



# opportunityreturns

*Creating more jobs for today and tomorrow*

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

news

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## **GOV. BLAGOJEVICH ANNOUNCES CRITICAL *OPPORTUNITY RETURNS* GRANT TO TRIGGER DEVELOPMENT OF SPRINGFIELD MEDICAL DISTRICT AND BRING NEW JOBS TO THE REGION**

SPRINGFIELD – In a bold effort to unleash the potential of the new Springfield Medical District, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced **\$300,000** in *Opportunity Returns* funding that will allow the district to form and market its master plan, the essential blueprint needed to move the project forward and begin attracting the research, investment and jobs from across the medical industry that the new area has such great promise to draw. Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Director Jack Lavin represented Governor Blagojevich at the announcement today with various local officials at the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce.

“Health services is anticipated to be one of the strongest growing sectors in the coming decade. The Springfield Medical District will play an instrumental role in capitalizing on this growth and maximizing its economic value to the surrounding communities. By awarding this *Opportunity Returns* funding, the effort can now begin in earnest to build a thriving medical community, which yields medical benefits that enrich the quality of our lives and economic benefits that widen the possibilities for our future,” Governor Blagojevich said.

Springfield is the preeminent health and medical care center for Central Illinois. Two major hospitals (Memorial Medical Center and St. John's Hospital), a world renowned heart surgery institute (Prairie Heart Institute), a medical school (SIU School of Medicine), more than forty clinics, and a full complement of other medical facilities and services establishes Springfield's leadership position in the health care industry. Modeled after the state's only other medical district in Chicago, the creation of this one will help spur both medical and research-related job growth, as well as neighborhood revitalization in Springfield's near north end. The district covers a one-square-mile area bounded by North Grand Avenue and Madison Street, Walnut and 11th Streets.

The *Opportunity Returns* funding comes at a critical juncture since it will allow the district to develop a master plan for land use that will promote the best use of properties within the district to support the growth of the medical profession and the delivery of health care services. The district  
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is also expected to act as a catalyst in the promotion of technology transfer, moving the discoveries of local medical researchers into the marketplace where they can impact quality of life issues, as well as generate additional local employment.

"I know Governor Blagojevich's *Opportunity Returns* plan is based on using partnerships between state and local governments to fuel economic growth and job creation, and I can't think of a better illustration of that strategy at work then here at the Springfield Medical District. But as strong and fruitful as this collaboration has been, it more importantly is setting the stage for the dynamic collaboration between medical researchers, practitioners, and specialists which will open the door to a world of discovery we all stand to benefit from," Springfield Mayor Timothy Davlin said.

"This funding from *Opportunity Returns* will enable the District Commission to move ahead with completion of a Master Development Plan for the District that will serve as a blueprint for attraction and expansion of medical-related job creating businesses and for revitalization of existing residential and commercial areas. We are grateful for this demonstration of support from Governor Blagojevich and DCEO. It will enable us to realize the economic development potential the District holds for the entire community," said Michael Boer, President of the Illinois Medical District Commission at Springfield.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is supporting the Springfield Medical District through two grants. DCEO is providing \$175,000 to help the Medical District develop its master plan, along with an additional \$125,000 marketing grant so it can raise awareness of the importance of the project within the community.

"The founding of the Springfield Medical District was a triumph of determination, but a strengthened, invigorated medical community armed with the resources to make important advancements in medicine and healthcare will be a triumph of innovation, collaboration and imagination. Governor Blagojevich understands the tremendous importance of this project to the community and, in providing these grants, has helped the Medical District take a pivotal step in realizing its vision," DCEO Director Jack Lavin said.

The *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. *Opportunity Returns* contains tangible actions to make each region more accessible, more marketable, more entrepreneurial and more attractive to business.

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