

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Mattoon Selected to Receive \$50,000 Tourism Marketing Partnership Grant

State funding will support sports tourism marketing, attract regional visitors, and encourage overnight stays in Mattoon.

MATTOON, IL - The City of Mattoon has been selected to receive a \$50,000 Tourism Marketing Partnership Grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The award is part of a \$2 million statewide investment supporting nearly 40 grantees in promoting Illinois tourism destinations and attractions.

The funding will support the City's Mattoon Tourism Momentum: Leveraging Sports Tourism to Drive Overnight Visitation and Economic Growth project, a \$100,000 initiative funded through a \$50,000 state grant and a \$50,000 local match.

"Mattoon is experiencing exciting growth in tourism, particularly with the success of Emerald Acres Sports Connection," said Mayor Rick Hall. "This investment will help us build on that momentum by introducing more visitors to everything our community offers. By encouraging families to stay longer, explore our attractions, and support local businesses, we're creating economic opportunities that benefit our entire community."

The project will expand Mattoon's regional marketing efforts, with a particular emphasis on sports tourism and attracting visitors from more than 50 miles away. Funding will support traditional and digital media advertising, strategic billboard placements, updated visitor guides and promotional materials, and continued market research using Placer.ai. The City has also implemented the Mattoon Connect Community Calendar, providing visitors with a centralized resource to discover sporting events, festivals, entertainment, and other activities throughout the community.

Emerald Acres Sports Connection will be a central focus of the marketing initiative. During its initial operating period, the facility hosted more than 400 teams, attracted over 10,000 athletes and generated over 7,200 hotel room nights. The City's marketing strategy will build upon this activity by encouraging tournament participants and their families to explore Mattoon's restaurants, shops, outdoor recreation opportunities, and community attractions.

Recent tourism data further demonstrates Mattoon's growth. Bagelfest attendance increased from approximately 30,300 visitors in 2024 to 33,400 in 2025, while hotel/motel tax revenues increased by more than \$50,000 during the same period. With two additional hotels anticipated near Emerald Acres, the City is preparing to accommodate continued growth in overnight visitation.

Through the Tourism Marketing Partnership Grant Program, DCEO provides matching grants to help Illinois communities promote tourism attractions, destinations, and events. The program aims to increase visitation by business and leisure travelers, with an emphasis on generating overnight stays. The investment complements Illinois' statewide Middle of Everything tourism campaign, which promotes destinations and experiences throughout the state.

Located in east-central Illinois, the City of Mattoon offers a growing mix of sports tourism, outdoor recreation, festivals, shopping, and entertainment. Home to Emerald Acres Sports Connection, Bagelfest,

Lightworks, and Lake Mattoon, the community continues to invest in tourism and economic development to attract visitors and enhance residents' quality of life.

For more information, visit mattoon.illinois.gov

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