

Notes from SSG

A community review of Peoria, IL

A well organized tour

- Laser focused on bio-manufacturing
- Good cross section of stakeholders, engaged
- How do we define life-sciences and bio-manufacturing
- “Pharma guy in a tractor town”

Theme: Industry and Assets

INDUSTRY

- How was life-sciences and bio-manufacturing made a target industry?
- Healthcare and life sciences are different, although adjacent, industries

ASSETS

- Universities and proximity to Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis
- Fermentation history
- Two large hospital systems, community minded
- USDA lab, Jump Innovation Center, Peoria Next Innovation Center
- U of I branch medical school
- Caterpillar for its engineering base
- Rheo, unique

Industry and Assets: Challenges and Strengths

CHALLENGES

- The bio-manufacturing hook is not obvious for the market: you're not on the radar
- Location decisions are made in clusters on the coast; awareness of next gen location solutions
- There are other Midwestern communities competing for the same industry.
- You only started in 2019 – you're not tested yet

STRENGTHS

- Low cost of operations (but it is not a leading factor in this industry)
- Good start on entrepreneurship: incubator and investment fund

Industry and Assets: Tactics

TACTICS

- Leverage what you have
- There are elements but they are not yet knitted together
- Grow your own first (ST); it's the best attraction tool (LT)
- Position Peoria as a destination for life sciences – narrative, nuanced to right segments of Bio Manufacturing
 - Validate Therapeutics
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Look at some peer communities and be realistic.

Theme: Community

CHALLENGES

- Third tier city in a region that is generally losing population
- Flight connections are now fewer
- The downtown is a donut hole. The city center is the enduring image of Peoria and it is dead.
- Poverty

STRENGTHS

- Good bones in downtown to build on
- Caterpillar is an important anchor (is it?)
- There are land sites, highways, railroads, and the river
- Peoria has a recognized brand (but it is fading)

Community: Tactics

TACTICS

- Vision for downtown and need to implement swiftly
- Re-branding of Peoria and region (which parts of Illinois would you include?)
- Control the narrative; Steering Cmte owns for the long term (it took RTP 40+ yrs to build)
- Master data strategy for this industry

Theme: Talent

CHALLENGES

- The current occupations are not aligned with the target industry.
- Cost advantages are real but salary differentials for key occupations may not be as big as stated.
- Engineers are not focused on life sciences. They are agriculture focused and want to work in that industry.

STRENGTHS

- Community college system is ready to build the pipeline and is already training students in some transferrable skills.
- Diverse workforce aligns with life sciences talent requirements

Talent: Tactics

TACTICS

- You need to show your transferrable skills.
Conduct your own workforce survey.
- Need to have a life sciences focus in Bradley University
- Training - bio reactors and other simulation in the community college with GMP framing

Recommendations

- Leverage what you already have. There are elements of the life sciences industry in the region but they are not yet “knitted together.”
- Conduct a workforce survey to show area skillsets transferable to biomanufacturing.
- Seek opportunities for donated equipment (e.g., bioreactors) to help launch training programs at Central Illinois College.
- Grow your own first (ST); it’s the best attraction tool (LT)
- Position Peoria as a destination for life sciences; however, the narrative must be nuanced to right segments of Biomanufacturing, or perhaps other life sciences segments (AgBio?).
- Validate therapeutics
- Don’t reinvent the wheel. Look at some peer communities and be realistic.
- Engage an urban design team to develop a long-term downtown development strategy that integrates with the local and regional economic development strategies. Unless more residential development takes place in downtown and it becomes a destination for younger homeowners, it would be challenging to build a memorable place that attracts talent.