

Just Go Online

By Geraldine Gambale, Editor, Area Development Magazine (Jun/Jul 07)

How did we ever live without the Internet?

I don't know about you, but the first place I turn when needing information is the Internet. Need to get the latest breaking news...do research or check facts for a story...figure out how to get from here to there...or answer any number of questions, I go online. I'm sure that's the first place that your company or consultant also turns when looking for a location or expansion site.

"The Internet is the way the world works now," says Don Schjeldahl, vice president and director of the Facilities Location Group at The Austin Company. "We start every search by going to websites and getting basic information to help in the screening process."

Many community websites are chock full of data, but often it is presented in a confusing manner and it may, in fact, be out of date. Additionally, those responsible for designing and organizing a community's website are sometimes more interested in promoting their area than in fulfilling the informational needs of those visiting the site.

However, over the past year or so, those economic development organizations representing forward-thinking communities have tried to address these concerns. Consequently, you may be pleasantly surprised by the findings presented in this month's cover story, "Retooled Websites."

First, more economic development groups have started to think in regional terms. They are realizing that when you are looking at their community as a possible location choice, you need the "bigger picture." Second, newer technologies are allowing you to request customized information for your site search. And third, the use of GIS (geographic information systems) is growing, which allows greater insight into a location's potential.

As one of your most important sources of information in the site and facility planning process, the publishers of Area Development magazine realized that they also needed to retool their website, and we've been working hard at doing just that. We have just launched the new Area Development Online, and we invite you to visit us at www.areadevelopment.com.

Our totally redesigned interactive site provides easy one-click access to the current issue's contents, as well as easily accessible information from past issues organized by subject. Our annual reports — including the Corporate Survey and our Gold & Silver Shovel awards (presented in this issue) — are all there. You can also access state-by-state demographics, tax and financial incentives, and contact information, and link directly to corporatelocationdirectory.com. A link to FastFacility.com will allow you to search for available buildings and sites, and there's even industry and economic news "from the wire."

In the coming months, we hope to add more interactive features to our website that will help to guide you in the location-decision process. Contact me to let me know how we can better serve your needs.