Missouri’s metropolitan areas, like Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield, are booming with reports of new expansions, attractions and retentions of both large and small-scale businesses happening each month. They do have a lot to offer businesses, such as a large labor pool, airport and U.S. highways, nearby limitless infrastructure and site locations, and brands that do not take much explaining.

However, small and mid-sized cities have benefits for businesses. When a business sets up shop in a small town, they become part of something bigger. No matter the size, the business becomes intertwined in the fabric of the local community and its people, offering an unparalleled sense of loyalty and pride in the business.

In addition, smaller towns tend to have a lower cost of living, and an abundance of under-utilized natural resources. They also feature original attractions, scenic beauty and many have historical significance.

Affordability

Affordability is a great selling point. In fact, Missouri has the 11th lowest cost of living in the country. For smaller towns or cities, the cost of living is even lower. For example, Fulton is a great place for business growth, as the cost of living is 20 percent lower than the national average. This mid-Missouri town has a population just under 13,000, is less than 25 minutes from Missouri’s capital in Jefferson City, and just over 23 miles from Columbia, another of central Missouri’s metropolitan hubs. Fulton also has immediate access to a readily available, skilled labor pool due to its close proximity to several local universities. The town is home to two private colleges, Westminster College and William Woods University, and is within 30 miles of several major universities, including the University of Missouri-Columbia, Lincoln University and Linn State Technical College (ranked by Bankrate as the sixth best community college in the nation).

Fulton and the surrounding area is already home to several large corporations, two of which experienced enough growth that they expanded operations in the community. Danuser Machine Company, headquartered in Fulton since 1910, recently invested $3 million in its facility and brought 10 new jobs to the area. Last year, Pro Foods Systems, Inc., headquartered only miles away in nearby Holts Summit, created 43 new jobs with a $6 million investment in the mid-Missouri area.

Natural Resources

The readily available natural resources also are a key for businesses looking to expand or relocate. Located in northwest Missouri, the town of Rock Port boasts the title of the nation’s first community powered 100 percent by wind. Although Rock Port’s population is a little more than 1,300 citizens, it was able to attract the attention of the large corporation John Deere, who partnered with local entrepreneurs and town leaders to create the Wind Capital Group and install four wind-power generators capable of producing the entire town’s energy needs. The community is now powered by a constant source of renewable energy that has led to significant financial savings for the City and its residents. Wind Capital Group also is able to sell any excess wind power not used by the City on the open market.

Quality of Life

Low costs, a strong workforce, and ample energy resources are just a few things businesses take into consideration when they are deciding where to grow. They also want to make sure their employees are comfortable, feel at home, and have things to do with friends and family.

Many of Missouri’s smaller towns have treasure troves of historical attractions. One example is Kearney, famed for being the birthplace of
notorious American outlaw Jesse James. The town has converted his boyhood home into a museum dedicated to the Town’s most famous resident, and also hosts a recreational fair, the Jesse James Festival, every September. Kearney is located north of Kansas City, an area that continues to attract huge companies like Freightquote, BIME Analytics and Aviation Technical Services. For the new employees who prefer more of a laid-back style of life, they can find calm and comfort in Kearney.

Kearney also is extremely close to the town of Liberty that has experienced its own economic stimulus lately. Liberty has reported several large expansions, including a June 2012 expansion of LMV Automotive Systems, a project that brought 156 new jobs to the area and a July 2013 expansion of Holland 1916 that added 62 new jobs to the local economy.

The town of Mansfield is a major tourist destination in Missouri, as the site of the Laura Ingalls Wilder House. This historic museum, the former home of the author of the Little House on the Prairie series, attracts more than 30,000 fans each year from all 50 states and nearly 20 different countries. Similar to Kearney, the area surrounding Mansfield received attention lately for several large expansion projects. In June 2011, the nearby town of Marshfield, 30 miles northwest of Mansfield, saw an expansion of Architectural Components Group, Inc., that brought 70 new jobs to the area. One year prior, 3G Processing in Mountain Grove, 18 miles east of Mansfield, announced an expansion project totaling $6 million that included the addition of 90 new jobs for the local economy.

Smaller towns in Missouri offer unique, one-of-a-kind experiences with pristine surroundings. One of Missouri’s major tourist attractions is the city of Branson, located in Missouri’s breathtaking Ozark bluffs. Branson, known as the “Live Music Show Capital of the World,” is considered small by population standards – a little more than 7,000 citizens, but draws nearly 8 million visitors every year. The towns surrounding Branson also benefit from the influx of tourists each year, providing a perfect opportunity for businesses to set up shop in a town close to a major tourism destination but without the hustle and bustle of a large city center. Branson is surrounded by many such small towns, including the community of Hollister. Because of its proximity to Branson, (it is located just two miles south) Hollister has seen increasing interest from developers looking to locate businesses in recent years, leading the town to create a unique “developer friendly” economic development culture.

Hollister also is ideally located within 40 miles of Missouri’s third-largest metropolitan area, Springfield, that has seen several large expansions in recent years. Additionally, Hollister is only 30 miles south of the community of Ozark that saw an investment of $1 million by HealthMedX in June 2011 that brought 65 new jobs to the area.

The existing presence of thriving local industries is a huge draw for businesses searching for locations to set up shop. Some of Missouri’s smallest communities are home to global companies, demonstrating that Missouri’s small towns are fully capable of providing a workforce necessary to sustain a large business.

The mid-Missouri community of California, with a population of a little more than 4,000 individuals, is one such community. This town is the headquarters of Burgers’ Smokehouse, the nation’s largest producers of old-fashioned country hams, as well as many other smoked and cured meats. The community also is home to several additional large manufacturers, including AeroSonics and Arkansas Valley Feather, Inc.

To help your community have a better understanding of your regional strengths, the Missouri Department of Economic Development will be producing quarterly, regional economic development reports featuring recent business expansions, job postings, regional rankings and other data. The first regional report, featuring information from Central Missouri is shown on page 16.

**UPCOMING EDITION: TOOLS FOR BIG BUSINESS**

To help assist small towns with recruiting and retaining large businesses, the state of Missouri has numerous incentives and assistance programs available for towns to utilize. In our next article for the Missouri Municipal Review, we will explore how one Missouri town, devastated by the one of the largest tornadoes in history, bounced back from this tragedy to become a hotspot of economic development activity through the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative that used national aptitude tests to validate and qualify the local workforce to businesses nationwide.
2013 EXPANSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morris Converting</td>
<td>Jefferson City</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$3 Million Investment</td>
<td>October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri University of Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Rolla</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$3 Million Investment</td>
<td>September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danuser Machine Company</td>
<td>Fulton</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$3 Million Investment</td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Electrical Products</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$749,000 Investment</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meramec Electrical Products</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>$5.7 Million Investment</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewer Science</td>
<td>Rolla</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>$20 Million Investment</td>
<td>April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubbell Power Systems</td>
<td>Centralia</td>
<td></td>
<td>$8 Million Investment</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Bank</td>
<td>Jefferson City</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluid Power Support</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$1.6 Million Investment</td>
<td>February</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rankings:

- **Linn State Technical Collage (Linn)** – No. 6 Best Community College in the U.S., Bankrate
- **Memorial Stadium, Columbia** – Best Place to see College Football, AAA Best of the Midwest
- **Jefferson City** – Most Beautiful Small Town in America, Rand McNally’s Best of the Road
- **Lake of the Ozarks** – Best Weekend Escape, AAA Best of the Midwest
- **Lake of the Ozarks** – Best Golf Trail, AAA Best of the Midwest
- **Lake of the Ozarks** – Top Midwest Getaways & Top Midwest Travel Spots, Flipkey.com (Trip Advisor)
- **Spa Shiki Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake Ozark** – Reader’s Choice Award: Best for GF Getaways/Bachelorettes; Best for affordability, Spafinder Wellness 365
- **Columbia** – Best Cities for Young Entrepreneurs (No. 2), Under30CEO
- **Columbia** – Best Performing Small Cities, Milken Institute
- **Columbia** – Top 10 College Towns 2013 (No. 4), Livability

Employment Educational Requirement (Number of Ads)
- Graduate/Professional Degree, 244
- Bachelor’s Degree, 632
- Post-secondary/AA Degree, 221
- High School/GED, 916

Energy Sources:
- Bagnell Dam (Lakeside – Miller County) [Hydroelectric Power Plant]
- Callaway Nuclear Plant (Fulton – Callaway County)