



Press Release

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BUSINESS CONNECTION TEAM REPORTS FIRST YEAR'S FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS OF COUNTY BUSINESSES; ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BETTER THAN EXPECTED

Fifty-six percent of companies interviewed by the Business Connection team hope to add more jobs in the next three years. That's among the findings of 104 interviews conducted by the Lorain County Growth Partnership Business Connection team.

The Business Connection program was launched last fall by the Lorain County Growth Partnership (LCGP) to assess the needs of existing companies and provide a proactive, systematic approach to county-wide retention and expansion of businesses in Lorain County. One year later, the information gathered from the 104 interviews with Lorain County businesses has been used to enhance retention and expansion services on a coordinated basis through the LCGP partner organizations.

The LCGP team interviewed business owners from across the county and from across all types of business segments including health care and social services, manufacturing, information technology, construction, financial, real estate and professional services.

"We've learned several things from our business community," said Lorain County Commissioner Ted Kalo. "Foremost is that they appreciate the one-stop approach from the Growth Partnership team. We also learned that the economic environment is more positive than we anticipated."

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Fifty-six percent of the companies interviewed said they expected to expand in the next three years, adding more than 400 jobs to the county workforce. The expansions also will include an additional 400,000 square feet of facility improvements with an estimated total of \$80 million in investments.

“These interviews now give us the baseline from which we can coordinate a unified response to local businesses from all of the members of the Lorain County Growth Partnership,” said Lorain County Commissioner Lori Kokoski.

“Information collected by the team will be used to identify the needs of Lorain County businesses and enhance the County’s ability to retain, expand and attract businesses and jobs,” said Lorain County Commissioner Betty Blair. The Business Connection program will provide a more thorough understanding of each company’s role in the community’s economic future, Blair added.

The LGCP Business Connection team also developed a comprehensive database of Lorain County businesses and has adopted the Executive Pulse data management system to help track businesses and communicate better with them about different programs available to assist their growth.

The business database was compiled with the help of five interns from the Lorain County Summer Youth Internship Program. The interns spent several months verifying and updating contact information for more than 8,000 business leads in Lorain County.

“The team’s hard work on this project will make it possible for the Growth Partners to connect businesses with available services and resources far more effectively than ever before,” said Jim Cordes, Lorain County Administrator. “They laid the groundwork with this project that will have a lasting impact on our ability to communicate with the business community.”

Additionally an inventory of business assets and commercial real estate in the county was done. Eighty-five commercial properties, buildings and sites were identified as being available to market to prospective tenants.

The interviews also found areas where Business Connection can assist businesses, including:

- Workforce attraction
- Workforce training
- Facility expansion support
- Streets and roads
- Business development
- Utilities

The Business Connection team goals for this coming year include interviewing 120 additional businesses, expanding the interview team, continually updating the company database and building site inventory, and streamlining the assistance tracking process.

“This information gives us the ability to look at the overall business climate in the county and determine what sectors or particular businesses may need assistance. And we will be able to provide a coordinated response to those needs,” said Cordes.

Partner organizations in the Lorain County Growth Partnership include the Lorain County Commissioners, the Lorain County Chamber of Commerce, Team Lorain County, Lorain County Community College and the Lorain County Joint Vocational School.

For more information about the program contact Phil Mikita at (440) 328-2364 or visit the Lorain County Growth Partnership website at **www.lcgp.net**.