

# DCEDC initiative nurtures industrial growth

The DeKalb County Economic Development Corp. completed its latest Voice of Industry report on the health and outlook for companies in DeKalb County.

DCEDC's Business Retention and Expansion Committee completed 38 retention visits between 2014 and 2017. Thirty-two companies completed detailed survey interviews that assessed their products and services, markets and competitive conditions.

Participating industries also rated the business climate of the county, including the labor force, utilities and community services. Data and responses from participating businesses were analyzed using Synchronist Suite software provided by ComEd.

Sixty-seven percent of the companies surveyed indicated they planned to expand during the next three years. This represents an increase from the most recent reporting period, 2009, when 59 percent expressed plans to expand. So far, DCEDC has helped coordinate assistance for 11 identified expansion projects resulting in more than \$100 million of investment and more than 800 jobs.

Overall, the report shows that several business factors have improved



**DCEDC  
VIEW**

**Paul Borek**

since 2009. These include an increasing number of primary products offered, increased total company sales, improved production technologies, planned expansions and improved public services.

Companies also have expressed concerns about matters such as workforce availability and training, greater demands on technology infrastructure, and a feeling that there is a lack of public policy at the state level that would benefit business. These matters will help shape DCEDC initiatives going forward.

The size of the firms interviewed ranged from four to 1,600 employees within a diverse group of business sectors, such as manufacturing, industrial, agriculture, information technology and consumer good production.

Participating companies were located in Cortland, DeKalb, Genoa, Hinckley, Maple Park, Sycamore and Waterman.

During the 2014 to 2017 sample

period with improving economic conditions, companies were remarkably busy and unable to grant appointments. This was a distinct contrast to 2009, during the recession, when 49 companies were surveyed during a single year.

When a specific concern or opportunity was identified, companies immediately were put in contact with the appropriate DCEDC partner to resolve the issue or capitalize on the opportunity.

In assisting the participating companies, DCEDC with its partners, followed up by introducing those businesses to higher education partners such as Northern Illinois University to establish research, product development, recruiting and internship partnerships.

Companies were connected to Kishwaukee College for education, training and internship needs. The Illinois workNet Center assisted with employee recruiting, screening and training resources.

Businesses were introduced to the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center for guidance and training on process improvements, increasing productivity and enhancing efficiency.

The DeKalb Ogle Workforce Development Consortium was called upon to promote industrial careers with students and identify summer employment or internship candidates.

To address technology infrastructure, telecommunication utility services were notified about internet service needs and issues.

Needs for high-demand rate plans, reduced or scheduled interruptions and advanced warning of maintenance were addressed by ComEd.

Local municipalities were called upon to address utility service; fix roadway, parking and permitting needs; and resolve problems for companies.

The information collected increased DCEDC's understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by business and industry. DCEDC is using this information to initiate activities in support of business expansion and the attraction of growth industries to the county.

The latest Voice of Industry can be found online at [dcedc.org/programs-initiatives](http://dcedc.org/programs-initiatives).

• *Paul Borek is executive director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp.*

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Nicole Walsh is employed at Siepert & Co. LLP as a paraprofessional. Nicole's responsibilities include client payroll processing, compilation, and tax preparation. She is also certified as a Quickbooks ProAdvisor. Nicole is a graduate of Illinois State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Nicole resides in Sycamore with her husband, Aaron, and their two daughters, Kylie and Peyton. You will often find Nicole at the softball fields or a dance recital watching her daughters do what they love. She enjoys traveling with her family, attending sporting events and concerts, and spending time with her family and friends.

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