

BOREK: DCEDC aims to expand, diversify tax base

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To boost prosperity and expand the tax base, the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation's Industrial Growth Initiative is targeting the attraction and expansion of industry.

Innovation and advanced technology have made U.S. manufacturers the most productive in the world. Increased shipping and overseas labor costs are making domestic manufacturing more competitive and production is increasing.

Industrial companies employ more than 10,000 DeKalb County residents. The manufacturing sector is the largest source of jobs that pay above average wages in the county.

DCEDC works with site selectors, industrial realtors and industry executives to promote the city to attract investment. The organization also works to strengthen and promote the local business climate by coordinating workforce development, development incentives and business assistance programs like Northern Illinois University research and engineering and Kishwaukee College education and training.

In addition, DCEDC works with local industry to identify and contribute to expansions by introducing supportive resources such as the Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center. More than 20 industrial firms have relocated to, or expanded in, DeKalb County over the past three years.

DCEDC leverages contributions and membership dues from more than 200 private businesses, DeKalb County, the cities of DeKalb and Sycamore, NIU, 14 communities, townships and park districts to share the cost and benefits of economic expansion and business climate improvement initiatives.

These activities have proven to be productive with more than \$1.6 billion in private investment and assessed valuation, resulting in more than 11,000 new jobs in DeKalb County since DCEDC's creation in 1987.

The DCEDC public/private partnership was instrumental in attracting or expanding five of the eight largest city of DeKalb taxpayers. These five industries – 3M, Target, Goodyear, Nestle and Panduit – now generate \$3.6 million in tax revenue each year.

During the past year, DCEDC helped attract Triumph Truss & Steel to the Bull Run Industrial Park in Kirkland, helped SK Express expand into the 310 Dietz Ave. building in DeKalb and supported expansions of DeKalb Forge, Nehring Electric Works, The Suter Company and CST Storage with the creation of the DeKalb Ogle County Industrial Workforce Development Consortium.

Through the efforts of DCEDC, DeKalb has been selected as an Illinois finalist for three pending confidential site selection prospects. DCEDC prepared 18 proposals and presentations and responded to 22 requests for information for site selectors and businesses considering location alternatives.

In addition to these ongoing activities, during the coming year, DCEDC will:

- Coordinate preparation of an Illinois Enterprise Zone application with the city of DeKalb, other municipalities and the DeKalb County Board;
- Create a Technology Task Force to market the county's telecommunications and broadband fiber resources to support technology-based business attraction, expansion and new business formation;
- Convene industry leaders to collaborate with the NIU College of Engineering and Engineering technology on the Digital Manufacturing Lab/Advanced Manufacturing Network; and
- Advocate for Illinois tax policy to help attract Data Center development and technology to DeKalb. Legislation is needed to enable DeKalb to compete for lucrative and sizeable data center development.

The DCEDC is a public/private partnership created to attract, retain and expand industry and create jobs in the city of DeKalb and DeKalb County.

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