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County's a Hot Spot for Industry

DCEDC View – Paul Borek

During 2009, DeKalb County Economic Development Corp. initiated an extensive business retention program to assist local industries.

ComEd underwrote the use of a proven survey tool and our public/private partnership identified resources to help companies solve problems and implement solutions.

These resources included the following.

The Illinois Manufacturing Extension Center provided technical support to improve operations, streamline production, increase efficiency and reduce costs.

Kishwaukee College conducted a series of Lean Manufacturing workshops.

The Northern Illinois University College of Engineering and Engineering Technology trained interns and graduates to support the innovation needs of industries.

City and village leaders provided critical community support.

Despite unprecedented challenges imposed by the recession, overall, firms were stable and optimistic about recovery. Eighty-four percent of the companies surveyed indicated that they planned to introduce new products or services.

While 48 percent of the companies surveyed indicated sales were decreasing, 52 percent indicated sales were stable or increasing.

In fact, 53 percent indicated their market share was increasing.

Fifty-five percent of the companies were active exporters and 16 percent indicated that their primary market was international.

Overall workforce characteristics, utilities and community services were highly regarded for the most part, exceeding the average results for all North American communities.

Fifty-nine percent of the companies surveyed indicated that they planned to expand during the next three years.

True to survey results, several expansions are under way. 3M has commissioned the development of a 650,000-square-foot warehouse in Park 88.

Ideal Industries is building a 130,000-square-foot building in the Sycamore Prairie Business Park to house their most recent acquisition: SK Hand Tools.

Smart Motion Robotics is building a 32,000-square-foot building to relocate their operations to Sycamore.

SK Express has leased an additional 11,000 square feet in the Sycamore Industrial Park.

Kishwaukee Hospital is completing its 26,000-square-foot Cancer Treatment Center.

With more than 800,000 square feet under construction, DeKalb County is one of the industrial hot spots in northern Illinois at a time when new construction is nearly nonexistent.

These projects represent calculated decisions by industries that have chosen to reinvest in DeKalb County.

We must continue to do everything we can to strengthen our business climate to continue to attract jobs and increase our industrial tax base.

Paul Borek is executive director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp. DCEDC is a public/private partnership working to facilitate sustainable and diversified growth within DeKalb County.