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DCEDC predicting local companies will expand

By DANA HERRA dherra@daily-chronicle.com

SYCAMORE – With businesses facing the worst recession in decades, the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp. focused on helping existing businesses to expand and maintain their operations in 2009, executive director Paul Borek said Tuesday in the annual state of the county address.

Borek discussed a survey taken by 50 of the 80-plus companies the DCEDC visited as part of its formal retention and expansion program. The results were encouraging, he said, with 59 percent of those surveyed reporting plans to expand in the next three years. More than half of those companies are actively exporting and describe their primary market as national or international, Borek said.

On the down side, nearly half reported a decrease in total sales last year, and 83 percent said proposed legislation will adversely affect their business, though specific legislative items were not addressed.

Borek also recapped development in the county over the past year, including the construction of an industrial wind farm along the Shabbona-Lee county line and grants awarded to develop a high-speed fiber optic network in the county.

In Sycamore, business has been brisk in the city's industrial parks, Borek said. The city also welcomed new businesses in its downtown business district. DeKalb saw expansions at Target, the KishHealth System Cancer Center, DeKalb Forge and Tegrant Corp., he said. Wendler Engineering remodeled the former Sawyer Auto dealership on Lincoln Highway and moved some of its operations there, as well as creating a technology business incubator to help engineering and science professionals.

Elsewhere in the county, Borek said a Cortland restaurant is expanding and there are plans for a retail and office development in Maple Park. Monsanto and KishHealth both made investments in Waterman properties and a company offering sales and consultations in small wind-energy systems opened in Hinckley, he said.

Sandwich saw growth in the health care industry, including a new location for the Midwest Orthopaedic Institute and an expansion at Valley West Community Hospital, Borek said. The still incomplete Waves of Fun water park, which has been plagued by the credit crunch, hopes to be back on track by this fall, he said.



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