

City of North Vernon Comprehensive Plan Large Employers Focus Group - Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday, May 19, 2009 @ 11:30 – 12:30 am

Location: North Vernon Education & Training Center

Facilitator: Scott Burgins & Erin Shane, SDG

Participants:

Name	Organization
Amy Boswell	Dave O'Mara Contractor, Inc.
Tim Grady	Lowe's Distribution Center
Mike Montgomery	Montrow Group
Linda Rickley	Concept Tool & Engineering, Inc.
Joe Roach	St. Vincent's Hospital
Dave Tempest	Metaldyne

Question: *How is your business in this current economy?*

- Automotive is in a bad place right now; with all the American dealers going down, all suppliers are struggling
- Credit issue is a large issue; those who do have capital are protecting very tightly right now; a lot of people are working on IOU's just waiting for things to come up
- If credit was there it may be better, but customers are just not buying
- For construction – stimulus has helped a bit; we have had to go out to north Vernon to have work; go out like 150 miles instead of our 60 miles; those of us doing heavy highway – the competition is mostly out of state now – IN allows that
- Lowes is doing OK – we are not seeing big projects; we are seeing more people repair; we have hired 300 persons out of thousands since January –many looking for a 40 hr check; people aren't really concerned about salary – it's more about getting 40 hrs per week; we are not building another distribution center soon – so we will take on more and expand; keep bringing stores into existing distribution centers
- Tool and die – hard to deal w/ China; everyone wants it fast and cheap; so when they go to china we just wait till they come back when it's broken
- The manufacturing model has changed forever – china is a constant
- Healthcare – no decrease in demand, but ability to pay is our issue; we see huge increase in people we care for; we've built in employer based healthcare that we come to rely on; we are doing more work but are getting less for it; government programs pay less than employer based healthcare, so w/ more people going on government programs like Medicaid, we are getting less and less; North Vernon represents the poorest community out of all the St Vincent's hospital network.

Question: *How about the local workforce?*

- It's a market where you can find pretty much anything; women and minority forces are an issue for construction – hard to find locally
- Montrow – our web gets hit a lot; soft skills are evaluated with an entrance exam; the manufacturing skill sets are becoming more refined so finding those skills can be an issue
- Tempest - 12-13 years service is average for employees; great workforce
- Lowes – lost 11 last week, 9 just did not want to come to work; our workforce we struggle w/ basic employment ability; lack of work ethic; most are surprised that they actually have to work – they all think they will be working w/ moving equipment
- Montrow – we find our best staff by word of mouth; we turn our staff into recruiters – so we provided bonuses depending on how the new hires have worked out
- Youth? 1 out of 10 is worth the investment; sometimes we see a rebound in their 20's and then they figure it out – but immaturity is an issue
- Hospital – recruiting is a challenge – filling professional positions; the biggest change for us lately has been turnover – the wages have stabilized in the region; hard to find nurses and physicians in small communities; kids who grew up here don't want to live here

Question: *What do the local large employers think of the bypass?*

- Don't see a lot of negatives – will relieve congestion thru town
- Will increase commerce for shipping routes
- Lowes – have trouble now so bypass will be better
- For future investment –it is imperative

Question: *What about other road issues?*

- Hayden Pike – needs sidewalks
- Area by industrial park needs a light

Question: *Does the existing North Vernon infrastructure meet your needs? Like Sewer / Water?*

- Electricity is bad here – we can't remain competitive with these issues
- Water will need to be improved
- Cost will be driven down and electric / water companies rates will increase – will be an issue

Question: *How about local housing? Is there an appropriate range of housing for your employees?*

- It is limited – some doctors can't find too many choices so routinely they go to Columbus
- The housing stock is older – but water supply limits a lot of growth; area out near the EDC was going to be developed but now can't b/c of water
- Most of the people who work in my plant live in Bartholomew County
- Have lower end houses but nothing much for 3-4 beds/ 2-3 baths – not here
- North Vernon – most is rented on contract – so that will just revert back to original ownership

Question: *How is your relationship with the EDC and City?*

- Good!
- Kathy does a good job, very open communication
- Kathy cares about north Vernon and it shows