

Perspectives

Survey goal — averting corporate flight

By Casey Hans
staff writer

COORDINATORS OF a survey of local manufacturers hope the results will have a "ripple effect" as an effort to unify the local business community begins.

"There is every reason to be pleased with the results," said Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce president Nancy Finley regarding the Michigan Business Retention and Expansion Program, co-sponsored by the chamber, the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, and Michigan Bell. "We must continue to maintain."

Project manager and local businessman Andrew Baker said the purpose of the recently completed survey is two-fold.

"Curbing the exodus of business is a key in any local development program," he said.

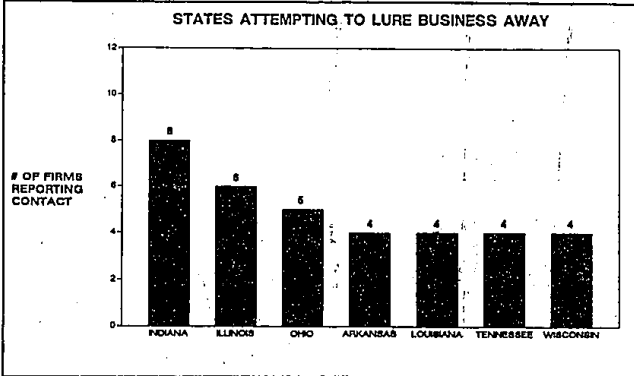
Promotion of small business is also important because "80 percent of all new jobs are generated by the retention and expansion of small businesses," he added.

The survey showed that 80 percent of the manufacturing businesses interviewed have less than 100 employees.

RESULTS OF the survey were presented last week during the annual State of the Cities Breakfast, hosted by Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. of America.

About 140 businesspeople and civic leaders attended the event, where the business survey report took center stage.

Congested and inadequate roads topped the list, followed by drainage, communication, power outages, community involvement, job training and unemployment/workers'



This graph shows which states have contacted Farmington Hills businesses in an attempt to lure them away, according to the Michigan Bell survey. In all, 24 local businesses have been contacted by other states. Twenty states have initiated contact.

compensation as key issues that will be addressed because of the survey.

According to Finley, the 15-member task force that coordinated the effort will meet again in six months to review progress on the above topics. Results of the five-month effort do not represent a "dead end," but a new beginning, Baker added.

Farmington Hills Mayor Ben Marks called the survey "important" for getting the city's road system in shape. The survey showed nearly 81 percent of those surveyed used trucks to receive and ship their product — labeling the roads as a key

concern for area business.

THE SURVEY report of only 42.5 percent satisfaction margin on roads "really didn't come as a big surprise to those on the task force," according to Steve Balasia, Bell area manager and Farmington Hills resident.

Farmington Mayor William Hartstock called the survey report "a hard document I can turn to" when reviewing city services. Although Farmington is not looking to expand, "we do emphasize retention," he said, describing the recent efforts on behalf of the city's Downtown Development Authority.

He said the city of Farmington will use the survey during the next several months to develop an effective communications program.

The Farmington area survey is the 21st completed by Michigan Bell, according to Balasia. A total of 77 of the 141 manufacturing companies in the two cities — about 53 percent — responded to the surveys, which were done face-to-face with the help of 61 volunteer interviewers.

Although the response percentage was less than in other communities, Balasia said "we're looking at that as good. Normally, the larger the community is, the lesser the participation is.

"Although the percentage was less than we've been getting, I hope the 53 percent would represent the community."

CHAMBER EXECUTIVE director JoAnn Soronen said the 53 percent represented "a good overview and cross section throughout the cities. I would say it's a good representation of the community."

The results showed 73 percent of the manufacturing companies surveyed were headquartered in Farm-

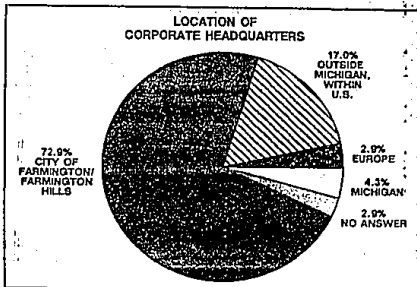
ington or Farmington Hills, a fact that Balasia believes is key.

"We have access to all the CEOs (chief executive officers) and that's very important; we need to build rapport."

Other key figures taken from the report showed that 50 percent of the firms surveyed owned their own facilities, which gives the community a "stability" factor, that 17 of the business are planning expansion in the area, and that nearly twice that many have sufficient property to expand.

Perhaps the main reason for the survey was detailed in figures showing that 24 companies were contacted by 20 different states that were trying to lure them away. Balasia said the figure was "fairly consistent" with responses in other communities, but was still a cause for concern.

Both cities fared better than the state in the business arena. Sixty-seven percent thought the local area was a "good place to do business". When asked the same question about the state, only 42.5 percent responded positively.



This pie chart shows where the responding corporations in Farmington Hills have their corporate headquarters.



Steve Balasia, Michigan Bell economic development area manager, addresses the State of the Cities Breakfast audience.



Nancy Finley, Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce president, listens to a report on the Farmington Area Michigan Business and Retention Program findings.

Staff photos
by
Bob Sklar

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Health fair coming up April 1

Project Health-O-Rama '87 will come to Farmington Hills Wednesday, April 1. The metro Detroit health fair runs from Monday, March 23, to Thursday, April 2. Sponsors are WXYZ-TV, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the United Health Organization, a Torch Drive Agency.



Dr. Jon Blum offers free skin cancer testing at last year's Health-O-Rama.

The Farmington Hills site, sponsored by the Farmington-Farmington Hills Commission on Aging, will be open from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at Mercy Conference Center, 28600 11 Mile. All Health-O-Rama sites will offer these free tests and services: blood pressure checks, height and weight measurements, vision testing, counseling and referral, glaucoma testing, health hazard appraisal and health education literature.

specialize in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of skin problems. Anyone attending the Farmington Hills Health-O-Rama can receive a free, painless examination for possible skin cancer. They also will receive free brochures that discuss the prevention of skin cancer, sunburn, wrinkles and premature aging of the skin.

PROJECT HEALTH-O-RAMA sites are staffed by volunteers from hospitals, clinics, nursing and allied health schools, the Women for the United Foundation, health departments, health education agencies, community groups and many individuals (physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nutritionists) who donate their time and skill. Participants with severely abnormal test results are followed up by telephone contacts made by Health-O-Rama staff two-three months after the project.

TO PROMOTE the early detection and proper treatment of skin cancer, Farmington Hills dermatologist Dr. Jon Blum will do skin cancer examinations. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. It is more common than cancer of the lung, breast, uterus or any other area. Dermatologists are medical doctors who

This will be the third year that Blum is offering the free skin cancer examinations at the Mercy Center Health-O-Rama. Most Health-O-Rama sites in other areas do not offer skin cancer screening.

For more information, call the Project HOTLINE, 669-0606, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays.