

# Business upbeat about roundtable

BY PAT MURPHY  
STAFF WRITER

Wednesday's initial meeting of the Business Roundtable — a partnership designed to improve Oakland's economic climate — was upbeat and positive, according to some of its participants.

For one thing, it started at 8 and ended at 10 a.m., the exact times promised by its organizer, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson.

"That's very important," said James Hopkin, executive vice president of Fitness U.S.A. in West Bloomfield. "We're all very busy. If this is going to work, things must be on schedule."

For another, the goals and objectives are realistic, said A. Robert Stevenson, vice president of public affairs at Kmart Corp. in Troy. "The world is changing, and we have to change the way we do things."

The roundtable appears to be results-oriented, said Joan Trusty, regional director of the government affairs office of EDS in Southfield. "We're not going to produce a white paper to gather dust on a shelf somewhere. We're participating to get results."

Hopkin, Stevenson and Trusty are among more than 125 business representatives who attended the organizational meeting at the Michigan State University Management Center in Troy.

## Picked for expertise

They were invited, Patterson said in his welcoming remarks, because of the expertise they've demonstrated doing business in Oakland County.

"We want your help fine tuning the engine that makes Oakland's economy run," Patterson said. "We want to find out what you like about doing business here — and some of the problems you encountered."

"We want to emphasize the good aspects and reduce or minimize the bad ones."

The roundtable was outlined by Patterson last fall during his first campaign for county executive. He said advice from business executives would be crucial to developing the economy and jobs.

Oakland County is already the epicenter of economic growth in Michigan, said Patterson. "We want to keep it that way and posi-

tion the area for continued economic growth into the 21st century."

The roundtable's goals had been outlined by Patterson on several occasions, including last month when he announced its co-chairmen, Robert Stempel, former General Motors chairman and chief executive officer, and Patey Fulton, chancellor of Oakland Community College.

Unveiled Wednesday was its organizational structure — the 125 business representatives working through 12 committees. Each is expected to hold an initial meeting as soon as possible, with subsequent sessions as necessary.

## Concrete ideas sought

Each is expected to come up with at least five concrete ideas or suggestions for changes to improve the business climate.

Remedies for some problems are beyond Oakland County, acknowledged Stempel.

But the roundtable can work on business impediments such as reducing regulation, improving transportation, preparing the work force or expanding research and export opportunities.

"Economic growth is going to happen," Stempel said, "and it can happen in Oakland County. But we've got to make it happen."

Chancellor Fulton focused on the business opportunities already available in Oakland County or southwest Michigan.

"We've got to have a vision of the future," she said. "Then we must act to implement that vision."

James Hall, general agent for James Hall Insurance in Farmington Hills, had high praise for the roundtable's initial meeting.

"I came away from that meeting more excited than I've been in a long time," said Hall, who will serve on the Small Business Initiatives committee.



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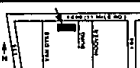
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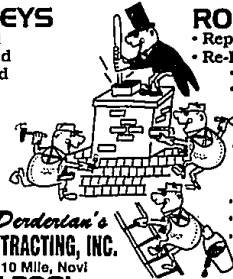
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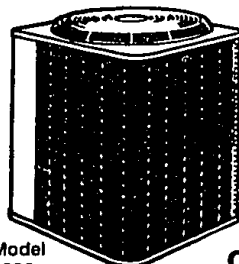
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