Erie County
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION

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2011 Community Report

April 15, 2011

Dear Community Partner:

It was with great excitement that I accepted the position as Executive Director of the Erie County Economic Development Corporation in November 2010. On my first day I prepared a 180 day internal action plan focusing around accountability, credibility and transparency of our organization.

As part of my action plan, I saw the immediate need for ECEDC to implement outcome oriented and measurable programs and initiatives. These programs and initiatives focus around job retention, growth and attraction by collaborating with leaders from both private and public sectors. In today's economy it is imperative that multiple community stakeholders can come together to achieve a common goal. We must collaborate to compete, and not compete against each other.

Until a new strategic plan is developed, my vision for ECEDC is to champion local & regional collaboration, sharing of resources and ideas, and creating a sustainable economic development framework for Erie County to retain, grow and attract jobs.

Erie County and its communities are very unique in its economic opportunities and challenges. I believe the economic development principle of economic gardening will provide a successful vehicle for consistent growth of current businesses and future investors in Erie County. Economic gardening is a philosophy that embraces strategies to grow existing businesses in a community. It is a unique, yet proven economic development strategy based on the fundamental concept that entrepreneurs drive economies.

We as a community, have direct impact on creating a competitive advantage for our businesses, a competitive advantage businesses need to succeed in today's economy. The first step towards that competitive advantage is creating business friendly communities where businesses can thrive and grow.

Best regards,

Peter Zaehringer
Executive Director

2010 Accomplishments:

- **Launched new ECEDC website- www.eriecountyedc.org**
  Provides one-stop-shop information for existing businesses and future investors, as well as demographic information about Erie County, links to various existing community and economic development resources.

- **Completed 11 retention visits**
  Our volunteers have surveyed local businesses to learn about challenges Erie County based businesses face and/or determine needs these businesses might have.

- **Updated existing building/land database**
  In 2010 our database consisted of 67 buildings and land sites. This information is accessible nationwide by various economic development professionals and site-selectors.

- **Updated new strategic plan**
  The Angelou plan was updated to reflect economic changes.

- **Created "Action Now Plan" for 2011**
  The plan was created to establish credibility quickly by providing tangible evidence that ECEDC is making a difference in promoting economic development in our community.

- **Hired Peter Zaehringer as new Executive Director in November, 2010**
  After an extensive search and thorough selection process that involved area community and business leaders, Peter was hired as the new Executive Director. Peter's first day was November 15, 2010.

2011 Goals:

Goal: **Status:**

- **ECEDC Lead Referral Initiative** **implemented**

  Share leads and investment opportunities ECEDC receives with all communities to maximize participation in "bidding" process. These leads may also be discussed by the Economic Development Task Force (see below)

- **Economic Development Task Force (EDTF)** **implemented**

  Assembled a group of economic development practitioners from various Erie County communities to improve communication, share information and ensure economic development opportunities (retention and attraction) are being serviced until the "Forum for Economic Transformation" (see below) is in place. Once the "Forum for Economic Transformation" is established, the EDTF will also execute the strategies and goals set forth by the Forum.

- **RISE -** **implemented**
  Regional Incubator for Sustainability and Entrepreneurship

  Create program that fosters and supports entrepreneurs throughout various stages (start-up, growing, declining etc.) of their business cycle.

  Business incubators have proven to be an effective way for fostering business growth and stimulating entrepreneurship. Incubators serve the need for job creation in the community, promotion of economic self-sufficiency, diversification of the local economy, transfer of technology from universities and corporations, or sharing of venture experiences with new companies by successful entrepreneurs and investors.

  Finalized partnership with GLIDE/Lorain and soft-launched RISE in March 2010.

- **Public Forums/Roundtables** **implemented**

  Increase ECEDC's visibility and strengthen community partnerships by providing businesses with decision making information.

  These public meetings will give us an opportunity to address each community's business owners/entrepreneurs and promote services, incentives, programs and other resources available to them. A panel comprised of local government leaders, economic development practitioners and other partners will discuss these programs and address questions from the audience.

2011 Goals continued:

Goal: **Status:**

- **Forum for Economic Transformation** **in progress**

Create a countywide think-tank to collaboratively address current economic challenges and mutually chart a course of action for the future.

Local and regional cooperation among economic development organizations, universities, governments and community and business leaders is essential to the success of economic development. Duplication of efforts between organizations not only wastes resources, but also results in muddled marketing messages communicated outside of the region.

The best economic development campaigns involve tightly coordinated teams or organizations within a region. These teams look past geographical boundaries of cities, counties, and sometimes state borders to promote a single message for their entire region.

- **Business Visitation Program (BEAR)** **in progress**

Implement formal business retention program, use benchmarking software and create countywide service provider network.

To better understand challenges and opportunities businesses in our community might face, this program is designed to survey businesses and evaluate their needs to succeed in Erie County. A broad network of service providers will be developed to address challenges, needs or opportunities revealed in those visitations.

The goal of the business retention program is to create an environment for businesses to succeed and the community to prosper. Additionally, each year we will initiate a "visitation blitz week" and recruit volunteers to complete a large number of visitations within one week, to update our database and create PR opportunities for ECEDC.

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