



Economic & Workforce Development

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Fairfield County Economic Update Addresses Inevitable Growth

Lancaster, Ohio – Nearly 200 community members, business leaders, and elected officials gathered on December 8th for the annual Economic Update presented by the Fairfield 33 Development Alliance in partnership with local Chambers of Commerce. The session included guest speakers from Google, JobsOhio and the Columbus Partnership who spoke about the rapid growth of Fairfield County and how best to meet the needs that accompany it.

“In the most recent report from the Site Selectors Guild, a group of experts who work with companies to determine where those companies will expand and place their businesses, it was indicated that skilled workforce availability is three times more important for business location decisions than any incentives,” said John Sherwood, Director, Talent Strategy for JobsOhio. He acknowledged that Fairfield County’s Workforce Center was the ideal way to address workforce development, referring to it as bold, creative and strategic.

“Across the western world we are in a time of real industrial resurgence and there is huge opportunity for Ohio and the Midwest to succeed – specifically in that industrial development,” Sherwood said. “And quite honestly, the communities that have the best skilled workforce, engineers, technicians, and skilled operators are the ones that are going to flourish the most.”

The growth throughout central Ohio currently accounts for 90% of the overall growth in Ohio over the past decade. Kenny McDonald, CEO of the Columbus Partnership, says that the area is quickly becoming the poster child for bringing industries such as pharmaceuticals and manufacturing back to the United States after learning during the pandemic that not producing goods in the US placed the entire country in a precarious position.

“We are about to have one of the largest solar assembly facilities in North America and over time, we will probably have the largest chip-making plant in the country,” he said. “We have Honda and LG and the batteries that are being recycled right here in Fairfield County. Most of the manufacturers in the world are trying to be inside the boundaries of the United States – best country in the world, best place to do business, best marketing over the long term - and they’re coming to our market.”

Tony Burkhart, Economic Development Expert for Google, said central Ohio is one of Google’s fastest-growing regions in its global fleet, with three separate campuses in the same metro area.

“This area is unique,” he said. “Google is using Ohio as a pilot site for the new AI and Machine Learning deployments and the New Albany campus is hosting the SpaceX Starlink Ground Terminal Network. We have developed great relationships in this area, including many of the people from Fairfield County.”

While the growth is exciting, local officials recognize that needs, such as affordable housing, will continue to be of utmost importance.

“We want to make sure we are ready for the growth that is coming to Fairfield County,” said Rick Szabrak, Fairfield County Economic and Workforce Development Director. “We continue to pull resources from thought leaders, business owners, developers and elected officials, as well as our community members, as we prepare for a future that is bright.”

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