

## Summary of Industrial/Agricultural Survey Results

Another effort to define economic development issues and concerns included a survey of local industries. Local industries were contacted via e-mail and asked to respond to a web-based survey that asked a wide range of questions about the local business climate and economic development prospects. All together, 19 responses were obtained. While a complete report with all findings from this effort is provided in Appendix B, a summary of key findings is provided below.

- Of the 19 companies responding to the survey, 43% are located in one of the County's industrial parks, Hillsdale Industrial Park being the most prominent
- 68% of the respondents were headquarters/main office, while the remaining 32% were branch plants.
- Of those responding to the survey, most were manufacturing firms, primarily related to the auto industry. Just over a third was farming / agricultural related.
- Almost two thirds of the respondents said that there are products or services that their businesses could offer that are not currently being offered. About a third responded in the negative.
- Approximately 37% of the respondents indicated that competitors are making either inroads, or a current or future threat – suggesting the need for businesses to increase their competitive edge through various means of support, assistance and internal review of what needs to be changed to be more competitive, particularly in light of overseas competition that has been cited.
- Most respondents (84.2%) said that they anticipate an increase in sales at their current location. While only 10% of the respondents anticipated a decrease, this percentage of the employment base expecting reduced business could result in significant problems for the County – reinforcing the need for an extensive retention program to identify and resolve issues.
- When asked about anticipated changes in their companies, responses were encouraging – none of the respondents indicated a relocation or downsizing. Almost 40% anticipated an expansion while a high percent of respondents suggested changing/adding product lines and production technology.



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- When asked about what changes or existing problems that could worsen to the point where you might consider relocating out of Hillsdale County, about a third of the respondents indicated that if cost of business issues (workmen's compensation, health care, property tax, utilities, and labor) worsens they might consider relocating out of Hillsdale County. Infrastructure (adequate transportation, public services and roads) were also frequently cited.
- Reducing the tax burden was most frequently cited as a way for local government to support business plans. The second most often cited reason was improving the local infrastructure including roads and sewers.
- Just over half of the respondents obtained bank financing for an expansion, start-up capital, or major capital investment within the last five years, 20% used internal financing or financing from the parent company. None of the respondents used public financing or assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA).
- While respondents indicated a decrease in their workforce over the past five years, they are generally forecasting an increase over the next five years – although the average future increase is below the average workforce loss from the past five years.
- While a majority of the respondents indicated satisfaction with the quality of training (skills) in the employees they are hiring from local learning institutions, a sizable portion of respondents suggested a lack of satisfaction.

When asked about the quality of community services within the County, the services that were ranked least favorable and in need more attention were roads, air service, telecommunications and electric service.

