

## Private Sector Engagement Program City of Gahanna



### Goal

This 4-year project was established to create and implement a program that proactively engages SMEs, encourages investment opportunities, surveys businesses, assists with regulatory approvals, facilitates industry connections, establishes partnerships with local school districts and provides business development services. The project started in 2016 and will conclude in 2019.



### Role and Responsibility

As the Director of the Planning & Development Department for the City of Gahanna, Ohio, Anthony Jones manages a team of employees and consultants that are tasked with stimulating the local economy and improving the community's competitiveness by attracting private investment, incentivizing job growth, guiding infrastructure investment, establishing land use plans that guide real estate investment and creating a fair regulatory environment for businesses.

The primary revenue stream for the City of Gahanna is employment tax revenue, which funds over 60% of the City of Gahanna municipal operations. Therefore, it is critically important that the City of Gahanna maintains and grows that tax revenue base in order to continue to provide the needed municipal services expected by residents of the community. Understanding this revenue stream dynamic, Anthony created and directed a Project Team to establish a Business Retention Program with annual performance targets. Utilizing best practices in economic development, customer service and public engagement, the Project Team created a multifaceted strategy that had a phased approach for implementation.

### Project Summary

The initial step in the strategy formation was to identify existing businesses within the City and correlate those businesses with the targeted industries identified within the City's Economic Development Strategy. Those identified businesses were then categorized into businesses receiving financial incentives, businesses leasing commercial space, businesses with largest employee count and all other businesses. The rationale for this categorization was to address those businesses that were a flight risk to the community and those that would have a tremendous financial impact on the City if they were to relocate or close their operations.

After business identification, the program called for an aggressive business outreach strategy through verbal, written, electronic and in person requests to setup a Business Retention Meeting. On average, it took 4 engagement attempts to setup one Business Retention Meeting. The program required the collection of business intelligence from local business development service

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providers prior to the meeting. The Business Retention Meeting team included the Mayor, City Economic Development Staff, Regional Economic Development Staff and the Local School District Superintendent. This team was created to provide businesses with a comprehensive level of customer service that helped to address market opportunities, business operations, workforce development and regulatory issues. A detailed survey was created and completed as part of each Business Retention Meeting. Any follow up items were referred to appropriate staff or business development service providers. The performance target for the program was set at 100 Business Retention Meetings annually.

A summary of the Business Retention Program can be downloaded at [www.ajcsolutions.com/projects](http://www.ajcsolutions.com/projects).

### Project Results

Anthony led the implementation efforts for the Business Retention Program. The City of Gahanna has achieved significant results in retaining existing businesses within the community; assisting businesses in making investments; connecting companies with business development service providers; and establishing partnerships with local educational institutions. A brief summary of the implementation results is highlighted below:

- 282 SMEs were visited over a three year period.
- 14 SMEs committed to investing over \$62 million in their business operations.
- 1,822 jobs were retained and created from the 282 SMEs visited.
- 2 SMEs signed up for an Export Assistance Program to expand their market opportunities.
- 2 SMEs have established a partnership with the Local School District to encourage youth to pursue employment within the electrical trades industry.

Please Note:

*Anthony Jones currently works as the President of AJC Solutions and the Director of the Planning & Development Department for the City of Gahanna. The professional accomplishments of Anthony at the City of Gahanna are representative of the services provided by AJC Solutions.*