

Business Walks Program

Executive Summary & Results

South Cobb, District 4 – May 7, 2019



INTRODUCTION

Co-hosted by the Cobb County Economic Development Division and SelectCobb, the inaugural 'Business Walks' program kicked off on the morning of Tuesday, May 7, 2019. Twenty-four businesses in South Cobb were visited by economic development professionals and local community leaders. District Four Commissioner Cupid was in attendance and excitedly participated in this initiative.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the business walks program is to develop a strong foundation to build relationships and networks with the businesses of Cobb County.

The information obtained captures the pulse of businesses in the defined area, directly connects economic development resources to the business community, and identifies opportunities for Cobb County's economic development growth strategies.

Outcomes from Business Walks include:

- » One-on-one assistance to address business challenges
- » Business Walks to become Best Practice in Cobb's economic development outreach strategy
- » Resources such as "WorkSource Cobb" shared with businesses struggling to find quality employees
- » Valuable feedback from local businesses, including suggestions on how to improve current processes
- » Topics to be addressed with all Economic Development partners at the next Round Table discussion



Business were asked:

- » How is business?
- » What is your overall opinion of Cobb County as a place to do business?
- » How would you rate the availability of qualified workforce in Cobb?
- » What are your top reasons for locating or keeping your business in Cobb?
- » What are your top three challenges of doing business in Cobb?
- » What do you like about doing business here?
- » Over the course of the next three years, how do you see your business changing? How can we help achieve these goals?
- » How can we make Cobb a better place to do business?

The above questions helped to organically expand the conversation during each interview. Business owners were asked to be honest; this program was created to personally connect with the businesses in Cobb County and learn how Cobb County's Economic Development Division, SelectCobb, and our partners may further assist current businesses in the county.

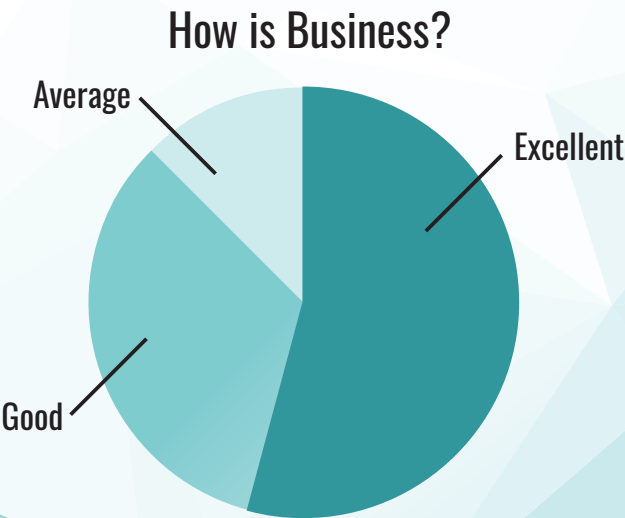
Results

All businesses visited represented a number of employees, ranging from less than 10 employees to 500 or more employees.



- Out of the 24 businesses visited:
- Nine (9) businesses employ less than 10 employees
 - Four (4) employ up to 20
 - One (1) employs up to 30
 - Three (3) employ up to 50
 - Three (3) employ up to 100
 - Four (4) businesses employ over 100

When asked how business was going, the majority of businesses replied “Excellent.”



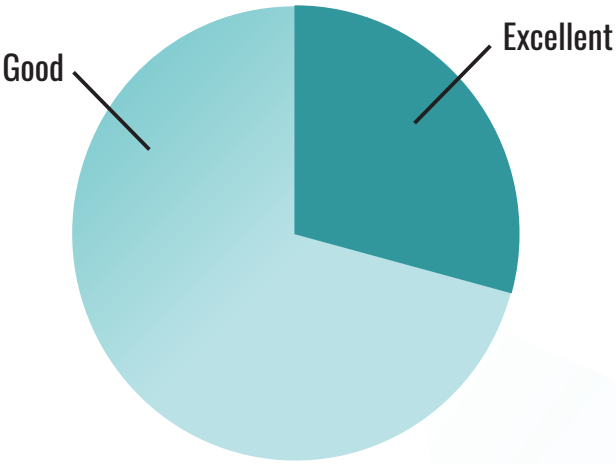
The top three items businesses like about Cobb County include: location, government stability (County and City), and the surrounding community. Business owners attribute success to their distance to I-20, Metro Atlanta, and transport services via air and railroad. The South Cobb community is business-friendly and encourages growth, as depicted by small business owners. The majority of business owners also commented on City and County simple business license and permitting processes.



Interviewees were asked to rate their overall opinion of Cobb County as a place to conduct business. Over three quarters of the responses were ‘good’ with the remaining responses as ‘excellent.’ The top challenges of these businesses include: traffic, workforce, and lack of transit in South Cobb. Additional presence of Public Safety Officers in the area is a request from business owners. All responses regarding traffic concerns have been forwarded to Cobb County DOT and Cobb County Public Safety. All business owners will be connected to Worksource Georgia in Cobb; this resource may aid business owners in finding and hiring qualified employees. Other business resources are available at: www.cobbcounty.org/economic-development. Cobb County Department of Transportation just finalized a series of public meetings concerning public transit in the County. The future of transit looks promising to the South Cobb community.



What is your overall opinion of Cobb County as a place to conduct business?



Business growth is a universal goal for all business owners who were interviewed. A few businesses simply hoped to maintain their stability in their market in the next five years. Half of the business owners are looking to grow within their current location in the following ways: physical expansion within their current building or another location in the County, hiring more employees, remodeling their current building, expanding the services they currently provide, or by expanding their clientele to outside the County or state.

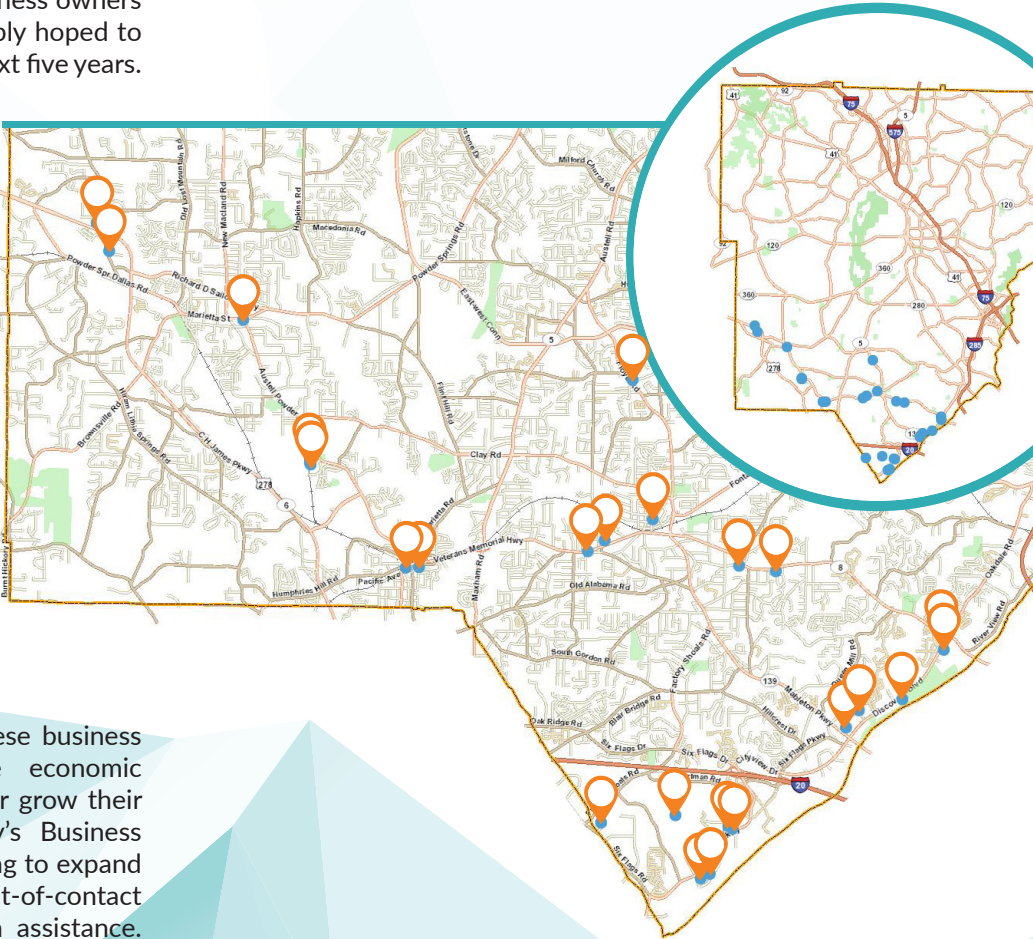
“Our interests are in favor of businesses and helping them succeed.”

Over the course of the next three years, these business owners may need assistance from the economic development partners in order to maintain or grow their business within the County. Cobb County’s Business Concierge Program will help businesses looking to expand within the County by providing a single point-of-contact with the County and offering site selection assistance. The Concierge program may also help these businesses navigate business-license, permitting, and eligible incentive processes.

During these open discussions with business owners, participants were asked to provide the County constructive criticism. *Our interests are in favor of businesses and helping them succeed.* The following were suggestions from business owners:

- » Vo-tech programs in the School System
- » Raise standards for property upkeep
- » Infrastructure improvements (via SPLOST)
- » Additional incentives for existing businesses

The inaugural session of the Business Walks Program was a success. The Cobb County Economic Development team and partners began an open dialogue with businesses of all sizes. These foundational relationships will help foster the collaboration with the County’s Economic Development partners and the South Cobb business community. Another business walk is planned for fall 2019 which will be held in one of the remaining three districts. There will be two (2) additional business walks scheduled in 2020 for the remaining districts. Dates for these business walks are not yet set but will be announced later.



*Special Thanks to the following organizations
for making the inaugural Business Walks Program a success:*

Cobb County Board of Commissioners
Cobb County Government
Cobb Chamber
Development Authority of Cobb County
City of Powder Springs
City of Austell
Mableton Improvement Coalition
Georgia Department of Economic Development

This event was sponsored by:



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

