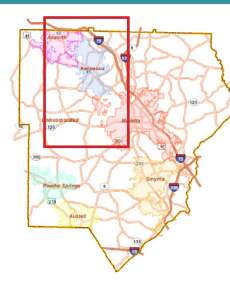


# Business Walks Program

Executive Summary & Results

West Cobb, District 1 – Oct 9, 2019



## INTRODUCTION

Co-hosted by the Cobb County Economic Development Division and SelectCobb, the second bi-annual 'Business Walks' program was held on Wednesday, October 9, 2019. Sixteen businesses in West Cobb were visited by economic development professionals and local community leaders. "This is about developing partnerships ... I'm excited to learn about these partnerships and how we can help strengthen them," said Keli Gambrell, District 1 Commissioner.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the business walks program is to develop a strong foundation to build relationships and to network 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 to enhance 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



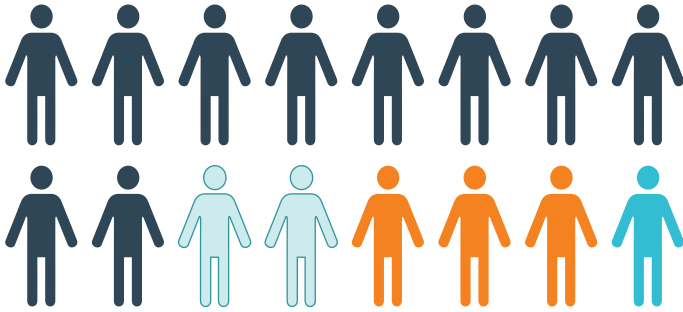
### Business were asked:

- » 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

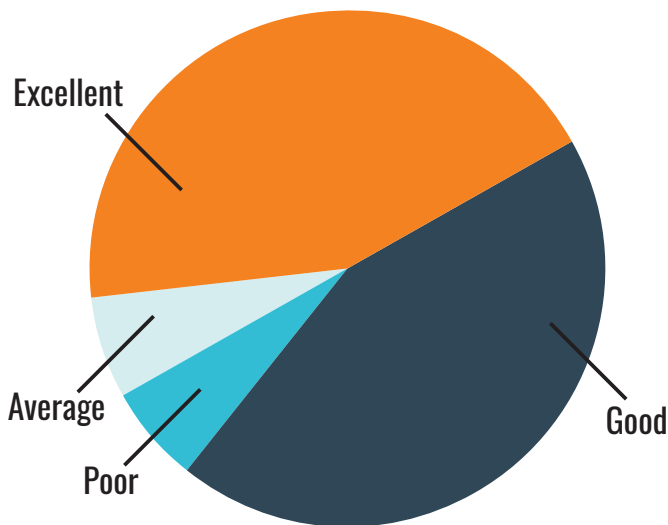
Of the sixteen businesses visited, ten employed up to 20 employees. Two businesses reported employing 21-50 employees and three employ 101-500 employees. One business employs more than 500.



Out of the 16 businesses visited:

- Ten (10) businesses employ 1-20
- Two (2) employ 21-50
- Zero (0) Employ 51 - 100
- Three (3) employ up 101 - 500
- One (1) business employs over 501

## How is Business?



When asked how business was going, the majority response was split between "Excellent" and "Good."

## What do you like about doing business here?

Unanimously:

1. Business Environment
2. Community

Participating business owners and management feel like the local business economy is supportive of thriving business and encourages growth. As explained from a participant, "Cobb has become a destination ... like Atlanta but without the horrible traffic." At least one business out of each group mentioned how they take pride in their local community and the personal connections that are made by conducting business within their immediate proximity.

Businesses' top reason for choosing Cobb as their business location include: location, community resources, and the business economy. Cobb County's location is a main attraction for businesses, accommodating for both easily accessible highway and air travel. This accommodation is making it easy for two of these businesses to conduct business internationally, and for one looking to expand its business logistics into Canada.

*Cobb has become a destination ... like Atlanta but without the horrible traffic.*

## Top Business Challenges

With any business enterprise, challenges are inevitable. The following topics were addressed as business challenges:

- » Finding qualified workforce
- » Expansion of transit for residents in West Cobb
- » Increase in traffic around major corridors
- » Marketing assistance
- » Expansion assistance

Representatives from WorkSource Cobb proudly participated in two of the groups, and provided everyone with information on employment resources offered using their free services.

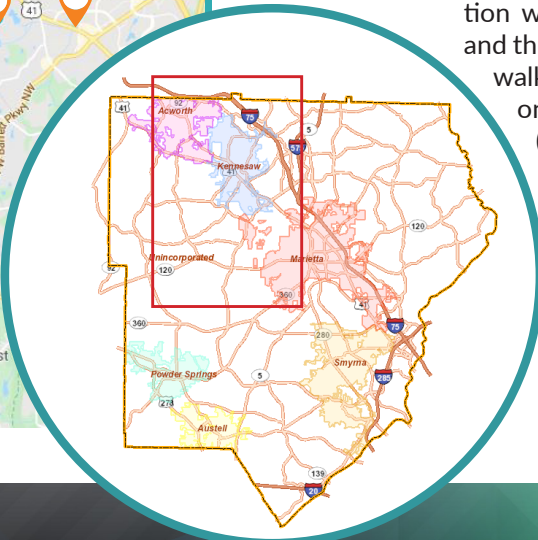
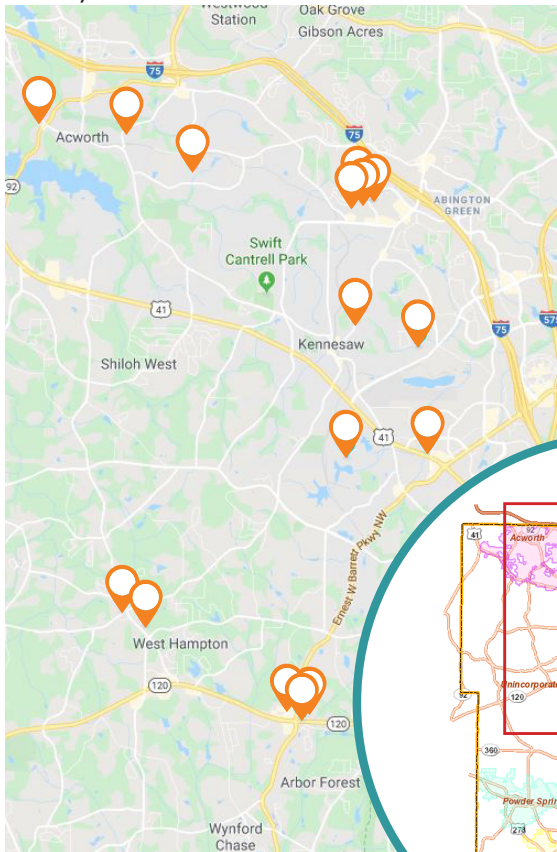
The Cobb County



Department of Transportation's Comprehensive Plan includes transit expansion plans throughout the County, however the specific location(s) of the businesses who mentioned it are not included in future transit routes. We have encouraged these participants to share their concerns directly with Cobb DOT. We have forwarded the traffic concerns to Cobb DOT.

The Executive Director of The University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) proudly attended the business walks. Located at Kennesaw State University, SBDC is an excellent resource for small businesses wanting to expand their marketing efforts. The SBDC offers free one-on-one consulting services and also offers assistance with business plan development. They also conduct small business classes and provide business resources featuring topics such as business funding, marketing and sales, patent, copyright, and invention, franchising, and legal.

Finally, the Cobb County Economic Development Division's Business Concierge Program was created to offer businesses assistance with permitting/county department navigation, business expansion, business plan review, and assistance with business incentives. This program is available to all businesses in Cobb County, and the information about this service was shared with all businesses who voiced concerns about permitting/licensing within the County.



## The Next 3 Years

During the discussions, economic development partners focused on the next three years when asking what businesses are expecting in the future. *Where do you see the business growing? What do you foresee as some of your business needs?*

Business growth is a universal goal for all new businesses; once established, a business owner may be comfortable maintaining their place in the business community or expand their venture within the county, into other counties or states, or foster international relations. Over three-quarters of business owners are looking to expand their business in one or more of the following ways:

- » Expand services offered
- » Expand present location within Cobb, creating new job opportunities
- » Franchising their business outside of Cobb
- » Expanding their international business

Businesses who responded with expansion news also shared their projected business needs, listed below:

- » Qualified workforce
- » Permit/license/expansion navigation
- » Marketing
- » Capital expansion or Incentive help
- » Access to public transit for employees

## The second bi-annual session of the Business Walks Program was a success.

The Cobb County Economic Development team, SelectCobb, and local economic development 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 West Cobb business community. Another business walk is planned for Spring 2020 which will be held in one of the remaining two districts. There will be one (1) additional business walk scheduled in Fall 2020 for the remaining district. Dates for these business walks are not yet set but will be announced later.



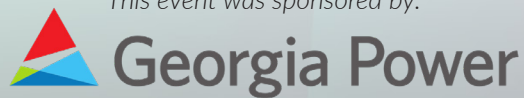
*Special thanks to the following organizations  
for making the inaugural Business Walks Program a success:*

Cobb County Board of Commissioners  
Cobb County Government  
Cobb Chamber of Commerce  
SelectCobb  
Development Authority of Cobb County  
City of Acworth  
City of Kennesaw  
WorkSource Cobb  
Georgia Department of Economic Development  
Metro-Atlanta Chamber of Commerce  
KSU Small Business Development Center

*This event was hosted by:*



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*Cobb County...Expect the Best!*

