



COMMUNITY INSIGHT

## STAKEHOLDER INPUT BY THE NUMBERS...

### BUSINESS STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

**20** Headquarters / CEO's

**20** Business Representatives

**20** Tax Abated Properties

### EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS/COLUMBUS REGION

**10** Large Industries    **10** Other Industries

*Distribution  
Pharmaceuticals  
Engineering  
Logistics  
Real Estate  
Insurance  
Manufacturing  
Agriculture*

*Central Ohio Real Estate Developers,  
Start-ups, Venture Capital, Information Technology,  
Economic Development Professionals,  
Financial Advisors,  
Construction*

## OVERVIEW

Understanding the inner workings of the City through the eyes of the internal and external businesses was an important factor in evaluating the economic conditions and opportunities as part of this project. The knowledge and expertise of the project steering committee, as well as the internal and external stakeholders helped the consulting team develop a local and regional perspective regarding the economic potential in Gahanna.

### PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE INPUT

We kicked off our very first meeting with our project steering committee by undertaking two exercises. First, we conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis to get a better idea of the economic perception of Gahanna. We rephrased the categories by asking 4 questions, What is enabling growth (Strengths), what is inhibiting growth (Weaknesses), what could enable growth (Opportunities) and what could inhibit growth (threats). The table to the right illustrates our findings.

### INTERNAL & EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

The consultant team met with groups of stakeholders that were identified by the client team and the project steering committee. The stakeholders were organized by businesses within Gahanna, and businesses outside of Gahanna. A tiered approach was taken to engage a variety of stakeholders. This included reaching out to small businesses less than ten, business that have more than 100 employees, as well as property/businesses that fall within tax abated areas. Through the meetings, the consulting team identified the issues and opportunities that face existing businesses, and what 'attractors' and or barriers to locating or doing business in Gahanna are perceived by non-resident businesses.

## STRENGTHS: WHAT IS ENABLING GROWTH?

- ~ *Safe Place to Be*
- ~ *Accessibility to Transportation*
  - ~ *Proximity to Airport*
  - ~ *Technology (Fiber)*
- ~ *Access to Electrical Power*
  - ~ *Proximity to Amenities*
  - ~ *Close to East Side Amenities*
- ~ *Nice Downtown/New Restaurants*
  - ~ *Reputation of being stable*
    - ~ *Family Oriented*
- ~ *Close to the Limited/AF/other industries*
  - ~ *Proximity to Rooftops*
  - ~ *Base of Entrperenues*
  - ~ *Strength of Political Will*
- ~ *Straight A Program (Manufacturing)*

## OPPORTUNITIES: WHAT COULD ENABLE GROWTH?

- ~ *Incubator/Services for Entrepreneurs*
- ~ *Affordable Land surrounding 270 (compared to Westerville)*
  - ~ *Close to Mount Carmel East*
- ~ *West Side Housing/Commercial Development*
  - ~ *Schools focusing on career paths*
  - ~ *businesses/schools/students incubator idea*
- ~ *Hard to find willing corporate partners for schools*
  - ~ *how to capitalize on oil and gas*
- ~ *Opportunity to attract another educational partner*

## WEAKNESSES: WHAT IS INHIBITING GROWTH?

- ~ *Finding Experienced Engineers*
- ~ *Political Unpredictability*
  - ~ *Lack of a Brand*
  - ~ *Tax Climate*
- ~ *Not a clear message to business community*
  - ~ *Depature of AEP*
  - ~ *West Side Infrastructure*
- ~ *Lack of space for businesses to grow into*
- ~ *Don't have the champion of the market*
- ~ *Family Community / Not YP Community*
- ~ *Competitor: New Albany, Worthington, Delaware, Hilliard, Grove City, Westerville*
- ~ *Focus on IT: requires infrastructure/resources*
  - ~ *Training of new employees*
  - ~ *Market the wins we have*

## THREATS: WHAT COULD INHIBIT GROWTH?

- ~ *Depature of AEP*
- ~ *Westerville: Medical Mile*
- ~ *Private Equity Pressure / High expectation-short window*
  - ~ *Large Scale Competitor to enter the market*

## INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

As noted in the introduction the stakeholders participants from within Gahanna (internal) included more than 60 business representatives from a variety of businesses in both size, type, and location within the community. Specifically they included the following three groups.

1. CEOs/Headquartered Companies
2. Companies in Tax Abated Properties
3. Other Gahanna Businesses

These stakeholders were engaged in both small forums as well as one on one interviews. We also made trips to business locations for on-site interviews and scheduled conference calls.

Figure 4.1: Stakeholder Meeting Invitation



Participants were asked “What is the one thing they treasured most about Gahanna?” Responses included:

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*“Family oriented atmosphere”*

*“Family friendly; Business- Proximity to amenities”*

*“The sense of community including company events that bring people together and build that community”*

*“Convenience – 270/670/Airport/Local restaurants and amenities”*

*“Large diversity of business industries and start-up culture”*

*“Proximity to transportation network; suburban character”*

*“The relatively low cost of living; Proximity to downtown Columbus and airport; Alternate local roads connectivity; Solid school district”*

*“Sense of community; Safe; Family events; Strong schools”*

*“Sense of community; There is a real sense of place/community that I haven’t seen other places I have lived and worked”*

”

# Q&A

**The following questions were asked of the external stakeholders who participated in the interviews. What is your perception of Gahanna?**

- What is Gahanna's identity?
- What was your original decision to locate in Gahanna?
- What has been your experience in other Cities you operate in?
- What factors drive your location decision?
- What opportunities do you see within your industry?
- What threats do you see within your industry?
- Where do your employees go for skills training?
- How far does your search expand to find ideal talent?
- If not Gahanna, where would you be operating?
- Would you be interested in collaborating with the City in assisting with initiatives?
- What do you as a business, want to see from the City?

**A variety of responses were tabulated through during the interviews. The following responses summarize the input received in the interview process.**

- ~ *"Dublin has a certain attitude, New Albany has an attitude, Grove City has a certain attitude, Gahanna needs an attitude?"*
- ~ *"We put Columbus, Ohio on our address, not because we are against Gahanna, but because our regional customers need to approximately know where we are"*
- ~ *"Gahanna's positive assets only have negative PR"*
- ~ *"The Development and Planning Department has been very supportive and knowledgeable of the City and our needs, but it seems as if the City does not have consensus politically."*
- ~ *"Creekside is an amazing asset that is only mentioned in a derogatory manner"*
- ~ *"Our original decision to come here was due to the availability of industrial space"*
- ~ *"Availability of product and the ability to work directly with owners of the product communities such as New Albany is key."*
- ~ *"Gahanna is built-out"*
- ~ *"It is actually more convenient to be outside of downtown Columbus for our business because we need quick travel access and less hassle to get to our project sites and meet with our customers."*
- ~ *"With such close proximity to the Airport and I-270, I don't see how sites such as Buckles tract have not been developed"*
- ~ *"Politically, this is an opportunistic time for Gahanna"*
- ~ *"There are no nearby technical schools to train our workforce, so if that is something you are looking to establish, you would get more than enough support."*
- ~ *"20 year-olds have no interest in Manufacturing, finding that skill-set with an aging workforce is difficult"*

# DID YOU KNOW



STAKEHOLDERS THINK

***A workforce  
development program***

could be utilized to educate existing  
business owners and attract new talent

***Schools***

are perceived as a valuable asset to  
Gahanna's economic viability

The availability of  
***industrial  
space***

Is a perceived  
value by existing  
businesses

***THE ENGAGEMENT***

with the  
**business community**  
by the City is

***a perceived  
value***

There is a perception by stakeholders  
externally that the City has limited  
buildable space, however there is ample  
opportunity to

***Grow in Gahanna***

Stakeholders believe there is an  
opportunity to boost Gahanna's positive  
presence in the region through an  
aggressive

***Marketing campaign***

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Confidential interviews with 20 external organizations around the Columbus Region were conducted to gain an external perspective of the economic conditions and opportunities in Gahanna. These stakeholders included the following.

- 2 Large Distribution Companies
- 1 Large Retailer
- 1 Professional Services Firm
- 2 Large Manufacturers
- 2 City Government Employees
- 2 Small Marketing Firms
- 2 Central Ohio Developers
- 2 Site Selection Firms
- 2 Banks (1 large and 1 mid-sized)
- 2 Healthcare Companies (1 small and 1 large)
- 1 Large Real Estate Firm/Financial Advisor
- 1 Small Start-up/Entrepreneurial Company

# Q&A

The following questions were asked of the external stakeholders who participated in the interviews.

- What is your current perception of Gahanna as a place for recreation?
- What is your current perception of Gahanna as a place to do business?
- What are key factors in your site selection decisions?

A variety of responses were tabulated through during the interviews. The following responses summarize the input received in the interview process.

- ~ *"I don't know much about Gahanna at all"*
- ~ *"Gahanna has great restaurants and dining options"*
- ~ *"Creekside is an architectural gem"*
- ~ *"Gahanna has phenomenal access to the airport, I670 and I-270, which are key factors in our site selection decisions. It seems as if sites in close proximity would be much more development-ready by now"*
- ~ *"From the surface, it seems the lack of cohesiveness and political environment makes it difficult to build consensus in accomplishing things"*
- ~ *"The top factors we evaluate in a site-selection decision are ease of transportation, highway proximity and the availability of skilled talent"*
- ~ *"Being in close proximity to our customers and clients and broadband access drives our office location decisions"*
- ~ *"Gahanna needs to look around the outer-belt and the Region to see where the best practices are. The City seems to market its assets individually very well, but there seems to be lack of a collective message and aggressive PR strategy."*
- ~ *"With today's technical workforce issues, it is more advantageous for our company to locate plants in closer proximity to technical training facilities."*
- ~ *"Gahanna has the assets, their issue is just positioning, developing and packaging them."*
- ~ *"The incentive packages we've negotiated in Dublin, Hilliard and Columbus have been much more robust than what we think Gahanna can offer."*