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OUR OPINION

Task force is key to growth

With residential and commercial growth fueling Licking County's rapid growth, there's a legitimate concern about securing enough higher-paying industrial jobs to help foot the taxes for bigger roads and new schools.

Bedroom communities can be wonderful places to live as long as they're properly balanced between residents and jobs.

That's why a new effort begun last week by Licking County leaders in government, development and workforce training could be vital to the future of our county.

Instead of primarily looking outside of Licking County for new employers who might bring jobs here, the Licking County Retention and Expansion Task Force intends to focus on existing employers.

Today's topic

Expanding existing industry within the county is the best way to keep jobs here, and expand the current work force.

The group will interview company leaders to find out how their companies are faring, what could be done to make them more successful and how to facilitate more hiring. The county can even offer workforce development training through C-TEC, which frequently goes into companies to train workers on new skills or machinery.

The best example of this process came earlier this year when county leaders were able to work with The Screen Machine, a small production facility in Etna Township that needed to expand. Instead of leaving for another state, the company expanded in Etna when the county stepped in to assist with extending water and sewer lines. Without the help, the company may have left and taken any chance of new jobs along for the ride.

Research shows about 75 percent of new jobs in Ohio come from companies adding workers to existing locations, while 15 percent come from attracting new companies.

We urge all local companies to support Licking County's new effort. Take the time to meet with task force members and explore how county development officials could make your company more profitable right here at home.

There's no reason to even think about moving anywhere else.