

# Retention Focused

WHEN IT COMES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE CITY OF MEDINA CONCENTRATES ON GROWING AND EXPANDING THE BUSINESSES THAT ARE ALREADY HERE.

**To Tom Krueger, retention efforts** are crucial to the viability of any city. So while many communities are most interested in attracting that one big business, the city of Medina concentrates on keeping business here.

"Most of the growth in industry in any region comes from the companies that are already there," says Krueger, economic development director for the city of Medina, which receives approximately 60 percent of its tax revenue from local businesses.

In fact, retaining business and jobs is so important to Krueger that he helped institute a countywide business retention-studies program about four years ago. Today, the Medina County Economic Development Corporation with the assistance of the economic development directors of the various municipalities has coined May as Business Appreciation Month.

Every year in May, Krueger and the economic directors of Medina County, along with other influential county officials, go out into the field and visit every business to discuss and address each company's current issues and future plans. The team asks pertinent questions such as: Does the business have plans for expansion? How many people do they currently employ? Do they plan to hire this year?

From there, every issue is then assigned to a person in charge of resolving it.

"We focus on activities that will be critical for the growth and sustainability for the businesses that are here," says Krueger.



Medina is a business-friendly community that has a historic feel but offers progressive approaches to helping companies grow and compete.

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"We are sensitive to the critical path of a company's project. We're looking at what can we do that if someone walks in here today, we can have them putting a shovel to the ground in short order."

The retention efforts have paid off. Last year, Sandridge Food Corp., the city's fourth-largest employer, broke ground on a 10,000-square-foot addition to its Medina facility, and plans to hire an additional 50 employees to its current 420 over the next three years. With the packaged foods manufacturer's plans to expand coast-to-coast, this estimate of new hires is expected to increase significantly due to possible

future expansions, according to Krueger.

"One of the things Tom [Krueger] helped us with was to gain a low-interest loan from the state," says Bill Frantz, Sandridge Foods' president. "Had we not gotten the support from the city, the expansion may not have been possible."

In addition, Friction Products, a division of Medina's Wellman Products Group, a manufacturer of products for use in brakes, clutches and transmissions, decided to keep its \$12.2 million expansion project in Medina in 2008 and add 100 employees. The project included plans to expand the 40,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and add additional equipment and machinery.

As one of the fastest-growing counties in the state, Medina's competitive economic-development programs were also crucial in retaining these businesses and others.

The city's Job Creation Grant, which is intended for businesses that will create within three years 30 new jobs or \$750,000 in new payroll, was a major contributor. In addition, Medina's Community Reinvestment Area, which encompasses the industrial, commercial and multi-zoned areas, was amended in 2007 to extend the length of the 100 percent tax abatement to 11 years for industrial zones.

But the No. 1 attraction for any business is the ease of working here, says Krueger. "Sandridge is a good example. From the day they walked into our office, within just a couple of weeks we were starting their building process."