



THE

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# 'Powerful' job study to be unveiled

BY ROD ROSE

The Lebanon Reporter

Boone County's workers are being trained for Industrial Revolution careers, Boone Economic Development Corp. executive director Dax Norton said recently.

The county's three public school systems are "doing a fantastic job of producing talent," Norton said, but more diverse training is necessary to widen the work force's abilities.

Indiana ranks 47th nationally in terms of work force development skill level, he said. More than 93 percent of the county's estimated 27,500 workers have jobs, Norton said. Many, however, are "under-employed," meaning they have jobs for which their experience or train-

ing is overqualified, but those jobs aren't available locally.

The EDC wants to change that, Norton said.

"The key," Norton said, "is human capital development."

An analysis of the county's potential to attract a wider range of jobs will be unveiled at a 6:30 p.m. Thursday public meeting at the Zionsville Town Hall, Norton said in a press release.

A Ball State University study found Boone County has the potential to attract manufacturing jobs in pharmaceutical, medical and surgical and medical instrument manufacturing, Norton said in a press release.

The study will help Boone investigate opportunities to bring higher-

paying jobs to the area.

Conducted by Ball State's Building Better Communities and Linda Williamson Consulting LLC, the study located so-called "business clustering" areas along Interstate 65 from Indianapolis to Tippecanoe County.

"This study is a powerful tool for Boone County's economic development efforts," said Chris Pryor, director of government affairs for the Metropolitan Indianapolis Board of Realtors. A community investment initiative grant to the Boone EDC in 2008 helped fund the study.

Finding jobs for the county's unemployed workers will be the EDC's top priority next year, Norton told the commissioners at their Nov. 2 meeting.

If banks loosen credit restrictions, loaning companies money to start construction, Boone County could see roughly 3,000 new jobs by 2012, Norton said, based on projects firms have already indicated they want to build here.

There are three projects that would bring "the kind of jobs we need," Norton said, including one that would pay its 20 potential employees an average of \$65,000 a year.

Companies are also looking at sites in Zionsville and in Lebanon Business Park, Norton said. Historically, developers and companies decline to talk about plans until they are ready to seek zoning and other local government approvals.