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BG ranked one of best biz locales in U.S.

Magazine: City eighth in its class for attracting new industry

JIM GAINES, The Daily News, jgaines@bgdailynews.com/783-3242

For the second year in a row, Bowling Green has made a national list of cities with the most new industry.

Site Selection Magazine, which bills itself as “The magazine of corporate real estate strategy & area economic development,” ranked Bowling Green eighth among metropolitan areas with fewer than 200,000 people for attracting new large-scale businesses. That’s a tie with six other areas, including Owensboro. Eight other Kentucky cities made the overall list, from Frankfort coming in at number 14 to Somerset in 65th place.

“In the economic development profession, we’re always looking for ways to measure ourselves against the competition,” said Jim **Hizer**, president of the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce. “The Site Selection study is one of the most respected measures of state vs. state, community vs. community, region vs. region. It’s heartening that we continue to perform at such a high level in comparison with other communities across the country.”

The region drew 1,326 new jobs – which indirectly created 276 more – and \$44.8 million in new investment last year, according to chamber of commerce statistics.

Site Selection Magazine, with its circulation to about 44,000 executives, has been compiling similar data for 40 years and doing rankings for at least 30, said its editor-in-chief Mark Arend. Telling those readers which areas are successful in attracting new commercial investment can be useful in their own choices of new locations, he said. Especially during a recession, when all areas are competing hard for scarce jobs, it’s significant to be ranked so high, Arend added.

The ranking criteria track new and expanding businesses, mostly factories, he said. Stores and restaurants don’t count, but a retail store distribution center would, Arend said.

“It does not track job losses,” he said.

Six new locations or expansions in the Bowling Green area led to the eighth-place ranking. To qualify, a project must be a commercial investment of at least \$1 million, or create 50 new jobs, or add 20,000 square feet of new business space, Arend said. The investment must come from private sources, he said.

“This demonstrates clearly that the marketing plan that we implemented in January 2005 and that we revised in January 2008 has been tremendously effective,” **Hizer** said. “These results aren’t a surprise, just further evidence that we’re doing all the right things.”

That marketing plan seeks to market Warren and the surrounding eight counties as a whole, focusing on particular business targets and improving connections with professional site selectors, he said.

Making the top 10 list again indicates to prospective investors that Bowling Green has sustained some economic momentum even in tough times, making it more attractive to companies that want to continue growing, **Hizer** said.

“Economic development is one of those arenas where success begets success,” he said.

The chamber will publicize this in its marketing materials, said Jessica Thompson, communications director for the chamber.

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