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Business development continues in Concord Township

By John Lasko

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Concord Township Trustee Christopher Galloway is pleased with the number of new and existing businesses that have chosen to call the township home.

Concord Township comprises 23.1 square miles. Only 7 percent of the township is zoned for commercial and business, while 14 percent is owned by Lake Metroparks and the rest is zoned for residential.

During Galloway's seven-year tenure as township trustee, he has seen a dramatic change in the business landscape on Route 44, as well as along Auburn and Crile roads.

"We are very active as a community in reaching out to businesses that we think would find Concord attractive, as well as commercial and

retail businesses we think that fit the fabric of Concord and that our residents are asking us for," he said.

Galloway believes accessibility to Interstate 90 and the township's growing population are the key for business development in the township.

One of those businesses is DeNora Tech. The company relocated its North American headquarters from Chardon to Concord Township in October 2011. Frank McGorty, president and chief operating officer of DeNora Tech, said the company purchased and renovated an existing building on Discovery Lane for about \$8 million. The facility houses about 100 administrative and research and development employees.

He said the reason the company decided to move to Concord Township was because it's closer to its plant in Chardon and the highway.

"We wanted to be somewhere where we could be at the plant in five or 10 minutes if need be, because we have some people here that have some managerial responsibilities to the plant," McGorty said.

John and Michelle DeJoy have owned John Palmer's Bistro 44 for the last 13 years.

As small-business owners, the DeJoys decided to relocate the fine dining restaurant from Chardon to their present 4,000-square-foot location in Concord Township about seven years ago.

"We had seen the growth potential here and we wanted to stay close to our home," Michelle said, adding they have called Concord Township home since 1999. "Our business has been phenomenal. We've doubled our sales moving from Chardon to Concord and I think the thing about Concord is that there's so many people that we know who don't come here once a week, they come here several times a week."

Currently, the DeJoys employ a total of 28 people, five of whom were hired this year. Michelle said she and her husband anticipate being a part of the township's growing business community for years to come.

"We're in our 13th year in business. ... I think we're doing something right," she said. "It's always been my husband and I. We don't have any investors."

TriPoint Medical Center opened its four-story, 300,000-square-foot complex in 2009.

The \$155 million medical center employs 802 people.

Gary Robinson, vice president of government and community affairs with Lake Health, said the reason it decided to move from Painesville to Concord Township was accessibility to the interstate and the ability to expand its current medical center, just to name a few.

"The other thing was the natural surroundings of the property we picked," he said.

"TriPoint very much takes into account the natural setting and it's a healing environment because there's a lot of trees, a stream on the property we were able to incorporate in to the design."

Some of the other businesses in Concord Township include Ricerca Bioscience, which employs about 240 people, and Avery Dennison. University Hospitals opened a 60,000-square-foot outpatient health center, while Kaiser Permanente unveiled its new medical offices at The Shops of Gristmill Village in November. Galloway said Concord Township put together incentives as a way to attract new and existing businesses into the community.

They include Tax Increment Financing, reduced electricity and water rates through the Joint Economic Development District with the city of Painesville, along with other loans and financing options available through the Lake County Port Authority.

Galloway and his fellow trustees are finding it challenging to make their sales pitch to businesses, especially in the retail sector, because it's still such a tough economic climate.

"It's starting to turn to some degree, but it has been very slow," he said.

A couple of years ago, trustees wanted to construct a "mixed-use" facility along the Route 44 corridor. The trustees hired a "major developer" based in the Cleveland area to begin the architectural process.

However when the economy collapsed, Galloway said the developer abandoned the project after a number of other projects went south.

"It's not all bad because what that had done is it has given us an opportunity in the last years to slow down, step back, re-examine our approach, tighten up our zoning and look at other ways that we could be successful," he said.

Trustees are trying to resurrect the project by pursuing different businesses and retail establishments who want to locate to the township in the not-too-distant future. Galloway stopped short of disclosing their names because they are in negotiations.

"The phrase that people like to use to describe Concord is semirural," he said.

"We have housing developments, but we also have a lot of green space and trees and I don't see that changing at any point in the future. We have really worked hard to strike a balance and manage our growth."

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