

Businesses looking to move to Gilbert

David Woodfill, Tribune

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Nearly 90 businesses are looking to open facilities in Gilbert, representing a potential 7,524 new jobs for the town and \$725 million in potential capital investment.

Dan Henderson, Gilbert's business development manager, told a group of people at a Gilbert Chamber of Commerce luncheon on Wednesday that out of about 200 companies expressing some form of interest in Gilbert during the second quarter, 73 are beyond the point of an initial inquiry and are in some way moving forward on plans to open facilities.



Gilbert's Business Development Manager Dan Henderson gives an update of the town's economic development efforts Wednesday during an appearance at the Gilbert Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the Southeast Regional Library in Gilbert. Thomas Boggan, Tribune

Altogether, there are 87 active prospects the town is working on, including 12 companies from the life and biological sciences sector, 10 from the advanced business services sector, four from the high-tech industry, 11 from the clean and renewable energies industry and four from the aerospace industry.

"I think it's a very positive sign," said Kathy Tilque, president and CEO of the Gilbert chamber, who attended the luncheon.

She cautioned, however, that some of those figures could include small businesses or startup companies.

But Henderson said several prospects would require footprints of more than 100,000 square feet of space. Altogether, seven would occupy 100,000 to 200,000 square feet of office space, and 10 could occupy 100,000 to 200,000 of industrial space. Eight firms could occupy more than 200,000 square feet of industrial space.

Henderson's presentation hit other high notes in the town and region.

For example, Gilbert has one of the highest median household incomes at \$86,380 a year according figures collected last year. That beat Scottsdale's \$68,189.

Chandler's median household income was \$71,287, and Mesa had \$52,838.

He said advanced business services companies, one of the town's target industry sectors, had about 243,000 people with advanced business degrees to pick from in the municipal statistical area, which is essentially Maricopa County. About 150,000, or 80 percent, of those are within a 45-minute commute, and 51 percent reside in the East Valley alone.

"That's a pretty compelling number when you're talking (to a company)," he said.

About 70 percent of the science and engineering work force in Maricopa County resides in the East Valley - an attractive point for companies in the aerospace, aviation and defense industry, which is another of the town's target sectors.

"No wonder Maricopa County is the eighth-largest aerospace market in the United States," he said.

Henderson added that 45 percent of the region's 140,000-strong biological and life sciences work force is in the East Valley, as well as 53 percent of the region's high-tech work force.

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