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Survey registers satisfaction with local business climate and identifies areas for improvement

Bloomington, Ind. - The Bloomington Economic Development Corporation (BEDC), the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, the City of Bloomington, the Monroe County Government, and Cook Group partnered to survey local businesses to evaluate perceptions of the local business climate. A public town hall meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 4, from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Monroe Convention Center to discuss the report, now posted on the [Bloomington Chamber's website](#). Panelists at the town hall will include Mayor John Hamilton, Commissioner Amanda Barge, Pete Yonkman, Lynn Coyne and Erin Predmore. The report's executive summary is appended to this announcement.

"This survey captures both positive and negative aspects of working with our municipalities and is an important starting point for a conversation that needs to happen," said Erin Predmore, president and CEO of the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. "In any city or county, there's room for improvement, and Bloomington and Monroe County are no different. We are proud to be part of such a strong community where our city and county governments are not only at the table to celebrate successes but are also willing to hear from the business community about what could improve."

The voluntary study, designed and conducted by Cook Group, was sent to owners and primary decision makers at large and small businesses that are members of the Bloomington Chamber, as well as those that are not. Questions ranged across issues of satisfaction, opportunities for growth, and challenges to success, including a review of interactions with governmental agencies.

"Our local businesses are committed to continuing to grow in the city and county, and we were happy to find that 90% of respondents were satisfied with the success of their business in Bloomington and Monroe County," said Lynn Coyne, president of the BEDC. "This survey gives us another opportunity to work together as a community to celebrate our strengths and improve areas that need it."

Pete Yonkman, president of Cook Group and Cook Medical stated, "We were happy to support the survey and thank all those who chose to participate. The success of businesses in our community, both large and small, is critical to all of our futures. The results show that we have significant opportunity to improve the rules, regulations and policies that business navigate on a daily basis. We are hopeful that our local governments will see this feedback as an inspiration to build systems that ensure

compliance in the least burdensome manner so that businesses have the opportunity to put more people in our community to work.”

The 92 surveys that were fully completed provided quantitative responses along with valuable comments and recommendations about business opportunities and challenges in the area.

“We have been hungry for this feedback at the County,” said County Commissioner Amanda Barge. “Our many local business owners identified areas where we can improve and also spotlighted the many reasons why Monroe County is a great place to own a business.”

“The City of Bloomington welcomes and embraces our employers,” said Mayor John Hamilton. “We’re grateful to those who do business here, and the many who, as the survey shows us, are committed to staying here. We appreciate their willingness to share their experiences and impressions and to explore how we can thrive as a community, in a sustainable way that works for residents from all walks of life.”

The City is poised to conduct its own scientific survey for the second time, in 2019, to gauge public opinion about quality of life and the delivery of services in Bloomington. Additionally, the City is striving to enhance efficiency through the administration of organizational assessments of each of its department this year. Already, the departments of Planning & Transportation, Housing and Neighborhood Development, Public Works, and Information Technology Services have been evaluated. One recommendation that has emerged from the assessment process has been to accelerate the implementation of a community development process management system, to streamline and create greater transparency during the planning approval process. Additionally, the Unified Development Ordinance currently being drafted through a public comment process is designed to simplify the development process when it is finalized in 2019.

Those responding to the Greater Bloomington Business Environment Survey registered their gratitude for the opportunity to share their perceptions of doing business in Bloomington and Monroe County, and their eagerness to participate in discussion and decision making about business-oriented policy and process. Cook Group plans to administer the survey annually to create ongoing visibility into perceptions of the business environment.

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The Chamber’s website has published the full results of the [Greater Bloomington Business Environment Survey](#), the executive summary of which follows below:

GREATER BLOOMINGTON BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

Executive Summary

- The Greater Bloomington Business Environment Survey is a joint effort by the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, the Bloomington Economic Development Corporation, the City of Bloomington, and Monroe County. The Survey was distributed through email, word of mouth, fax, and in-person to businesses in the City of Bloomington and Monroe County. A total of 137 business owners and/or primary decision makers (respondents) provided their feedback between April and May of 2018.
- The majority of respondents are satisfied with the success of their business (90%) and are committed to operating in the Greater Bloomington area for the next 5 years (91%). Although committed and successful, 35% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the local business environment.
- Respondents were most satisfied with the local economy and the Bloomington community, such as small businesses and the downtown atmosphere. These factors were rated highest for having a positive impact on the success of their businesses, as well as their desire to remain committed to operating in the Bloomington area.
- 49.5% indicated policies such as public transportation and walking/biking paths had a positive impact on the success of their business.
- Respondents expressed concerns related to public safety, graffiti, vandalism, road construction, those experiencing homelessness, and limited downtown parking as deterring employees and customers from their businesses. Respondents were least satisfied with some local government policies, regulations, and processes. More than half (56%) indicated certain local government policies are negatively impacting the success of their businesses, and 45% consider the local government difficult to work with. Some respondents expressed the concern that the government does not understand business practices and is disconnected from the realities of operating a business in the Greater Bloomington area.
- Respondents indicated the availability and affordability of commercial/office space (34%) and the ability to attract and retain qualified employees (34%) are also having a negative impact on their business success.
- Respondents expressed gratitude for the opportunity to provide feedback about their needs and concerns, and they are eager to participate in future discussions and decision making about these important topics.

