

# Key takeaways from REDI Cincinnati's annual meeting



CHELSEY LEVINGSTON/STAFF

REDI Cincinnati held its annual meeting Tuesday, March 10, 2015 in downtown Cincinnati. CHELSEY LEVINGSTON/STAFF

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## **CINCINNATI —**

At REDI Cincinnati's annual meeting last week, the group's leaders touted results from over the last year since the private development agency made changes to increase regional collaboration and to get more involvement from top business leaders in economic development.

According to REDI's annual report released Tuesday:

- New and existing companies expanding in Greater Cincinnati (only including Ohio counties) committed to creating 3,379 new jobs over a three-year window;
- Companies also pledged to retain 5,049 more jobs; and
- \$268 million worth of building and equipment investments are promised.

"I spend a lot of my time making sure that I'm keeping our partners informed and getting their feedback. It's not 'here's how we're going to do it.' It's 'do you think this is the way we should do it?'" said Johnna Reeder, who joined the group in 2014 as president and CEO of REDI.

One of REDI's key jobs is to put the Cincinnati region on the map to outsiders and to lure new companies here. Another role is to work with local governments to keep the existing businesses in

the region from moving or expanding elsewhere. REDI also acts as a liaison for negotiating business deals between local governments and the private nonprofit agency JobsOhio, a group that leads business attraction statewide.

In addition to working with JobsOhio, REDI also leads economic development efforts in Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana as part of the Cincinnati metropolitan.

The numbers listed above are for benchmarking purposes and are not all-inclusive. Not all companies that grow in the region and add jobs work with REDI. Nor do figures include the retail and health care businesses for which Ohio is not usually competitive.

What's good for the region is good for Fairfield, said Tim Bachman, director of development for the Butler County city.

"It's either job creation for us or it's job creation somewhere else in the region" and hopefully if Fairfield can't gain the jobs it can be the place where workers live, Bachman said.

"Fairfield's growing," Bachman said. "A lot of our businesses are having organic growth. We didn't have that big blockbuster announcement, but we've got a lot of existing companies who are doing really well."

Three key takeaways from REDI's annual meeting on March 10 were:

## **1. Results**

This month the Greater Cincinnati region was ranked third in Site Selection Magazine's annual Governor's Cup list of the country's top performing metropolitan areas in economic development. The Governor's Cup tracks new and expanded economic development projects among metro areas with population of more than 1 million, according to REDI.

"Last year we were in sixth place with Site Selection magazine. We moved up three places this year. To only be behind Houston and Chicago that are three and four times as big as us, we're doing just fine," Reeder said.

"Do I want to do better? Absolutely. We've had less than a year of all of us truly working together... of JobsOhio being really up and running like it needs to be, supporting us as a regional organization. I think the sky's the limit," she said.

## **2. Outsiders taking notice**

“It’s not just us that are noticing the results in Greater Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana. We’re recognizing the power of our regional approach and our strength in our numbers. But so are media outlets. So are the young people that are moving to town or who have moved away and are thinking about moving back to this area,” Reeder said.

“They’re talking about our thriving startup community whether it’s in the city of Hamilton or it’s in Over the Rhine in the city of Cincinnati, our revitalized neighborhoods and our strong business climate that’s been affected by all three states.”

## **3. Regionalism**

Previously, Butler and Warren counties were split along Ohio 63 by JobsOhio. The communities north of the line worked with Dayton Development Coalition. The counties south worked with REDI. That also changed last year and now REDI represents all of Butler and Warren for economic development.

“REDI Cincinnati’s efforts to grow the region meant they heard Warren County and our communities’ desire to be a whole county; not separated in two,” said Martin Russell, director of economic development for Warren County. “This recognition brought all of Warren County under one development organization (REDI), afforded a Warren County company on REDI’s Executive Board and brought REDI to the table to assist Warren County in successfully landing projects such as UGN, SSM Manufacturing and AK Steel.”

This news outlet asked Reeder how the territory change was going.

“We’re doing a great job of promoting their part of the territory and (Butler and Warren counties are) doing a great job being at the table,” she said. “They’re traveling with us. They’re sending us good information, good communication, but I’ll also say I’ve been really proud of our partner in the Dayton Development Coalition.”

“We continue to talk and work together. If there’s a project that won’t work in Dayton’s territory, they’ve handed it over to us. That right there’s true professionalism.”