

DECIDE DEKALB

# BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION REPORT



Decide DeKalb is proud to serve our business community through the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program.

In 2021, the businesses we engaged ranged from sole proprietors to multinational Fortune 500 companies throughout the entire county. We continue to partner with our stakeholders such as DeKalb County government and elected officials, cities, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), education and workforce providers, and economic development organizations such as the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Power, Georgia EMC and Electric Cities of Georgia. Cultivating the relationships between DeKalb businesses, Decide DeKalb and our stakeholders helps solve challenges facing companies today.

*Decide DeKalb is committed to supporting collaborative efforts to retain and grow business in DeKalb County. In 2021, we collaborated and advocated with the following partners:*



# ABOUT DECIDE DEKALB

Decide DeKalb is the primary economic development driving force to attract, expand and retain businesses in DeKalb County, Georgia. Established in 1974 as the Development Authority of DeKalb County, Decide DeKalb works with partners, stakeholders and the business community at-large to spur capital investments, encourage job growth and create business sustainability within our community. Decide DeKalb provides services and leverages partner relationships to continuously improve the quality of life for over 750,000 residents.



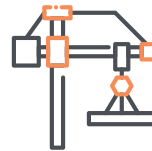
## DEKALB COUNTY'S TARGET INDUSTRIES



Healthcare &  
Life Sciences



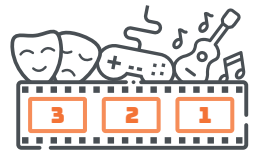
Corporate Operations  
& Business Services



Advanced  
Manufacturing



Logistics &  
Distribution



Film &  
Entertainment



## DECIDE DEKALB'S BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

The BRE program allows Decide DeKalb to assist in connecting existing businesses with information, resources, and programs. We do this primarily through on-site or virtual company visits, which helps us learn more about the company's issues, concerns, plans for growth or reduction, and valuable insights into the business community. This information allows Decide DeKalb to respond to the challenges that our businesses face. Decide DeKalb and its partners can provide assistance with:



WORKFORCE



ACCESSING  
CAPITAL



PERMIT  
ASSISTANCE



SITE  
SELECTION

# BRE PROGRAM 2021

In 2021, Decide DeKalb engaged 68 businesses across several industries. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) signed in 2021 between Decide DeKalb and DeKalb County outlines a 10% increase in BRE visits annually for the 5-year duration of the IGA.

## DECIDE DEKALB INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

26%

Commercial

16%

Advanced  
Manufacturing

15%

Corporate Operations  
& Business Services

15%

Other

10%

Healthcare &  
Life Sciences

10%

Logistics &  
Distribution

9%

Emerging industry:  
Film & Entertainment  
Production



The “**Commercial**” and “**other**” categories include DeKalb businesses and non-profits which received a grant and loan from the DeKalb County Small Business Relief Fund. This program provided a grantor loan to businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was launched in August 2020 and was funded by a partnership between the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta, United Way of Greater Atlanta, and Advance DeKalb. The Fund targeted businesses which have fewer than 50 employees and are located in a distressed census tract. The program was administered by LISC and \$178,000 in funds were awarded in January 2021 to 16 DeKalb businesses.

## INTERNATIONAL PAPER

For 35 years, International Paper has had a facility in Tucker. Decide DeKalb visited International Paper alongside our partners from GDEcD, Georgia Power's Economic and Community Development team, the City of Tucker, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, and other key stakeholders. The team provided helpful information. In turn, Georgia Power provided workforce data so the company can benchmark salaries, identify workforce which may have transferable skills, and guide their partnerships with Georgia Piedmont Technical College and WorkSource DeKalb. The group was also able to tour the facility.

## U.S. TENNIS ASSOCIATION (USTA) IN DEKALB

Peter Bau and Nazar Bilukhaare are leading the charge on redeveloping the tennis court facility on Presidential Drive. The courts have been through tornado damage and multiple foreclosures. Peter and Nazar are bringing the courts up to speed and partnering with the U.S. Tennis Association. Through events and revenue-generating activities with USTA, the state-of-the-art facility will help revitalize this area and increase community engagement. Decide DeKalb helped them navigate the permit process and connected them with Discover DeKalb.



# BRE FINDINGS

In 2021, the main restriction to growth, identified by DeKalb businesses and organizations, was and continues to be the workforce shortage.

- **MACHINISTS AND INDUSTRIAL MECHANICS** continue to be in high demand, especially as manufacturing operations become more sophisticated and technologically advanced.
- The **SERVICE INDUSTRY WORKFORCE** is extremely sought after, while shortages in commercial business remain constant.
- **COMMERCIAL KITCHEN SPACE** is very popular, as consumers move more toward take-out and food-delivery services, and small, local food concepts.
- The **ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY** is rapidly expanding in DeKalb, with the redevelopment of Assembly and Pullman Yards, and industry leaders expect this trend to continue.
- **TECH COMPANIES** such as Hermeus and ServeScape are able to recruit employees by touting the benefits of the high quality of life in DeKalb county, and the proximity to skilled talent in DeKalb, City of Atlanta, Gwinnett County and beyond.



# WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

As we found in our company visits, the availability of workforce is the top priority for DeKalb organizations. To help address the issues, Decide DeKalb kicked off the inaugural MADE IN DEKALB Educator Fellowship for the 2021-2022 school year, in partnership with DeKalb County School District. MADE connected DeKalb public educators with DeKalb companies and demonstrated different career pathways into local skilled trades. By integrating industry

into instruction at elementary to high school levels, educators gained awareness about well-paying jobs in modern facilities.

The cohort of 10 educators met with local businesses, job shadowed employees, heard from industry leaders, and used their expertise as educators to effectively bring industry insight to their students.



“

MADE IN DEKALB has connected me to information and resources that support college and career readiness. I can now create a scenario and say you're an employee at Sugar Bowl Bakery and you have to write a memo to your fellow coworkers to explain what the procedure is going to be for packaging the madeleines, and then use that to help them learn how to write an expository text or an information text. It's something real.

— TASHEIKA MASON  
Teacher,  
Stone Mountain High School

”

“

I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the inaugural MADE IN DEKALB cohort. Not only did I learn so much about manufacturing in general, but I was amazed to visit and discover business operating in DeKalb. I truly value the experience and expanded my knowledge on Manufacturing and Logistics. I am beyond excited to continue to share my knowledge with the students I serve. I highly recommend this program for other educators and hope to see a similar student experience one day.

— IMANI HANDY  
School Counselor,  
Dunwoody High School

”

# FUTURE HOME OF



Decide DeKalb is excited to continue the growth of its Business Retention & Expansion program in 2022.

We are positioned to continue addressing the challenges in DeKalb's business community, and we are grateful for the insights from the businesses who meet with Decide DeKalb and its partners and stakeholders. These meetings provide valuable first-hand perspective that we use to help build a thriving business climate. County leadership and key economic development entities in DeKalb County are eager to foster increased business retention and expansion rates. The BRE program will continue to build upon its successes, as we bring value to the companies that call DeKalb home.

“

Decide DeKalb understands the importance of valuing and serving the existing business community and we work collaboratively with partners to offer a wide range of helpful and relevant programs and services including workforce development and site selection.



”

— DORIAN DEBARR  
President,  
Decide DeKalb  
Development Authority