

Official shares 'phenomenal' economic report

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
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SENECA — More than 50 companies looked at bringing business operations into Oconee County last year, according to an annual report from the Oconee Economic Alliance. OEA board chairman

Kyle Thomas shared the report with alliance members this week, saying 47 new projects were identified after corporate representatives reached out to officials, while five expansion projects were eyed.

"The fact that we had

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52 different companies take an interest in Oconee County during the worst economy since the Great Depression is nothing



Thomas

short of phenomenal," he said in a letter. "This activity is also a signal to us that our community and sites can continue to compete in the post-pandemic economy. With your help, we hope to turn these projects into announcements this year."

There were 39 inquiries made about existing industrial parks and other sites, according to

the report. The Golden Corner Commerce Park received the most attention, with 12 inquiries. The Oconee Industry and Technology Park received 10 submittals, the Seneca Rail Park received five and the privately owned Oconee Manufacturing Park received three inquiries. Last week, CBRE senior vice president Trey Pennington told The Journal he didn't have any updates to share on the Oconee Manufacturing Park his real estate firm is marketing.

SITE VISITS AND PROJECTS STILL BEING CONSIDERED

Seven site visits happened in 2020, according to the report. There were

more than 40 consultant interactions.

Of the 52 inquiries made to the OEA, 10 have been counted as "misses," eight are still "suspects" to follow through and 34 projects are still being considered. If all 52 projects were to have chosen Oconee County as the place to set up shop, the OEA said the investment would total almost \$3 billion and result in approximately 4,764 jobs.

Company leads primarily came in the form of direct contact to the OEA at 22, while 17 came from the S.C. Department of Commerce. Outside of the U.S., the most website visits came out of the Netherlands and China, according to analytics provided by the OEA.

Thomas, who is also the president and CEO of Blue Ridge Bank, said he looked forward to being able to meet as a board again "once it is safe to do so."

"Looking forward into 2021, our project pipeline is healthy, but undoubtedly the OEA staff will continue their work to keep it full," he said. "We are blessed to either live, work or play in the Golden Corner."

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