

FALL NORTHFIELD BUSINESS VISIT REPORT

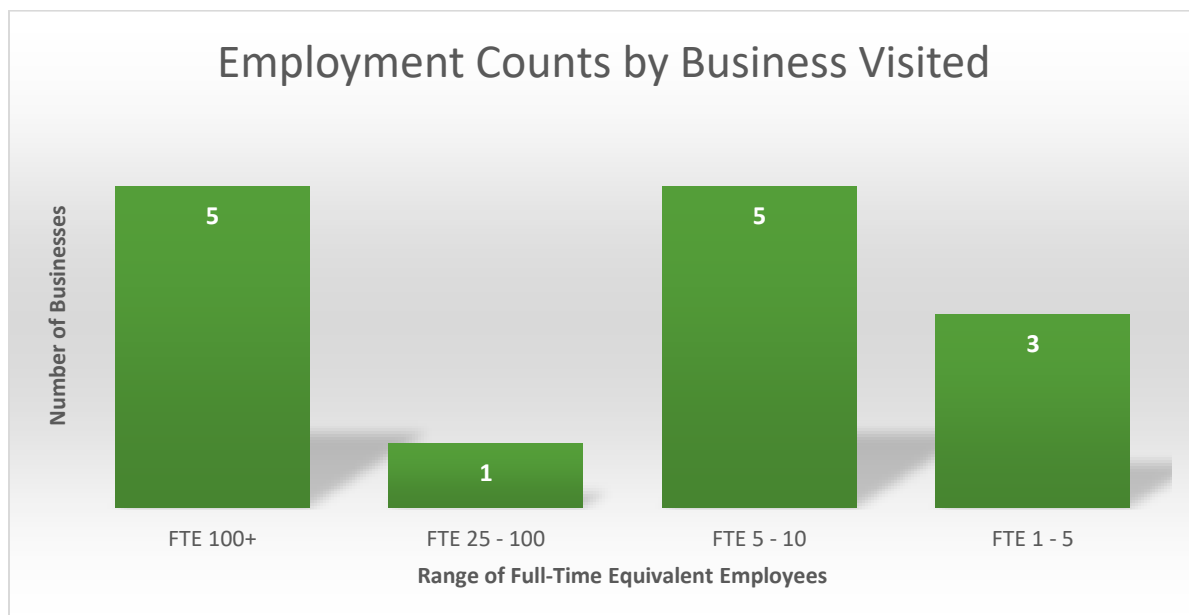
SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

2018 BUSINESS VISITS CONDUCTED BY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Over the course of the last twelve months, staff conducted 14 business visits with Northfield businesses. The businesses visited range in size and industry. In order to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the business climate as it pertains to different types of businesses, it was imperative to visit a diverse group of businesses. This report will briefly outline the visits in a broad sense. Businesses will not be identified by name in order to maintain confidentiality. Should EDA Board members request further information; staff can oblige through a scheduled face-to-face meeting.

EMPLOYMENT COUNTS

Of the 14 businesses visited, every business employed at least three full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. Five business employed over 100 employees ranging from entry-level positions to executive positions. One business maintains an employment count of over 750 employees. Staff visited small businesses of one to three FTE employees located along Division Street. The graph below gives an illustration of the employment numbers of the businesses visited.



PRESENT STATUS OF BUSINESSES

Overall, the businesses visited are currently in good condition. Eight businesses indicated to staff that some type of expansion was in the near future, if they had not already begun expansion efforts. The expansion efforts of these businesses featured employment growth, operation growth, and facility growth. Of the expansion efforts, the Northfield EDA has been a partner for three of the expansions by means of grant funding, revolving loan or a separate incentive. Staff will continue to stay in touch with these businesses and offer assistance when applicable.

In addition to the great successes, several businesses disclosed their current struggles with staff. Workforce availability was a common issue. One business received a State grant from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to train and hire 70 new employees. Other issues mentioned were regulatory burdens, availability of capital, lack of industrial space for expansion efforts, infrastructure/road issues, automation, customer reviews, cultural differences and the current political environment. Staff will continue to maintain connections with these businesses and seek opportunities to assist in alleviating business challenges.

FUTURE OUTLOOK OF BUSINESSES

As stated previously, several of the businesses visited are considering some type of expansion. Two businesses in particular are recent start-ups (three years in business) and both are on schedule to begin the next phase of business development, which will primarily entail product and service growth. Other businesses are considering taking on new endeavors such as employment growth, broadening services provided, increasing the number of clientele served, introducing technology efficiencies, purchasing buildings, increasing local investment, etc. Staff will continue to maintain communication with these businesses as they continue to grow and flourish in Northfield.

The businesses visited appreciated the opportunity to speak with Economic Development Staff and are encouraged to see greater attention given to the business community. Should EDA Board members request further information be provided in these reports, Staff asks that these requests be specific and respect the anonymity of businesses visited.