

BUSINESS



VOICE OF BUSINESS

Affordable homes essential to attracting, retaining workforce



Chris Kershner
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Workforce continues to be the number one challenge for employers throughout the Dayton region. The way we address the workforce issues are both broad and complex.

Retaining, attracting and training talent is essential in the economic development game. Companies searching for workforce are looking for a valuable talent pipeline via strong higher educational insti-

tutions and training programs.

There has been a need to address workforce training and Ohio has stepped up to provide resources for employers in need of training incumbent workers for in-demand skills. We know that access to affordable high quality child-care is prohibiting workers from returning to the manufacturing floor or getting back into the office.

Now, we are facing a new crisis that is threatening our workforce efforts. Access to affordable housing in the right locations for middle-income Dayton area workforce is becoming harder and harder to find. The

middle-income worker isn't able to find the selection of affordable homes that allows them to build financial equity, strengthen ties to a community and reside close to their jobs.

Our workforce wants to buy homes and they want to invest our community, but the diversity of inventory just doesn't exist. Homebuilders are working hard to find land and develop new communities, but the supply can't keep up with demand. As new business and jobs are coming to the Dayton region with companies like Honda/LG, Joby Aviation and Intel, the demands will get greater.

Ultimately, it's the business community that will feel the pain when our employees can't find housing that meets their needs.

To solve this problem, our public and private partners must continue to work together. New housing developments for middle-income workforce is in desperate need.

However, they can only buy these homes if it makes financial sense and lowering mortgage interest rates is critical to affordability and access. Additionally, it is important that to have common sense zoning and permitting at the local levels that will streamline these

homes to come online quicker and allow a pathway for public incentives that help offset the risk for developers.

Overly restrictive design and zoning requirements can force the price of a home build to levels that quickly becomes unaffordable for the target market. Housing needs to be a balance of attractive, functional and affordable. If we solve these challenges, we will continue to win at economic development and Dayton area will be the destination for Midwest.

Chris Kershner is the president and CEO of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce.