



SiteOhio Program

by Gene R. Abercrombie

On June 4, 2012, Governor Kasich signed House Bill 436, creating the SiteOhio certification program within the Ohio Department of Development. The SiteOhio program aims to certify and market eligible commercial, industrial and manufacturing sites and facilities to new or expanding businesses. Eligible projects do not include projects intended for residential, retail or government use. The bill was enacted in response to the termination of the Job Ready Sites program, which ran out of funding at the end of April 2012.

As it aims to build upon the success of its predecessor, the SiteOhio program mirrors the Job Ready Sites program in purpose and it will include sites certified under that program. Similar to the Job Ready Sites program, this program intends to bolster the State's portfolio of commercial and industrial sites ready for development. Eligible applicants may send their site applications to the Ohio Director of Development for certification.

The content of the scoring criteria, which will be crafted under Director's discretion, may include the evaluation of certain quality of life indicators and community assets. If an applicant meets all of the scoring criteria, which will be published by the Director, the applicant's project shall be approved and certified. Once a site is certified, the Director will market that site to interested parties.

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About the photo: Toledo skyline

Certified sites will be posted on the Ohio Department of Development web site, most likely in a manner similar to the Job Ready Sites program, which posts pictures and a description of each site. The SiteOhio program gives Ohio a competitive edge over states without similar programs because it provides relocating companies with access to crucial information about available sites to locate their operations. Furthermore, the program saves businesses time and removes the risk related to selecting a site for future operations. By consolidating local efforts across the state, the program provides prospective employers with a one-stop shop for economic site approval.

One important difference between the SiteOhio program and its predecessor lies in the funding of the two programs. The original Job Ready Sites program was funded by the sale of bonds. These funds were used to offset costs traditionally incurred in industrial and commercial site development. Conversely, the SiteOhio program will be a fee-for-service program. Applicants will finance construction costs, required studies and infrastructure improvements, thereby making the program revenue neutral for Ohio taxpayers. Fees remitted by applicants will be credited to the Site- Ohio administration fund, which was also created by H.B. 436.

In sum, the program should continue to build upon the success and efforts expended under the Job Ready Sites program and increase the likelihood that more employers will choose to locate their operations in Ohio. Applicants wishing to participate in the program should contact the Ohio Department of Development. If you have any further questions about the program, please contact the attorneys at Eastman & Smith, Ltd. at (419) 241-6000.

For more information on the original Job Ready Sites program, visit <http://www.development.ohio.gov/Urban/JRSHome.htm>



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