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Jobs results of JOBZ in Cass County reported by EDC

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About 10 years ago, JOBZ, the Job Opportunity Building Zones, were all the talk in economic development circles.

Cass County offered to participate in this statewide program by signing the regional application.

JOBZ is a state program that was created in 2004 that offered significant tax incentives if a company would commit to creating quality jobs. There have been varied experiences in different counties throughout the state. The Cass County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was asked to coordinate the business projects and help the local units of government with determining a company's benefit to their community.

There are five businesses designated as JOBZ in Cass County. The first two received designation in 2004, while the latest was in 2006. Each year the EDC completes annual state reports on behalf of the communities that have designated JOBZ businesses. In 2012, the five businesses in Cass County had a total employment of 149. This includes both part-time and full-time employees.

"I know that JOBZ has been a real plus for Cass County as without it, these jobs ... would not have happened. The benefit has outweighed the taxes that would have been paid," said Cass County Commissioner and EDC Ex-Officio Board member Bob Kangas. The average hourly wages at the JOBZ companies reported ranged from \$14.34 to \$25.48 per hour in 2012. Four of the five companies offer healthcare insurance benefits. The average hourly value of that benefit ranged from \$.71 per hour at one company to \$7.38 per hour at another.

"Having programs available like JOBZ are an important part of economic development" said Bill Palmer, president elect of the Cass County EDC.

With JOBZ set to expire in 2015, there have not been any recent applications to the program in Cass County.

"As a county economic developer, I am listening carefully for new state legislation. In the past two years, there have been two similar programs introduced and debated, with neither of them passing yet," said EDC Executive Director Gail Leveson in a news release. "Keeping the programs in place to create good jobs in Cass County is always a priority for us."

The Cass County EDC is a local 501c3 with the mission to "Improve the business environment of Cass County by encouraging a strong, diverse and sustainable economy and to build better relationships between business, government agencies and local communities."

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