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## Snyder's speech encourages leaders in economic development

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Economic development leaders in and around Metro Detroit say they were heartened to hear the strategy for adding jobs and strengthening business outlined in the State of the State speech Wednesday.

Now, they want the details.

"We're very supportive of what the governor outlined. We felt really good about his addressing the competitiveness of Michigan and improving the climate for jobs," said Doug Rothwell who, besides his role as president and CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan, led Gov. Rick Snyder's transition team.

"We had talked during the transition and shared some of what of what our group feels was important, but this really is his plan," Rothwell said Thursday. "This reflects what his agenda is and, while it's closely aligned with our ideas, these are his own."

The city's development agency, the Detroit Economic Growth Corp., also discussed ideas with the governor's office since November, said CEO George Jackson, and was pleased to hear Snyder echo Detroit Mayor Dave Bing's focus on creating jobs. Jackson said he's also encouraged by Snyder's plan to establish an Office of Urban Initiatives for Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint and other cities.

"Anything we can do where the focus is on helping the urban centers of the state, we are in favor," Jackson said. "There are a lot of under-utilized resources in those communities. To bring this state back you have to have thriving, viable urban centers."

Phil Power, chairman and president of the Center for Michigan think tank in Ann Arbor, said he also was contacted by the governor's office before the speech, and was pleased with Snyder's Michigan Dashboard. That effort aims to measure and publish the state's progress on economic growth as one of five key metrics for improving life in the state.

"Politics in Michigan for the last decade have lacked any sense of accountability," Power said. "The Dashboard is a built-in accountability machine. If it's properly used it should change the culture of the state about promises made and promises kept."

Overall, economic experts said, they were impressed by Snyder's emphasis on accountability, efficient management of economic development efforts and, most of all, jobs.

"We've had the better part of a decade of high-flowing rhetoric and grand concepts that have been followed by a devastating economic slide," said Patrick Anderson, CEO of Lansing's Anderson Economic Group. "Right now what Michigan workers need is less high-concept and more high employment. And that's what Snyder is promising."

All the development experts praised Snyder's vow to replace the state's focus on luring businesses from other states with tax incentives to emphasizing entrepreneurship and helping existing Michigan businesses grow.

"I think it's a breath of fresh air when the governor talks about gardening as opposed to hunting," said Detroit Regional Chamber CEO Sandy Baruah. "Businesses know that is far cheaper to keep an existing customer

than getting a new one."

Michael D. LaFaive, fiscal policy director of the conservative Mackinac Center, praised the move but cautioned that focusing on state businesses won't be an improvement if the policy continues to redistribute state money and support to help one business compete with another.

"Robbing Peter to pay Paul doesn't create jobs, on net balance. It just shifts them around," LaFaive said.

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