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## Study to assess potential growth in south Lansing

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Local officials and business leaders say it's time south Lansing taps into its economic development potential as the downtown and Old Town districts have done.

As part of that effort, the Lansing Economic Development Corp. is funding a \$30,000 study to assess the area's business climate and its capacity for growth.

"It's certainly an area that many feel has been overlooked in terms of economic development in Lansing," said Scott Watkins, director of market and industry analysis for East Lansing-based Anderson Economic Group, the firm hired to do the study.

South Lansing is home to about 60 percent of the city's residents, according to the city. It is an economic engine with its commercial corridors and manufacturing facilities, such as Barnes Aerospace and Symmetry Medical Inc.

Lansing's population was at 114,276, according to the 2006 Census Bureau estimate.

"We're not going to sit during this critical time and wait for things to get better," Mayor Virg Bernero said.

"We've got some areas that are sort of nagging challenges."

Pressed for details, Bernero said he wouldn't mention specific areas.

Anderson expects to finish the study by mid-September. The firm will research what companies could fit in the area, determine what the city can do to better accommodate businesses, and track the area's population and disposable income.

Anderson analysts also will look at south Lansing's existing industrial base and facilities for potential reuses and complimentary uses.

"There certainly is opportunity and a need for existing manufacturing businesses to diversify their customer base," Watkins said.

The study also will focus on options to attract and promote commerce, such as work force development and career training programs, changing traffic patterns and making areas more walkable to encourage shopping.

Local business owner Marta Cerna wants to change south Lansing's negative image.

She opened Cerna Business Center at 6070 S. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. about a year and a half ago. She leases office space to local businesses, provides free financial classes, and also offers payroll and accounting services.

"When they come to the south side, no one comes to shop on this side," Cerna said.

"This is a shopping district, and we welcome anyone."

## Additional Facts

I how to help

- The Lansing Economic Development Corporation wants input from residents and business owners about what improvements they'd like to see in the area. Visit [www.edc.cityoflansingmi.com](http://www.edc.cityoflansingmi.com) and click on the south Lansing market study survey.
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