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## County enjoying booms in all areas

There's an unmistakable steady stream of good economic news flowing through Licking County in recent months.

For starters, it's likely more than 1,000 jobs will eventually be created by ProLogis in Etna Township's new joint economic development zone adjacent to where other companies recently opened light manufacturing facilities.

The Boeing Co. recently announced it would expand its presence and add 36 jobs at the old Air Force base, now known as the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center in Heath.

Add projects from Best Lighting in Etna, Velvet Ice Cream in Utica, Installed Business Products in Union Township, Ohio Metal Technologies in Hebron, Victoria Secret in Reynoldsburg, the Screen Machine in Etna, DDM in Hebron and Sunfield and you have 455 new jobs coming to Licking County and even more jobs retained.

On the commercial side, Indian Mound Mall will soon add several new tenants, including Goody's, a clothing retailer to fill its fifth anchor store spot.

Wal-Mart, the world's No. 1 retailer, will add a second supercenter to Licking County later this year, adding 200 jobs once it renovates and expands the existing store in Heath.

Home Depot is building its first Licking County store on North 21st Street in North Newark, further enhancing that area's burgeoning shopping areas and adding even more jobs.

As part of our annual Living Here edition, which appears in today's edition, we've again chronicled how growth is changing Licking County by updating the status of the Top 10 development areas list we first developed in 2002.

To us, it's clear that growth in our county has really just begun.

Once the Ohio 161/37 expressway is completed around 2010, we expect to see an explosion of more companies and retailers locating here. Such growth will aid our existing businesses by providing them with more and more customers to serve

Yes, we do face the occasional hiccups as companies shed jobs or encounter problems, especially as retail competition intensifies. But there are far more stories of growth and new jobs.

All of this ads up to a growing community and a vibrant economy that makes us the envy of many areas.

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