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Ohio Aerospace Hub Director Kerry Taylor has been many things during his first year on the job — a promoter of the Dayton region, an economic and business developer, a salesman, a web editor, and a marketer. He’s even had to answer to a grandmother taking him to task.

Add to that, successful.

In his first year on the job, Taylor helped attract two companies to the Ohio Aerospace Hub of Innovation & Opportunity — cyber-security-related firms Security Innovation and its spin-off Scada Security Innovation of Boston, plus Electronic Warfare Associates of Herndon, Va. All moved part of their operations to Dayton to focus on opportunities with the federal government and Air Force opportunities.

"SI is interested in investing within the Aerospace hub and employing personnel in the Dayton region. We believe our goals and business strategy coincide with that of the hub and would like to further explore this possibility," Ed Adams, CEO of Security Innovation said.

"SI is in the pursuit of several opportunities located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and in the Air Force as well as commercialization of some of its intellectual property. We believe this investment will be best realized while working in close concert with the hub as well as its expertise, resources and partners, including UDRI, DDC and TechTown. We look forward to working with the Aerospace Hub and the kickoff of our presence in the Dayton area."

Taylor's main day-to-day job is to attract aerospace-related companies in sensors, materials, cyber-security, intelligence, propulsion and aerospace medicine to the hub.

"We are building the hub one brick at a time. It takes a lot of time, equity and sweat to develop and promote the aerospace hub. Keeping up momentum is important," said Taylor, who retired from the Air Force in 2005 after a 25-year career. "Do we have the momentum? Yes. Is there much more we need to do? Yes."

Taylor and the hub partners — CityWide Development Corp., Dayton Development Coalition, the city of Dayton, University of Dayton Research Institute and Montgomery County — have contacted more than 240 companies about relocating to the hub since he began work in August 2010. He estimated he's still having conversations with half of these companies about the hub's offerings — developing partnerships with the University of Dayton, Wright State University and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base researchers and technologists, plus possible financial incentives from local, regional and state agencies that could amount to millions of dollars.

In September 2009, former Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland designated the Ohio Aerospace Hub of Innovation & Opportunity in Dayton as Ohio's first hub. The Ohio Hub of Innovation & Opportunity strategy assists regions across the state in leveraging existing urban resources to attract new companies, spark new investments, grow jobs and develop Ohio's key industries.

The hub stretches from Tech Town, Dayton's technology-oriented campus located on Monument Street designed to support the application and commercialization of cutting-edge technologies, to the University of Dayton. The Oregon District, South Park neighborhood, Miami Valley Hospital and part of downtown are in the hub.

"Naturally, we would like to have more GE-type companies invest in the hub and the region," said Taylor, referring to the $51 million facility GE Aviation is building on the University of Dayton campus. "But our primary goal is to recruit small, agile, nimble entrepreneurial aerospace and related businesses. That's where the future is, small businesses looking to be near to customers, create jobs and build collaborations within the region."

Taylor said his first year on the job involved working with the partners to establish the message and build a grassroots marketing campaign of meeting with the community and WPAFB stakeholders.

"The next year involves pushing the throttle up and putting on a full-court direct marketing press. The big challenge is getting a marketing strategy done right," Taylor said.

Taylor has helped put together a website and enlisted University of Dayton marketing students to assist in developing a
marketing plan.

In addition to the challenges of selling the hub to companies, Taylor has had some challenges selling it to residents in the neighborhoods located the hub.

"A grandmother in the South Park neighborhood told me, 'Make sure you're doing what you say you're doing,'" Taylor said. "They want to make sure we're spending their taxpayer money well. They care about their neighborhoods. They want to see more people attracted to them and more energy, but understandably, they are concerned how the hub may affect their neighborhoods."

Some of those changes to the neighborhoods will happen in the next year. Brown Street from Irving Avenue on the University of Dayton's southern border to near Miami Valley Hospital will get a facelift with fewer driving lanes, mid-block crosswalks, street trees and landscaping, dedicated bike lanes and a continuous left-turn lane.

"It's all part of the vision for the hub," Taylor said. "While the city sees the hub as part of its urban development strategy, using technology as an economic development lever to attract businesses and people to the city, there are also efforts under way to make Dayton an even better place to live, work and play — and to make current and potential residents aware of that. For instance, more people are considering living in downtown residential offerings such as the new Patterson Square development. There is a sense of positive energy flowing now."

While Taylor wants to push the throttle up on developing the hub, he also wants to urge patience.

"Economic and business development take time. It's a long-term investment," he said. "I want to have a conversation with those companies about how to advance their business and invest here in the hub and the region. Once they understand the value of investing here, I believe they'll be sold on how great a place Dayton can be to live and work."

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson at 937-229-3391.