



# Google a high-tech tonic for area, panelists agree

Search engine will rev up local tech community

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Google's announcement to move its advertising operation, AdWords, to Washtenaw County raised as many questions as it answered.

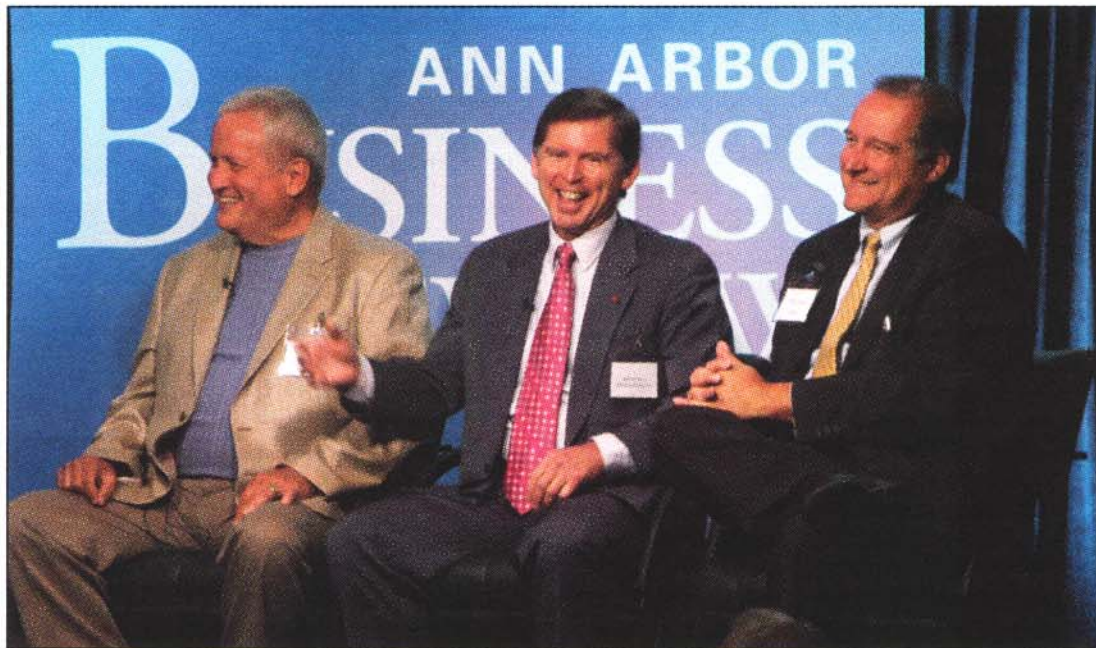
Where in the county will it land? Exactly how many jobs will it create? Will it be just sales jobs or will tech jobs follow? Even, will it boost sales of downtown Ann Arbor condominiums?

But one thing is for certain, experts say. It has been a giant boost to our state's self-esteem.

"The big benefit is the mental part," said Larry T. Eiler, who participated in an Aug. 10 *Ann Arbor Business Review* panel discussion on the impact the move will have on Washtenaw County. "It makes people happy."

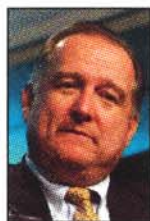
Eiler, chairman and chief executive of Eiler Communications, was a member of the Michigan Leaders Speak panel that attracted almost 200 people to Travis Pointe Country Club.

The other two panelists were Bill Milliken, founder of Milliken Realty Co. and president of the Commercial Board of Realtors of Michigan. He served as chairman of the Washtenaw Development



From left, Google panelists Larry Eiler, Bill Milliken and Mark Morante at Travis Pointe.

ROBERT RAMEY



**Morante**

Morante offered a rare glimpse into the secret dealings between the state and Google.

He said MEDC started to court the Internet search engine giant nearly two years ago. There were phone calls and letters from Gov. Jennifer Granholm along with wooing from the University of Michigan and local officials.

It was all done on the hush, Morante said. "Very, very few people at MEDC knew, includ-

ing our CEO for awhile." At one point, the courtship ended when the news broke that Google was looking at the Ann Arbor area, Morante said. "Google didn't want it to look like an arms race."



**Milliken**

But talks began anew and it looked like the competition was between Ann Arbor and Boston, Morante said.

Again, it was top secret. A few days before the announcement was made, Milliken said he was told by Michael Finney, CEO of Ann Arbor SPARK – which merged recently with Washtenaw Development Council – that a press conference was scheduled for July

11, but he didn't know the details until the night before.

"I was told Google is coming to Ann Arbor and that I was going to speak tomorrow," Milliken said.

Michigan and the Ann Arbor area offered a number of advantages, the panelists said.

In terms of timing, Google will pick up three hours on the world market over Google's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif. Also, there was a strong incentive package from the state and personal interest from University of Michigan Mary Sue Coleman.

But the tipping point may have been the U-M in another way.

"We knew we had Larry Page's alma mater," Milliken said. "That was a strong pull." Page, a U-M graduate, is one of Google's founders and currently the presi-

dent of products.

As the community sorts out what the move will mean, more questions emerge:

- How many jobs will Google create?

While the state tax incentive package requires at least 500 new jobs – Google announced it expected to create 1,000 new jobs – there are additional incentives to create even more jobs, Morante said.

While AdWords will employ mostly sales and business staff, Michigan wants to give Google the incentive to expand its technology staff someday, Morante said. "We're saying, 'Why stop at 1,000?' There's no reason why Google couldn't expand here."

Google will impact the area, Eiler said. With 1,000 jobs, Google would become the county's 13th largest employer. With 2,000 jobs, it would be the sixth largest employer, he said. Milliken said Google expects to recruit most of its employees from inside the state.

- Where will Google land?

While Google has said it will invest \$20 million to \$50 million for AdWords in the area, the company is searching for temporary space now. Ann Arbor, along with most of the townships, would like to be host, Milliken said. A decision is expected by September. Job interviews have already started.

- Where will workers live?

With an average annual salary at more than \$45,000, the move will boost demand for housing in Ann Arbor, the townships and probably into Livingston and Wayne counties.

It may even be a boon for the new downtown Ann Arbor condos coming on line, Milliken said.

■ Janet Miller is a freelance writer.