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Technology-Led Development Sparked by New Research Centers Here

Oct 24, 2003 - 16:00



Michael Manikowski, Executive Director Ontario County OED/IDA

An update of the Ontario County Office of Economic Development/IDA strategy has been prompted by the recent attraction of world-class centers in Infotonics and Agriculture & Food Technology.

The strategic review, prepared by Peter Fairweather of Fairweather Consulting, notes how these two centers "have propelled the County into a position as a premium location for technology development. Further, "says Fairweather, "the County should fully embrace this opportunity and make the commitment to harvest the technology-led employment opportunities that will be spun off from both of these major economic catalysts." In the end, "this will leave the County prepared to harvest other opportunities associated with the next waves of technological growth and change.

Most intriguing is Fairweather's observation that the presence of these new research and development centers in Ontario County will require new approaches to economic development, which he has identified.

According to Fairweather, the update of the economic development strategy comes down to one question: "What must Ontario County do to harvest the new opportunities so that industries stay and grow in Ontario County, rather than drifting to existing high-tech locations elsewhere." It is a question he addresses through a five-step process: (1) a review of conditions that are benchmarked against other technology-led centers, (2) an assessment of the County and its economic development efforts, (3) the recommendation of a strategic position for the County to take in competing in this new arena, including the industries it should target for attraction, retention and expansion, (4) identification of the programmatic elements that should be involved in that response, (5) options for structuring the County's ED programs.

In the upcoming months, a full exploration of the issues, challenges and opportunities facing Ontario County in the 21st century will be discussed at an "Economic Development Summit" of public officials and other stakeholders.

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