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Business invited to get involved

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Section: VIEWPOINTS

Page: 04

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York-area leaders are working to assess and improve York County's business climate in a number of ways and are inviting businesses throughout the city and county to take part. The long-term goal is shared by entrepreneurs of all kinds and firms of all sizes: a better, more competitive York.

An important collaborative tool is the **CEDS**, or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. It is a means by which more partners are being brought to the table and are getting involved.

The **CEDS** came to be in 2004 as the result of a compact between the York County Economic Development Corporation and YorkCounts - York County's quality-of-life initiative. The primary goals involve the use of a business cluster analysis approach to target business groups that stand to have the greatest impact on York County's economy in the future.

While a number of clusters will serve as strong drivers of York County's economy, emphasis is placed predominantly on agriculture and food production, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, technology and information, and transportation and logistics. Advisory groups have been formed around these clusters.

Each advisory group has been asked about key needs and core competencies essential to their future growth and sustainability. This information is being used to tailor strategies for business retention, expansion and recruitment, new business development, workforce development and overall competitiveness.

* In business retention and expansion, 438 retention visits have been conducted over a three-year period in 36 different municipalities - facilitating 21 expansion projects and generating more than \$325 million of investment. The majority of these visits were to priority cluster companies.

* In business recruitment, during the past two years, more than 200 prospects have been served, with 18 locations having been facilitated. To maintain this momentum, YCEDC has implemented a marketing campaign focusing on hundreds of prospects. A community video has been developed with WPMT-TV, Fox 43, to promote York County's assets and brand identity as the "Smart Market." Some of the most exciting movement has been in the area of new business development - specifically, the Codorus Corridor Redevelopment Strategy, encompassing a six-mile stretch of land along the Codorus Creek, running from Harley-Davidson to just beyond Richland Avenue.

At the heart of this corridor strategy is urban revitalization in an area with substantial social and economic challenges - but significant development opportunities. High-profile catalytic projects are Sovereign Bank Stadium, the Northwest Triangle initiative, the Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ) and the NutriCore Center of Excellence. These efforts aim to cultivate knowledge-based businesses and attract a creative workforce into the urban

center.

Much progress has been made, but there is more to accomplish. For example, YorkCounts and YCEDC are completing a workforce development study with a focus on producing a talent development agenda, including performance benchmarks and strategies for tracking results.

My invitation to businesses in York County is to join the effort. The **CEDS** is bringing partners together to find solutions to diverse challenges. A competitive business environment in which all of us have a stake will make for a stronger York County.

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