

# BUSINESS

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## Game on!

### Teamwork stressed as key to job creation

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The Citizen

AUBURN — Economic development is a team game, and on Wednesday some of the county's main players discussed the game plan to keep and grow jobs in Cayuga County.

During the second installment of a monthly panel called Wednesday Morning Roundtable, development staff with the city of Auburn, the county and Cayuga Economic Development Agency (CEDA) talked with local business and nonprofit leaders about economic strategies.

One of the main messages throughout the presentation was teamwork, with speakers looking at ways the public and private sector can strengthen the county's economy together.

"Economic development is a team effort," said Terry Masterson, executive director of CEDA, a new agency with a board of directors of mostly private sector individuals.

"You have to work together to create a unified goal," Masterson said.

The panel included Masterson and the planning and economic

development directors for the county and city, Steve Lynch and Jennifer Haines. The three discussed local efforts to provide local businesses with the information and resources they need to succeed, and they also answered questions from attendees on various issues.

One of those efforts is a strategic plan currently being completed by CEDA staff. When completed, the plan will examine important problems facing the county's economy, identify what can be done about those problems and discuss which people and agencies are equipped to remedy them.

Masterson said the project will require months of work gathering data and will depend on private and public leaders in the city, county, towns and villages all providing input and participating.

"Everybody working together is really going to be critical," he said.

CEDA was created last year to be a first stop for any businesses to contact when they are seeking resources from local agencies or programs.

Lynch used the analogy of an inverted funnel when describing

the new agency, with CEDA as a single entry point directing business to the large volume of resources.

He also said the county's private sector is the main driver of job creation, and he pointed to businesses like The Center, where the event took place, and the Auburn Public Theater as examples of local entrepreneurial spirit.

Both businesses renovated and moved into the buildings where they are currently located.

"The public sector does not create jobs. You do," Lynch said to attendees. "But we can try to create the stage on which that private sector can drive."

During the discussion, Haines said those private sector jobs are mostly created by existing companies. The city planning staff has been focusing some efforts on retention, she said, contacting businesses and discussing needs.

They've also looked at cleaning up and developing some of the large sites of former manufacturers, and Haines said the city is reaching out to the business community through new avenues on the Internet.

But like at the county, the city's planning department deals with day-to-day tasks like code enforcement, housing and other issues. With CEDA, the city and county have a local agency dedicated solely to economic development.

"The capacity we have at the city to do some of these bigger picture things is really small," Haines said.

The Wednesday Morning Roundtable is a monthly forum on local business organized by the group that participated in 2007's A Call to Action: A Blueprint for Our Region's Future. The event is meant to foster discussion and eventually inspire ideas to improve the local economy and quality of life.

Each month, a new speaker or group of speakers discusses a different topic and fields questions from the invited group of public and private-sector attendees. Upcoming topics include a musical theater festival, the county's bio-gas pipeline project, health care and the local dairy industry.

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Stephen Lynch, director of planning and economic development for Cayuga County, speaks at the monthly Wednesday Morning Round Table on the topic of the county's economic development at The Center in Auburn Wednesday.

Jill Connor / The Citizen