

• ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT •

Job-creation experts giving Cayuga County an appraisal

Consultants helping CEDA form economic strategic plan

CHRISTOPHER CASKEY
The Citizen

Sometimes it takes some fresh eyes to look at an issue and come up with solutions. A local economic development agency believes that will hold true in Cayuga County, where a pair of consultants are visiting businesses and officials this week to get a picture of the local economy.

John Rhodes and Ellen Morosoff Pemrick will eventually use the information gathered this week and other data to develop a 10-year plan for local economic development.

The Cayuga Economic Development Agency hired Rhodes and Pemrick to put the strategic plan together, and CEDA director Terry Masterson has been guiding the tour and introducing them to local business and government leaders.

Both consultants have extensive experience in economic development and have worked with businesses and communities across the country.

The plan's formation will take about six months, and once finished will be used as a type of blueprint for growing and keeping jobs in Cayuga County. The idea is to

prioritize the needs of local businesses and industries and identify areas that have potential for growth.

While compiling raw data and statistics about the community for analysis will be important, both Rhodes and Pemrick say one-on-one discussions and first-hand experiences in the community are vital for putting together an effective plan.

"The data really just tells you so much," said Pemrick. "It really doesn't give you any sense of perspective."

To get the perspective, the two consultants will visit every corner of the county and cover every sector. That includes large manufacturers like IIT Goulds Pumps and Currier Plastics in Auburn, as well as small business groups in Fair Haven, Aurora and Weedsport. They'll tour farms in Locke and an agricultural business in King Ferry.

Rhodes and Pemrick will also check in with public planning officials, talk with education leaders and meet some of the movers and shakers in the nonprofit world.

The strategic plan is one of the first major initiatives for CEDA since it began operations approximately a year ago. The organization is meant to be a first-stop agency

for anyone conducting business or looking to do so in Cayuga County.

Rhodes said the plan they'll compile will look at the county's past and current economies and explore potential for growth as the national and world economy changes. What kinds of opportunities can Cayuga County seize as energy costs and demands change, or high-tech industries grow? Where is the local potential for growth in health care, tourism or the arts? What road blocks are keeping current businesses from reaching their full potential?

"We ask a million questions," Rhodes said.

So far, both Rhodes and Pemrick say they've detected a lot of energy among local business leaders, and there are people with new ideas. The challenge is to focus the energy and help turn those ideas into action and, hopefully, jobs.

"The real question is," Rhodes said, "Is the community at large ready to be reinvented?"

Staff writer Christopher Caskey can be reached at 282-2282 or christopher.caskey@lee.net. Follow him on Twitter at CitizenCaskey.



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Cayuga Economic Development Agency Director Terry Masterson, consultant John Rhodes, CEDA chairwoman Sue Edinger, Wells College business professor Robert Ellis and consultant Ellen Pemrick discuss the plan for growth of Wells College's business program. CEDA hired the two consultants to tour the area and suggest ways to help the community grow.