

Rockland Economic
Development Corporation

County of Rockland
Industrial
Development Agency

Spring 2004

Outreach Programs Pay Off With New Jobs, Investment

Talk about a quick return on investment, shortly after Rockland County officials promised a more aggressive campaign to attract and retain business in Rockland County late last year, a number of major corporate relocation transactions were finalized in the first quarter of 2004.

The largest recent transaction closed in late March as WMC Mortgage Corp., which is headquartered in Woodland Hills, Calif., signed a lease for 55,000 square feet of space at Mack-Cali Realty Corp.'s One Ramland Road build-

ing in Orangeburg. The firm, formerly known as Weyerhaeuser Mortgage Co., held a press conference on March 26 announcing the opening of its newest wholesale processing center, to better serve its growing number of Northeast mortgage broker clients. Rockland Economic Development Corporation (REDC), the County of Rockland Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and Empire State Development (ESD) worked closely to create an incentive package that included a \$3.5 million sales tax exemption from the IDA, and a significant grant from ESD, which successfully secured the deal.

Brandie Young, vice president of corporate marketing for WMC, said the high loan submission volume the company was experiencing demanded the firm have a presence in the New York metro area. "We considered a number of locations, including Northern New Jersey and Westchester County, but found the location in Orangeburg ideal," she said.

Ms. Young continued, "The talent pool is incredible. We will open with a staff of approximately 150 and anticipate that number to grow to at least 300 over the next year or so. Our new Orangeburg location offers a great number of local professionals already familiar with our industry since the building was at one time the home of a lender that ceased operations."

Steve Porath, director of economic development for REDC, said, "This is a terrific win for Rockland County, particularly since most of the positions will be high paying jobs - averaging between \$50,000 to \$65,000 a year."

REDC officials also report that an out-of-state pharmaceutical firm has applied for IDA benefits in connection with the purchase of the former Halsey Pharmaceutical properties at 77 Brenner Drive and 125 Wells Ave. The company expects to increase its workforce in Rockland to about 90 employees over the next three years. Before deciding on Rockland County, the firm was looking at sites in New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida and even Europe.

Also in March, Rockland Realty Corp. reported that John Mini Landscapes had purchased 250-252 Brenner Drive in Congers in a bankruptcy sale for \$2.6 million from Hitachi Seiki, U.S.A.

John Mini Indoor Landscapes relocated its operations from City Island in the Bronx to Rockland County in late March. The indoor commercial landscaping company is employing approximately 100 workers at its new headquarters property.

Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef said the new corporate relocation deals are another sign that the Rockland County economy remains strong.

"Our diverse economy has done really well over the past number of years," he said. "Rockland County has developed a reputation as a good place to do business and there is a strong skilled workforce."

Continued on page 2



PHOTO BY BOB VERGARA, APS

At a press conference, WMC Senior Vice President, Michael Maloney, announces its new Northeast facility, with (l) Rockland County Executive, C. Scott Vanderhoef and (r) Empire State Development Corporation's Chairman, Charles Gargano.



PHOTO BY BOB VERGARA, APS

At the First Annual Stakeholders Forum (l to r): Steve Yassky, Rockland Realty Corp.; Michael Grossman, Mack-Cali; Dan Mellin, Bradley Corporate Park; Jim Tully, Chair, REDC; and Jeffrey Koenig, Koenig Management Ltd.

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in this issue

- 2 The ED & IDA Report
- 3 Quality of Life
- 4 REDC Stock Index
- 6 Agency News

Getting the Word Out to Business

With the advent of spring and the start of baseball, we apologize if our thoughts turn to the baseball diamond. In fact, recent business activity in Rockland County reminds us of a scene from the popular baseball motion picture "Field of Dreams." To paraphrase a line from the Shoeless Joe Jackson character: "If you build it, they will come."



James B. Tully
Chairman
Rockland Economic
Development Corporation



Eric Dranoff
Chairman
County of Rockland Industrial
Development Agency

Last year's promise by REDC to build a more aggressive marketing campaign to educate businesses both here and outside of the County on the merits of doing business in Rockland has been nothing short of a home run.

The work of REDC and ESD, along with the IDA's help, was critical in the major lease deal by WMC Mortgage Corp. at One Ramland Road. Read WMC Mortgage Company's comments on why they chose Rockland County in this edition of *Rockland Economic Focus*. They are a strong endorsement of Rockland County as a business location.

Speaking of strong endorsements, we were heartened by the news that Rockland County was selected #4 in *Inc. Magazine's* list of Best Places to Do Business, in the Small Metro Area Category. The *Inc. Magazine* designation offered Rockland County regional and national exposure as a prime business locale. See Page 7 for the full story.

Also, we recently learned

about a project at the First Annual Stakeholders Forum that literally takes the Shoeless Joe Jackson line to heart.

Dan Kwilecki, a principal of Kwilecki Enterprises, Inc. of Montebello, reported that work is proceeding on his firm's planned 100,000-square-foot speculative medical office project Palisades Medical Center in West Nyack. Kwilecki said that the company is in negotiations with a number of medical services tenants for space at the one-story 38,250-square foot property. Construction is expected to be completed on the first building at 2 Medical Park Drive in May. A groundbreaking for the second building, which will total 61,750 square feet, could take place sometime this summer.

Speculative construction is rare indeed in the New York area and the fact that a developer would build first and lease later shows the confidence his firm has in the Rockland County marketplace and specifically in its thriving medical services sector.

The IDA has seen a marked increase in potential projects and we believe the key reason for this surge in activity is due to the work of the REDC staff to aggressively market Rockland and the services REDC and IDA provide.

While we have generally focused on large deals in our column, we are not ignoring the smaller businesses in the County that require our assistance. In fact, the IDA is holding discussions to try to streamline the legal and financing approval process to make smaller projects that come before the IDA more viable.



Palisades Medical Center in West Nyack

Outreach Programs...

Continued from page 1

Stakeholders Forum Brings Major Real Estate Players Together

Team Rockland members – REDC, ESD and O&R, were especially pleased at the turnout and positive dialogue that took place at the First Annual Stakeholders Forum held on March 5 at the Pearl River Hilton.



Alan Yassky, Vice President, Airport Executive Park, addresses the audience.

A total of 28 of the 33 invited guests attended the event, including 16 significant land/property owners or developers in Rockland County, which was geared to educating the stakeholders on the assistance programs Team Rockland can offer.

REDC officials said that some stakeholders have expressed interest in joining some of its Committees and perhaps establishing an organization composed of Rockland County stakeholders (commercial property owners) that can work on issues affecting all or some of its members. REDC would serve as a facilitator to the organization.

Jeff Koenig, vice president of Koenig Management Limited, a New City-based real estate investment management and development company, was one of the stakeholders who attended the session. Koenig said the event was "absolutely worthwhile. It gathered for the first time in my memory the major real estate holders, business leaders and government officials in one place. There was a lot of positive networking that went on there."

REDC's Porath said members of Team Rockland plan to meet individually with the stakeholders over the next few months, and plans to hold a follow-up meeting in the spring or early summer of this year are in the works. "The feedback to the forum has been outstanding," he said. "Obviously we touched a nerve."

Rockland Seen as Epicenter Of Health Care for Region

The latest employment statistics from the New York State Labor Department reveal one unmistakable fact – the health care industry in Rockland County continues to grow and in fact was the top job producer in the private sector in the past 12 months.

Marc Goloven, senior regional economist for JPMorganChase, noticed the spike in health care sector jobs last September when he penned his analysis on the Rockland County economy. Contacted in March by *Rockland Economic Focus*, Goloven said that health care services reached a record high of 18,400 jobs in Rockland County for the month of February. The sector enjoyed a 6.4 percent increase in employment over the past 12 months and easily surpasses retail as the top private sector industry in the County. He related that the health care industry has grown an astounding 50 percent in the last 10 years from 12,400 jobs in February 1990 to 18,400 positions today.

The economist also pointed to an emerging geographic area of the County where health care services and development is thriving.

“One of the most far-reaching developments in the County’s recent economic evolution has been the emergence of a Route 59 medical corridor, stretching from the ever-expanding Nyack Hospital in the east to Suffern’s Good Samaritan Hospital in the west,” Goloven said. “Sprinkled within easy reach of this health care axis is everything from physician’s offices to diagnostic centers to specialist providers; indeed, as the west bank of the lower Hudson Valley continues to grow, Rockland is well-suited to emerge as the epicenter of medical care for the entire region.”

He related that the health care industry accounts for approximately 20 percent of all private sector jobs in Rockland County at the moment. In New York City, health care represents 17.5 percent of the private sector employment pie; statewide, health care averages approximately 16.5 percent of all private sector wage earners.

Goloven related that the continued

growth in health care employment has provided some recession resistance to the County. While Rockland County’s unemployment rate has risen slightly over the past few months, Rockland posted the fourth lowest jobless rate in New York State in the month of February at 4.2 percent.

Deborah Marshall, director of public relations at Good Samaritan Hospital, said that the hospital has been able to find qualified applicants for most job vacancies at the hospital, with the exception of nursing, which is facing a national shortage. The hospital currently employs approximately 1,600 workers.

“We have recently added new service lines at the hospital which have added new jobs such as primary angioplasty, which is the only service of its kind on this side of the Hudson River,” she said.

Good Samaritan Hospital is also seeking approval on a plan to build a 75,000-square-foot medical office building on property adjoining its hospital campus. The building will cost approximately \$15 million to develop and will include hospital outpatient testing services and physician offices.

The most recent development at Rockland County’s two other major health care institutions — Helen Hayes Hospital and Nyack Hospital — is a partnership involving outpatient services.

In January, Helen Hayes Hospital took over the Outpatient Rehabilitation Center at Nyack Hospital. Both institutions, which are members of the New York-Presbyterian Healthcare System, said the collaboration will be beneficial to both hospitals.

The center offers comprehensive physical, occupational and speech therapy, as well as cardiac rehabilitation and a cardiac wellness program. Licensed physical and occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, nurses and exercise physiologists provide a full range of evaluation and therapeutic services. The staff of Helen Hayes Hospital provides all of the care.

The Costs of Caring

By David Freed

President and CEO, Nyack Hospital

Those of us who work in hospitals are often asked why health care costs are so high. The answer is surprisingly simple: Because health care is provided by highly skilled and educated individuals to literally hundreds of people every day. In short, it is a labor-intensive, highly customized endeavor.

For example, Nyack Hospital cared for 15,398 inpatients, 144,110 outpatients and 67,598 home health visits last year. Each patient is unique, presenting a different medical history even if he or she shares symptoms with another patient. Moreover, even the same patient changes from day to day, visit to visit, requiring calibrated changes in care.

To provide that handcrafted care, Nyack Hospital employs 465 nurses, 170



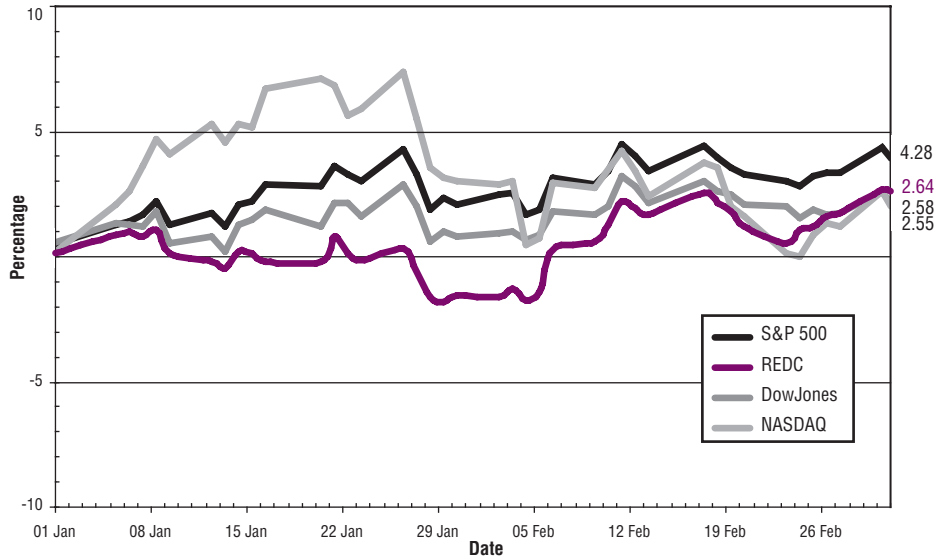
patient care associates, 518 clinical support staff, and 350 other staff. Because we are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, we have three shifts of staff available every day of every week. All together, that cost \$80,174,759 last year in payroll and benefits, or about 58% of Nyack Hospital’s annual budget.

Another large expense is medical

Continued on page 5

REDC Continues to be Among The Top Performers in 2004

PERCENTAGE CHANGE 2004 DAILY VALUES



The REDC Stock Index tracks the performance of key publicly traded companies with a sizeable presence in Rockland County (see member list). Dr. Karim Abood of REDC's Board of Directors created the index in March 2000 with a benchmark of 1000.

January 2, 2004-March 5, 2004 – The REDC Stock Index was the second highest of all major indices. As of March 5, the REDC Stock Index gained 2.64 percent from the beginning of this year. The S&P 500 topped all markets with a 4.28 percent gain. The Dow placed third in terms of value gain from the beginning of 2004 with a 2.58 percent increase, followed by the Nasdaq with a 2.55 percent increase. **By Dr. Karim Abood**

Top Stock Performer

Leading the Rockland County based companies in the REDC Stock Index early in the first quarter of 2004 was **Micros-to-Mainframes, Inc.**, (NASDAQ: MTMC), appreciating 28% from January 1, 2004. Established in 1986, Micros-to-Mainframes, Inc. ("MtM"), has become a leading single-source provider of advanced information technology solutions, including design and consulting services, communications services and products, Internet/intranet development services, and network management services. In June 1999, MtM acquired Pivot Technologies, a provider of unique cost-effective remote network and systems management solutions. Together, MtM and Pivot Technologies serve as a "one-stop" organization for data processing and network solutions by providing computer hardware and software sales, systems design and installation, consulting, maintenance and integration services, including the design, implementation and management of enterprise networks.

Howard Pavony has served as MtM's chairman and co-CEO, and Steven Rothman as president and co-CEO since its inception. MtM has more than 650 active clients, diversified in such industries as securities, financial institutions, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, distribution, legal and accounting firms.

MtM's and Pivot Technologies' corporate headquarters are located in Valley Cottage. This site houses an extensive Advanced Technology Laboratory that is used to test and evaluate multi-vendor products and solutions. The lab is accessible to MtM clients for training, testing, preconfigurations and evaluations. Its configuration center can work 24 hours a day to provide maximum delivery of integrated desktops and servers to clients.

MtM has more than 190 employees as well as a New York City office and Connecticut warehouse and support staff.

By Bruce Mason



PHOTO BY WILLIAM E. KAUFFMAN, JR.

Dr. Karim Abood,
Ph.D., Partner, LMS
Engineers LLP



PHOTO BY BOB VERGARA, APS

Bruce Mason,
Chief Economist,
Union State Bank

REDC Stock Index Member List

Avon Products Inc.	(NYSE:AVP)
Bank of New York	(NYSE:BK)
Barr Laboratories Inc.	(NYSE:BRL)
Citigroup Inc.	(NYSE:C)
Mack-Cali Realty Corporation	(NYSE:CLI)
Cablevision Systems Corporation	(NYSE:CVC)
Dress Barn Inc.	(NasdaqNM:DBRN)
Consolidated Edison Inc.	(NYSE:ED)
Provo International Inc.	(AMEX:FNT)
Footstar Inc.	(NYSE:FST)
Gannett Co. Inc.	(NYSE:GCI)
General Bearing Corporation	(NasdaqSC:GNRL)
Hudson Technologies Inc.	(NasdaqSC:HDSN)
JP Morgan Chase	(NYSE:JPM)
LeCroy Corporation	(NasdaqNM:LCRY)
Mirant Corporation	(Other OTC: MIRKQ.PK)
M&T Bank Corporation	(NYSE:MTB)
Micros-to-Mainframes Inc.	(NasdaqSC:MTMC)
Novartis AG	(NYSE:NVS)
Provident Bancorp Inc.	(NasdaqNM:PBCP)
Parker Hannifin Corporation	(NYSE:PH)
Presidential Life Corporation	(NasdaqNM:PLFE)
Pharmaceutical Resources Inc.	(NYSE:PRX)
Praxair Inc.	(NYSE:PX)
Paxar Corporation	(NYSE:PXN)
Sound Federal Bancorp Inc.	(NasdaqNM:SFFS)
Suez	(NYSE:SZE)
AT&T Corp.	(NYSE:T)
Traffix Inc.	(NasdaqNM:TRFX)
USB Holding Co. Inc.	(NYSE:UBH)
Vision-Sciences Inc.	(NasdaqSC:VSCI)
Verizon Communications Inc.	(NYSE:VZ)
WorldCom Group	(Other OTC: WCOEQ.PK)
Wyeth	(NYSE:WYE)

Q & A with Steven Yassky

Rockland Realty Corp.



Steven Yassky

PHOTO BY BOB VERGARA, APS

Since much of this edition of *Rockland Economic Focus* concerns the aggressive efforts that have been launched by REDC to offer existing Rockland County businesses the help they need to either expand or retain their operations, the obvious choice for this issue's profile was Steven Yassky.

Yassky serves on REDC's board and is Chair of the Retention and Expansion Committee. Yassky is vice president of the family-run Rockland Realty Corp. in Spring Valley, which has been a staple in the County's residential and commercial real estate business since the 1960s.

Q: Could you discuss the recent work of the Retention and Expansion Committee?

A: Basically the Retention and Expansion Committee's goal is to bring awareness to what REDC does. To get the message out and to manage our (database) lists and find out what the individual needs of businesses are... Steve Porath, the director of economic development for REDC, has a goal of meeting with a minimum of three companies per week to find out what their needs are. That has proven very valuable for us in getting back information in trying to find companies that may be considering a move while they are in the decision-making mode. We also recently held a Stakeholders Forum and for the first time since I have been with REDC, we met with all the property owners that have major real estate holdings in the County where companies can either build their own facilities or where they can relocate for lease or purchase. They are the ones that control the inventory and now we are trying to get them more active with REDC.

Q: While corporate relocations grab the headlines, please explain why business retention and expansion is so important?

A: Retention and expansion is really the nuts and bolts of a lot of what REDC

does... It doesn't get as much publicity but we have had some great (retention) successes over the last couple of years regarding companies that have expanded and spent lots of money within Rockland County, such as: Avon, Olympus, and Nice-Pak, to name a few.

Q: The Stakeholders Forum held on March 5 brought property owners, government officials and real estate executives together. Do you think it was worthwhile and what do you think it accomplished?

A: I think it was a very worthwhile endeavor. Rockland County has a unique property base because a lot of the major stakeholders are locally born and locally raised and up until now we haven't been able to get them all in the same room together... I think the goal of getting them together was to explain that we are really competing with the Northeast states, especially New Jersey, and the Hudson Valley Region as opposed to with each other. And I think it opened some eyes that we all have a lot of similar problems, similar successes. I think there was a good exchange of ideas.

Q: How has the commercial real estate market performed of late in Rockland County?

A: Rockland has a strong market. Based upon the type of tenancies we have, in a down economy we don't have huge pitfalls and in a booming economy we don't have incredible highs. We are very level, we have steady growth and there is demand. Right now, demand on the sales end is very strong and on the leasing end we are strong as well.

Q: What are your company's plans for the future?

A: I think we are probably going to become a little bit larger and we are going to become more diversified. We may become

more involved in management and do more consulting work. We are definitely looking at more development deals, looking at sites either for redevelopment or from the ground up.

The company is also considering nearly doubling the size of its Airport Executive Park complex on property it bought back about two years ago.

We feel very strongly about Rockland County and have a large investment in the County. Our businesses have been entrenched here for a long time and we like what we see in the long term.

The Costs of Caring

Continued from page 3

technology, such as \$700,000 to purchase two new digital X-ray machines that enable Nyack to provide better care in the Emergency Department.

Other expenses include drugs—and hospitals, just like consumers, have had to bear double-digit drug price increases for a number of years.

After 9/11, hospitals have also had to shoulder new costs related to preparing for previously unimaginable disasters. We need to be ready to deal with biological, chemical, and other man-made threats. We have also learned from past emergencies like ice storms and the August 2003 blackout, that we need to have sufficient supplies and electrical backup to care for members of the community who turn to us for shelter, food and comfort in times of tragedy or fear.

Nyack Hospital has a 2004 annual operating budget of \$141,552,316 to provide patient care and a capital budget of more than \$6,000,000 for new equipment, construction, and renovations.

Is that a lot of money? Yes, but we think the residents of Rockland County are worth every penny of this investment.

County IDA Proposes Plan to Spark Affordable Housing Construction

On April 13 at a press conference at his offices in New City, Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and chief officials with the County of Rockland Industrial Development Agency (IDA) announced a plan that could significantly increase affordable housing development in the County. The plan would expand the powers of the IDA to include offering incentives to developers who construct affordable housing projects. At present, IDAs in New York State do not have the legislated power to offer incentives to residential projects.

County Executive Vanderhoef, who termed the need to create additional affordable housing units to be one of his administration's top priorities in his Message to the Legislature in February, said, "We are asking the Rockland County Legislature and the New York Legislature to give us permission to become the first County in the state to extend incentives currently offered to businesses to developers of affordable housing. This is an innovative, creative way to encourage the development of more affordable housing in Rockland County." He said that if the proposal is enacted, it

could serve as a model for other counties throughout New York State that are trying to address the issue of affordable housing.

Under the proposal, the IDA could offer sales tax incentives, exemption on the mortgage recording tax and the right to allow the developer to negotiate a Payment in Lieu of Taxes agreement with the affected taxing jurisdictions.

Holly Freedman, executive director of the IDA, said that the shortage of affordable housing is a critical issue in Rockland County. In the past two years, the median price for a home in Rockland has soared 30.3 percent, according to figures released by the New York State Association of Realtors.

She added that by offering the same incentives to developers of affordable housing as those who are proposing commercial ventures, the County would be helping businesses attract and retain qualified workers.

IDA Chairman Eric Dranoff further explained that if the home rule proposal is approved by the Rockland County Legislature and adopted by the New York State Legislature, the IDA would then hold



To announce a new IDA initiative are (l to r): Joseph Abate, Director of Rockland County Office of Community Development; Holly Freedman, Executive Director, IDA; C. Scott Vanderhoef, County Executive and Eric Dranoff, Chair, IDA.

public hearings and seek input from every taxing jurisdiction to ascertain the guidelines for eligibility and to determine the definition of affordable housing. In addition, under the proposed rule, mixed-use projects could also be eligible as well as housing developments that contain only a percentage of affordable units.

Joseph Abate, director of the Rockland County Office of Community Development, said of the proposal, "This is a fantastic day for those of us who deal with affordable housing in Rockland County."

Fire Training Center can help Businesses Comply with State, Federal Regulations

The Rockland County Fire Training Center is a resource for business in the County to comply with federal and state environmental regulations. The center also conducts programs that offer the proper training for business or institutions to properly deal with hazardous waste; as well as assist firms in the implementation of fire safety and prevention initiatives.

Arthur Smith, Industrial Training Coordinator for the Rockland County Fire Training Center in Pomona, said that his agency is trying to get the word out to business that it can help them comply with OSHA and New York State PESH regulations.

In addition, the center offers training in the field of fire safety, including instructions on how to operate a fire extinguisher properly, to the formation of in-house fire brigades and the establishment of building

evacuation plans in case of fire or other emergency.

"What's unique about our organization is that if we get a call from a company, an instructor will go and spend a day at the facility and take photos. Those photos are then incorporated into a Power Point training presentation," he said.

A number of major businesses and institutions have already taken advantage of the center's services. For example, the center was scheduled to offer in April: a HAZMAT training session at Praxair in Orangeburg; hazardous materials training sessions at Nyack Hospital and a three-day session with security personnel at the Palisades Mall on how to deal with fire and electrical problems as well as other emergencies. Other clients of the Rockland County Fire Training Center include:

Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, the New York Power Authority, Wyeth, Mirant, Dress Barn and the security department at Rockland Community College.

"Today's complex workplace demands that you are highly skilled and that safe work practices are integrated into all operating procedures," it states in a brochure detailing the services provided by the Rockland County Fire Training Center. "Training provides employees with the knowledge, motivation and skills necessary to perform tasks in a way that protects them, the public, property and the environment."

For more information contact the Rockland County Fire Training Center at (845) 364-8800 or by email at: smithart@co.rockland.ny.us.

Inc. Magazine Ranks Rockland Among the Best Places to Work

Inc. Magazine ranked Rockland County #4 in its annual "Best Places to Do Business in America" competition. The designation, reported in the magazine's March 2004 edition, gives Rockland County some national recognition and tells corporate real estate executives everywhere what Rockland businesses already know – Rockland County is a very attractive corporate business location indeed.

The County finished behind only



Montpelier, Vermont, Missoula, Montana and Casper, Wyoming in the "Small Metro Area" category with job bases of up to 150,000.

Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef said he was pleased that the County was recognized for its attractive business climate by a national business publication. "Our County is strong and vibrant, our economy is one of the healthiest in New York State, and our workforce is diverse, educated and motivated," Mr. Vanderhoef said.

He added that the strong business investment activity in Rockland County in 2004 is a continuation of the "good run" the County has experienced in terms of private sector employment. He noted that the County has for the past eight years posted

gains in private sector employment, while many surrounding areas have suffered job losses.

The magazine said the following about Rockland County: "Although not cheap by Midwestern or Southern standards, its housing prices are bargain basement compared with areas closer to New York City. Population growth has been three times the New York average since 2000, while information and business services have shown solid growth."

Funding Agreement Secures Assistance For Small Businesses To the Government

County of Rockland and U.S. Department of Defense Continue Funds for PTAC



Gathered for the official signing of an agreement to cooperatively fund the PTAC program for 2004 are (standing l to r) Jason Rashford, Congresswoman Kelly's office; Fran Salzman, DHS; Maryann Williams, REDC's PTAC; Jeffrey Kassover, Jawonio; John Castellane, DCMCN; and Dana Reed, Spectrum Computer Corp., (seated l to r) James B. Tully, Chair, REDC; U.S. Army Commander Lt. Col. Jack A. Pellicci, Jr., DCMCN and Holly Freedman, President and CEO, REDC.

Direct Rail is The Holy Grail

By Jeffrey M. Zupan,
Senior Fellow, Regional Plan Association

Rail service directly to Midtown Manhattan with a one-seat ride has been the commuting brass ring for Rocklanders for generations. The West Shore rail service to Weehawken with a ferry transfer to West 42nd Street was about the closest that we ever came to reaching this goal, but that rail line



Jeffrey M. Zupan

was abandoned in 1959 at the worst possible time as the County's commuting population began to expand exponentially. In the years since we have had to settle for a ride on the Pascack Valley or Bergen County lines to Hoboken and a circuitous and slow PATH trip through Greenwich Village and Chelsea to 33rd Street and Sixth Avenue. All this has now changed with the opening of NJ TRANSIT's Secaucus Transfer station in the Meadowlands in December 2003. After years of planning and construction, the new Secaucus Junction station has given commuters from Rockland, and neighboring counties, an option to switch to a train directly into Penn Station. The savings can be as much as 20 minutes.

Although a big improvement, the commute could get even better. Two possibilities exist. With the rail tunnel into Penn Station nearing capacity, NJ TRANSIT is examining the best way to add a new rail tunnel under the Hudson, which could create a one seat ride without the need to transfer in Secaucus for both Rockland County lines and eventually for the West Shore, if it gets revived. Service to Midtown might even reach the east side of Midtown. For more on this see www.accesstotheregionscore.com

The second possibility: the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the NYS Thruway is exploring construction of a commuter rail line in the Tappan Zee/I-287

Continued on page 8

A. Jon Prusmack Named Business Leader of the Year

Recently, at the Junior Achievement of the Hudson Valley Inc.'s Business Leader of the Year Luncheon, A. Jon Prusmack, president, chief executive officer and founder of DHS Systems, LLC of Orangeburg, was honored with this year's Business Leader of the Year award, sponsored by *The Journal News*.

Prusmack, who founded the company in 1988, is the 23rd recipient of the Business Leader of the Year honor.

Prusmack serves on REDC's board, is a member of the External Marketing Committee and a highly successful PTAC client.



A. Jon Prusmack

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Direct Rail is the Holy Grail

Continued from page 7

corridor to connect to the Hudson Line of Metro North for direct service directly into Grand Central Terminal. For more details see www.tzbsite.com.

Will any of this happen? NJ TRANSIT's new tunnel is a good bet, but funding is not yet in place. Decisions on both studies are expected before the end of 2005. Any of these options will cost big bucks and will require a strong public commitment to find the funds to give commuters in Rockland and other west of Hudson communities better choices than they do today. Get involved in these studies as they progress.

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