

LEADER HERALD— 10/28/16

SUMMIT REVEALS FULTON COUNTY'S PATH TO DEVELOPMENT

JOHNSTOWN - Local officials say the foundation of Fulton County's economic development efforts goes back several years to when the county was dealing with tough financial times.

The county's path to more recent development efforts were recapped at the county's Vision 2026 Summit Tuesday at the Holiday Inn.

"Today, you'll be participating in plotting our community's future," Fulton County Board of Supervisors Chairman Charles Potter told about 90 guests.

Potter, Gloversville's 4th Ward supervisor, said the county has launched several large initiatives in recent years.

He said Vision 2026 was "an important stage in the process." He said that if the new efforts are successful, they will make Fulton County "a positive place with a positive attitude."

County Administrative Officer Jon Stead told the gathering that after the global and national recession of 2008, county government was looking to streamline its finances. By 2013, he said the county launched its "Jump Start: Fulton County" campaign - a precursor to the current "Fulton County Posi+ive" campaign.

Stead said the goal was to expand revenues and tax base, and grow sales tax revenue. A "key component" of the county's economic revitalization has been the Tryon Technology Park and a "targeted industry analysis," he said.

Among the county's most important efforts are Smart Waters, to extend water services to more rural areas outside the Glove Cities. Other efforts, Stead said, are the new Fulton County Posi+ive brand and the effort to get more "shovel-ready" sites available for industrial use.

Stead said the Board of Supervisors indicated the county "needed to be prepared and we needed a plan promoting growth." He said the question remains: "Where does the county want to go?" He said the county also has a New Neighborhood Plan for making the area safer.

With Smart Waters, Stead said the county is poised to offer utility services to other areas of the county and create job growth.

A couple of years ago, the county brought in site selector Michael Mullis and he gave the county a "strong, eye-opening critique." Stead said. Mullis indicated Fulton County needs an "identity, an attitude" and to let businesses know it is a friendly community in which to grow.

Stead said shovel-ready sites are still in demand.

"It is something that is still a priority for large-scale developers," the county official said.

He praised efforts at the Tryon Technology Park. The park contains one tenant - medical marijuana manufacturer Vireo Health of New York - and Stead said that business is "growing and growing every day."

Stead also mentioned two "primary" development areas the county is working on: Vail Mills, in the town of Mayfield, and Hales Mills Road Extension, in the town of Johnstown.

LEADER HERALD— 10/26/16

FULTON COUNTY LAYS OUT PART OF ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Fulton County released part of its draft 10-year-economic development strategy at Tuesday's Vision 2026 Summit at the Holiday Inn, garnering input from those in attendance.

County Planning Director James Mraz said Tuesday's presentation by Troy-based River Street Planning Development, which has been working the past six months on the strategy with the county, will be placed on the county website within a couple of weeks.

The county is trying to discern how to move ahead in the next 10 years.

"We're entering a new economy," said River Street Planning Development Principal Margaret Irwin. "This is about focusing the county within a larger context. The problem is you're losing young people 25 to 34. Right now, they're not focusing on Fulton County."

The public can also participate in development of the 10-year plan by filling out a survey at: surveymonkey.com/r/FULTONVision2026. Surveys must be submitted by 5 p.m. Nov. 11.

Irwin led the group of 90 summit participants in a review of the strategy, which she said is about 50 percent completed. Later in the event, she recapped the input of those in attendance, who met in groups to present more ideas.

She focused on four main goals identified in the strategy so far. By 2026, she said, Fulton County is expected to be a "premiere place."

"Fulton County will be the place every other place wants to be," Irwin said.

The first goal: "Position Fulton County as an extraordinary place to live with an enviable quality of life."

Irwin said River Street's research so far found that the county should better use vacant buildings and its parks in Gloversville.

She said the county could use its historic resources, such as walking trails, and create roadside shops.

Participants identified several items to group in the "quality of life" goal of the strategy, including promoting the county's "pristine" lakes.

Other ideas included: affordable taxes; more diverse food options; preserve local architectural heritage; diversify housing; reduce absentee ownership; expand wifi; improve public spaces; and hold more events.

"What I heard was downtown housing, lofts, condominiums," Irwin said. "Fulton County has the ability to meet most of all those needs in one pretty tight place."

The strategy's second goal is: "Continue to build a strong economy and tax base."

Irwin said her firm identified a need to promote "numerous shovel-ready sites," and develop areas of Hales Mills Road Extension and Vail Mills. The county could also explore a hotel and conference center, she said.

Participants in groups said of the second goal they would like to see a diversified building base in the county, and to market Gloversville as an internet-based business hub. They also want support for a regional land bank and to "stabilize" neighborhoods.

Irwin said the third goal is: "Emphasize the fact that healthy communities are connected to nature."

She said her firm put into the strategy that Fulton County can promote an "active lifestyle" for its residents. Those activities include hiking, boating, walking, swimming, canoeing, kayaking and snowshoeing.

The group said ice fishing could be promoted more, and there should be public access to the Great Sacandaga Lake.

Other ideas for the strategy included: increasing mountain biking facilities; geocaching; a skateboard park; a county-supported triathlon; maintaining cleaner trails and promoting healthy community programs.

The fourth goal is: "Innovate through bold leadership and progressive planning."

Summit participants listed several items for this goal, including: tackling crime problems; working with the Adirondack Park Agency on issues; evaluating consolidation efforts, shared services; using local resources for grants and meeting the need for a sewer district in the area.

"We're going to take what you did and work with it and develop a strategy," Irwin said.

THE DAILY GAZETTE – 10/23/16

FULTON COUNTY PUSHING TRYON TECHNOLOGY PARK

FULTON COUNTY — When Gov. Andrew Cuomo closed the Tryon Juvenile Detention Facility in 2011, Fulton County and the surrounding area lost 325 jobs and an estimated \$15,000,000 in wages spent in the local economy, according to an estimate from the county planning department.

The Gloversville Water Dept. and the Gloversville-Johnstown Joint Wastewater Treatment Plant also lost a combined \$170,000 in annual revenue, they said.

But while similar youth detention facilities across the state were shuttered and remained closed, officials in Fulton County had something different in mind for the Tryon facility. They asked the state to turn the property over to them so they could convert it into a business park.

“Fulton County government took the initiative,” said James Mraz, Executive Director of the Fulton County Industrial Development Agency. “After a couple years worth of back and forth this entire facility was deeded over to the county’s industrial development agency.”

The county, through a combination of grants and matching funds, has so far put over \$4 million into the site. They built a ring access road throughout the 515-acre shovel-ready site, known as the Tryon Technology Park, as well as a 300,000-gallon water tower and pump station to improve water pressure and supply.

Their plan is to tear down nearly all of the many structures that were part of the detention facility, save for one 15,000-square-foot facility they hope to convert into a regional business training and incubator center. That facility, said Mraz, will help new businesses get off the ground and provide space for them to try out ideas.

Mraz said county officials felt the site would make a good business park because of its proximity to New York’s interstate system and the presence of existing utility hookups.

“There’s already gas, electric, water and sewer service here,” said Mraz. “When you’re developing shovel-ready sites that’s usually the biggest cost, is getting that infrastructure, which is integral to developing the site. It was already here.”

He also touted the county’s access to markets.

“Because of our proximity to interstates, this county, a four-hour drive in any direction has access 70 million potential customers, and that’s huge,” said Mraz, pointing to retail giant Wal-Mart opening a food distribution center in the Johnstown industrial park as evidence of Fulton County’s advantageous location.

“They did it for a reason,” he said. “Strategically it was centrally located to a geographic area that they wanted to serve and could serve given the interstate system here. Our proximity to markets is as good if not better than most other areas.”

Mraz also touted the relative remoteness of Tryon Technology Park as an asset.

“It’s a very peaceful campus setting. So part of our marketing strategy is we’re saying ‘come here, take a 180 degree turn away from a high-cost, high-stress business life,’” he said.

“We think it’s a positive thing. And that’s how we’re trying to market it.”

Selling prospective businesses on the property is something Mraz, who doubles as the county’s planning director, said is a daily task for him and other officials.

“That’s a work task that we’re on every day,” said Mraz. “This business is very competitive.”

Mraz said the county is courting a prospect now that’s looking at sites all over the northeast.

“So every time we’re competing against other great sites, and sometimes you win and sometimes you lose,” he said. “I can’t say when we’re going to have [tenants]; all I can say is every day we’re trying.”

The Tryon Tech Park already has one tenant, Vireo Health of New York, which is one of the few companies allowed to grow and manufacture medical cannabis for use by patients in New York.

Vireo’s scientific director Eric Greenbaum said on a recent tour of the facility that the company is one of just five allowed to operate in the state, and while regulations in New York are more stringent than in other states, he sees a bright future for the industry in the state.

Greenbaum said New York’s marijuana program is a “really medical model” as opposed to more recreation-based models in Colorado and California, which could actually greatly help the medical cannabis industry nationwide to serve patients as opposed to casual users.

“[New York’s] is a model that in my opinion will serve as the template for a federal regulatory framework similar to what the FDA would do,” said Greenbaum. “Compared to California, where the medical model is basically a proxy for adult and recreational use...the fact that we don’t sell [marijuana bud], we only sell carefully formulated medicines...it’s just indicative of the approach that New York is taking.”

Vireo provides customers with carefully formulated medicines in three different forms, said Greenbaum: oil (for vaporizing), a capsule or an oral solution. The company has five brands that run the gamut from having very high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentrations and very low cannabidiol (CBD) concentrations, and vice versa.

Cannabidiol is a compound that is useful for seizure disorders as well as pain, said Greenbaum. It’s also been shown to mitigate the sometimes dysphoric effects of THC, which can include paranoia and anxiousness.

THC is the chemical produced by the glands of a marijuana plant that is most responsible for the euphoric effect – or high – found in users.

Greenbaum said the company settled at Tryon Technology Park as part of the licensing agreement it struck with the state, but that he and Vireo CEO Kyle Kingsley are native New Yorkers who are passionate about jumpstarting local economies wherever they can in the state.

“We knew that the state was really focused on repurposing this facility; we knew there was a commitment to building up the Tryon Technology Park to be a center for tech development as well as job growth for this region,” said Greenbaum.

And while the state’s regulation of medical cannabis is a bit strict now, said Greenbaum, there’s reason to believe it will broaden in the near future.

“It’s a pretty limited patient market right now; there’s been some discussion with the legislators and regulators to expand some of the qualifying patient conditions to include chronic pain,” said Greenbaum. “Chronic pain is one of the indications for which we have the most evidence of efficacy with medical cannabis. So we’re hoping that that goes through. We think it will be really good for the people of New York.”

Greenbaum said Vireo is “optimistic” the regulations will be expanded within the next quarter.

“Not that we’ll be able to implement it, but we’re optimistic we’ll see an announcement within the next 90 days,” said Greenbaum. Relaxing them, he said, would “open up access a lot, and will be good for growth and patients as well.”

And growth is what county officials are hoping for as well with the Tryon Technology Park. Mraz said the capital projects at the site are in their final stages, and the way in which the county has been able to repurpose what would have become an abandoned property is a unique and inspiring way to create more jobs and commerce in the area.

“It’s just going to take some time,” he said.

LEADER-HERALD – 10/20/16

FULTON COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY WILL SEEK MULTIPLE BROKERS TO MARKET TRYON TECHNOLOGY PARK

JOHNSTOWN —The Fulton County Industrial Development Agency will be seeking multiple commercial real estate brokers to market the Tryon Technology Park.

The Fulton County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution last week to endorse the concept.

Fulton County Planning Director Jim Mraz said the IDA board began considering involving real estate brokers to market the property months ago.

He said the board discussed two basic approaches. The first approach would engage a singular broker and enter into an exclusive listing agreement, where that broker would go out and market Tryon directly. Mraz said the hope would be that the broker would bring projects to Tryon and if doing so, earn a commission. The second approach was to send Tryon information to all brokers. Any broker who brought in projects would also receive commission.

Tryon, the former youth detention center on Route 107, has 213 acres of shovel ready land available. Projects proposed within the Tryon Technology Park benefit from an expedited 30 to 60 day review process at no cost to the applicant. The county established the park in an effort to attract modern industries to the area. The 515-acre site has plans for a Regional Business Training & Incubator Center.

Mraz said the IDA has a strong working relationship with the board of supervisors and the Economic Development Committee recommended sending the information to all brokers. Sending the information to the brokers will be of no cost, Mraz explained. He said the IDA would send drawing maps and a marketing package to all licensed real estate brokers in the region. Officials in Fulton County previously launched a website for the Tryon Technology Park in an effort to attract potential businesses to the development area. A target industry analysis for Tryon, prepared by DCG Corplan, stated the top five industry clusters for the new business park would be biomedical research and development; food and beverage industries; headquarters and business services; healthcare products and services; and electronics manufacturing.

Vireo Health, a company who manufactures and distributes medical marijuana, was the first business to enter Tryon. Vireo has already created approximately 20 new jobs in the region.

“There are two options, both are utilized a lot so we are going to try this approach first. If it doesn’t work, we can reconvene at a later date,” Mraz said.

LEADER-HERALD – 10/15/16

FULTON COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY TO SEEK BROKERS

JOHNSTOWN - The Fulton County Industrial Development Agency board voted Tuesday to utilize multiple commercial real estate brokers to market properties at the Tryon Technology Park.

The Fulton County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday at the County Office Building approved the concept of the IDA taking such action.

IDA Executive Director James Mraz said Thursday the IDA will probably begin soliciting for brokers by the end of the year.

"We're going to put together a package to send to various brokers," Mraz said. "We're targeting getting things out in the next month or two."

Both the IDA and county government are working closely to bring businesses to the new technology park in the town of Perth. Fulton County has invested county funds into marketing Tryon through: a Tryon targeted industry analysis, lead generation, sign and barriers, and a marketing agreement with the Fulton County Center for Regional Growth.

The IDA on Tuesday at the Fort Johnstown Annex reviewed potential real estate marketing services for Tryon. The agency previously authorized distributing a request for proposal to two commercial real estate brokers. Proposals were received from CBRE Albany and Berkshire Hathaway. Interviews were done by IDA members.

But county Administrative Officer Jon Stead told the county Board of Supervisors' Economic Development and Environment Committee he thought the IDA board should seek the consent of Fulton County prior to retaining a broker. The board took such action Tuesday.

Mraz met with the committee Sept. 28 and supervisors decided to suggest the IDA send out a marketing prospectus to commercial brokers to bring prospective projects to Tryon. Any broker who brings a company to Tryon will be paid a commission. An incentive would be provided to any broker that brings a company to Tryon within one year.

LEADER-HERALD – 10/13/16

COUNTY SCHEDULES SUMMIT TO UNVEIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

JOHNSTOWN — The Fulton County Board of Supervisors have announced they will be hosting a community summit later this month to unveil its development strategy for the next several years.

The “Vision 2026” summit will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 25, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 308 North Comrie Avenue, in Johnstown.

According to a release, the summit will provide residents the opportunity to learn about and discuss Fulton County’s strategic direction over the next decade. “Vision 2026 is an opportunity to continue the Fulton County NY Posi+ive momentum,” Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Charles Potter said. “We hope that this countywide vision will bring local communities together to enhance quality of life throughout the region, promote our scenic resources and increase investment and growth. We want to attract people who are ready to make a 180-degree turn from high-stress and a high-cost way of life.”

The county has been working with River Street Planning and Development to prepare an economic development strategy that will provide the vision for future economic development opportunities in the area. The plans are expected to be unveiled during the special summit hosted by the county later this month.

Fulton County Planning Director Jim Mraz said the strategy will include a profile and analysis of Fulton County, as well as a 10-year vision for the region. He said the plans will focus on the Vail Mills and Hales Mills Road Extension development areas, new retail and housing strategies, plans for the Tryon Technology Park site and the proposed regional business park. County officials said they will be releasing the first draft of that plan and seeking public input on where the county should be heading in the future following the presentation.

“It brings together a number of technical reports that evaluate community assets, including housing and retail opportunities,” Mraz said. “It identifies potential development sites, calls out a vision and lays out a 10-year implementation plan. It’s important that we hear from as many people as possible to build consensus about the county’s path forward.” Fulton County Administrative Officer Jon Stead said the summit will not only unveil the details of these plans but also provide video and artist renderings of what the new development may look like in the future. Mraz previously said the Smart Waters initiative will provided new economic development opportunities in both the Vail Mills and Hales Mills Road Extension development areas.

The Hales Mills Road area has about 500 developable acres of land, while the Vail Mills area has about 450 developable acres of land. Overall, the Smart Waters system has the potential to reach about 10,000 acres of serviceable land throughout the county. County officials said they

hope to install the water and sewer lines needed in the Hales Mills Road development area by 2017 and the Vail Mills area in 2018. The Tryon Technology Park is also currently being marketed to potential businesses. According to a release, the summit this month will also synthesize these existing initiatives into a county profile; identify new initiatives and projects needed to achieve the 10-year vision and identify projects at the county, town and village levels that can attract state support and leverage private investment.

The county will also be showing two videos which build on the previous “Fulton County NY Posi+ive” branding effort, that highlight the county’s quality of life as well as investment opportunities at the Tryon Technology Park. According to the release, the keynote speaker will be John T. Evers, director of government affairs for the Business Council of New York State. The Business Council of New York State, Inc., is the leading business organization in New York State, representing the interests of large and small firms throughout the state. Its membership is made up of thousands of companies, as well as local chambers of commerce and professional and trade associations.

“Dr. Evers has an impressive background in economic development and can speak about the challenges and opportunities facing communities like Fulton County,” President and CEO of the Fulton County Center for Regional Growth Ron Peters said.

Those interested in attending the summit need to register online by Tuesday, Oct. 18, at <https://fultoncountyvision2026summit.eventbrite.com>. The county advised seating will be limited during the event.

LEADER-HERALD – 10/10/16

FULTON COUNTY OFFICIALS TO RELEASE 10-YEAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AT OCT. 25 SUMMIT

JOHNSTOWN - Fulton County officials will release the county's new 10-year economic development strategy at a community summit from 1-5 p.m. Oct. 25 at the Holiday Inn.

County Administrative Officer Jon Stead said Friday the public is invited to the event, at which two new videos will be released.

"This is like building a comprehensive plan for a 10-year period," Stead said.

He said the strategy will be a way to cull together all the county's important economic development efforts into a long-range plan. He said efforts started a few years ago with the "Jump Start Fulton County" initiative.

"This is a stage in that process," Stead said.

Stead said the county needs a 10-year plan to guide it forward. Officials said the strategy not only does that, but also creates a county profile, and identifies projects at various municipal levels that can attract state support and leverage continuing private investment.

Some of Fulton County's economic initiatives the past few years have included the Smart Waters infrastructure initiative, Tryon Technology Park and a proposed regional business park for Route 30A.

According to a news release issued Friday by the county, the Oct. 25 event will be a "community summit." Officials says the economic development strategy to be released constitutes a "clear vision" for the county for the next several years.

County supervisors in March authorized a \$160,000 agreement with Troy-based River Street Planning and Development, which prepared the strategy with the assistance of the county and others.

According to the release, the summit will provide various interested parties an opportunity to discuss Fulton County's "strategic direction" the next decade.

Gloversville 4th Ward Supervisor Charles Potter, board chairman, indicated in the release: "Vision 20!6 is an opportunity to continue the Fulton County NY Posi+ive [campaign] momentum."

"We hope that this countywide vision will bring local communities together to enhance quality of life throughout the region, promote our scenic resources and increase investment and growth," he said. "We want to attract people who are ready to make a 180-degree turn from high-stress and a high-cost way of life."

The keynote speaker for the summit will be John T. Evers, director of government affairs for the Business Council of New York State Inc.

Fulton County Center for Regional Growth President and CEO Ron Peters indicated in the release that Evers has "an impressive background in economic development." He said Evers can "speak about the challenges and opportunities facing communities like Fulton County."

According to the release, a team of consultants are preparing the strategy, mainly from River Street Planning and Development; but also Elan Planning, Design and Landscape Architecture of Saratoga Springs; Room One Planning and Design of Blenheim; and Asterhill Inc. of Manford.

"It brings together a number of technical reports that evaluate community assets, including housing and retail opportunities," county Planning Director James Mraz said Friday.

Persons interested in attending can register online at:
[fultoncountyvision2026summit.eventbrite .com](http://fultoncountyvision2026summit.eventbrite.com).

LEADER-HERALD – 10/10/16

JOHNSTOWN - The Fulton County Industrial Development Agency is trying to decide whether to contract a single real estate broker or multiple brokers to market land at the Tryon Technology Park.

Fulton County legislators last week recommended the IDA go with multiple brokers to spread around the potential for commissions from new Tryon businesses.

IDA Executive Director James Mraz said Monday that the Board of Supervisors' Economic Development and Environment Committee decided to recommend "all brokers be given an opportunity" to gain commissions from Tryon property.

"It's just [dealing] with any real estate agent," Mayfield Supervisor Rick Argotsinger, committee chairman, said Monday.

Mraz, director of the county Planning Department, said the IDA and county are "great partners" in the 515-acre Tryon park in the town of Perth.

He said the board of directors of the IDA - owners of the Tryon property - hasn't made a decision yet on the brokers issue.

Mraz came to the Economic Development and Environment Committee last week to review the "concept" of the IDA engaging a commercial real estate broker to market the Tryon Technology Park. The intent would be to have this broker represent another way to market Tryon to perspective businesses.

Under the singular option, Mraz said the broker would be the exclusive listing agency. The broker would develop and implement its own marketing plan for Tryon.

Mraz told the committee an alternative approach - eventually endorsed by the panel - would be multiple brokers. He said information about Tryon would be distributed to all commercial and real estate brokers in the region. The IDA would also offer all brokers a commission that would be paid on any sale or lease that a broker negotiated on behalf of the IDA.

Under the scenario, no broker has an exclusive listing.

The Tryon facility and its future growth is part of a larger Fulton County economic development strategy aimed at bringing more jobs into the area to reduce the local property tax burden.

New Jersey-based DCG Corplan Consulting is also doing a marketing plan and analysis for Tryon that identified clusters of potential jobs.

LEADER-HERALD – 9/26/16

(by Charles Potter)

Fulton County government has a history of responding to economic challenges.

When the leather and glove industry faded, we rebounded, recovered and reinvented ourselves. We choose to take action when new opportunities present themselves.

In the 1980s, we developed a plan that inspired the construction of Crossroads Industrial Park, Johnstown Industrial Park and Crossroads Business Park. We acted fast, and all three of these facilities utilized our county's unique qualities and contribute greatly to the business climate here in Fulton County.

But like most communities upstate, we are facing new economic challenges. The recovery that folks are feeling in other parts of the country hasn't made its way to our neighborhoods yet; however, we are confident that we have a plan to revitalize our economy.

Now we're ready to take this to the next level.

With extensive economic research, planning and eagerness for change, "Jump Start Fulton County" was born. This multi-faceted plan aims to promote growth, business and affordability within the county and provide a "shot in the arm" to the local economy.

Step one to promote growth, business and affordability within the county starts with the people.

Fulton County NY POSI+IVE is helping surrounding communities and visitors recognize the endless opportunities that Fulton County has in store for them.

The branding campaign, which was introduced in late 2015, is working to shed light on Fulton County and reveal our community as one that is welcoming and ready to expand. We have considerable advantages over other communities. The costs of property, single-family homes and shovel-ready land in Fulton County are significantly lower, with much higher availability.

Affordability, natural beauty and safety are the qualities that make Fulton County the easy choice for families and businesses looking for a new place.

Two other critically important components of the "Jump Start Fulton County" initiative include Tryon Technology Park and the SMART Waters Regional Water and Sewer System. Both will help in the transformation of Fulton County and will provide opportunities and progress for years to come.

Tryon Technology Park will be the modern technology industry hub that our region needs. It's easy access and 220 acres of shovel-ready sites, in addition to current tenant Vireo Health and plans for a Regional Business Training & Incubator Center, will provide any size business with the facility and infrastructure needed to succeed.

SMART Waters, the historic intermunicipal agreement between Fulton County and the city of Groversville, will allow extension of municipal water service and utilities like never before. Developments that were once out of reach will now have easy and affordable access.

This undertaking is large, but we know from experience that it can be done with community engagement and input. At this fall's Vision 2026 Summit, we will unveil a proposed 10 year Vision and Development Strategy for Fulton County and ensure that comments and concerns from the public are heard and addressed. This is an important part of any public plan.

When governments face challenges, they can choose one of two paths. They can dig their heels in and let history repeat itself, or they can be bold and try something new.

Fulton County officials have chosen to be bold.

Charles Potter is the Chairman of the Fulton County Board of Supervisors.

LEADER-HERALD – 9/26/16

PERTH - The pistils, or hairs of the plants, are ready. The resin and THC levels appear to be in peak condition.

It's time to harvest marijuana plants at the Tryon Technology Park. "We're going to start harvesting next week," Vireo Health of New York, LLC Chief Horticulturist Chuck Schmitt said Wednesday.

Vireo Health - the park's only and first full-time business - is due to begin harvesting its cannabis plants this week to produce batches of legal medical marijuana products for the public. The firm employs 20 people, mostly with scientific, horticulture and plant biology backgrounds.

Fulton County and Vireo Health officials on Wednesday took area media on a tour of Vireo Health's new operation - a curiously sophisticated and highly-protected cannabis growth building sanctioned by New York state. The new company provides medical marijuana - mainly in the form of vapor and capsules. Such firms also produce medical cannabis oral tinctures and syringes to Empire State-sanctioned dispensaries.

The new Tryon Technology Park is owned by the Fulton County Industrial Development Agency.

"Vireo came to us last year, in the spring of 2015," says IDA Executive Director James Mraz. "This was a central location."

In 2014, New York state adopted the Compassionate Care Act that authorized the growing of medical cannabis to manufacture medicines to administer to patients with debilitating diseases. Vireo Health was one of five companies issued a license, retrofitting an existing 21,000-square-foot building.

Vireo CEO Ari Hoffnung agreed Friday his company was attracted to the location.

LEADER-HERALD – 9/22/16

PERTH - The 515-acre Tryon Technology Park is in its infancy, but Fulton County officials have big plans for its future.

County Planning Director James Mraz on Wednesday led area media on a tour of the County Highway 107 facility, which used to be the state's Tryon Youth Detention Facility. Now, as Mraz explained, the Fulton County Industrial Development Agency has taken ownership and is working closely with county government to create developable land and prepare the park for businesses.

"We are currently actively marketing Tryon," Mraz said. Officials say they hope the Tryon Technology Park becomes a new home for high-tech companies.

The Tryon facility and its future growth is part of a larger Fulton County economic development strategy aimed at bringing more jobs into the area to reduce the local property tax burden.

Mraz, also the IDA's executive director, said the Fulton County Demolition Team this summer took down an old building on the Tryon campus and is now razing five more for the creation of more than 100 acres of prime developable land.

"That work is ongoing," he said.

The overall Tryon plan is to at least replace jobs lost when the youth detention facility closed in 2011.

"We're off to that start," Mraz said of new job creation.

The technology park currently has one tenant - medical marijuana manufacturer Vireo Health. The company has 20 employees.

Various sections of the park will be divided into pockets of what Mraz calls "shovel-ready land." There are 51.5 acres of such land off the park's newly created County Highway 117, another 118 acres of land will be shovel-ready in an area to the east of the park bordered by County Highways 107 and 158, and another 44 acres is planned to the northwest.

Many of the project sites among 260 acres will be around a loop in the center of the park. A future development area of 57 acres is being studied for the northern part of the park.

The park already has water and sewer services, and a regional business training and incubator center is planned for an existing building.

Mraz said that after the IDA took ownership of Tryon in 2014, officials immediately concerned themselves with job creation.

The IDA also owns 30 acres across the road from the park entrance.

"We're also willing to look at these other properties as commercial developments," Mraz said. "That's the vision."

He said many ideas for job creation spun from a September 2013 two-day visit by international site selector Michael Mullis to Fulton and Montgomery counties. New Jersey-based DCG Corplan Consulting has also done a marketing plan and analysis for Tryon that identified clusters of potential jobs.

County officials are also working with engineering firm C.T. Male to reuse existing space at the Tryon campus. Money is available to bring the regional business training and incubator center to fruition through \$185,000 in federal Northern Borders Regional Commission grant money, \$50,000 from 2016 county budget funds, and \$65,000 through the IDA.

The hope, Mraz says, is to eventually create jobs through big or small companies. He said Fulton County will find a way to accommodate companies now at Tryon if it has to.

Buildings at Tryon were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Some are structurally sound and some aren't. Officials are looking at the former Midas building at Tryon for providing 16,000 square feet for start-up companies.

"This building is perfectly set up for this," Mraz said.

The Midas-sponsored auto shop serviced vehicles at the state's former detention facility.

LEADER-HERALD – 1/12/16

On Thursday, New York state's much-anticipated medical marijuana market opened for the first time, allowing the legal sale of marijuana in medicine form, including capsules, vaporizers and liquids. So far, the market is pretty small, with only 71 patients signing up for the necessary permits as of Friday, according to the state Department of Health.

We're hoping that market expands in size, because if it does, local medical marijuana producer Vireo Health of New York may be able to expand employment at its plant in the Tryon Technology Park, which currently employs about 24 people.

New York state's medical marijuana market is highly regulated. Each of the five companies granted licenses to produce the drugs can only distribute them to customers from dispensaries in specific places.

Vireo Health controls dispensaries in Queens, Albany, Broome and Westchester counties. This system isn't very competitive and will probably slow the growth of the market for medical marijuana. New York state is working with Vireo and the other medical marijuana manufacturers to help set up regulations to allow home delivery of medical marijuana. We support that effort because it should help expand the market and hopefully spur more employment at Vireo as well as help get needed drugs to people who can't easily travel to Albany to get them.

New York state has set up a highly regulated, probably too regulated, medical marijuana market. If the state's regulations help a company like Vireo grow and expand its workforce, they are good for our area, but in areas like home delivery, the state should open up regulations and give Vireo a chance to grow and hopefully hire more workers.