

Lebanon, EDC working to grow jobs

A "Center for Research and Collaboration" could bring researchers from Indiana and Purdue universities, venture capitalists and others to Lebanon, where they would collaborate on biotechnology, green energy and other projects.

Mayor Huck Lewis said the city is in the "very, very early" stages of creating a research center here.

At a Nov. 30 city council meeting, Boone County Economic Development

Corp. Executive Director Dax Norton said Lebanon is an ideal site for the "high tech campus" because it is midway between the biotech and pharmaceutical companies and IUPUI campus in Indianapolis, and Purdue University in Lafayette.

"We've had some conversation with Purdue and IU and that's as far as it's gone,"



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Lewis said.

"We need for them to buy into it - then, we have to figure out a business plan, and see if it works," Lewis said. "Right now, it's just a conceptual thing."

The EDC will also emphasize ways to help the county's workers learn new skills to land new, higher-paying jobs.

"We think it's important, for true economic development, to assist everyone across the board," Norton told the Boone County Council Tuesday. "We do believe we can attract some highly skilled, highly technical jobs to the county - but we must have the workforce."

Norton said the EDC is working with the Boone County Learning Network, "to raise both skills and learning levels."

Elected officials here and the EDC should consider copying Logansport's idea of endowing two scholarships to the Ivy Tech Community College campus there. One scholarship is to help residents pay tuition to earn technical certificates or associate degrees. The other is to help GED grads who live in Logansport and attend IVTC there.

A similar endowment could be set up here with, for example, food and beverage revenue. The Community Foundation of Boone County could administer the scholarships. Other arrangements could be made.

Norton has talked about the importance of investing in Boone County's "human capital" - its workforce.

One of the EDC's initiatives for next year, Norton has said, is helping elected officials develop "creative financing options" to attract new companies.

We need to be creative in helping our workers find work, too.

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