

Home / Maryland Independent / News / Local News

http://www.somdnews.com/independent/news/local/indian-head-hosts-innovation-and-technology-summit/article_c2665ee7-2976-50b7-837e-f4a107671b00.html

Indian Head hosts Innovation and Technology summit

By CHARLIE WRIGHT cwright@somdnews.com 10 hrs ago



Above left, members from a variety of technological and economic disciplines came out for the event, hoping to glean information from each other or promote future ventures. Above right, Maryland Department of Commerce deputy secretary Benjamin Wright delivers keynote address on Thursday, focusing on the growth potential in Indian Head and Charles County.

STAFF PHOTO BY CHARLIE WRIGHT

Members of the technical and economic workforce in the Charles County area gathered on Thursday for Innovation and Technology Day at the Village Green Pavilion.

The event was put on by Energetics Technology Center, a research and engineering group based in St. Charles, with the goal being to ignite economic growth in the region and build on strides made by the Naval Support Facility Indian Head, the surrounding town and the Charles County Department of Economic Development. The attendees included staff from SMECO, ZekiahTech, SolarTech, the Port Tobacco River Conservancy and the Indian Head Rail Trail, convening and sharing business ideas for a more successful Southern Maryland.

The overarching idea linking the representatives from these organizations with those from the local and state governments is an increased connection between economic prosperity and the infusion of technology. Indian Head was deemed fit for the occasion because of the more than 800 patents held by residents, many the result of work done at the naval base, suggesting a high level of skill and knowledge in that arena.

“We’re definitely moving in a direction where the state and local officials, private industry and government labs are seeing innovation is a really important theme for them,” said Energetics Technology Center president and CEO Bob Kavetsky in his kick-off address. “What we’ve seen in the last five years is a real focus on economic-focused groups at the local level and the state level.”

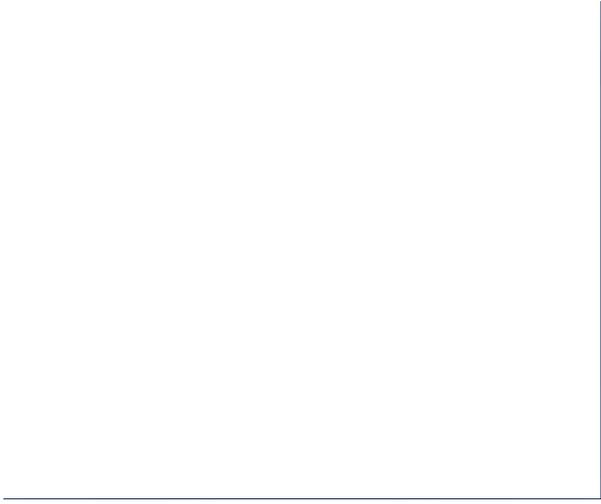
Indian Head is uniquely positioned for this type of growth, with the naval base as its hub and the pending presence of the Velocity Center and the Nammo Energetics lab. Local politicians have harped on reviving the once-bustling city from its current state of lethargy, and the influx of jobs and overall technical expansion expected to arise from these acquisitions may do just that. Maryland Department of Commerce deputy secretary Benjamin Wu discussed the progress made in the area during his lengthy keynote remarks, while also pointing out that these changes are just the beginning.

“There’s a lot going on here, and that’s one of the reasons why we’re here,” Wu said. “To not just talk about what is going on, but also to talk about what else can we do to help support Indian Head and Charles County.”

Wu made references to everything from “Grease” to the Laurel/Yanni debate in his speech to the crowd of a few dozen, imploring residents to continue the advancement of the town through interactions during the day-long festivities. He invoked “Seinfeld” to note that government and community leaders can’t just “yada yada yada” the headway made on the economic front and must

give credit to the hard work it took, but also reminded folks that there's more work to be done. Nammo is scheduled to arrive in Indian Head in the coming months, and the Boardwalk project is another factor contributing to attracting people and companies to the town.

"We want businesses to come here, but they won't come here unless they want to be here," Wu said. "And that means that new employees want to live here and they want to make sure that there is a good quality of life that will ensure that they remain here."



As for growth across the region, Charles County Re-development Manager Taylor Yewell shared a presentation on opportunity zones, created last year under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The U.S. Department of Treasury approved 149 of these zones in Maryland, with Charles County getting three, in Indian Head, the Waldorf Redevelopment Corridor and Waldorf Station. Yewell described these new features as "tax incentives to stimulate investment in low-income communities," with investors receiving benefits like temporary deferrals or permanent exclusions for placing money in "opportunity funds."

Yewell used the imaginary sale of a \$1 million asset as an example, illustrating how this would result in capital gains taxes that can be lessened through investment in the funds. The Department of Economic Development will be tasked with directing investors to the Charles County zones, with the potential for bountiful benefits to projects in these areas.

Those in attendance were treated to many more conversations from industry leaders, while also getting the opportunity to visit business exhibits and network with each other. The program closed with a reception at the Black Box Theater, where many more innovative propositions likely spawned over offerings from the cash bar.

Twitter: @CharlieIndyNews

Twitter: @CharlieIndyNews