



news release

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WESTCHESTER NAMED ONE OF WORLD'S "TOP SEVEN" INTELLIGENT COMMUNITIES County advances in prestigious global contest honoring innovative economic development efforts

Taking the global spotlight for its economic efforts, Westchester County has been named one of the Top Seven Intelligent Communities of the Year by The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF), a non-profit international think tank that focuses on job creation and economic development in the broadband economy.

The designation recognizes Westchester for its economic development efforts in the 21st century and puts the county in the company of other progressive communities from Scotland, Canada, South Korea and Estonia that also provide "role models for the world's best practices."

"This just reinforces what we've known all along – that we are at the forefront when it comes to technology, education and economic development," said County Executive Andy Spano. "For years, we've had some of the most innovative policies and programs, as well as one of the best telecommunications infrastructures in the U.S. Now we have a chance to be measured in an international arena."

The Top Seven announcement which was made on Monday in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the second stage of ICF's annual Intelligent Community awards cycle, which garners hundreds of nominations each year from around the world. Gaining a place among the Top Seven is a major achievement as well as a step toward even greater recognition for Westchester's efforts to successfully use broadband and information technology to attract leading edge businesses, stimulate job creation, and generate sustainable economic growth.

For the first time, the Top Seven included three American communities, plus three from the rest of the world that were named to the list a second time. The other finalists include Dundee, Scotland, United Kingdom; Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada; Gangnam District, Seoul, South Korea; Northeast Ohio, USA; Tallinn, Estonia; Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA. For a more detailed list, see www.intelligentcommunity.org.

MORE

PAGE 2 – SMART COMMUNITIES

Summarizing Westchester’s achievements, ICF noted that the county “was largely ignored by broadband carriers until it amassed demand from public agencies and built a multi-gigabit fiber network that now serves over 3,500 companies. Determined to maintain the quality of life that is its most compelling advantage, the county has invested in promoting business growth, improving the skills of its workforce and fighting digital exclusion in a community that has seen new immigrants become 35% of its population.”

Spano noted that the county’s telecom network was repeatedly cited by ICF as a major contributor to new investment, educational opportunities, employment growth and an overall better quality of life. The 800-mile fiber optic network, initiated by the county and built by Cablevision’s Lightpath, links local governments, libraries, hospitals and schools, and helped spark competing rings that ultimately created one of the best local telecom infrastructures in the United States.

“This information superhighway, which we had the foresight to create ten-plus years ago, is a big part of what put us on the map,” Spano said.

The Top Seven were selected, based on analysis by academic experts, from among the Smart21 Communities of the Year, a group of semi-finalists named by ICF on October 25, 2007 in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, which was the 2007 Intelligent Community of the Year. On May 16, one of the Top Seven will be named 2008’s Intelligent Community of the Year during ICF’s *Building the Broadband Economy* annual summit in New York City.

This year’s theme – “sustainability” – allowed the county to highlight many of its green initiatives, ranging from the global warming task force to new county policies in favor of sustainable economic development. Westchester’s application also described contributions made to local innovation and economic prosperity by partnering organizations, including local universities, libraries and private sector firms.

Speaking of the Top Seven, ICF Chairman John G. Jung added, “In these outstanding communities, the act of building a broadband network with a sustainable business model became a catalyst for efforts on many fronts to create economic growth, social inclusion and environmental stewardship. The network was the starting point, but the communities went on from there to develop a powerful culture of use, which proved transformative. They are inspiring models from which we all continue to learn.”