

Franklin's focus on business applauded

By Joe O'Connell/Daily News staff

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FRANKLIN —

An empty warehouse at 431 Washington St. was the ideal location for officials to hold the town's 2010 Economic Development Summit yesterday, which showcased opportunities for business growth in Franklin.

More than 70 people attended the summit, which took place in the former home of the investor services division of Putnam Investments. The Washington Street facility is one of 100 or so that the Planning and Community Development Department hopes will appeal to a business looking to expand.

"There is no other community that has put on such an effort," said Jack Lank, president of the United Regional Chamber of Commerce. "People here in Franklin get it, they really do."

The summit highlighted the town's ability to offer tax incentives to businesses that expand within six so-called economic opportunity areas designated over the last two years.



Jacob Belcher/Daily News staff

Peter Abair, director of economic development for the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, talks about the opportunities Franklin has to offer for businesses that may want to come to the town during Wednesday's economic development summit at 431 Washington St. in Franklin.

The areas include Forge Park, Franklin Industrial Park, North Grove Street, South Grove Street and Pond Street. There are about 100 parcels available, totaling more than 900 acres.

"We created these to promote opportunities for economic development in these areas," said Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Taberner. "I think it's a good designation."

Taberner and his staff won high praise from all of yesterday's speakers, including Robert Roche, president and CEO of Tegra Medical, who moved his company into an economic opportunity area in 2009.

"We are a living, breathing example of a company that has lived through this process," said Roche, who moved Tegra Medical into a facility in Forge Park. "The move to Franklin has been everything we had hoped. I can tell you we had a very pleasant experience."



Jacob Belcher/Daily News staff

Nancy Razevich from the MassDevelopment Finance Agency collects some business expansion information during Wednesday's Franklin economic summit.

One of the reasons to develop a business in an economic opportunity area is because it allows the business to negotiate a tax increment finance agreement, or TIF, with the town. A TIF is a multi-year property tax exemption, based how much a company increases a facility's value through construction or other improvements.

TIF agreements are part of the services provided through the state's economic development efforts overseen by the state. Within the last year, the program has approved 20 projects across Massachusetts, 14 of which have TIF agreements. About \$1.2 billion has been invested in those projects and more than 1,600 jobs have been created.



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State Sen. Karen Spilka, D-Ashland, chats with Franklin Town Councilor Glenn Jones, right, while state Sen. Richard Ross, R-Wrentham, far left, was also on hand for Wednesday's Franklin economic summit at 431 Washington St. in Franklin to talk about businesses that want to come into Franklin.

"This is really a great event," said Rich Pellagrini, regional director for the state Office of Business Development. "Bryan Taberner does a fantastic job of shepherding businesses through the process."

And while opportunities are available for business growth in Franklin right now, state officials who attended the summit cautioned that work still needs to be done to keep businesses in Massachusetts.

"We are fortunate in Franklin," said state Rep. James Vallee, D-Franklin. "We have some vacancies, we have some parcels, we have room to grow. What we are going to focus on at the state level is ensuring businesses grow in Massachusetts and stay in Massachusetts."



Jacob Belcher/Daily News staff

Prospective business owners tour the facilities at 431 Washington St. in Franklin during Wednesday's Franklin economic summit to talk about businesses that want to come into Franklin.



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Ralph DeLucia, owner of Storage Max in Franklin, talks about his property on North Grove Street with Vice President of Community Development for MassDevelopment Shyla Matthews during Wednesday's economic summit at 431 Washington St. in Franklin.

Joe O'Connell can be reached at 508-634-7521 or joconnell@cnc.com.

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