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**PROGRESS & PROSPECTS:
Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park Reports
to the Community**

By L. McCandless

The Cornell Agriculture and Food Technology Park Corp. (CAFTPC) will host a public meeting on Wednesday, May 14, at Hobart and William Smith Colleges to brief members of the Geneva Town Board, City Council, and the community on progress in the Park's development, and release drawings of the 20,000 sq. ft. incubator building. The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanford Room of the Warren Hunting Smith Library, on Pulteney Street, in Geneva, NY. The public is encouraged to attend.

"This is the first we've seen of the new 'Flex Tech' building," said Geneva City Manager Rich Rising. "It will be exciting to see what the architects have done with the suggestions they received last winter."

Six months ago, Einhorn Yaffee Prescott Architecture and Engineering, PC (EYP), of NYC, a nationally recognized firm that specializes in technology facilities, came to Geneva seeking input on the park's design from Station faculty and staff, and members of the community. The architects are designing the incubator building, or "flexible technology" building, as it is called, to meet a range of needs associated with food, agricultural and biotechnological research.

EYP is working closely with the project manager, The Saratoga Associates of Saratoga, NY; and construction manager and developer, Christa Development, of Victor, NY.

The CAFTPC Board of Directors has laid out work plans for the next year. "Groundbreaking for the infrastructure and the flex-tech building is expected in late 2003," said Dan Sitler, principal of The Saratoga Associates, "The flex-tech building should be ready for year-end occupancy in 2004."

Phytobials, LLC, a new company built around research conducted at the Experiment Station, has expressed its intention to be one of the first tenants of the Flex Tech building.

Co-founder Gary Harman, a horticultural scientist at the Station, will be working with colleagues from Great Britain and Italy to provide biological methods to clean up contaminated sites. The firm uses ferns and trees to remove toxicants from soil or water by use of a beneficial fungus that, when applied to roots, enhances uptake of contaminants. Earlier research by Harman with the beneficial fungus led to the transfer of this technology into the private sector, and the formation of Bioworks, a Geneva company with an international market. Bioworks uses the fungus to control plant diseases and promote plant growth.

Two Issues to be Addressed

Additional funding for park roads, sewer and water lines and flex-tech building construction is needed. To date, federal and state agencies have provided nearly \$1.8 million in financial support, largely through grants,



Aerial view of the main campus of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, and the adjacent 74 acres earmarked for the Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park.

with another \$3.3 million pending from government sources. The pending support includes an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant of \$2.8 million for construction and infrastructure development. This reflects a strong level of commitment by the federal government to the project, but Park board members are still actively seeking some \$600,000 in matching funds necessary to change this pending EDA grant into "dollars in-hand."

A second issue involves low-level soil contamination identified by the CAFTPC during the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). The Park is working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to contain pesticide residues on-site or remove them. According to Jim Hunter, director of the Experiment Station, and president of the CAFTPC board, the CAFTPC is also working with the new company-Phytobials, LLC-to possibly provide a biological means to clean up soil at the Park.

These materials have not been used at the Station for over 30 years. Research conducted by NYSAES scientists and others led to the development of the current generation of pest control chemicals that break down quickly in the environment, and have been widely adopted by industry.

"The Park is working closely with the DEC to deal aggressively with an old problem," said Hunter. "We're not certain what the cost of soil cleanup will be. With Senator Michael Nozzolio's help, we are exploring funding possibilities through the SUNY Capital Fund and other sources earmarked for environmental clean-up."

Major Progress Since 1995

Cutting edge scientific research and the Station's 120-year history of service to New York State's food and agricultural industries represent the foundation and the promise for the Park. It will be situated on 74 acres south of the Experiment Station that is visible from Pre-Emption Road.

Geneva and the Park are located in the middle of a research triangle, with Syracuse University to the east, the University of Rochester to the west, and Cornell University to the south. Research already conducted in this triangle can lead to the transfer of new technologies to the private sector, and the formation of new commercial enterprises in Upstate New York. This comparative advantage forms the basis for the high-tech, job-generating corridor from Buffalo to Albany envisioned by Governor George Pataki.

The City of Geneva, Geneva Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Ontario County IDA, New York State Electric and Gas, State Senator Michael Nozzolio, and the Experiment Station have been working since 1995 to make the park a reality. Strong support from state and local governments propelled the expansion of Geneva's Empire Development Zone to include the 74 acres set aside for the park, and to rezone the land for use in food and agricultural research.

Public support for the project is evident in the process. Citizen volunteers worked with city and Station officials to draft the zoning ordinance. The Geneva Industrial Development Agency oversaw a series of regulatory reviews under the SEQRA to examine the Park's potential impact on the region's traffic, air, water, noise levels, and archaeological resources.

When completed, the Park could generate 1,000 associated jobs in the area. Several potential users of the Flex Tech building, along with the Agricultural Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture have expressed interest in locating new facilities and jobs at the Park.

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