

## **Science and Technology-based Economy for Los Alamos Calls for Shared Vision and Faith among Key Players**

**By: Min Park**

Since 1993, when an Economic Development Strategic Plan was adopted by the County Council, Los Alamos has been making significant progress to position as one of the most economically vibrant communities in the nation by working together on the downtown revitalization plan, affordable housing projects, transfer of DOE lands to the county and schools, and active conversation on the Trinity site redevelopment plan. These accomplishments were made possible by strong leadership within the County, continuous support from our congressional delegates, DOE, Los Alamos schools, and other private entities such as the Los Alamos Commerce and Development Co (LACDC) and the Housing Partnership.

Economic development is a multi-faceted approach. Among the multiple approaches for economic development, the science and technology-based approach is unique in that only a limited number of communities have access to the academic and research institutes that serve as catalysts for intellectual property (IP) and technology-transfer driven local economy. Throughout the country, research parks play a significant role in stimulating the local and regional economy by locating themselves adjacent to universities and research institutes. The majority of successful research parks significantly contribute to local economy by creating high-paying jobs and viable technology based companies. Their successes are heavily dependent on tight collaboration and partnership among the key players such as state and local government, research institutes, and non-profit organizations such as LACDC who have a strong interest in diversifying local economy through technology-based industry.

Los Alamos has the opportunity to begin to formulate a plan to capture the scientific and technological breakthroughs with commercialization potentials from Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). LANL has an organization, the Technology Transfer Division (TTD), which provides various services to the laboratory scientists and engineers who have the desire to patent and commercialize their research and development ideas and products. The TTD manages LANL's intellectual assets to accomplish various goals: 1) to identify unique, commercially viable technologies, capabilities, facilities, and expertise, 2) to partner to enhance LANL capabilities and intellectual property value, 3) to transfer these assets successfully to external organizations for public benefit, and 4) to support northern New Mexico economy.

Another key player is the County government. Since 1999, The County has invested over \$5 million in high-tech start-up businesses through its Economic Development Financial Assistance Program. The Los Alamos Research Park was partially funded through this program to enhance and diversify regional economic opportunities in Los Alamos and surrounding communities in northern New Mexico. The loan funds granted to the Research Park support business development efforts that benefit Los Alamos County and have been matched by more than a 10 to 1 investment from other sources of investment.

The Research Park facilitates collaborative efforts between corporate, academic, institutional, and LANL researchers and technologists. In addition, national, regional, and local start-up companies are identified and nurtured through various efforts by LACDC.

The Los Alamos Commerce and Development Corporation has a long term vision to serve as an agent to facilitate the growth of technology-based industry in Los Alamos. As one of the key efforts, LACDC built the Los Alamos Research Park in close collaboration with the Los Alamos County, LANL, and DOE to attract companies that want to tap into the scientific and technical breakthroughs, state-of-the art facilities, a highly educated and trained workforce. The first building of approximately 83,000 square feet was completed in 2001. This building houses more than 20 tenants with diverse technology focus, supports more than 150 jobs, generates more than \$80,000 per year in new revenue for the County general fund through taxes and utility transfers. Activities at the Research Park have already generated more than \$1,000,000 in NM gross receipts taxes.

Los Alamos National Security, LLC (LANS), the new company that started managing LANL as of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006, has also made a significant commitment in the area of improving local economy through technology-transfer based efforts. LANS invited LACDC to be a teaming partner to start a new technology services enterprise and to increase participation in technology transfer and development activities. LACDC is also one of the organizations designated to provide more support to small businesses in northern New Mexico. In response to the LANS request, LACDC started Ngenuity, a science and technology company that provides talent and technical expertise to LANL and other clients who need solutions for complex problems. One hundred percent of the profits earned by Ngenuity will be reinvested in economic and community development activities in Los Alamos. LACDC also created the Los Alamos Research Institutes that has a vision to provide research and development opportunities to people who have ideas and products that can be commercialized.

Regional collaboration is another significant element. Member communities in Northern New Mexico must work together to overcome key challenges that are critical to high-tech industry such as workforce development, a regional transportation system, and shared tax-base for the land that can be used for manufacturing facilities of the high-tech companies in Los Alamos.

The last, but not the least significant asset for a high-tech based economy is us. Los Alamos is one of the most vibrant intellectual cities. It values creativity, innovation and discovery. Our history is deeply rooted in conceptualization of great ideas and execution of those ideas. In addition to the natural beauty that we enjoy everyday, this community culture and spirit must be very attractive to the companies that want to move to Los Alamos.

It is a perfect time for all of us to articulate the vision for a science and technology-based economic plan that is appropriate for Los Alamos and the region, to visualize the

potential challenges, to develop and implement effective strategies to address the challenges, and to stay on the path for success. If we succeed in this endeavor, Los Alamos and the surrounding region will have an opportunity to be recognized as one of the most vibrant communities with a strong science and technology-based economy.

Min Park is the chairman of the LACDC board, local business person, and a LANL scientist.