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**Area Chambers Come Together to Host Inaugural “Rising Rust Belt: A Regional Revitalization Economic Summit” Oct. 6 & 7**

**Lt. Governor of PA, Head of Ohio Development Services Agency confirmed as Keynote Speakers**

**Regional Event Crosses State Lines**

**Youngstown, Ohio, and Sharon and New Castle, Pennsylvania** – The Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania and the Director of Ohio Development Services Agency are confirmed to keynote the inaugural “Rising Rust Belt: A Regional Revitalization Economic Summit” in Sharon, Pennsylvania, in October.

The summit – an outgrowth of a more than a year of conversations between three chamber directors whose organizations encompass five counties and two states in ground zero of the rust belt – will focus on rust belt-specific revitalization problem-solving results throughout the region

Sponsored by FirstEnergy, topics at the summit will include cracker plant opportunities, site selection readiness, riverfront revitalization, attracting and retaining next-generation workforce, creating an entrepreneur-friendly community, as well as site tours, a ‘shark tank’-style competition and more.

The tagline for the summit, which will be held October 6 and 7 at the Park Inn by Radisson Sharon, is Honoring Our Heritage – Forging Our Future.

“This event includes representatives from a variety of fields, making it one of the best opportunities for networking around,” said James Dignan, President and CEO of the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber. “The conference features respected keynote speakers discussing topics such as finance, real estate, regional cooperation, workforce development, infrastructure construction and more, and provides all participants with an opportunity to grow their business and network with other successful professionals in our region.”

He added that working regionally creates a potential workforce of over 1.5 million, which is more attractive to businesses, funders and grant makers.

The redefinition of what it means to be part of the rust belt region is also a goal of the summit, added Sherris Moreira, Executive Director of the Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce, based in Sharon, Pennsylvania, and representing Mercer County. “Though we still carry the weight of the old narrative, we have more power than we realize,” said Moreira, referring to the coverage of the 2020 election and winning the ‘rust belt’ electorate. “It’s time we own that power and all the innovative ways we’ve come up with to survive our challenges that don’t necessarily fit the status quo. We’re survivors and that is a skill set that gives us an advantage.”

Strength in numbers is the reason Alex McCoy, Executive Director of the Lawrence County Regional Chamber, wanted to put on the summit together with his regional partners. “Those who can speak in a unified voice have a better chance of getting their voices heard,” he noted.

He added that coming up with creative answers to problems is easier in a larger community of people and that the summit would provide an opportunity for the region to come together and brainstorm and innovate solutions.

The summit will begin Sunday, October 6, with a shuttled site tour of The Landing, a commercial and industrial business development inside a former Westinghouse Torpedo Factory, followed by a stop at Hope Center of Arts and Technology, a Manchester Bidwell replication education model, both in Sharon. Afterwards, participants will attend a mixer at the hotel with invited elected officials, sponsors, vendors and special guests. Musical guest North Side Jazz will provide entertainment.

Monday will open with a keynote address by The Honorable John Fetterman, Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, followed by up to four breakout sessions throughout the day. Lydia Mihalik, who was appointed by Ohio Governor Mike DeWine to head up the state’s Development Services Agency, will speak during lunch. (Ohio Lt. Governor Jon Husted was unable to attend since he and Governor DeWine just announced they will be unveiling new gun control legislation the day of the summit.)

Breakfast and lunch are included in the \$40 ticket price, along with a revitalization-focused vendor area and a closing Rising Rust Belt Pitch Competition with area entrepreneurs who will compete for prize money. The competition will be held at the CHIP Spec Building located at LindenPointe, a signature business park development in the nearby City of Hermitage.

Some of the speakers, moderators, announcers and panelists include Carol Kilko, Deputy Secretary of DCED; YSU President Jim Tressel; Pat Kelly, Economic Development Director of FirstEnergy; Jim Gagliano, Executive Director of Lawrence County Land Bank; Lowellville Mayor Jim Iudiciani; Mekael Teshome, Vice

President and Senior Regional Officer of the Pittsburgh Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland; Sean Dougherty, Kitchen Manager of Commonwealth Kitchen Incubator, Youngstown; Bill Fontana, Director of Strategic Initiatives with PA Downtown Center, Harrisburg; Barb Ewing, CEO of Youngstown Business Incubator; Eric Karmecy, Operations & Special Projects Division of West Central Job Partnership and many more.

FirstEnergy-sponsored Site Selector Expert & Consultant is Don Schjeldahl, Principal of the DonSchjeldahlGroup of Kent, Ohio, who will be presenting during one of the break-out sessions. Plus a couple of the developers behind the Petrochemical study will be presenting on Plastic & Petrochemicals Supply Chain Opportunities.

Tickets are \$40 and include up to four breakout sessions, both keynote speakers, breakfast, lunch and dessert, a swag bag, and vendor networking October 7. Tickets, vendor, sponsor, lodging and information about the area is available at [www.risingrustbelt.com](http://www.risingrustbelt.com).

Platinum Sponsor is FirstEnergy; Accelerator Sponsors are JCL Development; Penn State Shenango, both of Sharon & Whole Life Services, Hermitage; Innovator Sponsors include City of Hermitage; Forty Two Event Production; Steward Medical Group of Trumbull County and Sharon, PA; and UPMC Horizon of Greenville & Shenango Valley and UPMC Jameson, New Castle.