

For Immediate Release
January 14, 2011

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ABOUT MTEC SMARTZONE

The mission of MTEC SmartZone is to provide technology-based facilities, resources and programs to high-growth entrepreneurs and companies that increase employment, income, wealth and recognition in the U.P. communities where we serve. Our vision is having integrated economic development of the region that includes a vibrant technology sector, driving Michigan's technological leadership and economic growth with sustainable opportunities for companies and their employees to prosper. More information is available at www.mtecsz.com

ABOUT THE MEDC

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is the State of Michigan's one-stop resource for businesses seeking to grow in Michigan. Whether it's an expansion, a relocation, or even a concern with another agency of state government, the MEDC can help. From site location assistance to job training grants, from help with permits to tax abatements, we're the state's economic development corporation. More information is available at www.themedc.org.

SmartZone is a service mark of Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

WUPPDR Acquires Millions in Grant Funds to Spur MTEC SmartZone Expansion Projects

Since 1968, the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) has provided general economic planning support to the western six counties of the Upper Peninsula through programs, projects and services. One of these services is writing and administering grants for communities and governmental agencies to foster stable and diversified local economies within the region. WUPPDR is a quasi-governmental unit performing work under Michigan Public Act 281, the Local Development Financing Act. WUPPDR pursues funding opportunities through numerous state and federal programs and has obtained millions in grant monies for local government and community ventures. In the past five years for every dollar invested by the WUPPDR membership they have realized a \$77 return on their investment.

MTEC SmartZone has been the fortunate recipient of three grants written and administered by WUPPDR to facilitate building and space renovation projects in the Houghton-Hancock area. CEO Carlton Crothers attributes much of MTEC Smart Zone's success as a thriving high-tech business incubator to WUPPDR's assistance over the last few years. "WUPPDR is an important resource and economic development partner in our community, and the driving force behind MTEC SmartZone building and space renovations," Crothers states emphatically.

In 2004, MTEC SmartZone indirectly benefited from a \$500,000 grant awarded to Michigan Technological University (MTU) through an Economic Development Administration (EDA) program of the U.S. Department of Commerce. MTU used this grant to construct its Advanced Technology Development Complex on Sharon Avenue, which provides space for high-tech business starts-ups, prototyping, research, testing laboratories, conference space, and business support services offered through MTU's Corporate Services and the MTEC SmartZone. It also houses the Ford Student Design Center.

Then in 2005, EDA representative John Peck hatched an innovative plan with WUPPDR to combine high-tech businesses with art and design, and helped fund the first grant for \$800,000 to renovate three floors of the Jutila Center for Global Design and Business in Hancock. The Jutila Center



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houses two organizations, Finlandia University's incubator and MTEC SmartZone, which provide vibrant work spaces and operating support for new and emerging businesses to function and grow.

In 2007, MTEC SmartZone applied for and received \$1 million in funding from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to assist with its Powerhouse facility renovation. The Powerhouse incubator site tripled in available square footage, including the creation of two new floors. Situated on the Portage Canal near the lift bridge in Houghton, the building houses GE Aviation's University Development Center, where engineers provide design and development services for the aerospace industry, including software development, verification and validation, and mechanical and hardware design.

The largest grant WUPPDR administered was awarded to MTU and MTEC SmartZone in 2008, for \$3.02 million in funding from the EDA to enable the complete refurbishment of the former UPPCO building on Houghton's waterfront. Renamed the Michigan Tech Lakeshore Center, this site is now MTEC SmartZone's flagship facility, housing high-tech office and laboratory spaces for several established businesses and new start-ups. The Lakeshore Center business accelerator environment supports multi-tenant occupancy with specially designed removable walls for easy expansion of office spaces. WUPPDR wrote another grant to the MEDC and secured \$500,000 for MTEC SmartZone to lease the entire first floor of the Lakeshore Center for the next twenty years. WUPPDR combined these two funding sources to make the project work for the community.

MTU Vice President for Research, David Reed and MTU Chief Financial Officer, Daniel Greenlee were instrumental in developing the Lakeshore Center expansion and renovation project. WUPPDR Executive Director, Kim Stoker commented, "Networking is what makes this happen. Our success in bringing these projects to completion lies in our excellent working relationships with Michigan Tech, the Cities of Houghton and Hancock, EDA, MEDC, and USDA Rural Development."

In 2009, WUPPDR wrote a grant to the Michigan Department of Labor Energy Efficiency Block Grant program, securing \$163,000 to undertake a feasibility study for a video conferencing network called U.P. Link. Identified in the Regional Innovation Plan sponsored by Michigan Works, U.P. Link is a collaborative project of Stoker and Crothers, with the goal of installing video conferencing facilities across the Upper Peninsula, two counties in Wisconsin and Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. U.P. Link will be available to government and businesses for long distance collaboration in real-time. Dedicated network hubs will feature high-definition monitors and full audio capabilities to connect business leaders to enterprise opportunities. Xeratec, an MTEC SmartZone network technology company, will create the framework for U.P. Link. As the feasibility study nears completion, Stoker and Crothers continue to work on another EDA grant to fund the project. If project funding becomes a reality, they hope to have the new collaboration network ready to use in 2011.

With over \$6.8 million secured in grant monies in the last five years, WUPPDR is a key economic driver in our communities, with a significant impact on the way we work and live in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan..

