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## Regional Chamber gives awards

By **LARRY RINGLER**

Tribune Chronicle

**BOARDMAN** — People and the private sector, more than technology or location, determine a region's economic future, an economist told local business and community leaders Thursday.

“People are the ones behind the businesses receiving awards today. It's the private sector that creates jobs,” regional economist Jack Kleinhenz said in his keynote address at the Regional Chamber's 16th annual Mahoning Valley Growth Awards breakfast at Mr. Anthony's.

High-performing regions focus on education and individuals who can innovate, along with equality of income, he said.

Areas with prominent “legacy of place” — older industries and infrastructure, plus a high number of government entities for the population — face greater challenges trying to reposition their economy for growth, he said. Location amenities, or quality of life items, are important but aren't key drivers, Kleinhenz said.

The northeast Ohio region includes 19 counties from Mercer County, Pa., in the east to Bucyrus in the west and has 4 million residents and a \$150 billion economy.

But in 2005, the region lost ground in turning technology into commercial gain, and racial inclusion and income equality, as well as business dynamics, the latter falling to red from yellow, according to Kleinhenz's “Dashboard of Economic Indicators” compiled for the Fund for Our Economic Future group that pushes regional economic development.

Kleinhenz noted northeast Ohio's per-capita fell below the national average for the first time in 1999, and in 2004 was \$33,223 versus \$34,170 nationally.

Among the key indicators Kleinhenz cited for economic growth, racial inclusion and income equality was the only one listed in all four economic growth categories of per-capita income, employment, gross metropolitan product and productivity.

The ability to turn technology into commercial uses was listed in three economic categories — per-capita income, gross metropolitan product and productivity, while urban assimilation also made three categories — employment, gross metropolitan product and productivity.



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A skilled work force and research and development was vital to per-capita income and productivity, while individual entrepreneurship and business dynamics were keys to employment and gross metropolitan product.

Location amenities was listed only in per-capita income. Legacy of place, meanwhile, was listed as a negative in employment, gross metropolitan product and productivity.



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