

THOMAS P. GORDON
County Executive



DAVID A. GRIMALDI
Chief Administrative Officer

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

For Immediate Release
Jan. 14, 2015

Contacts: **ANTONIO M. PRADO**, Director of Communications
(302) 395-5108, (302) 545-1462 AMPrado@nccde.org
MELODY KITCHEN, Executive Assistant
(302) 395-5117 MAKitchen@nccde.org

NEWS ADVISORY

Route 9 Innovation District Launch Draws a Packed Crowd to Rose Hill Community Center

NEW CASTLE, Del. – Governor Jack Markell and New Castle County Executive Thomas P. Gordon led the Route 9 Innovation District Launch held Wednesday morning before a packed crowd of 250 people gathered in the Rose Hill Community Center gymnasium.

The launch officially began the County's initiative to revitalize the Route 9 Corridor with a state-of-the-art Innovation Center/Library serving as the anchor. The library would have not just books but also a heavy presence of state-of-the-art technology and hardware to aid both students and members of the community with academic research, job searches, and several other uses.

County Executive Gordon, CAO David Grimaldi, Community Services General Manager Sophia Hanson, County Councilman Jea Street, County Council President Christopher A. Bullock, and several others have been working on the design of the library, estimated to cost \$21 million.

"Let me start by thanking the County Executive for bringing this all together," Gov. Markell said. "This is exciting on a number of levels. First of all, the vision itself is very compelling. The idea of the innovation district and really focusing on economic development, on housing, and innovation through the new, state-of-the-art library is a holistic vision for this community. That alone is worthy of real celebration."

County Executive Gordon in turn thanked Gov. Markell for his vision in establishing a forward thinking state in terms of technology.

"We have the largest broadband in the country," Gordon said. "It means we have the best ability to use technology that's already been paid for by the Governor. Everybody is going to be doing innovation centers. We're moving from books to readers, advanced computers, and smart phones."

State Senator Margaret Rose Henry, State Representative JJ Johnson, Colonial Schools Superintendent Dr. D. Dusty Blakey, Councilmen Street, and Canaan Baptist Church Rev. John Bailey, who gave the opening benediction, were also among the featured speakers. President Bullock, senior pastor of Canaan, sent his regrets for being unable to attend the launch due to his appointment to the board of the National Baptist Convention in Mississippi.

Councilman Street thanked, among others, Richard "Mouse" Smith, president of the Delaware NAACP for giving him the idea to build a library in the Route 9 Corridor and Herman Holloway, Jr. for encouraging him to run for office 10 years ago in the first place.

"I want to say to Sophia Hanson and the County Executive, all I wanted was a library,"

Councilman Street said. "But y'all made it into something so special, something so different and beyond. I can't express how truly, truly grateful I am."

CAO Grimaldi said the innovation district would provide a tremendous boost to an area with some of the highest foreclosure, dropout, unemployment and underemployment rates in the county.

"I want to thank the County Executive," he said. "I think it's fitting that the County Executive who years ago built the Police Athletic League and tore down the DeLaWarr Hotel put forth this vision to revitalize and bring back this area. I appreciate the support of our Governor and this state and all the layers of government coming together to make this happen."

Ms. Hanson said the Route 9 Innovation District would also complement the Neighborhood Stabilization Program the County has undertaken for some time with financial help from the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and the Delaware State Housing Authority. NSP has helped the County purchase and renovate several vacant blighted homes and sold them at market value to stabilize Route 9 communities.

The County has budgeted capital construction money in the 2015 (current) Fiscal Year and the 2016 FY capital budget for the \$21 million library. The County anticipates that the State of Delaware will also provide a significant amount of capital money for the innovation center, but the exact amount is unclear at this point.