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'Good projects' here will stay on Pa. funding list

■ **State official tells Economic Development Co. to expect Gov. Rendell's economic stimulus package to be a priority for next four years.**

By **TIM MEKEEL**
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The Rendell administration remains committed to strengthening the economy by using a comprehensive, targeted strategy, a state official said here today.

Dennis Yablonsky, secretary of community and economic development, said the plan introduced by Gov. Ed Rendell during his first term already has improved the state's economic health.

Now, following Rendell's re-election last November,

the governor intends to stick with his \$2.8 billion economic stimulus package, Yablonsky said.

"We're going to work until the very last day of the second term doing these things and hopefully we'll be able to continue to make an impact," he said to the Economic Development Co. of Lancaster County's annual breakfast.

Yablonsky, addressing more than 400 people at the Willow Valley Resort, noted that Lancaster County projects frequently are the beneficiary of state funding.

That's because the projects, shaped and presented to the state by the Economic Development Co. and its funding arm, EDC Finance Corp., are worthy ventures, he said.

"This area of the state, competitively, has done really terrific. It's not because you're glib, it's not because this group is overly persuasive from a

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verbal perspective: It's because you bring us good projects...

"As long as you keep doing that, we will continue to respond and provide funding," said Yablonsky.

To illustrate how the state economy has fared under Rendell, the secretary noted that it's grown by \$64 billion to \$487 billion annually over the past four years, making it the 17th largest in the world and sixth largest in the nation.

Some 124,000 new companies have been started in the state over that time, he added.

To spur that economic growth, said Yablonsky, the Rendell administration has a strategy that funnels state support: to the most promising industries; to projects that just need "gap financing" to happen; to infrastructure upgrades that will make sites welcoming to developers; to downtowns; and to improving the business climate.

Also at the breakfast, EDC officials reviewed their record 2006, in which they helped secure financing for 28 projects worth \$95 million, and their plans to sustain a high level of activity this year.

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