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Inland Valley Daily Bulletin (Ontario, CA)

January 10, 2010

Section: News

New report names Ontario as 'new urban center'

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ONTARIO - A new report by two academic institutes has named this city as the "Inland Empire's new urban center." The Rose Institute and The Lowe Institute of Political Economy, both research groups at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, recently published the first "**Inland Empire Outlook**," a report that analyzes political and economic trends and looks at what's around the corner.

In its inaugural edition, the report states, "the City of Ontario has emerged as a hub for the Inland Empire," in part because the city has seen its population double between 1980 and 2000.

"The city has a vision and knows what they are trying to accomplish, and putting the pieces in place," said David Huntoon, a fellow at The Rose Institute of State and Local Government.

The report found that as Ontario experienced a population growth - from 88,000 people in 1980 to 170,000 people in 2000 - it has also seen higher income levels for its residents.

In that time the city has been able to evolve and diversify its economy from heavily relying on agricultural to becoming known for its logistics and industry.

"Ontario has taken advantage of its location to become a trade and logistics center, handling the mass of freight traffic between the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the rest of the country," the report states.

Selecting Ontario to feature in its inaugural edition was a result of the vision of the City Council and city staff, Huntoon said.

Mary Jane Olhasso, the city's economic development director, said the Rose Institute and the Lowe Institute are highly regarded academically, and it's a high honor to be recognized by them.

"We appreciate the fact that they understand what the vision of our City Council is, in that we are trying to be the job center," she said.

Ontario, Olhasso said, is trying to create the types of jobs that will also bring people to work and live in the city.

A major factor is the city's location as a transportation hub and the ability to move people and goods, Olhasso said.

Southern California Association of Governments has named Ontario as the "Global Gateway" because of the airport, the railroads and the highways in the city, she said.

It is also why major corporations such as UPS and Toyota choose Ontario. UPS operates its western region hub in the city and Toyota has its North American parts center in Ontario.

The report also features a question-and-answer session with Ontario's city manager.

"Greg Devereaux really is an excellent city manager and leader for the community," Huntoon said. "We feel this is a community with a vision and a plan. And one that is effectively executing that plan."

The interview was conducted by a couple of students at Claremont McKenna College, with Huntoon sitting in.

Because a majority of the students at the college are studying either economics or governance, the center will use them as resources for future reports and studies, he said.

The outlook will be published on a quarterly basis and provide an analysis of political and economic developments in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, said Ralph Rossum, director of The Rose Institute.

"In the next one we'll feature another city but in our minds, Ontario jumped out to us as doing some excellent things and that why we chose to focus on it," Huntoon said.

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