

BUSINESS

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Research district receives state grant

Grant will be used for infrastructure fixes, maybe new website

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The Tri-Cities Research District has received \$275,000 from the state.

The district was designated

an innovation partnership zone in October but didn't receive any money then because funding was limited to five zones.

Recently, the state agreed to allocate the program's unspent dollars to the Tri-Cities district. The 1,600-acre district, which lies north of Stevens Center and east of Stevens Drive, is home to Pacific Northwest National Labora-

tory, Washington State University Tri-Cities, the Port of Benton, Hanford contractors, other federal and state agencies and about 80 businesses.

"We're pleased that the state is recognizing the potential of the Tri-Cities Research District for the region and for the community, said Diahann Howard, executive director of the district.

Innovation partnership

zones are part of Gov. Chris Gregoire's Next Washington plan to keep the state competitive in the global marketplace.

The capital grant will be used for making infrastructure improvements along First Street between George Washington Way and Stevens Drive and to update signs and support sustainable development projects.

Part of the grant also may

be used to develop a new website for the district and to launch an electronic newsletter, Howard said.

The grant will help forge the research district's identity and specify the boundaries, said Gary Spanner, chairman of the district's board.

The grant couldn't have come at a better time, Spanner

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GRANT | Firm working on plan to develop 330 district acres

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said, adding a Portland firm is about to start working on a master plan to develop 330 acres in the district. The plan would lay out street orientation, building sizes and recreational amenities in the area, Spanner said.

The uniform planning and landscaping will help attract new businesses and help generate new jobs, said C. Mark Smith, a district board member. More than 7,000 workers are employed in the area.

About \$300 million have either been invested or proposed in capital projects in the last two years by major landowners and partners, including Battelle Memorial Institute, Solaris Group and the Port of Benton, Smith said.

As one of the state's 11 innovation partnership zones, the district will promote collaboration between companies and research institutions to help commercialize cutting-edge technologies, Smith said. It'll also help brand the region, encourage economic

development and provide opportunities to train the work force of the future, he said.

Spanner, who's also manager of economic development at PNNL, said the process of recruiting the right people to the district has already begun, referring to the recent appointment of the world class Danish researcher Birgitte Ahring to lead the new Center for Bio-products and Bioenergy at WSU Tri-Cities.

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