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Successes offer lessons from which we can all learn

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More than 450 business leaders, public officials and economic development professionals gathered at the Seaport Hotel in Boston last month to honor a select group of companies for their outstanding contributions to the Massachusetts economy. These 15 recipients of the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development's (MAED's) Team Massachusetts Economic Impact Awards are located across the state and are engaged in such diverse businesses as software, consumer products, manufacturing, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. And while their businesses couldn't be more different, they share one common denominator -- every one of them has made a significant expansion in the state in both jobs and facilities in the last 12 months.

To those of us accustomed to reading about all of the challenges to growth in Massachusetts -- high housing costs and employee outmigration -- it may come as a surprise to learn about the extent of good news on the economic front in the state.

For example, ITA Software of Cambridge, creator of the world's first modern system for airfare pricing, shopping and seat availability, and provider of the "backbone" for, among others, **Kayak.com**, **Orbitz.com**, Continental and America West, added 249 jobs in the past two years. Cold Chain Technologies of Holliston, which serves the life sciences and health-care markets with thermal packaging that helps customers ship temperature-sensitive products, invested \$3 million in a 60,000-square-foot facility and plans to add 30 new jobs. Millipore of Billerica, a bioprocess and bioscience products company, completed a new 110,000-square-foot R&D center in Bedford, resulting in the creation of up to 500 new jobs. And Bristol-Myers Squibb is undertaking a \$750 million, 750,000-square-foot biologic manufacturing facility complex at Devens that is expected to bring in more than 350 jobs.

Such success stories, and others like them, are the result of a tremendous collaborative effort, launched and sustained by our state's unique public-private partnership in economic development, consisting of MAED, cross-industry business leaders and the state's Business Resource Team under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell, secretary of the state's Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development.

One of the more important state programs is the "priority development sites" initiative, which offers streamlined municipal permitting within 180 days on selected properties across the state. Bristol-Myers Squibb benefited from streamlined permitting at Devens, with permits granted within 49 days of the start of the process.

In sum, it is important to note that despite the differences in terms of size, industry and age among all of the companies driving economic development in Massachusetts, there is one strong similarity: They are all attracted by unique advantages found here and only

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here. Among them: Massachusetts earned a place on the Development Report Card Honor Roll for the fourth consecutive year and is the only state in the Northeast and the only large industrial state to earn this distinction.

Massachusetts ranks No. 1 among all states for its "innovation assets," determined by available Ph.D.s, scientists and engineers, federal and state R&D investment, and patents issued.; No. 1 in its college attainment rate nationwide; and No. 1 for both the number of high tech companies per capita and the level of venture capital investment.

Celebrating the success of those companies that have applied these assets to their own unique circumstances, to the continued benefit of their employees and communities, is important, and their stories provide an opportunity for other companies to learn who among their peers are doing it right.

Susan Houston is executive director of the Massachusetts Alliance for Economic Development. She can be reached at shouston@massecon.com.

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