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## UI, area leaders push West Haven as biz mecca

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Real estate consultants from across the country will tour the region during a two-day showcase beginning Tuesday, as business leaders and officials from area municipalities aim to convince them that the area is the ideal spot to relocate or expand their businesses.

The site selector tour is sponsored by the United Illuminating Co., and includes all 17 towns in UI's service area.

It is the fourth such showcase in the region.

Since the first tour, devised by a group of West Haven officials and local business leaders in 2007, the number of consultants touring the region has doubled, West Haven Mayor John M. Picard said Thursday.

Sixteen consultants, who represent multiple clients from 11 states, are expected to take the tour, which includes views by helicopter and by boat.

Picard attributed the increase to progress in the region. Locally, the Smilow Cancer Center at Yale, West Haven's upcoming train station and improvement to West River Crossing in West Haven make the area a good fit for new business, Picard said.

"This is an ideal opportunity to demonstrate why companies should consider Connecticut for a new business location," Jim Torgerson, UI's chief executive officer, said in a statement. "UI has always been a leader in promoting the value of doing business in this region and in our service territory."

The tour is funded through a public-private partnership, sponsors include Bayer Healthcare, Yale University, Pilot Pen Tennis and Connecticut Economic Resource Center.

North Haven First Selectman Michael J. Freda praised UI's efforts, and said consultants should be attracted to the region for its proximity to major arteries, airports and railways.

Each year that consultants return, Picard said, relationships that ease business deals are furthered.

Those familiar with marketing know that results are not immediate, Picard said, but every time the site selectors come back signifies a further chance for West Haven to net a new company, expand its tax base and improve its economy.

North Branford Town Manager Richard Branigan said the tour is valuable to small participating towns, like his, even if the consultants choose one of the other municipalities for new business.

“If some other larger corporation comes into neighboring towns, it provides potential employment and offshoots of businesses, and that’s part of being part of a regional approach,” Branigan said. “You have to look beyond town borders sometimes.”

*Staff Reporter Susan Misur contributed to this story. Call Amanda Pinto at 203-789-5734.*

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