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## **Marketing the tri-county region**

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A new regional Web site called [discoversouthwestny.com](http://discoversouthwestny.com) that offers detailed virtual tours of hundreds of locations has been launched to promote development in Cattaraugus, Allegany, and Chautauqua counties.

Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board (STW) in Salamanca put together the Web site to provide online tours of the business, residential, and tourism opportunities available in the three-county area.

“The intent is to market the whole region,” said Don Rychnowski, STW’s executive director. “We don’t duplicate other Web sites.” In fact, “We include them if they are county or business Web sites.”

It took 14 months to build the Web site, according to Brian Schrantz, STW’s director of information services. “We included technology by PixEarth Corp.” that helps give Web visitors greater variety and detail.

Since its launch late last month, the Web site has had 450,000 hits, Mr. Schrantz said. “The average time on the site by a visitor is 12 to 14 minutes so they’re spending a lot of time there.”

The Web sites photo content includes not only businesses and potential building sites but also places to live or visit for recreation, Mr. Rychnowski said.

Along with developers, Mr. Schrantz said, “Realtors are interested in the site as well.”

The Web site’s genesis was from the fact “we recognized this region had no central site to market it,” Mr. Schrantz said.

Employers also can use the site as a way to attract employees from outside the area, noted Mr. Rychnowski. Even academic institutions can use it for the same purpose.

“We’re getting a lot of feedback” and calls from developers and businesses, Mr. Schrantz said.

“I just got off the phone with someone who used the site and sent a link to three developers interested in Allegany County,” Mr. Rychnowski said earlier this week.

In addition to making upgrades to the Web site in the next year, Mr. Schrantz said STW is looking to gain partnerships to “help us market and expand it.”

Holiday Valley Resort in Ellicottville is the Web site’s most recent partner. The purpose of the partnership program is to encourage organizations within the region to assist in promotion and future development of the Web site.

Jane Eshbaugh, Holiday Valley Resort’s marketing director, said, “I am excited to lend our support as a partner in marketing this new Web site.” She said 500,000-plus visitors come to Holiday Valley Resort annually and having a Web site that will help it grow its business will also help the community. “We are looking at a variety of ways we can advertise the site to our customers as well as the community.”

## A Fact Sheet on [discoversouthwestny.com](http://discoversouthwestny.com)

- It has over 200 content pages, including a community profile for each municipality for the region.
- Visitors are able to view almost 850 locations and over 6,500 photos of the area. Plans are to double these figures within the next year.
- The site uses a system called PixEarth to display images. Also, the Web site is the largest user of PixEarth technology anywhere on the Internet.
- The site has hundreds of reciprocal links to other Web pages that provide local information on a variety of topics.
- The business section includes statistical data on labor force, education, taxes and cost of doing business. There's also a regional profile of the technology, infrastructure, industry types, growth and opportunities, and natural resources.
- Through the use of the Web site's business tool box, business incentive information such as industrial parks, municipal power and incentive packages can be accessed.
- The site's living section includes ethnic information on cultural diversity, religious concentrations, plus Native American and Amish heritages. There's also a full listing of demographic data.
- The recreation section has attraction images and links to discover the arts, parks and public land, history and heritage, wineries, farms, markets and more.