



Welcome to Erie, fellas: Gene Cherner and Steve Fialko of CE Convergence | Rob Engelhardt

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Hershey Center for Applied Research a little sweeter with new programs for tech startups

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For the last 116 years, Hershey has been a chocolate town. Started by Milton Hershey as an effort to create a community for his factory workers to raise their kids in, the town has blossomed into a bucolic destination. But with manufacturing woes hitting the whole country in the wake of recession, Hershey has started to look beyond its candyland roots to the future. And one technology center has introduced two new programs that may help turn the region's focus from sweets to suites and from chocolate chips to microchips.

After receiving a \$1 million grant from the [U.S. Economic Development Administration's public works program](#), the [Hershey Center for Applied Research](#) started the Tech Suites program to connect fledgling businesses with wet-dry lab facilities, networking tools and business services. The Tech Suites II program seeks to expand on the efforts of the first, drawing new, early-stage companies to the HCAR network. The research center has also made up to \$2 million available for larger, more established companies looking to build a new headquarters or distribution facility in the region. With a dedicated investment partner--Maryland's [Wexford Equities](#)--these incentive dollars make this chocolate town that much sweeter for potential and established business owners.



"Our building is a shell building that we build on to suit the needs of the businesses," says Director of Business Development Jack Atchason. "These programs are designed to reduce the cost of the companies acquiring space, to make it easier for them to come here."

Incentive programs are not the only thing making it easy to build and grow in Hershey. HCAR is the brainchild of several life sciences and technology investors. Breaking ground on its first facility in 2006, HCAR opened 1214 Research Boulevard in May of 2007, offering lab facilities, research space and networking opportunities for Hershey's burgeoning life sciences and biotechnology sector. These professionals provide a long list of business services to help companies get started. At just three years in, the center boasts an impressive tenant list as well, including up-and-coming health-food company [Better Bowls](#) and Penn State's departments of Pharmacology and Medical Technology.

"We offer these companies a whole network of business services which, depending on the need of the company, could vary from helping them to get their U.S. corporation set up, access to capital, marketing and PR, workforce development, relocation services," says Atchason, "It really depends on what the company needs. We have access to most resources within the commonwealth."

Source: Jack Atchason, HCAR

Writer: John Steele

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