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Group wants to turn area into a "Tech Belt"

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YOUNGSTOWN — About 100 leaders from the Mahoning Valley, Cleveland and Pittsburgh are starting to talk about how they can cooperate to turn the Rust Belt into a Tech Belt.

The brain-storming session Monday at Youngstown State University was called by U.S. Reps. Tim Ryan of Niles, D-17th, and Jason Altmire of McCandless, Pa., D-4th.

The congressmen said the key to creating a high-tech economy in the region is to join forces, not view neighboring communities as competitors.

"We've got to get really serious really quickly in order to compete with Mumbai [India] or Shanghai," Ryan said.

He sees the Tech Belt Forum as one of the first steps in preparing to compete. Leaders discussed how they could cooperate better to foster development of businesses in information technology, advanced energy or medical devices.

"This is all about figuring out how to unleash the potential of this region," Ryan said.

For more on this story, see The Vindicator or www.vindy.com Tuesday.