



BREAKING GROUND

BUILDING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
IN GREATER PHILADELPHIA

an implementation workshop for local partners

Conference Proceedings



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2010

THE UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA
140 S. BROAD STREET | PHILADELPHIA, PA





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UNION LEAGUE, PHILADELPHIA, PA

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's *Breaking Ground* conference drew over 300 participants from throughout the Greater Philadelphia region. These participants included municipal officials, community activists, developers, urban designers, and numerous others that are working to enhance the livability of our communities. DVRPC thanks the keynote speakers and the numerous session speakers who shared their time and expertise to make *Breaking Ground* a success.

Morning Plenary Session

Barry Seymour, Executive Director, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)

Mr. Barry Seymour welcomed the *Breaking Ground Conference* participants and suggested that the day's topics on creating sustainable, livable communities were extremely timely, given the fiscal challenges currently facing municipalities. He noted that tools for building livable communities contribute towards increasing efficiencies and reducing costs. Sustainable design, green infrastructure, and green buildings can lower energy costs, for example, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements can reduce health costs.

Mr. Seymour introduced the conference's theme of taking ideas for improving community livability from the planning stages to the implementation phase. He noted that the Greater Philadelphia region, as one of the most livable in the nation, with strong residential neighborhoods; a walkable, mixed-use downtown; and an existing transportation system that, while not perfect, is envied by many other major metropolitan regions. The purpose of the conference was to learn from each other about how to make individual communities more sustainable, what resources are available, and what changes may be in the air on the federal level. Mr. Seymour noted the broad range of topics to be covered throughout the day as well as the diversity of the conference attendees and encouraged participants to network and share ideas and success stories.

Ms. Melissa Castro-Marmero, Director of Outreach for Southern New Jersey, Senator Menendez's Office

Ms. Melissa Castro-Marmero discussed Senate Bill 1619 (the Livable Communities Act), introduced in August 2009 by Senators Menendez, Dodd, Merkley, Akaka, Schumer, and Bennett. Senate Bill 1619 supports sustainable, livable communities by creating partnerships between federal transportation, housing, energy, and economic development departments and agencies. Key components of the legislation include providing comprehensive regional planning grants; providing “challenge grants” to support innovative local implementation efforts; creating a Federal Office of Sustainable Communities within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); and creating a Federal Interagency Council.

Ms. Castro-Marmero noted that the bill is currently pending in the Senate Banking Committee and will most likely not pass during the current legislative session. She stressed, however, that Senator Menendez will continue to work towards its passage. She noted that the current interagency partnership between HUD, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is a strong signal that all federal agencies must work together to achieve shared goals.

Ronald Sims, Deputy Secretary of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Mr. Ronald Sims described Senate Bill 1619 as an excellent piece of legislation, noting that U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is by statute both a development agency and a housing agency and as such stands ready to do its part towards developing sustainable communities. He began by discussing his previous experience as County Executive in King County, Washington, the nation's 13th largest county located in a metropolitan area of 1.8 million residents and 39 cities (including Seattle). Over 195,000 acres of forest were acquired and preserved during his tenure as a wall against urban sprawl and public investments were made only inside a designated urban growth area.

Mr. Sims noted that the key to maintaining sustainable communities is the integration of a wide range of community assets (including arts, parks, transportation investments, and green infrastructure) and that economic vitality depends on establishing and maintaining a high quality of life. He also stressed that sustainable community initiatives must benefit all communities, with no one left behind. One's zip code should be an address, not a determinant of their future. Mr. Sims relied on several personal anecdotes to illustrate that everyone must be part of the solution (including both large and small jurisdictions) and that any team is only as strong as its weakest member—everyone and every place counts. He stressed that cities must always move forward and cannot afford to be complacent.

U.S. Housing and Urban Development believes in providing opportunities for all people – the Department's goal is to decentralize the number of people living in segregated, low-income, older communities with little opportunity. Two options exist for reaching this goal: providing opportunities in other locations or reinvesting in these older locales. Mr. Sims noted that everyone deserves clean air, clean water, and clean soil, as well as access to jobs, transit, parks, and open spaces. Ease of movement is also critical to achieving sustainability, including the movement of both people and commodities.

Mr. Sims discussed the value of partnerships, citing as an example the many major universities that have not abandoned the nation's cities and have been transformative in nearby neighborhoods. He noted the importance of re-establishing partnerships with other groups as well, including businesses, community groups, and civil rights groups. He also noted the value of involving fresh food initiatives, including urban gardens, farmers' markets, and agricultural preservation, stating that everyone deserves access to fresh food.

Mr. Sims stated that during the civil rights era the persistence of people brought about change—sustainability should theoretically be easier to achieve, as it requires only one's self-interest in the long-term economic welfare of the country. This country can no longer afford sprawl—by reducing sprawl we can reduce infrastructure costs and preserve a future for coming generations. The nation as a whole must commit to growing smarter, with compact neighborhoods that support the most efficient expenditure of available funds. Mr. Sims noted that other world leaders (including those in China and in European and South American nations) speak about regions, not cities.

HUD, DOT, and EPA are committed to helping regions work and function as a whole. Through their recently established partnership, these three federal agencies will invest in regional outcomes. Mr. Sims noted that the creation of sustainable communities can impact health outcomes (through access to fresh food, clean air and water, and environments that support pedestrian and bicycle activity, for example). He completed his presentation by stating that sustainability encompasses all good things—smart energy and transportation; clean air, water, and soil; and pedestrian and bicycle environments that support good health—and that every neighborhood, city, and region should reap these benefits. Mr. Sims stated that now is the time to do something extraordinary to impact the country and the world, and HUD wants to be a partner.

In response to questions from the audience regarding balancing the vast needs of the region given current fiscal constraints, Mr. Sims acknowledged that fiscal need will always exceed available funding. He suggested that the region must prioritize its goals and needs, requiring that tough decisions be made. U.S. Housing and Urban Development grants will be incentivized to regions and investments will be made based on anticipated return.

Concurrent Sessions Proceedings

Concurrent Session: Creating Livable Neighborhoods

Moderator: Ryan Gallagher, MSCE, Assistant Manager, Office of Project Implementation, DVRPC

Mr. Ryan Gallagher opened the session by welcoming the attendees and introducing the speakers. He then highlighted his work with DVRPC's Office of Project Implementation noting that he has worked on 150 bicycle and pedestrian projects while with the Commission.

Robert Thomas, AIA, Campbell Thomas and Co. Architects

Mr. Robert Thomas's career in architecture, via bicycle and pedestrian advocacy, began in 1962 when he and his bicycle were thrown from a SEPTA regional rail train. In opening the discussion about the recently completed bicycle and pedestrian plan for Whitemarsh Township, Montgomery County,

Pennsylvania, he asked what it really means to be walkable. The answer is more than having the opportunity to walk, but to also be able to access goods, services, and recreational opportunities without using a car, and having access to transit.

Mr. Thomas provided details on how they examined all existing sidewalks, paths, cut-throughs, and easements currently used to get around by bike or on foot. The high school students in the neighborhoods, in particular those too young to drive, proved to be an invaluable resources for identifying little known pathways that help connect the neighborhoods to shopping and other destinations. Once these paths were identified, Mr. Thomas and the team mapped the existing transit network serving the immediate area and beyond. This layer, on top of the bike/foot path layer, shows the existing connections, the barriers, and the opportunities for new connections.

Through a series of maps and supporting analysis, the Whitemarsh bicycle and pedestrian plan illustrates the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian travel to, from, and within the town. The plan also promotes recommendations for encouraging nonmotorized travel, *e.g.*, well-marked and highly visible trail blazers and incentives for not using a car, such as discounts to area businesses. The township labeled some pedestrian ways as “side paths” rather than sidewalks to make the improvements more palatable to those residents seeking to preserve a rural aesthetic. Along the same lines, not every pedestrian way needs to be made of concrete—*asphalt and a variety of compacted earthen materials can be excellent substitutes.*

Stephanie Mason, ICMA-CM, Township of Doylestown

In addition to over 20 years experience in Doylestown Township to her credit, Ms. Stephanie Mason has also been the township manager since 2000.

Ms. Mason described the history of the evolving Doylestown Bike/Hike Plan since its beginning almost two decades ago. Focused on the hub and spoke concept, the goal of the plan is to create and promote biking and walking connections between the various destinations within the greater Doylestown area. The plan was a response to the local residents’ push for increased walkability throughout the area and to special destinations like the local elementary and high schools.

The Doylestown bike/hike system received its first capital grant in 1995. Ms. Mason attributed the continued success of the program to dedication at the local level and strong partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies like Delaware Valley College, SEPTA, PennDOT, and DVRPC. Most of the construction has been undertaken by the Doylestown Public Works Department (DPW); DPW workers have installed everything from asphalt paths to a bridge replacement.

The bike/hike system continues to grow as local residents see what was done in one part of town, then requesting the same in their neighborhood. Some residents have contributed by holding fundraisers and by attending ribbon-cutting ceremonies. The projects have also begun to incorporate public art by tapping into the local schools.

David Sciocchetti, AICP, Chester Economic Development Authority

Mr. David Sciocchetti, Executive Director of the Chester Economic Development Authority, is involved with all of the major economic development activities along the City of Chester’s waterfront.

The focus of Mr. Sciocchetti's presentation was the Chester Riverwalk Project, a multi-faceted planning and development project that seeks to reconnect Chester City to its waterfront while simultaneously attracting visitors into the city. This plan started out as an ambitious attempt to revitalize Chester City after losing most of its 30,000 industrial and manufacturing jobs. From 1960 through the end of the 1990s, the city waned and was replaced by decades of decline. Because manufacturing is almost completely gone from the waterfronts of American cities, office and entertainment development is the hallmark of the Chester Riverwalk Project.

By acquiring key parcels, transforming existing properties, and building new ones, the plan is a model for reinvestment. Now the home of a casino, a soon-to-open major league soccer stadium, and 400,000 square feet of office space, the riverfront has a strong foundation for future success. In addition, the Riverwalk Project incorporates access to the river for fishing, boating, and passive recreation. The site also ties into the larger and very ambitious East Coast Greenway.

After 7 years, these efforts are ongoing. Mr. Sciocchetti stated that an undertaking of this magnitude relies heavily on partnerships with agencies like PennDOT and DVRPC. In particular, the project received funding from PennDOT's Transportation Enhancements (TE) program. Administered by DVRPC in conjunction with PennDOT's District 6-0 Office, TE is a competitive grant program that funds nontraditional transportation projects.

Concurrent Session: Transformative New Developments

Moderator: Patty Elkis, AICP, Associate Director, Comprehensive Planning Unit, DVRPC

Ms. Patty Elkis opened the session with an introduction of each panelist, and noted that the transformations presented in the session are so significant that people in the audience who are familiar with the sites predevelopment may not recognize them now.

Dan Rubin, Vice President of Redevelopment, Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust (PREIT)

Mr. Dan Rubin's presentation focused on the Voorhees Town Center, which is located in Voorhees Township, New Jersey, in the former Echelon Mall location. He began by presenting some of the basic facts about PREIT and recent successful shopping center redevelopments. According to Mr. Rubin, approximately 50% of PREIT's portfolio has been redeveloped, including the Cherry Hill Mall, the Plymouth Meeting Mall, the Susquehanna Valley Mall, and 801 Market Street (former the Strawbridge & Clothier building).

Mr. Rubin explained that the Echelon Mall was a typical dying mall, with vacant anchors---JC Penney and Sears. The mall's location, a distance from interstate highways and major routes, contributed to the demise of the mall. Despite this disadvantage, the mall's unusual location in a dense, predominantly affluent residential neighborhood and proximity to the PATCO high-speed line made it a desirable site for redevelopment. Early redevelopment ideas focused around designs for an office park. The next set of ideas included a combination mall retail/Walmart anchor solution. Mr. Rubin stated that real estate investment trusts are generally risk-adverse investors and that Wal-Marts are typically safe investments.

At this point in the process, a local advocacy group approached PREIT and suggested adding a residential town center element to the redevelopment design. He also noted that at the time of this

proposal, there were only two other similar redevelopment projects of this kind, one of which was North Hill, in Raleigh, North Carolina. North Hill was particularly appealing to PREIT because it was leasing to regional tenants, as opposed to attracting national tenants. Mr. Rubin emphasized two important take-aways from the North Hill Mall: first – it is important to seek the best regional tenants in order to make the project unique; second – patience is critical, as regional tenants tend to be family businesses and it takes time to negotiate new lease deals.

Mr. Rubin reported that since the Voorhees Town Center reopened, many of the national tenants have reported increased sales. The second floor of the mall is turning to office leases and municipal uses. PREIT has replaced the JCPenney and Sears anchor stores with a mixed-use development.

Additionally, Mr. Rubin noted that restaurants are another key ingredient to the redevelopment project. Many of shoppers who will visit the new shopping location, may not buy anything, but will spend money on a meal. Lastly, Mr. Rubin praised the inclusion of a residential component, as this provides the retail tenants with a built-in customer base.

Steve Spaeder, Senior Vice President, Acquisitions and Development, BPG Properties

Mr. Steve Spaeder presented the Ellis Preserve Town Square project as an example of a transformative new development in the Philadelphia region. He began his presentation with an overview of the project, its history, and BPG’s future vision for its redevelopment.

Mr. Spaeder described the history of the Ellis Preserve Town Square site—it was originally the Charles E. Ellis School for fatherless girls from 1921 to 1977. Several intact historic school buildings are still standing and will be incorporated into the “non-contrived” town center. Beginning in 1978, it has been used as an office park. In 1997, SAP America built several new LEED Platinum office buildings for approximately 5,500 employees. Mr. Spaeder noted that it was an interesting mix of historic school buildings and new LEED office buildings. There were roughly 6,000 people on the site, which attracted BPG to the idea of redeveloping the property as a town center.

In 2004, BPG purchased the 210-acre site. Mr. Spaeder explained that BPG invested a large amount of money into the rehabilitation of the historic Ellis School buildings, a complete renovation of the ARCO building, and the historic restoration of the historic John West House. After this phase, BPG secured the Bryn Mawr Hospital Health Center as a future tenant.

Mr. Spaeder provided a detailed explanation of BPG’s vision for the town center, which includes a combination of retail, hotel, office, residential, and entertainment development and integration of historical assets within a walkable community. The vision also includes public improvements through preservation of wooded areas, traffic improvements, and stormwater management.

After outlining the vision for the Ellis Preserve Town Square, Mr. Spaeder discussed “By-Right” development versus Smart Growth, and posed the following questions for the audience to consider: 1) Why can’t we implement Smart Growth? and 2) Why don’t we have a system set up for developers that wants to do Smart Growth? Mr. Spaeder then reviewed five types of challenges for developers attempting to do large Smart Growth projects, such as Ellis Preserve Town Square, which included legal, design, market, financial, and phasing challenges.

He concluded that when developers are forced to develop under ‘by-right’ as opposed to Smart Growth, the development and design suffer.

Will Agate, Vice President, Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC)

Mr. Will Agate highlighted the work PIDC has undertaken over the last 10 years at the Navy Yard in South Philadelphia. He began by explaining PIDC’s recognition that people spend a lot of time in and around workplaces, so it is important to define a “living community” as one which is more than just residential. Mr. Agate noted that employers have a diverse set of options when scouting locations in the Philadelphia region, including downtown sites, suburban campuses, and in-between. Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation’s vision for the Navy Yard was to offer both of those options.

Similar to other unique urban industrial adaptive reuse projects, the history of PIDC’s Navy Yard redevelopment highlights a series of critical decisions and tipping points. The Philadelphia Navy Yard, slightly larger than Center City, operated as a full naval military base and shipyard and then as a decommissioned base and shipyard. The City of Philadelphia purchased the property in 2000. Recognizing that its location was attractive for the large labor pool on either side of the Delaware River, PIDC sees this site as an excellent opportunity to create jobs in Philadelphia.

After the city purchased the site, Liberty Property Trust was selected as the developer for the Navy Yard. The master plan included a vision for the Navy Yard as a 24/7 community, with physical design that capitalizes on the historic value of the site and existing buildings, the open landscape, and also preserves the urban setting. Mr. Agate explained that PIDC and Liberty Property Trust immediately established high standards for the architectural design of the site, and that sustainability elements would be worked into the site plans wherever possible. In addition, he described how the site plan would maximize public access to the waterfront and views of the water, which would help position this site as a star destination for employment and private investment.

Mr. Agate touched on efforts taken to locate funding. He noted that they used the Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ) process for the research park. The developer and PIDC are starting to build amenities into the site and looking towards infrastructure improvements that will further enhance development and investment. Mr. Agate concluded his remarks by reminding the audience that partnerships were and remain critical to the Navy Yard’s success.

Concurrent Session: Improving One Community at a Time

Moderator: The Honorable Joe Brigandi, Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders

The Honorable Joseph Brigandi is a Freeholder of Gloucester County and the Borough Administrator for Glassboro. Mr. Brigandi introduced the session by discussing this critical time in which sustainability and livability are imperatives. However, fiscal constraints mean we must do more with less. Government budgets often address the problems of yesterday, but redevelopment programs like DVRPC’s TCDI program look towards tomorrow. Since 2002, the TCDI program has allocated \$10 million towards revitalizing downtowns through great planning with strong community support.

Farah Jimenez, Executive Director, Mt. Airy USA

Since 1997, Farah Jimenez has been the Executive Director of Mt. Airy USA, a nonprofit real estate development corporation. Mt Airy USA is one of the leading community development corporations in the region. Germantown Avenue has been the primary focus of its revitalization work, particularly along a two-mile stretch that is the dividing line between east and west, and meeting place of the neighborhood.

Winston Commons was an adaptive reuse of an historic building that has won many awards. Another project involves the reuse of a six-acre site where there had been industrial uses next to the train station. Mt. Airy USA is currently promoting its plan of the Mt. Airy Transit Village, which will have a mix of uses and incomes.

Ms. Jimenez commented that most plans tend to sit on shelves. This was true for a number of plans developed for Mt. Airy...except for one plan. The TCDI plan was the only one that worked, for three reasons. First, the plan began with the end in mind. They already had \$2.8 million reserved, and they were thinking of implementation while they were doing the plan. Second, the plan involved long-term planning for a long-term goal, and was organized into phases. The planning process included research and synthesis.

The Mt. Airy Placemaking and Streetscape Improvement Plan included sidewalk improvements and a partnership with mural arts. One project within this plan was the improvement of an unused train trestle that is the gateway into the community. After implementation, this will become part of the rails-to-trails network and provide direct access to Fairmount Park. Another improvement is planned to open up the Germantown Avenue Playground to more pedestrian access from the avenue.

Ms. Jimenez remarked that no matter how many public meetings and media coverage, there will inevitably still be one person who says, "How come no one told me about this?" The TCDI program is an opportunity that can lead to other opportunities for additional funding and implementation.

Greg Filipek, Director, SORA Holdings

Greg Filipek, cofounder and director of SORA Holdings, spoke about a major redevelopment project in Glassboro. Long-term planning requires patience because it is multi-year process. It can be particularly difficult for elected officials who want to see groundbreaking before elections. The Glassboro redevelopment project started with a plan to connect downtown with the campus of Rowan University. They saw a need to increase density along the new Rowan Boulevard. What usually happens is sporadic investment and haphazard redevelopment, and the results usually reflect that. There are few opportunities to build a downtown from scratch. He commented that there are not many projects of this size and this complicated.

They conducted feasibility studies and market surveys to understand the needs and demands of students and faculty, businesses, and other stakeholders within a 10-mile radius. They questioned what would be needed to make this redevelopment a regional destination. They found that for every hypothetical \$1 spent, there was a return of \$100. The feasibility study found that students and faculty spent \$18.3 million annually, only 18% of which was captured in Glassboro's downtown.

They developed the site using smart growth principles, including wide sidewalks, elevated crossings, plantings, and other environmental features, appropriate lighting, and other streetscape amenities.

They did not use eminent domain for any part of the project. All land was acquired by purchasing over 90 properties. Although eminent domain is an effective tool, one hopes to never have to use it. Most people in the area have been pleased by the real estate transactions for the redevelopment. Some college towns do not like colleges expanding for, among other things, tax reasons. However, the land here is privately owned and generates property tax revenue. Last year, the borough experience no tax increases. They estimate that Glassboro will see \$40 to \$60 million in tax benefits over the next 20 years.

Mr. Filipek talked about the six “Ps” of redevelopment. This is a Process, not a project, and takes time and tasks. It is a Partnership, not a contract, and is a give-and-take that includes the input of residents and businesses. There is Political sensitivity, so timing is important. Proper Planning is key. Power, and the proper use of it, is important since eminent domain can be very dangerous. Lastly, Patience is essential since no project is completed overnight.

James Bruton, Council President, Borough of Downingtown

James Bruton is the President of Council for the Borough of Downingtown. Downingtown is an old mill town at the end of the Main Line and in the geographic center of Chester County. The borough’s redevelopment began in 1992. Their central business district is historic and has many significant buildings.

They have a Keystone Opportunity Zone at a landlocked Amtrak rail yard. This area was vacated by Amtrak, and the outstanding taxes were waived. A redevelopment plan and zoning changes for the site have been completed, and construction is pending.

Other redevelopment projects include the Brandywine Paper Mill, the Sonoco Paper Mill, the old Minquas Firehouse, the Fire Creek Restaurant, the Harleysville Bank, and Victory Brewing Company. At the Brandywine Paper Mill site, an historic building fell down during construction of the site. The developers were so committed to historic preservation that they rebuilt the house with the original stones. The Victory Brewing Company took over an old building used by Pepperidge Farms, and has since become one of the top microbreweries in the country. Part of the reason for Victory settling in Downingtown is access to high-quality water from the Brandywine River.

Concurrent Session: Green Infrastructure

Moderator: Alison Hastings, AICP, Senior Environmental Planner, DVRPC

Ms. Alison Hastings opened the session by welcoming the attendees and introducing the speakers. She then spoke about DVRPC’s interest in investing in green infrastructure as a way to stretch public dollars and make the region livable.

Michael Leff, TreeVitalize Program Manager, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS)

Michael Leff of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) presented on the TreeVitalize program. TreeVitalize is a partnership program that includes Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Protection, DVRPC, PHS, and Aqua PA, among others.

TreeVitalize analyzed tree canopy cover in the Philadelphia region and produced a series of maps showing the percentage of tree cover within municipalities. Through this analysis, it set a goal of increasing tree cover in the region. In the first 4 years of the program, 20,000 trees were planted in Southeastern Pennsylvania. TreeVitalize focuses on both street trees in communities and on “riparian trees” in parks and natural areas.

The program also includes extensive training and volunteers. PHS has trained 3,200 citizens as “Tree Tenders” and 11,000 volunteers have been engaged. Because of success in southeastern Pennsylvania, DCNR expanded TreeVitalize into a statewide program.

Mr. Leff highlighted the many social, economic, and environmental benefits of trees. Trees can reduce stress, elevate an individual’s mood, improve health, increase one’s sense of safety, improve community cohesion, and increase a community’s livability.

The City of Philadelphia has set for itself the goal of planting 300,000 trees by 2015. TreeVitalize will plant 8,000 trees in the spring of 2010 and has mapped the locations of projects using a Google Map application.

Mr. Leff was asked if the increase in community tree plantings has created stress on tree breeding. He responded that he has not seen evidence of stress on breeding, but occasionally the supply of specific types of trees can run low. In response to a question regarding tree quality and longevity, Mr. Leff stated that the Morris Arboretum does quality control for bare root trees and that the assistance of a forester is critical in any large-scale tree planting program

Glen Abrams, AICP, Manager of Watershed Planning, Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)

Glen Abrams of the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) presented on the city’s long-term combined sewer overflow control plan, otherwise known as Green City, Clean Waters. Mr. Abrams explained that natural areas have a runoff rate of approximately 10%. A typical urban area has a runoff rate of 55%.

The plan is an effort to use green (as opposed to gray) stormwater infrastructure to infiltrate, store, and slowly release the first inch of stormwater falling on the city so that it does not enter the city’s combined stormwater/sewer system. To accomplish this task, the city will utilize a variety of “green infrastructure” techniques. The PWD is dividing its efforts among eight programs focused on public lands (streets, schools, public facilities, parks/open spaces) and private lands (industrial/commercial/institutional uses, homes, parking lots, and alleys/driveways)

Mr. Abrams highlighted a number of demonstration projects, such as the installation of “tree trenches” along Baltimore Avenue, the Waterview Recreation Center, and Columbus Square.

Green School projects were highlighted including the Greenfield and Penn Alexander Elementary Schools and the Wissahickon Charter School. Green School projects are highly visible and help to educate students and the public. Mr. Abrams showed slides of pilot projects at the Free Library (green roof), Cliveden Park, Liberty Lands, Herron Playground, and Cobbs Creek.

Patrick Starr, Vice President, Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)

Patrick Starr of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) presented on the new study PEC undertook to explore different ways to fund green infrastructure. Mr. Starr called attention to the fact that Philadelphia has had a plethora of ambitious plans with “green infrastructure” goals but there has been little implementation.

When thinking about how to fund the North Delaware Riverfront Greenway, PEC advocated for the creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to capture the value of real estate appreciation. Other green infrastructure projects that will require creative funding include Dilworth Plaza (\$100 million), Pier 11 (\$3.5 million), Penn’s Landing (\$500 million), and DVRPC’s Regional Greenspace Network (billions of dollars).

Mr. Starr argued that we have to do the following: 1) Continue to “make the case” by showing the return on investments in green infrastructure. Examples include the Trust for Public Land study on the economic value of Philadelphia’s parks, the North Delaware Riverfront Greenway economic impact study, and the New Kensington Greening Study that analyzed the effect of greening on property values; 2) Use innovative public funding mechanisms, such as fee-based payments (PWD’s fee-based stormwater billing) and the creation of special improvement districts; and 3) Develop new approaches for generating low-cost capital such as tax increment financing and revolving loan funds.

In Philadelphia, TIFs can be a challenge because of 10-year tax abatement, irregular property reassessment, blight certification requirements, and impacts on the school district.

Innovative market incentives, such as building regulations and trading schemes, are another approach to funding green infrastructure. In the Philadelphia region, the “Wissahickon Sediment Trading Program” is an example of a market-based trading scheme.

Mr. Starr advised the region to think carefully about how to fund and implement the region’s big ideas and visions with local resources, especially if federal funds become scarcer. Mr. Starr advocated that the region should leverage federal and state resources, increase funding at a regional scale, and dedicate a portion of future municipal tax revenues to green infrastructure.

In response to a question regarding the attitude of the development community toward green infrastructure investments, Mr. Starr stated that the development community is behind these efforts, but that they will remain on the sideline until the benefits of green infrastructure can be localized and captured in the market.

Concurrent Session: Community Development through Marketing

Moderator: Karen P. Cilurso, AICP, Senior Regional Planner, Office of Smart Growth, DVRPC

Ms. Karen Cilurso opened the session discussing the need for public relations and marketing as tools to jump start redevelopment plans and strengthen downtown business districts. The intent of the panel was to highlight experiences in combining marketing techniques with traditional economic development tools to attract new residents, businesses, and tourists.

Barry Cassidy, Phoenixville Main Street

Mr. Barry Cassidy is the Executive Director of Phoenixville Main Street. His presentation centered on efforts to market Phoenixville. It began in 2003 with a group of approximately 60 citizens, council members, and businesses that wanted to revitalize Phoenixville which was suffering from disinvestment.

An initial set of streetscape improvements, including brick sidewalks and streetlights, funded with \$5 million in local funds was undertaken. Phoenixville started to systematically address crime and began a community watch program. A second phase of streetscape improvements was undertaken with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to widen a street and reinvigorate a brownfields site.

Mr. Cassidy stressed that the foundation of Phoenixville's renaissance was the development of regularly scheduled standard events. It began with a First Friday event that drew several hundred people and later expanded it to every Friday. They now draw about 7,000 people and have strolling musicians as well as a main stage act. A key to their success is that people do not need to check a newspaper to see if something is going on downtown; they know that if it is Friday that something is happening. Mr. Cassidy noted that Phoenixville has seen a dramatic increase in both commercial and residential property values since they began these efforts. There has been new in-fill construction and they work with the developers to put retail on the first floor. Phoenixville is now the fastest growing borough in Chester County.

Marianne Lods, Glasstown Arts District, Millville

Ms. Marianne Lods is the Executive Director of the Millville Development Corporation. She has a background in business development, consensus building, marketing, and art education and appreciation. In 2009, Ms. Lods received the title of Certified Main Street Manager from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The Millville Development Corporation, a non-profit public corporation started in 1994, is behind the Arts District. They were formed to reinvigorate Millville which suffered from a dramatic loss of jobs in the 1990s. Job creation was the highest priority and it was felt that a thriving downtown could draw employment and businesses to the region. The group sought to fulfill the entertainment needs of people in a local setting and capture the segment of population that did not necessarily want to go to Philadelphia or Atlantic City. They focus on drawing crowds from the shore, particularly on rainy days. Millville's historical glass industry and the presence of the largest American glass museum led the group to focus and tie-in to artisan glass for tourism and marketing efforts.

In 2001, they developed and built an arts center, which serves as a cornerstone for all their subsequent efforts. They started a Third Friday event focusing on the arts and change exhibitions every month to act as a regular draw to patrons. They have several other events throughout the year such as a Soul of the Season event in winter and a Summerfest which expands to encompass the nearby river with canoeing and kayaking.

Funding is a challenge, particularly with state contributions frozen in the currently proposed budget. After the arts center opened, the district had a \$75,000 annual marketing budget and focused on magazines and regional newspapers. They currently are concentrating their efforts on electronic media and marketing. They have eliminated their print newsletter and now use Twitter and Facebook. They feel that electronic marketing is particularly good for organizations with a limited budget. They also have advertised on Channel 40 NBC in Atlantic City, which is widely watched by tourists for weather reports.

Julie Fitzpatrick, Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC)

Ms. Julie Fitzpatrick joined PDC in January 2005. Her responsibilities include providing technical assistance to local communities for a wide range of economic development and planning services, and providing staff support on program development. Ms. Fitzpatrick spoke about the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, which provides technical assistance to communities for planning and marketing services. They are a statewide non-profit and act as a state coordinating agency for national organizations.

They work closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), specifically on the Main Street and Elm Street programs. They facilitate community visioning exercises that look at current perceptions of communities. They focus on issues such as access to the community, daytime and evening vibrancy, commercial and residential vacancy rates, and parking availability and accessibility.

The Pennsylvania Downtown Center identifies community needs and tries to utilize a community's assets since it is easier to enhance assets rather than change negative perceptions. It is important to realize that not every community can be a regional draw but they may succeed as a local draw. Therefore, it is crucial to link the demographic basis and marketing efforts. They also work to create awareness because many times unfamiliarity is considered a negative perception.

Concurrent Session: Redevelopment through Regulations

Moderator: Richard G. Bickel, Director, Planning Division, DVRPC

The intent of this session was to translate smart growth principles into on-the-ground planning tools. The session's three panelists discussed implementation tools at three scales: county, community, and neighborhood.

Susan Craft, Executive Director, New Jersey State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC)

Ms. Susan Craft discussed the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, whereby development potential is transferred from one parcel to another, resulting in the preservation of land from which the development potential is transferred and increased densities on the land to which the potential is transferred. Every TDR program involves four essential elements: an identification of the resource to be protected in the sending area; the allocation of existing development potential, based on the existing zoning and environmental constraints; the development of a transfer mechanism that will allow development credits to be transferred from a sending area to a receiving area, including an enrollment procedure, deed restrictions, and an appeals process; and planning for development in the receiving area, including size, design, density, infrastructure requirements, site plan, and design requirements. Next Ms. Craft described the voluntary TDR program adopted in 1998 in Chesterfield Township, Burlington County. Chesterfield's program was initiated at the township level with the mutual goals of preserving farmland and developing a New Urban village. The township's sending area included 7,525 acres with 1,408 associated TDR credits. The 570-acre receiving area (which originally included only 122 TDR credits) was designed as a neo-traditional village, which at total build-out will include approximately 1,250 units at a gross density of 2.2 units per acre.

The process for developing Chesterfield's TDR program began in 1997 with the adoption of a master plan that identified the sending and receiving areas. In 1998 a local land development ordinance was adopted that created the TDR zoning scheme, followed by approval of the Wastewater Management Plan by NJDEP in 1999. Following designation of the township's receiving area as a center by the N.J. State Planning Commission in 2000, a master plan amendment was adopted in 2002 that created the village plan and imposed architectural standards within the receiving area. Construction commenced on the first subdivision in 2003, leading to the issuance of the first Certificate of Occupancies (COs) in the TDR receiving area in 2004. By 2006, 115 COs had been issued, 212 building permits had been issued, subdivision approvals had been obtained for 813 units, subdivision approvals were pending for an additional 357 units, and 2,060 acres had been enrolled in the TDR program and preserved.

Developers currently control 90% of the township's receiving area, and 76% of the ultimate development capacity of 1,170 units is either pending approval, approved, or under construction. Construction has commenced by three developers on 813 units, and the new school location has been designated as the hub of the community. A Recreation Improvement District has been created to fund \$3.9 million in common facilities, and a Transportation Improvement District has also been created to fund \$8.9 million in collector roads. Ms. Craft stressed that TDR is a growth management tool rather than a shield to prevent growth and that implementing TDR creates an opportunity to design centers. Chesterfield's Old York Village embodies the principles of traditional neighborhood design found in other local examples, such as historic Crosswicks Village. TDR can successfully preserve farmland and open space by substituting private capital and real estate market activity for public funding.

In conclusion, Ms. Craft discussed how TDR implementation can be improved statewide. Despite the enactment of statewide enabling legislation allowing TDR programs in 2004, only one TDR ordinance has been adopted since (in Woolwich Township, Gloucester County). A statewide TDR policy task force is currently meeting and has been charged with recommending changes to existing laws, regulations, and policies that would improve the implementation of TDR, specifically by reducing an overly burdensome approval process. A package of task force recommendations is due this summer.

Martha Cross, AICP, PP, LEED, Director of Design, Group Melvin Design

Ms. Martha Cross discussed form-based codes. Ms. Cross described three form-based codes at various stages of completion: Woolwich Township, New Jersey (adopted and in use); Woodbury, New Jersey (where a form-based business district code is nearing adoption); and Mt. Holly, New Jersey (currently being developed). The primary focus of a form-based code (FBC) is on vision and form as opposed to land use (as in traditional Euclidean zoning). There are four main principles of form-based codes: a community vision is illustrated; a predictable outcome is created; community character is protected; and the resulting code allows for market flexibility.

In Woolwich Township, an existing TDR program is preserving 7,000 acres while creating a new town in the receiving area, for which a form-based zoning code has been adopted. Ms. Cross described the township and discussed the FBC, which includes requirements for architecture and design; parking; edges and buffers; and the environment for both the public and private realms and on each of several scales, including site scale, block scale, and town scale.

In Woodbury, the purpose of the FBC is to integrate the City's Land Use/Transect Zone Plan, Street Regulating Plan, Public Spaces Plan, and Gateway Plan into a set of cohesive design regulations. Unlike a

traditional zoning code, the FBC encourages a mix of uses and building types within transect zones and places a large emphasis on the form and function of the public and private realms. Woodbury's FBC identifies three transects, including a live/work zone, the downtown zone, and a neighborhood zone. Ms. Cross stressed that form-based codes must be easy to navigate: Woodbury's code will be on-line and include illustrations of the rules within each of the code's zones.

In Mt. Holly, the primary goals are to implement a form-based code that will protect the town's historic character and to identify opportunities for redevelopment and potential redevelopment sites that can act as catalysts for economic development. Ms. Cross illustrated existing conditions within the municipality and discussed the ongoing process for developing the FBC.

Ms. Cross provided several internet links with additional information on developing a form-based zoning code, including <http://www.formbasedcodes.org>, <http://www.smartcodecentral.org>, and http://woodbury.nj.us/about_redevelopment.shtml. Randall Arendt, one of the conference's keynote speakers, suggested from the audience that form-based codes can be difficult for citizen board members to understand and suggested that such codes focus on the basics, such as designating maximum setbacks (to bring development to the forefront) and minimum heights (to encourage increased density).

Scott Page, Principal, Interface Studios

The session's final panelist was Mr. Scott Page, Principal of Interface Studio, LLC. Mr. Page discussed neighborhood Transit Revitalization Investment Districts (TRID), which he described as an interplay between planning policy and implementation. He noted that transportation is one of the key building blocks to be considered as the city works towards achieving Mayor Nutter's goal of becoming the greenest city in America. With the fifth largest transportation infrastructure system in the nation, Philadelphia grew and declined around transit. Mr. Page described concerns that have led to a decline around transit stations, some of which are perceived (such as poor street connectivity and an inability to find the station) but others of which are real (especially crime). He suggested that transit-oriented development (TOD) in the city needs to include moderate densities, mixed uses, mixed incomes, and community amenities and services. He also noted that TOD focus not only on transit but also on the pedestrian and bicycling environment and densities in Philadelphia's TOD locations which vary significantly, given the city's diversity.

TRID legislation was enacted in 2004 as a means of promoting TOD by funding redevelopment around transit stations. The TRID is basically a form of tax-increment financing for transit, as increased tax revenue in a designated area around transit is captured and reinvested locally. NeighborhoodsNow (a nonprofit organization that develops market-driven programs to improve the health and competitiveness of Philadelphia's low- and moderate-income neighborhoods) was awarded state funding to consider the potential for implementing TRID at two of the city's rail stations—46th Street and Temple University. Mr. Page stressed that, unlike the suburbs, TOD in Philadelphia is about more than new development; it includes the design and retrofitting of existing places. He discussed several elements that need to be considered including improving the basics (through bike patrols, lighting, and police coordination); providing information (maps, real-time transit service information, and playful signage); the importance of other modes of travel besides transit (including cars and bikes); injecting activity (including "softer" approaches such as bike facilities, rain gardens, farmers' markets, lawns, or outdoor movies); providing clear, visible approaches to the stations; upgrading the infrastructure (both functionally and aesthetically); and adding density.

Implementation of TRID has been incremental. While no TRID has yet been designated, a rail station zoning overlay has been proposed; Home Depot has provided \$1 million for greening projects; \$2.4 million has been provided by the Commonwealth for infrastructure projects in the two areas; and redevelopment is moving forward around both stations. In response to a question from the audience, Mr. Page noted that obstacles to implementing TRID include questions as to how properties are assessed; a hesitation in altering tax structures; local opposition to TOD, which residents fear will result in increased neighborhood traffic and a lack of parking; and state budget cuts which have impacted Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's ability to provide assistance in implementing the program.

Concurrent Session: Linking Philadelphia Neighborhoods to the River

Moderator: Karin Morris, AICP, Manager, Office of Smart Growth, DVRPC

Ms. Karin Morris introduced the panel highlighting the efforts of three organizations that are using Take Me to the River grants to improve Philadelphia's relationship to the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers.

Joseph Syrnick, Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SDRC)

Mr. Joseph Syrnick is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC), as well as the Acting Chairman of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Mr. Syrnick began his presentation by discussing the history of the SRDC and the progress of Schuylkill Banks. Schuylkill Banks is the name given to the partially completed trail system which will ultimately run along the east and west banks of the Schuylkill River between the Fairmount Water Works and historic Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River.

Mr. Syrnick discussed two Schuylkill Banks projects that are moving forward with the help of Take Me to the River grants. SRDC received a capital grant to develop the DuPont Crescent section of the trail system, which represents a 3,300-foot stretch of the tidal Schuylkill between 34th Street and Wharton Street near the Grays Ferry neighborhood. SRDC is working with the City and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to plan the greenway. Mr. Syrnick noted that this link is especially important to the trail system because it will provide recreational opportunities to underserved neighborhoods and access to a portion of the river which has been off limits for nearly a century. One of the greatest challenges of this site is maintaining the ecological integrity of the area. The DuPont Crescent is one of the most wooded portions of the trail system and planning has included significant wildlife and habitat preservation.

The second Schuylkill Banks project involves planning for a pedestrian crossing of the Schuylkill River near Grays Ferry Avenue. A pedestrian crossing at this location would link the trail system to historic Bartram's Garden on the west bank of the river and avoid the heavy industrial uses on the eastern bank south of Grays Ferry. SRDC is using its second grant to analyze the feasibility of utilizing an abandoned railroad bridge just south of the Grays Ferry Avenue Bridge. The study is evaluating the possibility of passing over and through the existing structure while using the substructure for support. Mr. Syrnick acknowledged several obstacles, including the clearance needed for boats to pass under the bridge and cost concerns, which will influence the design of the project. Nonetheless, he stressed the importance of linking cultural assets such as Bartram's Garden to the trail system.

Paul Lonie, Delaware River City Corporation (DRCC)

Mr. Paul Lonie is the Capital Program Director of the Delaware River City Corporation (DRCC), an organization dedicated to revitalizing northeast Philadelphia's riverfront. Mr. Lonie discussed two projects that have received support from the Take Me to the River grant program. The first project deals with Lardner's Point Park, located just south of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge. DRCC's work includes making repairs to an existing pier that will serve as one of the central elements of the park as well as shoreline restoration and wetland construction. Although, work on improving the park began in 2006, Mr. Lonie acknowledged that patience is needed when dealing with complex projects with multiple funding sources. A portion of Lardner's Point Park's funding is being supplied as part of the 2004 Athos I oil spill mitigation project. In response to the damage caused by the oil spill near Paulsboro, NJ, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association developed a Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan that includes Lardner's Point Park as one of nine projects to be funded.

Mr. Lonie then described DRCC's work on the Port Richmond Trail. This trail, envisioned as an 11-mile greenway from Allegheny Avenue to the Poquessing Creek, will serve as a critical link to the East Coast Greenway through Philadelphia. DRCC has been working with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as well as the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority to finalize plans for an off-road trail along the city-owned rights-of-way for Delaware Avenue and Allegheny Avenue. Mr. Lonie stressed the importance of coordinating planning efforts with stakeholders. DRCC has found dealing with multiple levels of jurisdiction, a linear permitting process, and time restrictions on funding among the biggest obstacles to the success of both projects.

Sarah Korlett, New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC)

Ms. Sarah Korlett is the Economic Development Director of the New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing the East Kensington, Fishtown, and Port Richmond neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The NKCDC leads the community planning process for a four-mile stretch of the Delaware River from Spring Garden Street to the Betsy Ross Bridge.

The NKCDC received a Take Me to the River Grant for two different projects. The first grant supports *Waterfront Wednesdays*, a summer concert series at Penn Treaty Park designed to provide cultural programming, engage local businesses, and promote neighborhood access to the Delaware Waterfront. The first concert series was held over 6 weeks in July and August 2009. Ms. Corlett highlighted several lessons that NKCDC learned from the inaugural run, including the importance of involving the local business community and marketing the events in creative ways.

Arts and Intrigue Lead to the River is another NKCDC initiative partially funded by a Take Me to the River grant. This project seeks to use public art to raise awareness and enhance pedestrian connections to the Delaware River. The public art initiative focuses on Girard and Columbia Avenues, linking Penn Treaty Park to the Girard Station of the Market-Frankford El. The NKCDC worked with Interface Studio to develop a plan that identified strategic public art opportunities along the route. The NKCDC then collaborated with the Mural Arts Program to develop both temporary and permanent art with an aquatic theme.

Concurrent Session: Energy-Efficiency for Municipalities

Moderator: Robert Graff, Manager, Office of Energy and Climate Change, DVRPC

Mr. Robert Graff opened this session by providing information on the efforts of DVRPC and our state and private partners on approaches and resources for municipalities to reduce energy use in their own operations and in their communities at large. Representatives from the U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR and Clean Energy Program, New Jersey Clean Energy Program, and PECO Energy presented on their programs for assisting municipalities in reducing their energy bills.

Andrew Kreider, U.S. EPA, Region III

Mr. **Andrew** Kreider is an Environmental Protection Specialist for ENERGY STAR and Clean Energy Programs in the U.S. EPA, Region III. His presentation provided an overview of EPA Portfolio Manager and other related EPA programs and tools available to municipalities.

The EPA Portfolio Manager (PM) is a free on-line tool that allows users to benchmark the energy performance of their buildings against similar buildings throughout the nation. The PM also tracks building energy use over time. Municipalities can utilize this tool at www.energystar.gov.

The EPA's State and Local Climate and Energy Program provide technical assistance, analytical tools, and outreach support to state, local, and tribal governments. Mr. Kreider invited municipalities to sign up for this service on the EPA's website at www.epa.gov/statelocalclimate to stay up-to-date on important state and local developments in climate change and clean energy policies, programs, and opportunities. Though not an EPA resource, Mr. Kreider recommended viewing the Database of State Incentives for Renewable & Efficiency (DSIRE). DSIRE is a comprehensive source of information on state, local, utility, and federal incentives and policies that promote renewable energy and energy-efficiency. Established in 1995 and funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, DSIRE is an ongoing project of the N.C. Solar Center and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council. Additional information can be found at www.dsireusa.org.

Joseph Carlamere, New Jersey's Clean Energy Program

Mr. Joseph Carlamere is the Deputy Program Manager for New Jersey's Clean Energy Program, administered by the N.J. Board of Public Utilities' Office of Clean Energy.

The Clean Energy Program strives to save energy, lower operating costs, protect the environment, and change the business mindset. The Clean Energy Program was introduced as part of the N.J. Clean Energy Act in 1999 and provides energy-efficiency project opportunities through Honeywell Inc. and TRC Energy Services. The commercial and industrial portion of the program focuses on commercial buildings, local government facilities, and old industrial buildings. Mr. Carlamere spoke to the audience about the local government energy audit provided through the N.J. Clean Energy Program. The energy audit is available to local governments, New Jersey state colleges and universities, and select nonprofits. To participate, a registration form must be completed and submitted with a resolution. A draft request for proposal is then submitted and the participant will enter into a contract with an approved audit firm. The audit is scheduled and the invoice is then submitted. The incentive to participate is 100% of audit costs are paid if the applicant commits to making the energy-saving upgrades. Mr. Carlamere noted that the Clean Energy Program's Local Government Energy Audit Program links up with three incentive

programs: SmartStart Buildings, Pay for Performance, and Direct Install. Additional information is available at www.njcleanenergy.com.

Mike O’Leary, PECO Energy

Mr. Mike O’Leary is the Manager of Energy-Efficiency Programs at PECO. He has worked for the past 13 years for PECO, where he has held the position of Applications Engineer, Sr. Account Executive, Sr. Engineer, and most recently Manager, Energy-Efficiency Programs. In his current role, Mr. O’Leary is responsible for managing PECO’s commercial, industrial, governmental, institutional, and nonprofit sector energy-efficiency programs.

ACT 129 encourages governments, institutions, nonprofits, and C & I customers to improve energy-efficiency in existing and new facilities, as well as to reduce the electric demand in Pennsylvania. To help accomplish this, there is approximately \$67.4 million in energy-efficiency incentives through May 31, 2013. All PECO business customers are eligible to apply for these incentives. Mr. O’Leary explained the difference in the available incentives. The first is Prescriptive Incentives, where you install energy efficient equipment to achieve predetermined savings. This is offered per unit, wattage reduced or wattage-controlled basis. Eligible measures include lighting, HVAC, refrigeration, and motors and drives. The second type is Custom incentives. These are determined on a case-by-case basis and are paid per unit energy saved (kWh and/or kW). Projects that are on the prescriptive measures list are not eligible for custom incentives even if the calculated incentive is greater. Mr. O’Leary encouraged interested applicants to submit a preapproval application. Available incentives do not include on-site generation, repairs, replacement of unused equipment, design, or consulting services (except energy audits for governmental, institutional, and nonprofit customers), and residential metered customers.

Lunch Keynote

Mark Brookman, Chair of the Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance (DVSGA)

Mr. Mark Brookman opened the lunch keynote by recognizing Joanne Denworth for her ongoing role in support of the Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance (DVSGA). Mr. Brookman noted the importance of identifying communication gaps between the different stakeholders in regional planning, and surmised that it is often the local governments that are the least informed in the regional conversations about Smart Growth. He explained that his organization is in a unique position to communicate well with local governments, because DVSGA can hear opinions on development and growth management from both sides, whereas oftentimes local governments are in a “tricky spot.” Mr. Brookman then explained that DVSGA is working with the Urban Land Institute to give awards to outstanding Smart Growth projects in the region. He explained that through this award recognition process it became clear that there is a large dichotomy between what planners believe and what residents believe is the appropriate density level of development. Lastly, he explained that the DVSGA board is comprised of caucus groups, and includes a wide variety of individuals and interest areas.

Anne Hutchinson AICP, Senior Director, Municipal Conservation Services, Natural Lands Trust

Ms. Anne Hutchinson, from the Natural Lands Trust, introduced keynote speaker Randall Arendt, noting his well-known book *Rural By Design* and his upcoming book *Envisioning Better Communities: Seeing More Options, Making Wiser Choices*. Ms. Hutchinson described Mr. Arendt as a leader in “challenging the mechanical subdivision process that has rolled across America.”

Keynote: Randall Arendt, Author of Rural by Design (1994) and Envisioning Better Communities: Seeing More Options, Making Wiser Choices (2010)

Mr. Randall Arendt’s presentation, entitled “Transforming the Commercial Strip into Mixed-Use Corridors and Nodes,” was an engaging discussion of his professional interests and his recommendations for how to redesign commercial strip developments, which are prevalent in the DVRPC region.

Mr. Arendt began by showing the audience examples of Smart Growth design at a variety of densities. He remarked that Smart Growth issues are of growing concern, even though these issues are not new. He first pointed out that form-based code design solutions should be approached gradually, and by turning conventions on their head. For example, he asked the audience to consider - what if our codes had a build-to-line standard or a minimum height standard as opposed to a maximum height standard? Mr. Arendt stated that we need to find solutions that are not too complex for township officials to deal with; townships must have good design standards in place, because the commercial strip mall built environment currently has a design life of 30 years at the most. Mr. Arendt believes that when these structures reach the end of their useful life, strong design standards will prevent townships from just rebuilding the same types of buildings that do not contribute to the urban fabric. He concluded this point by asking the audience to design and build fewer Greenfield developments and instead more clustered or traditional neighborhood designs, with designs that could better relate to the traditional architectural vernacular.

For his second point, Mr. Arendt showed the audience slides of Mad River Green in Waitsfield, Vermont and posed these questions: “What if we graphically described our zoning codes? What would we see?” He explained that because our standard zoning codes do not graphically describe our zoning regulations, we do not understand what kind of design and development we are permitting and promoting. Mr. Arendt asked the audience to consider the importance of greenspace in mixed use developments, and explained how these greenspaces allow for social and economic transactions. These types of spaces and their design must be a part of future land use maps and zoning codes. Mr. Arendt explained that even if a township does not use a full-fledged, form-based code, their zoning code should still have form elements.

Following this point, Mr. Arendt turned the discussion to infrastructure. “We need to put our money where our mouth is,” he stated, “and if we are serious about Smart Growth, then we need to invest in the basic public infrastructure amenities.” He went on to note that there is no mystery to borough and small town building, and that municipalities frequently neglect the design and construction of their gateways, which allows for sprawl-style commercial strips. Mr. Arendt then showed a figure ground image of an existing small town in central New Jersey, and explained how it could create vital placemaking assets by creating a new street structure and populating those streets with buildings and trees. He then provided examples of places that found success with this approach, such as Davidson, NC’s use of roundabouts and Sandwich, Massachusetts’ redevelopment of a dilapidated mall site, using a new street grid and landscaping elements. Mr. Arendt then stated that vision is the key important ingredient in connecting

regulations to design, and that the vision should drive the design and development process. He noted that vision-making starts with community meetings and continues to permeate the entire process.

Next, Mr. Arendt focused on the importance of trees and landscaping elements in place-making. He showed the audience pictures from Amherst, Massachusetts and the “Trees of Amherst” book. He noted that in addition to all the climatological and ecological benefits trees provide, trees can also be used to hide ugly buildings, to maintain the street line, and trees should be heavily planted in the first phase of any project.

After the images of trees, Mr. Arendt discussed the importance of town squares and centers in anchoring downtowns, and that these places attract people into spending more time and money in downtowns. “In order to attract more people,” he noted with a smile, “we need to make our places more attractive.” He showed an example of Birkdale Village in Huntersville, NC, a prime example of remaking a rundown strip mall into an attractive, “happening” place, with a town center and plenty of activity. “There is so much we can do with our old tired strip malls,” Mr. Arendt continued, and offered examples of using water features, grass, and trees to “use the beauty of a property appropriately.” He explained that these natural features are a gift we often squander, and that oftentimes engineers and planning boards make decisions without a full understanding of the landscape.

Next Mr. Arendt showed examples of incorporating natural areas into strip malls, including: day-lighting streams in Paoli, PA; using grass as a parking lot surface in areas of lots that are less frequently used; deliberately sloping new parking lots down toward rain gardens; building pedestrian ways through shopping centers; and taking out the curbs in parking lots so that water can run into rain gardens or stormwater ponds. Mr. Arendt noted that these types of design elements should probably be mandatory, but that the bigger issue is addressing the regulations, policies, and incentives that prevent these types of designs from happening.

Mr. Arendt ended his presentation with images of typical strip mall building designs on rural highways. He showed the audience pictures of standard Dunkin Donuts, CVS, gas stations, and gas station canopies that are set back from the highway. Mr. Arendt then showed these same buildings redesigned to reflect more of the local vernacular, with buildings brought closer in and turned around on the highway, in order to create a physical design that is more cohesive with the surrounding community. “The small details are important too.”

At the conclusion of Mr. Arendt’s presentation, there was a brief session of questions and answers that followed up on issues of building heights and configuration, and how to take advantage of the natural features in the landscape as design assets.

Mr. Arendt’s newest book *Envisioning Better Communities: Seeing More Options, Making Wiser Choices* is available now.



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