

Land Use, Transportation and Economic Development Summary of Advisory Committee Meeting February 27th, 2007

- 1. Welcome and Introductions** – Barry Seymour, Executive Director of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, opened the meeting and spoke briefly about DVRPC's LUTED project and its initiatives.
- 2. Project Update** – Michael Boyer, Manager of Long Range Planning & Congestion Management, gave a few highlights about the project. He reviewed the project scope, provided a progress report, and presented results of the survey of primary objectives. He covered the development process of the Long Range Plan and asked for participants to stay involved
- 3. Action Plan for Investing in a New Pennsylvania Summary Report**
Erin Murphy, Development Specialist with the Governor's Action Team of the Southeast Regional Office presented the study "**Identifying Opportunities for Pennsylvania to Compete in the Global Economy**".
- 4. Economic Development and Planning Coordination in Berks County** – Thomas McKeon, Executive Director of the Berks County Industrial Development Authority gave an overview of Berks County's process
- 5. Break-Out Sessions** – Participants were assigned to small groups to discuss the greatest opportunities and challenges to economic development in the region and the priority initiatives needed for the region's future economic growth. The groups reported back after several discussions their list of priorities (please see attached tables).

Red Group

Facilitator: Patty Elkis

Recorder: Sean Greene

Participants: Chris Christman, Laurie Actman, Alma Plummer, Ron Gross, Scott France

Opportunities

- Brownfield redevelopment was expressed as an opportunity (Chris Christman) but the associated challenge was redeveloping these sites back into industrial use. Too often they are being developed into residential units (Robert Powelson).
- Waterfront redevelopment is an opportunity and tax abatement can be used as a tool to facilitate the development (Alma Plummer). The redevelopment should be mixed use and special attention should be given to improving transportation infrastructure and access to waterfront amenities.
- An opportunity exists for regional coordination around workforce development (Laurie Actman). There are funds available for coordination but the effort needs a strategic plan (Patty Elkis).
- The quality of life of the region is a real opportunity (Scott France), in both the city and suburbs because of the diversity and accessibility of assets. The region needs better marketing of assets.

Challenges

- Redeveloping Brown fields sites back into industrial use. Too often they are being developed into residential units (Robert Powelson).
- Lack of funds available for a strategic plan
- Transportation infrastructure improvements need more input and interaction between funders, employers and agencies. There should be more business input in transportation decisions, both highway and transit.
- The public transit model is a challenge and needs to be reevaluated (Robert Powelson). Business needs and inputs need to be considered when designing transit system.
- Transit needs to transform into a customer oriented organization (Robert Powelson, Scott France), improve its image (Alma Plummer) and its convenience and reliability.

Recommended Initiatives:

- A campaign directed to attract new residents and consumers to the region. The campaign could be directed to more expensive cities on the eastern seaboard touting Philadelphia affordability (Laurie Actman).
- Rebuild neighborhoods with a focus on reasonable cost housing and mixed use development (Robert Powelson), such as the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (Alma Plummer).
- Target immigration to revitalize neighborhoods (Patty Elkis).
- Bring more transportation funding to the region by lobbying legislators and the tri-state delegation (Chris Christman). The region generates significant revenue but seems to be losing funding.
- Broad Street extension to Navy Yard and possibly New Jersey (Alma Plummer).
- Improve light rail – Schuylkill Valley Metro (Robert Powelson).
- Link programs relating transit use to climate control (Laurie Actman)
- Region needs a “Big Idea” project to relieve gridlock in the Schuylkill corridor
- Complete the I-95 – Turnpike connection.

Orange Group

Facilitator: Barry Seymour

Recorder: Mary Bell

Participants: Angela Watson, Carmen Italia, Jerome Wallace, Ken Klothen, Kristen Fitch

Opportunities

- Transportation network (including both highway and transit networks)
- An existing “critical mass” in specific clusters and diverse economic base
- Ongoing growth in small companies, including biotechnical firms
- Existing support networks, at the state level as well as regionally and locally of both public agencies and non-profit organizations
- Clear pro-development policy directive from the Commonwealth, including support for brownfield redevelopment
- Presence of universities, higher education opportunities; quality work force, research, and opportunities for commercialization

Challenges

- Challenges associated with reverse and suburb-to-suburb commuting; getting the available workforce to suburban employment centers
- Lack of “ready-to-dig” sites, especially larger sites for commercial development
- Community opposition (CAVEs, NIMBYs, BANANAs, etc.) from both citizens and municipal governments
- Limited appropriately-zoned sites
- Challenges associated with brownfield redevelopment (ownership issues, cost of remediation, etc.) – although the Commonwealth has made significant progress in this area
- Fragmentation of governmental authority and decision-making
- Workforce training and education, specifically at the community college and vocational training levels – disconnect between the education agenda and the economic development agenda

Recommended Initiatives:

- Workforce training: connecting statewide and regional education goals and priorities with economic development goals and priorities, including more opportunities for targeted technical training at community colleges or technical schools
- Transportation: increase and improve the available options for accomplishing the reverse and suburb-to-suburb commute (whether through improvements to the regional highway network or through enhancements to transit); modernize the system and increase service; need for more funding at State and local levels
- Increase the available subsidies for developing in the region’s core cities and older communities; increase incentives for in-fill development and redevelopment
- Expand and improve sewer and water infrastructure in appropriate locations; use enhanced sewer and water capacity to direct growth to targeted locations.
- Encourage and support cooperation and coordination at the regional level.

Green Group

Facilitator: Rich Bickel

Recorder: Zoe Neaderland

Participants: Ronald Bailey, Kevin Gallagher, Lee Senior, Thomas Morr, Robert Powelson

Opportunities

- Regional coordination of county economic development through Select Greater Philadelphia
- Knowledge-based clusters are strong, including finance, bio-pharm, and regional headquarters
- Higher education as an investment opportunity and employment source
- Brownfield redevelopment initiatives are going well and providing sites
- Having many small employment centers allows selecting those with superior access and facilities to deal with growth

Challenges

- Buy-in from local governments/NIMBY/"herding cats"
- Dedicated funding for public transit, highways, airports, and ports
- Access to early stage capital
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Water/sewer infrastructure is a responsibility of municipalities (and is insufficient) but the planning is done by authorities and there could be better linkage

Recommended Initiatives

- Enhanced air access/capacity, especially at Philadelphia International Airport including runway length and terminal improvements
- Funding for public transit and other transportation modes
- Resolving funding and other issues for inter-city rail (Amtrak)
- Workforce training – skills for those not going to college and early childhood/kindergarten experience
- Tourism promotion, as that is going well and should continue
- Dealing with the port/dredging issue

Additional Notes

- Higher education cluster could be leveraged to grow the economy
- Brownfield redevelopment provides sites where they are needed for smart growth
- An inexpensive area of improving air access includes airspace protection and working with FAA on requirements
- We discussed how to generate value from the Turnpike; ideas include leasing it out or refinancing it through government's access to lower interest rates
- Improving K-12 science education is an unmet need for providing a workforce with basic skills. There is room to enhance both ends of preparing the workforce; we can better prepare children for kindergarten and we can better prepare high school graduates who are not going to college or who have gone to some amount of college and are preparing to enter the workforce.
- Water/sewer needs - Political will is needed to create the adequate levels of infrastructure
- There is a shorter return on investment for commercial development though it is not necessarily as solid of a long-term investment as industrial development
- Developed areas may be an efficient place for investment but there is often significant concern about added traffic and other impacts.

Blue Group

Facilitator: Mike Boyer

Recorder: Brett Fusco

Participants:

Eric Johansson, James Madera, Erin Murphy, Maureen Sharkey, Marilyn Wood

Opportunities

- Universities, the region has core area of educational facilities
- Huge diverse market, with large number of employers, employees and suppliers
- Lots of interests, diverse economic base especially in big pharmaceuticals and professional services
- The area is in high demand in terms of the number of companies wanting to move here
- Area is of interest to biopharmaceuticals and warehouse distributors
- Land and buildings readily identified for Industrial development, Philadelphia Planning Commission and PIDC currently hold or have zoned a limited number of ready to go sites for industrial use
- Large numbers of skilled workers
- Good opportunity to attract call centers
- Existing vacant buildings can be redeveloped for new uses
- Extensive transit system

Challenges

- Matching workforce availability to employers/sectors
- Shortage of industrial zoned land
 - Identifying underused sites
 - Availability of industrial zoned land
 - Changing zoning when needed
- Is region competitive vs. international locations?
- Mass transit/infrastructure to support large scale industrial development. Challenge is to retool transit and make vacant industrial land usable. Need to find dedicated funding and the necessary density to support
 - Studies of TOD are changing the view of density and helping locate the appropriate areas for industrial and commercial opportunities
- Integrate transit and highway funds to create the transportation system that users want
 - For example, NJ Transit NE Corridor line is stimulating development all along its corridor
- Make development easier in the region.
 - Some municipalities are very difficult to do business in
 - Difficult to find sites for light manufacturing
- Lack of regional leadership
- Inner ring boroughs have outmoded zoning.
 - Need more sophistication at local government levels
- Focus development in dense areas
- Hub and spoke transit system is not serving suburban growth areas

Recommended Initiatives:

- Dedicated transportation funding
- Regional vision for transit
- Pass legislation to support transit studies
- Increase mobility to get employees to jobs
- Streamline zoning and approval process

- Cooperation rather than competition at local government level.
- Stronger sense of regional leadership
- State should create more fellowships to better educate work force
- Workforce training
- Conceptualize that region is made up of interdependent, individually connected entities
- Forum for local government leaders/elected officials to meet and discuss issues
- Create universal database/site search for possible industrial land or development opportunities that includes parcels not held by economic development agencies
- Centralize contacts to where a company/firm goes to find industrial land. Similar to residential real estate listings
- Highlight Preferred Real Estate and O'Neil Properties as model redevelopers

Yellow Group

Facilitator: Rob Graff

Recorder: Chris Linn

Participants:

Joanne Denworth, Thomas McKeon, John Haak, Ben Ginsberg, Terry Gillen

Opportunities

- Large number of colleges and universities
- Existing infrastructure
- Access by road, rail, air, sea
- Relatively low cost of living
- High quality of life

Challenges

- Fragmentation of government structure creates lack of consistency in zoning and planning
- Infrastructure needs repair
- Airport needs expansion and modernization
- High dependency in population – requires young, educated workforce to support aging population and high portion in poverty
- Lack of jobs, especially in center city, hinders retention of young people
- High city taxes

Recommended Initiatives:

- Treat colleges and universities as a business cluster. Ascertain their needs as a cluster. For instance, does more need to be done to accommodate expansion? How can they work together to attract research dollars to the region?
- Improve the quality of K-12 education, particularly in science and technology (e.g., regional high schools of science and technology)
- Improve public transit to make new economic development sites more accessible
- Institute a regional tax for transit improvement
- Undertake an effort to expand the creative sector of our economy

Additional Notes

There was little additional discussion of the role transportation or land use factors play in these initiatives or challenges. However, the issue of fragmentation of local government and the “rateables chase” was underlying several of these.

- 6. Next Steps** - Richard Bickel, Director of Division of Planning, DVRPC noted that DVRPC staff will address comments and suggestions raised at the meeting. He concluded by stating that the next meeting will be in June, where all counties including New Jersey would be invited to.

Land Use, Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting, Feb 27th, 2007

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MS.	MARILYN	WOOD	PROJECT DIRECTOR, SE	10,000 FRIENDS OF PENNSYLVANIA
MR.	THOMAS	MCKEON	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	BERKS COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
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MR.	Rob	Gross	Vanguard	CHESTER COUNTY CHAMBER OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
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Mr.	Jeremy	Thomas		Neighborhood Transformation Initiative
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