

Economic Development, TOD, Smart Growth, Transportation, Arts, Culture and Historical Resources Focus Group held June 29, 2017

In attendance: Annemarie Sliby, Orange EDC; Carol Smullen, Orange Chamber; Daniel Fitzmaurice, Arts Council of Greater New Haven; Mary Bigelow, League of Women Voters East Shore; Tim Ryan, Wallingford ED; Sue Rapini, Greater New Haven Chamber; Miriam Brody, League of Women Voters Hamden/ North Haven; Dee Prior-Nesti; Christopher Soto, East Haven planning; Karla Lindquist, New Haven Planning; Susmitha Attota, New Haven Planning; Barbara Malmber, REX; Juliet Burdelski, Meriden ED; Carey Duques, North Branford Planning; Julie Nash, Milford ED; Carl Amento, SCRCOG; Eugene Livshits, SCRCOG, Rebecca Andreucci, SCRCOG; Rebecca Augur, MMI; Nick Armata, MMI

Discussion Summary:

- Towns are competing to grow their tax bases, but also marketing themselves as part of a greater region
- Opportunities to grow manufacturing, industrial base; however run up against workforce limitations
- Need a workforce development strategy, especially for urban communities – access to good paying jobs limited by lack of public transportation
- Unique strategies are currently being used by workforce development agencies in the region; e.g. Workforce Alliance grant for Uber to assist getting low-income people to job interviews
- Need to align transit and transportation with employment opportunities
- Having a solid future land use strategy critical for economic development – serve the greatest amount of people, connect people to jobs and educational opportunities
- We have large amounts of vacant office space throughout the area and we expect this pattern to only increase in the future – how can these be repurposed?
- Need to improve the quality of life in the area, which includes developing and promoting the area as rich in cultural institutions
 - When people look at the area and compare it to nearby cities like New York or Boston, there is much more appeal to live in those cities
 - Recruiting and retaining those in the creative class will help
 - Involve creative class in planning processes to help educate and connect with the public
- Need to diversify housing stock
- The communities in the region need to collaborate with one another in order to promote the area as the cultural and employment destination that it is
- Senior housing easier to get approved in some communities than dense market-rate or affordable housing

- Public education needed on what exactly affordable housing is and who it serves
 - We need to educate the public on the capacity of our existing infrastructure and resources, so that they are aware that affordable housing can be seamlessly integrated into the existing community fabric
- When development does occur, we need to make sure that it is incremental and that the new units can be fully absorbed
- Work with universities to develop talent based on the needs of regional employers - 90% of SCSU's graduates stay in the region
- Address the issue of "trailing spouses," who enter the region's workforce due to a relocation of their spouse, and who often take jobs designed for someone with a certificate or degree from a 2 year college, and for which they are often over-qualified
- All communities need to promote walkability in some form – create those destinations
- Encourage creative place making and public art
- Work with coastal communities to mitigate flood issues, as many employment and industry areas are impacted
- Growing industrial/manufacturing companies are leaving the City of New Haven as a result of space and parking constraints, and the costs associated with expanding in an urban environment (brownfields, historic preservation, land acquisition etc.) – need to work to understand the needs of these types of businesses
 - Opportunity for collaboration on regional space progression planning assistance support to connect growing industries with space and land available
- Opportunity for the region to get ahead of the curve on renewable energy and green technology planning – communities currently reacting to private proposals, rather than a thought-out plan to increase renewable energy resources throughout, especially to serve industry
- Agriculture is an important part of the region's past, present and future – a sector that is also diversifying and increasingly looking for more year-round activity
- Explore economic leakage in the area - understand what and where goods and services are coming from and make connections to possibly source them within the region
- Invest in the port of New Haven - an asset to the region and state
- Region does not capitalize on location on Long Island Sound – more opportunity to develop water-dependent businesses and/or waterfront activity
- Do not think of the area as a region that is isolated from other metropolitan areas - build on the fact that the region is situated between Boston, NYC, Hartford and Providence
- Need to better promote the host of cultural attractions available in the region, and ensure that we have a rich portfolio of cultural/ historic resources for all age groups

- Educate the public on the importance of sustainability, land use etc. – good role for the region to play
 - Opportunity to tie in the creative class
 - Planning needs to be more citizen focused and easier to understand/follow/engage
- NHHS commuter rail development is a great opportunity to help the region grow into the type of community that can attract residents of all ages - the region can help organize a collaborative effort by affected towns to market themselves and the system – perhaps tie in with Shoreline East commuter rail towns