



Contact: Jeremy Soffin, Regional Plan Association, 212/253-2727, ext. 303, jeremy@rpa.org

LOCAL MAYORS TACKLE SMART GROWTH ISSUES

Six NJ Mayors Attend 5th New Jersey Mayors' Institute on Community Design to Solve Development Issues and Build a Healthy Community

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PRINCETON – Mayors from six New Jersey municipalities gathered in Princeton for three days last month to learn how to utilize urban design to solve growth and development issues and build healthy communities.

Participants in the fifth Mayors' Institute on Community Design, organized by Regional Plan Association and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – Office of Smart Growth, include: Mayor Frank DeLuca, Jr., *Lindenwold Borough*; Mayor Preston M. Taylor, Jr., *Lumberton Township*; Mayor Phyllis L. Marchand, *Princeton Township*; Mayor George Paschalis, *River Vale Township*; Mayor Rudolph J. Wenzel, Jr., *Washington Township*; and Mayor Peter A. Buchsbaum, *West Amwell Township*.

Each Mayor comes to the Institute to discuss a specific development site or area in their municipality. They will present their problem statements and then work with a resource team of planners, designers and architects to devise creative, workable solutions.

“There is tremendous pressure on mayors in New Jersey to manage development,” said Thomas G. Dallessio, RPA’s New Jersey Director. “The Mayors’ Institute matches ambitious mayors with the resources and expertise they need to make smart growth a reality in New Jersey.”

This Institute will have a particular focus on creating healthy communities by exploring the relationship between public health and the built environment. For example, several of the mayors will look at ways to utilize development to promote walking and use of active open space.

The six projects presented by the mayors will be as follows:

Lindenwold: Transform an automobile oriented “edge city” into a walkable environment with pedestrian connections to several neighborhoods.

Lumberton: Provide a planning and urban design framework for the northeast quadrant of the Township that knits together, and creates a transition between, future commercial development along Route 38 and nearby residential areas.

Princeton Township: The Princeton Shopping Center case study will raise issues about the potential ability of a single large redevelopment site to function as the mixed use center of a larger community.

River Vale: A senior housing complex near the crossroads of this future center raises the issue of how to create an active environment for this population who, if the design enables it, will walk to shop and get services.

Washington Township: In Washington Township there will be less emphasis on redevelopment but more attention paid to how several proximate, but disconnected destinations – a post office, library, shopping center and park – can become less automobile oriented and more walkable.

West Amwell: Provide a design for the Mount Airy area and several nearby development sites that demonstrates the benefits of somewhat higher density development on less land – benefits such as conservation of open spaces and “place-making” - and offsets the negative consequences of higher density such as more traffic and densities that are not in keeping with the overall character of the area.

The New Jersey Mayors’ Institute on Community Design is held at Princeton University to promote better planning and development in communities throughout New Jersey. Regional Plan Association convenes the Institute in cooperation with the NJ Department of Community Affairs – Office of Smart Growth, and partners Princeton University, NJ League of Municipalities, NJ Chapter of the American Planning Association, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Mayors’ Institute Partnership: The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the US Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation. Modeled on the national program run by NEA, the NJ Mayors’ Institute provides a retreat as well as indoctrination for local officials to inspire them to bring new ideas back to their communities.

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