



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

LOCAL MAYORS TACKLE SMART GROWTH ISSUES

New Jersey Mayors' Institute on Community Design Helps Mayors
Solve Development Issues and Build Healthy Communities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 5, 2003

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

Participants in the fourth Mayors' Institute on Community Design, organized by Regional Plan Association and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs – Office of Smart Growth, included: Mayor Victor De Luca, *Maplewood Township*; Mayor M. James Maley, Jr., *Collingswood Borough*; Mayor Ann Y. McNamara, *Tinton Falls Borough*; Mayor Ed O'Brien, *Metuchen Borough*; Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres, *Paterson City*; and Mayor Louise Wilson, *Montgomery Township*.

Each Mayor came to the Institute to discuss a specific development site or area in their municipality. They presented their problem statements and then worked 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 Mayor's Institute matches ambitious mayors with the resources and expertise they need to make smart growth a reality in New Jersey."

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

"The Institute helped us think about ways to integrate new development into the Walk Metuchen program," said Metuchen Mayor Ed O'Brien. "That program has raised the quality of life in town, and the resources provided at the Institute will help ensure that new development has the same focus on public health."

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The six projects presented by the mayors were as follows:

Collingswood: Create a strategy for the underutilized parcels adjacent to a rail line adjacent to downtown.

Maplewood: Create a pedestrian friendly network to encourage use of a local park and library.

Metuchen: Conceive a mixed-use development plan for an area adjacent to rail tracks, and integrate it with a separate walkable communities initiative.

Montgomery Township: Leverage infrastructure improvements to reestablish Belle Mead as a local center with a distinct identity.

Paterson: Link school and stadium redevelopment projects to surrounding neighborhoods.

Tinton Falls: Utilize remaining development opportunities to create a more complete neighborhood in the southern half of the town.

The next Mayors' Institute will be held in June.

Funding for the fourth New Jersey Mayors' Institute on Community Design was generously provided by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Additional support was provided by Princeton University, New Jersey League of Municipalities and the Mayors' Institute Partnership, comprising the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation.

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