

BRINGING SMART GROWTH TO THE TRI-STATE REGION

RPA's 9th Annual Regional Assembly

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The Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers

WORKSHOP POSITION PAPERS

- Advancing Smart Growth Initiatives in NY & CT
- The Costs of Sprawl: What are Its Fiscal, Transportation and Land Use Impacts?
- Creating Parks and Public Spaces in the New York-New Jersey Harbor
- Cutting Edge in Somerville: From Edge City to Suburban Center
- The MTA Capital Plan: A Year of Decision
- Regional Compacts for Smart Growth
- Regional Downtown Success Stories
- Smart Corporate Location I: Who is Coming; Who is Leaving/ Smart Corporate Location II: What Do We Have To Do To Compete More Effectively?
- Strengthening New Jersey's State Plan
- Will Smart Growth Benefit Low-Income Communities and a Diverse Population?
- Y2K: The Regional Picture / Y2K for Local Government

RPA

Regional Plan Association

ADVANCING SMART GROWTH INITIATIVES IN NEW YORK AND CONNECTICUT

MODERATOR: Hon. Thomas A. DiNapoli, *NYS Assembly*

PANELISTS: Edward C. Farrell, *Executive Director, NYS Conference of Mayors*; James Findley, *Associate Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, CT Conference of Mayors*; David J. Miller, *Executive Director, National Audubon Society of New York*; Robert A. Wieboldt, *Executive Vice President, Long Island Builders Institute*

BACKGROUND

Across the country, states and metropolitan and resort regions are struggling to find ways to control sprawl—the unplanned deconcentration of population and residential, commercial and industrial development. Sprawl consumes farm and forest land, threatens air and water quality, contributes to highway congestion, escalates infrastructure costs and school budgets, and undercuts quality-of-life in urban and suburban communities.

In response to these threats, 13 states and dozens of metropolitan and rural regions are developing or implementing new smart growth programs. These initiatives are designed to reduce sprawl, focus new growth in adjoining existing villages, cities and suburban centers, and reduce congestion by providing transit alternatives.

Nearly every neighboring state, including New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine, Maryland and Pennsylvania, has adopted one form or another of these programs. Several recently adopted programs, including those in New Jersey and Maryland, utilize incentives to encourage municipalities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with state goals. The success of these “bottom-up” efforts, which are consistent with the strong home-rule traditions of New York and Connecticut, provides a model that might be replicated here.

This workshop will explore ways that New York and Connecticut can improve their state growth strategies and learn from the successes of New Jersey and 12 other states that have adopted state “smart growth” initiatives. Panelists will also examine how legislation now pending or proposed in Albany and Hartford could advance smart growth in each state.

THE “STATE” OF STATE PLANNING IN NEW YORK AND CONNECTICUT

New York was once a leader in state planning, having developed the nation’s first state plan in the 1920s. Since the 1970s however, New York has dismantled nearly all of its planning infrastructure, the exception being the state’s successful Coastal Zone Management program administered by the Department of State.

During this same period, New York has made important progress in improving regional planning in rural regions across the state. The first of these innovations, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), is a “top-down” (i.e., established and directed by state government) regional land-use regulatory commission established in the 1970s. More recently, several “bottom-up” regional commissions have been established, including the Tug Hill Commission, the Hudson River Greenway Council and the Long Island Pine Barrens Commission. Unlike the APA, these commissions were created as a result of advocacy by area residents and are controlled by local officials and citizens.

Connecticut has had an advisory state plan, the State Conservation and Development (C&D) Plan, for more than two decades. The plan includes a “guide map” that identifies urban, rural and resource protection lands across the state. In recent years, legislation has been enacted requiring that state agency investments and permitting decisions be consistent with the C&D Plan. Major investments now require a review by the Office of Policy & Management, which has used this authority to stop or modify state investments deemed to be inconsistent with the C&D Plan.

No provision has been made, however, to require that municipal plans and regulations be consistent with the state plan. Consequently, the C&D Plan has had little or no influence in shaping municipal zoning, the front line of defense in slowing sprawl.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

New York State

For the first time in several years there are serious discussions in New York about reforming the state's land-use planning system. In addition to RPA's Regional Assembly, a number of public forums have focused on the question of how a smart growth initiative should be structured for New York. These included a regional workshop on Long Island (convened by Sustainable Long Island) in February, and a statewide conference in March (convened by New York Audubon).

At this statewide meeting, Secretary of State Alexander Treadwell and Environmental Commissioner John Cahill indicated their support for an improved system of land-use planning in New York. Also, an *ad hoc* coalition of civic, business and environmental groups has emerged from these events that is now promoting adoption of smart growth legislation.

Legislation is now pending in Albany, filed by Senator MaryLou Rath and Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, which would create a state level task force to prepare a smart growth strategy for New York.

A second bill is being drafted by Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli that would establish smart growth goals for the state and provide strong new incentives for communities to adopt plans and regulations consistent with these goals. This bill would also require that state agency actions be consistent with these goals. DiNapoli has long been a leader on land-use and environmental protection issues; in 1994 he successfully led efforts in the Legislature to establish the Long Island Central Pine Barrens Commission.

A third proposed bill, drafted by Robert Wieboldt, Vice President of the Long Island Builders Institute (and a long-time advocate for land-use reform in New York), is now being debated by the *ad hoc* coalition mentioned above. The coalition's goal is to attempt to merge the best provisions of this and the other two bills to create a consensus bill that can move forward in the legislature with strong support from the state's civic, business and environmental leaders.

Connecticut

In the mid-1990s RPA convened a similar coalition, the Connecticut Land-use Coalition, that proposed new state incentives to encourage cities and towns to adopt new plans and regulations consistent with the state Conservation & Development Plan. At the time, the Weicker Administration and legislative leaders were preoccupied with the state's economic and fiscal woes, and reform bills died in the legislature two years in a row.

Earlier this year legislation was filed that would have focused state investments in "priority funding areas" in locations zoned for commercial and industrial development. This same bill (Raised Bill #6678), which died in committee, would also have required that cities and towns adopt a municipal plan of development. These plans were to have "taken account of" and "noted any inconsistencies with" the state C&D Plan.

With the demise of this bill, there are no pending smart growth legislative initiatives in Hartford. This leaves Connecticut as one of only two states in the Northeast, the other New Hampshire, that has not adopted or is not considering some form of smart growth legislation. Two other bills do provide authority for improved land conservation and regional cooperation. The first of these would authorize the establishment of town land banks, funded by real estate transfer taxes. The second would authorize the creation of regional asset districts within which arts and cultural facilities could be supported by regional taxes.

THE COSTS OF SPRAWL: WHAT ARE ITS FISCAL, TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE IMPACTS?

MODERATOR: Harriet Tregoning, *Director of Urban & Economic Development Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

PANELISTS: Thomas Condon, *Columnist, The Hartford Courant*; Robert Burchell, *Professor, Center for Urban Policy Research*; Julia Freedgood, *Director of Farmland Advisory Services, American Farmland Trust*; Ethan Seltzer, *Director, Institute for Portland Metropolitan Studies*

An underlying assumption of Smart Growth is that unchecked sprawl saps economic strength by requiring additional spending on infrastructure, travel and government operations, and by encouraging the inefficient use of scarce natural resources. Expansion into undeveloped land requires expenditures on new roads, sewers, water systems and schools. Decentralized growth can also lead to increased travel times to jobs, schools and shopping, implying an increase in household transportation costs. Sprawl can also lead to the loss of farmland or environmentally sensitive open space that is important to the long-term health of the economy. In theory, compact development reduces costs by making more efficient use of existing infrastructure, reducing travel times and allowing for economies of scale in delivering government services.

After more than two decades of debate and research, the costs of sprawl remain difficult to quantify. The most influential work on the topic remains the 1974 study by the Real Estate Research Corporation, *The Costs of Sprawl*—a three-volume study that found significant capital, operating, land and environmental costs associated with low-density, unplanned development. Since then, an extensive volume of research has challenged, extended and refined these findings. In spite of the methodological difficulties, some studies have estimated the costs of sprawl for particular states. For example, a 1992 study of the New Jersey State Plan found that implementation of the plan could save the state and municipalities \$400 million annually. A Maryland study predicted that sprawl would cost residents \$10 billion by the year 2020. Most recently, the Transportation Research Board has issued *The Costs of Sprawl—Revisited*, a critical review of about 500 studies that have examined different aspects of the impacts of sprawl.

In addition to monetary costs, sprawl can deplete natural resources that are important to quality of life, a healthy environment and sustainable growth. The American Farmland Trust and others have documented a substantial loss of farms and farmland over time. In the tri-state region, sprawl has consumed open space at a prodigious rate. Over the last 30 years, land consumption has grown at four times the rate of population growth.

Other information about the costs of sprawl can be gleaned from the several states and regions that attempted to limit suburban and exurban growth through smart growth strategies. The Portland region has had an urban growth boundary in place for two decades, and several states have implemented state plans to protect open space and encourage development in cities and town centers. While most of the latter are relatively recent, these experiences can provide additional insights into both the costs of sprawl and the effects of anti-sprawl policies.

An understanding of what we know about the costs of sprawl is critical to shaping an effective Smart Growth agenda. Assumptions about costs will help determine what specific measures need to be taken, how investments and incentives should be paid for, and how much support a comprehensive initiative will receive. For example, previous estimates have found that compact development could save 25% of road construction and maintenance costs, 15% in utility costs and smaller savings in public education. These estimates may need to be revisited in light of current research and used to evaluate the impacts of specific policy options.

As this agenda takes shape, the region will need to address the following questions: How does sprawl affect the costs of infrastructure, housing, transportation and public services? How does it affect our consumption of land, energy and other natural resources? What type of savings and efficiencies might result from alternative development patterns? How can we more effectively quantify these costs and savings?

CREATING PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES IN THE NEW YORK - NEW JERSEY HARBOR

MODERATOR: **Kent L. Barwick**, *Director, The Waterfront Project*

PANELISTS: **Leah C. Healey**, *Trustee, Hudson River Park Conservancy and Partner, Maraziti, Falcon & Healey*; **Marc Matsil**, *Chief, Natural Resources Group, NYC Parks Department*; **Robert Pirani**, *Director, Environmental Programs, RPA*; **Warrie Price**, *Executive Director, Battery Park Conservancy and Harbor Park Administrator*

Encompassing approximately 1,500 square miles of open waters and 800 miles of urban waterfronts, the New York-New Jersey Harbor is poised to become one of the region's great open space resources. Thanks to billions of dollars invested in sewage treatment plants, the Harbor's water is now the cleanest it has been in the 90 years since systemic Harbor surveys began. While persistent problems remain, it is clear that the days when the Harbor was considered only as an industrial waterway are long gone.

As a result, there is growing interest in public access opportunities. Many new park ventures, highlighted by the restoration of Battery Park, the Hudson River Park on the West Side of Manhattan, and the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway in New Jersey, are finally coming to fruition. Swimming areas like South Beach and Midland Beach on Staten Island and Seagate Beach on Coney Island have been opened for the first time in a generation. The Harbor's growing fleet of ferry boats and water taxis now carry passengers on more than 120,000 trips to and from work, the airports, waterfront parks and cultural attractions every day. But even after twenty years of waterfront revitalization, there are still large numbers of vacant or underutilized industrial properties on the waterfront that could be used for new parks or water-enhanced development efforts. Governors Island and the proposed Brooklyn Bridge Park are just two of the many opportunities in New York and New Jersey where new parks could help transform the relationship that people have with the Harbor.

The cleaner water has also helped restore one of the most important and biologically rich estuaries in North America. The physiographic and geological complexity within the Harbor and its watersheds are extraordinary and have along with climatic and historical events, contributed directly to the region's remarkable biological diversity. This heritage includes over 20 species of colonial nesting waterbirds, significant concentrations of wintering waterfowl, critical migratory shorebird concentrations areas, spawning and nursery areas for anadromous fish, and rare wetland and upland communities and plants. However, these resources are considerably diminished from their former abundance and their habitats are greatly reduced in extent, making protection of remaining areas and restoration of wetlands critical to preserving the biodiversity of the region.

Realizing the environmental potential of the Harbor could be a key step toward providing the residents of New York City and northern New Jersey with an important measure of quality-of-life, what is needed is a sense of place that could help re-center regional growth in existing urban centers all along the Harbor.

The workshop will encompass both presentations of some of the specific projects now underway as well as a panel discussion on elevating the Harbor's profile as an amenity for the region.

One of the key issues to be addressed by both the presentations and the panel discussion is how to provide the means to get people down to the waterfront and into the water. Common law dictates that the waters of the Harbor are a public trust. But despite this legal right to navigable waters, access to the waterfront is still limited. Part of the barrier is the legacy of industrial uses in the area. But obtaining the public funding necessary for capital improvements and management of waterfront parks has also been difficult. The high cost of improving waterfront property—and lack of parks funding in general—has made the creation of new parks on the waterfront a difficult financial and political proposition. This is true even

when the land is already publicly owned, such as Brooklyn Piers 1-5 or Governors Island. Even existing public parks—such as Liberty State Park—have had to create programming and design plans that “pay for themselves,” or at least generate a portion of their capital and operating funds. While partnering with the private sector to improve and manage parkland has many advantages, such as bringing users to the waterfront during off-peak evening hours and winter months, enlisting private help does have its costs—notably by pricing some of the public out of using a tax-supported facility.

Ensuring access to the waterfront through the public regulatory process has also been problematic. New Jersey’s Hudson River Waterfront Walkway was to have been built over time as a condition of permits required of developers by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. But the incremental nature of the permitting requirement, and the lack of cooperation by some builders, has led to a walkway that exists only in pieces. Moreover, a lawsuit by the National Association of Builders is now testing the ability of the government to mandate public access through creation of the walkway. The challenge on both sides of the Harbor is how to ensure that important urban waterfront revitalization moves forward, while at the same time, meeting the public’s right to waterfront access.

To ensure that park and development projects move forward, a larger pool of public capital that can finance public improvements may need to be created. Clearly, the demand for such funding is there. Three waterfront park proposals alone—the Hudson River Waterfront Park, Governors Island, and Brooklyn Piers 1-5, will require about \$400 million in new funding to be realized. The Waterfront Project estimates that \$1.2 billion is needed to replace all the existing piers in the Harbor. While the private sector may be able to help contribute, it is clear that simply relying on developer contributions will not result in the kinds of public improvements that will transform the Harbor into the spectacular public amenity it could and should be.

CUTTING EDGE IN SOMMERVILLE: FROM EDGE CITY TO SUBURBAN CENTER

MODERATOR: Philip Langdon, *Author, "A Better Place to Live"*

PANELISTS: Patrick Condon, *James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Livable Environments, University of British Columbia;* Robert Bzik, *Director of Planning, Somerset County;* Stephen Dragos, *President, Somerset Alliance for the Future;* Robert Lane, *Director, Regional Design Program, RPA;* Carlos Rodrigues, *Manager, Special Projects, NJ Office of State Planning*

“Sustainable development” in a maturing metropolitan area such as New York, will be less a matter of how new development takes place and more a matter of retrofitting the existing suburban pattern in ways that create a sense of place and community while maintaining the unique suburban character that developers, retailers, local officials and home buyers seem to demand. As the struggle to stem the tide of sprawl development continues, advocates for centered development will have to develop new land use policies and overcome the limitations of transportation improvements in sprawl environments. In addition a fundamental question will have to be answered: What is sprawl—and conversely—what is a “suburban center?”

IS IT SPRAWL?

In 1995, Somerset County successfully petitioned the New Jersey Office of State Planning for designation that has met the essential criteria: the area is a place that has been a traditional focal point for the economic, social and cultural activities of the region, where there is already a critical mass of population and employment, an urban level of infrastructure, and opportunities to exploit connections to transit. The center occupies 5% of the land area of the county, but contains 11% of the county’s population and 29% of the county’s employment. But is the Somerset County Regional Center a “center?” A quick review of the landscape does not reveal anything that could be considered a center in the sense of a compact and continuous settlement pattern.

But is it sprawl? Carlos Rodrigues, at the Office of State Planning, has found that beyond being able to say “I know it when I see it,” there is little agreement on what sprawl actually is. Some aspects of sprawl seem to be quantifiable, for example, density (site coverage) and use mix. Other aspects of sprawl seem to be the subjective consequences of the physical pattern, for example, perceptions about level of traffic congestion or the poor appearance of some kinds of development. Density is often considered the antithesis to sprawl, but is density always good? A cluster of stand-alone office buildings at a highway interchange is certainly high density from a site coverage point of view, and yet these places are considered sprawl in the eyes of many people because of their auto dependence, because of their location beyond the urban core, and because of their appearance. Is low density always bad? A residential subdivision of one-acre lots may be land consumptive by comparison to the nearby town center. And yet, such a development can be beautifully planned and designed in a way that complements the natural resources on the site.

These contradictions are everywhere evident within the boundaries of the Regional Center. The new Somerset Corporate Center, adjacent to the Bridgewater Commons Mall is high density, but it is disconnected from everything around it. The new residential developments at the west edge of the center are higher density than the town centers of Rarity and Somerville in terms of dwelling units per acre, and yet are single-use, limited access communities that are unreachable except by car. It is in fact, a fascinating landscape that encompasses the full range of pedestrian and automobile environments—a suburban “kit of parts:” traditional 19th century downtowns and post-war subdivisions; old factories along rail lines and single story suburban industrial parks; highway strip shopping centers; and stand-alone office buildings. The area around the Bridgewater Commons Mall at the Route 22/I-287 interchange is a classic “edge city” environment. Throughout the center there are successful environments. The sense of sprawl comes from the lack of connection between them and the nondescript places in between.

A MATTER OF SCALE

The biggest challenge to retrofitting this pattern is scale: eleven square miles is a *big* area. To get a sense of this scale, consider that this is an area roughly five times the size of the White Plains Central Business District, one of the largest downtowns in the region. Comparisons with some of the “new urbanist” projects that have attempted to retrofit existing sprawl, yield similar results. Projects such as Rio Vista West (Calthorp Associates), Downtown Hayward (Daniel Solomon) and Lake West (Peterson Littenberg) would cover an area equivalent to perhaps one of the two downtowns of Somerville or Raritan—at best, 10% of the entire Regional Center. Even one of the largest master plans, Duany Plater Zyberg's Town Plan of Wellington, at approximately two-and-a-half square miles, is little more than a quarter the size of the Regional Center. This issue of scale is typical of other edge city environments such as the King of Prussia in Pennsylvania, and the Nassau Hub area on Long Island.

The reality of the scale of the Somerset Regional Center is implicitly acknowledged in the descriptions of this place as actually being three sub-centers—downtown Raritan, downtown Somerville and the Bridgewater Commons Mall environs. Loosely connecting these three is Route 22. However, this description of the Center does not account for the development that continues to take place on the periphery. To the east, the Chimney Rock Road area has seen the construction of a minor league baseball stadium and a 600,000sf mall. Some of the largest parcels to be redeveloped, such as the American Cyanamid properties are also in this area. To the west, on the former Vanderveer farm properties, 3000 units of housing have been completed or are underway, a population that rivals each of the two downtowns. As these projects are completed, the abstraction of the Center as “three points and a line” (the three core areas and Route 22) becomes more and more strained.

TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR RETROFITTING SPRAWL

However it is defined, the essence of sprawl is discontinuity: of built form; of open space resources; of the pedestrian experience; and ultimately—of community. But our efforts to retrofit this pattern should be informed by the essential realities of the scale of these places and the limits and potential of the suburban “kit of parts.” Even if the most aggressive assumptions are made about the amount of new development that could be directed to these places, it is difficult to imagine a comprehensive build-out that makes the entire place feel like a single center. As the last five years of experience with the Regional Center indicates, the issue is not just how much new growth the Center may absorb over the next twenty years, but where within the center that growth should go, and how it should be configured. This is borne out by the fact that in the four years since the formal designation of the Regional Center, none of the significant amounts of new development have actually created new “connecting fabric” to help knit the existing pattern together.

And to the “where” and “what” of future development must be added, a third and equally important level —“when”— the sequence in which the build-out takes place, to whatever ultimate level. Without an understanding of the phasing, without recognizing that there will be periods over a twenty-year horizon of fast and slow growth, it is impossible to prioritize development opportunities in ways that will create key linkages and set a sustainable pattern for the development that follows.

These realities suggest that a successful strategy for retrofitting places the scale of the Somerset County Regional Center will rely on the following propositions:

- There is a need to accept some level of discontinuity in the suburban landscape. It is important to identify a series of sub-centers, each of which can become nodes that support higher density development and mass transit connections. The sub-centers should have their own identity and scale, and that the Regional Center can accommodate a wide variety of conditions—from the most pedestrian-oriented to environments that are still dominated by the automobile.
- It is important to understand and exploit the formal realities of the suburban “kit of parts”—the office buildings, shopping centers, subdivisions—that are an essential part of the edge city landscape. This means, for example, rationalizing the site planning of low-coverage developments in order to create systems of open space—focussing on the edges of large sites

where the interface with the public realm is most important, while conceding control of the interior of the site.

- Acknowledge the reduced role of small-scale, incremental development while promoting design strategies that reduce the apparent scale of the large developments.
- Exploit the potential of “green infrastructure”—the ground cover and watercourses—that can knit the landscape together at a variety of scales.
- Create concentrations of uses that can support transportation connections—connections that do not create physical links, but contribute to the economic and social connectivity of the center.

THE MTA CAPITAL PROGRAM: A YEAR OF DECISION

MODERATOR: **Elliot Sander**, *Director, Council on Transportation, NYU*

PANELISTS: **Francis X. McArdle**, *Managing Director, General Contractor's Association*; **Gene Russianoff**, *Staff Attorney, Straphangers Campaign*; **Jeffrey M. Zupan**, *Senior Fellow, RPA*

There can be little doubt that New York City and the surrounding metropolitan region could not function without its transit network. New York City grew around its subway system. Today, four million trips a day are made on it. Over three million more trips are made on buses both within and into the city and another three-quarters of a million use the three commuter rail systems—the Long Island Rail Road, Metro North and NJ TRANSIT. The importance of transit to the region has been brought home continually whenever disruptions to service have occurred.

By 1980, after years of disinvestment, the New York City subway system and the two MTA commuter rail systems were literally disintegrating before our eyes. Derailment and fires were almost a daily occurrence. Doors wouldn't close, forcing trains out of service. Every surface on the system seemed to be a billboard for graffiti, advertising a system which was out of control. In New Jersey, the rail and bus systems were only marginally better.

The region's governments responded. In 1982 the first of three MTA capital programs was passed by the New York State Legislature. Collectively, since 1982 over \$30 billion dollars has been spent in New York and New Jersey on new rolling stock, track, stations, and modern maintenance facilities to catch up after years of neglect. Today, much of the two states' transit systems are now on a schedule of normal cycles of maintenance and replacement, not catch up. However, some systems remain far behind. For example, only a fraction of the NYC subway stations have been restored, and at the current rate of expenditure, not all will be upgraded until sometime after 2020. The subway's signal system, even after restoration, will still not be using the latest technology, slowing trains and limiting capacity.

The effect of the investments has been dramatic. Ridership on the subways is at its highest since 1970. Commuter rail ridership is up too since the early 1980s by 60 percent on NJ TRANSIT, 35 percent on Metro North, and six percent on the LIRR.

It is hard to believe that if these investments had not occurred, the economic strength we are enjoying in the New York region would have been possible. These investments were investments of survival and rebirth. However, today we are drowning in our success. The growth in the economy and the improved conditions made possible by our twenty years of investments has added more riders than the system can comfortably handle. New fare policies have brought in still more riders. Some subway lines like the Lexington Avenue express and the Queens Boulevard line are jammed. In many sectors, the capacity limitations will prevent further economic growth from occurring.

The expansion promised in the past to deal with these and other shortcomings of the system were set aside to deal with the more immediate crises. A new tunnel for both the subway and LIRR under the East River at 63rd Street was built, but only partially connected to the subway. Construction was suspended on the Second Avenue subway. Plans to extend subway services to northern Bronx and to southeast Queens, building upon the new East River tunnel and the Second Avenue subway were abandoned, as was the LIRR connection to the East Side using the 63rd Street tunnel. Today, the subway system is 15 percent smaller than at its maximum in 1938. No new line has been completed since then.

This brings us to New York in 1999, a year when the latest five-year program of the MTA must be formulated and passed by the New York State Legislature. The program will need to address the continuation of investments on the existing network, especially in the areas where progress has been the

slowest, especially in stations and signals. The program will have to include first stage funding for the \$3 billion LIRR connection to Grand Central Terminal, for which \$400 million of federal dollars has been committed, but for which no significant MTA money has yet to materialize. And the imperative of expansion will have to be met.

These expansion opportunities include *MetroLink*, Regional Plan Association's proposal for five new subway services for the Upper and Lower East Side, the financial district, and many areas of the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. *MetroLink* would build 19 miles of new subway tunnel and use 40 miles of existing track. It would also provide the long sought one-seat ride from Kennedy Airport—serving Downtown Brooklyn, and Lower and Midtown Manhattan in the process.

While the MTA has been studying subway options for the East Side of Manhattan, they have expressed only tentative support for an alternative of limited value, and they have not indicated a willingness to commit significant funds for design and construction for that. The MTA has numerous studies underway to examine: improved access to Lower Manhattan; direct one-seat service to Kennedy Airport; Metro North access to the West Side; and in partnership with NJ TRANSIT and the Port Authority, new capacity under the Hudson River. No funding is in sight to move forward with **any** of them.

Meanwhile in New Jersey, five major new initiatives are either in place or underway to address NJ TRANSIT's worst problems. By the early 1990s, NJ TRANSIT had embarked on a capital program to make up for years of inactivity. MidtownDirect (aka the Kearny Connection) opened in 1996 with extraordinary success, the Montclair Connection and the Secaucus Transfer are both under construction and will open in two to three years. In entire new light rail line on the Hudson River Waterfront will open for service within a year. Newark Airport is being connected to the Northeast Corridor. Taken together, these projects will interconnect the vestiges of disconnected competing railroads built in the last century and open up new transit markets.

To date, the MTA has not presented its assessment of its capital needs to the public, nor indicated its priorities for spending in the next capital program. It is unclear when they will do so. The choices to be made will affect us all, and must be part of a public discussion. Ultimately, it is the citizens of our region who will pay for and benefit—or not—by the choices made. It is in the interest of engaging in a discussion of this critical public issue that RPA brings this topic to the 1999 Regional Assembly.

REGIONAL COMPACTS FOR SMART GROWTH

MODERATOR: **Patricia Salkin**, *Director, Government Law Center, Albany Law School*

PANELISTS: **Tim Dillingham**, *Executive Director, Highlands Coalition*; **Kevin McDonald**, *Vice President, Group for the South Fork*, **David S. Sampson**, *Executive Director, Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council*; **Ned Sullivan**, *Executive Director, Scenic Hudson*

At the heart of Regional Plan Association's Greensward Plan is the protection of 11 region-shaping landscapes and coastal waterways. Together, these areas provide the region's cities, suburbs, and rural towns with fresh drinking water and local produce. They offer recreation and spectacular scenery—a chance to enjoy the outdoors—to visitors and residents, from children to the elderly. They safeguard threatened and endangered species of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. These landscapes incorporate the major water supply watersheds, aquifers, and surface water resources of the region. They are clearly marked by still-intact natural boundaries that, in several cases, look from the air almost like a knife-edge between wilderness and intense urbanization.

The 11 reserves are the truly special places, the quintessential landscapes that have helped attract residents and investments in the past and can make the region a desirable place to live and work far into the future. But maintaining the environmental quality of both the private and the public lands in the reserve landscapes is an increasingly difficult challenge. Too often, meeting the residential and commercial needs of new residents has resulted in over-eager and insensitive development in the wrong places: filling in the wetlands, fragmenting the forests, cutting steep slopes, and obscuring the scenic views that define these places and provide important ecological functions. Moreover, the towns and villages within the reserve areas are the homes and workplaces for millions of people. For that reason, protecting these critical landscapes cannot simply rely on land acquisition or even development regulations alone. These are places where economic development and land use must move forward together, but where such activity should be built around natural resources and other landscape values.

Finding the right answers will not be easy. But in three of the most important reserve areas – the Appalachian Highlands, the East End of Long Island, and the Hudson River – area-wide growth management and land conservation initiatives are taking shape. This panel will explore the successes (and failures) of these efforts and how they are taking root in the local communities.

Hudson River

The Hudson River is one of the most biologically rich waterways in the United States. This tidally-influenced system supporting major fisheries, including shad and striped bass populations, that are among the healthiest on the East Coast. The river is an important stop-over point on the Atlantic Flyway for migrating birds: bald eagles, a federal endangered species, soar over the Hudson every winter. Yet most people know the Hudson only for its spectacular scenery. The birthplace of American landscape paintings, its natural elegance is still remarkably intact. The Hudson River was the first area in New York State to be designated as a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance.

Since 1991 the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council has been encouraging communities along the Hudson River to protect and provide access to the river by providing technical assistance and funding for local planning projects. A partner agency, the Greenway Heritage Conservancy, is working on the long-term goal of building a Hudson River Trail that can be walked and biked along both banks, from the mouth of the Hudson north beyond Albany. The ultimate goal is to create a river-long compact of communities actively working together to protect and enhance the Hudson. Over 65 communities have joined this compact, making them eligible for a host of benefits including legal indemnification, consistency of State actions, and technical and financial assistance.

Long Island's East End

The Long Island Pine Barrens ecosystem is one of the state's biological treasures, harboring the greatest concentration and diversity of rare and endangered species in New York State. And like their geologic cousins in New Jersey, the sandy, scrubby Long Island Pine Barrens sit on top of an enormous aquifer—water that is critical to the economic future of Long Island. But East Enders also see protection of the Pine Barrens as equally critical to Long Island's future. The island's enormous second home and tourist economy is threatened by sprawl patterns of growth that are consuming open spaces and filling roadways.

In 1993 the 100,000 acre Central Pine Barrens area was designated as the state's third forest preserve and a Central Pine Barrens Commission was created with the mandate to prepare a comprehensive land use plan for the forest preserve area. A key aspect of the legislation is that the commission is locally controlled and staffed. The Pine Barrens plan, which was adopted on June 28, 1995, divides the forest preserve into two zones. A 52,500-acre Core Preservation Area encompasses the largest intact areas of still undeveloped Pine Barrens. The other zone is a 47,500-acre Compatible Growth Area where development will continue, although with special concern for uncompromised Pine Barrens resources. The next challenge is to extend the cooperative spirit that established the Pine Barrens Commission eastward to take on equally serious resource issues in the rest of the North and South Forks. There have been a number of extraordinary efforts to acquire land in this area, an acquisition program fueled in part by a recently-enacted land transfer tax. But ultimately, the answer to preserving the East End's unique quality of life and Peconic Estuary may require a comprehensive approaches like the Pine Barrens Commission .

Appalachian Highlands

The two million acres of Appalachian Highlands of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut are the Region's backyard wilderness. It is a landscape rich in wildness, charm, serenity, natural resources, and recreational opportunities, including more than 200,000 acres of public open space; clean drinking water for more than four million metropolitan residents; and habitat for a range of wildlife and fisheries. The Highlands have long served as an unofficial boundary to the urban core of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan area, effectively partitioning the region into the dense suburbs and urban centers to the south and east and the more rural landscape of western New Jersey and the Hudson Valley. The vast open spaces of the highlands still function as an effective, if undesignated, green belt. The Highland's ability to provide such shape and form to the region is now in jeopardy.

There have been a number of conservation initiatives in this area over the past 10 years, perhaps highlighted by the recent public acquisition of the 17,500 acre Sterling Forest, the largest unfragmented forest in the region. Efforts are now underway at the federal and state levels to target hundreds of millions of dollars for the creation of new parks in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. These important investments will now have to be matched by a similar commitment to improve conservation practices in the Highlands communities outside of public parkland.

REGIONAL DOWNTOWN SUCCESS STORIES

MODERATOR: **Thomas K. Wright**, *Deputy Director, NJ Office of State Planning*

PANELISTS: **Michael Friemuth**, *Director of Planning & Economic Development, City of Bridgeport*; **Marilyn Gelber**, *Executive Director, Independence Community Foundation*; **Mayor Dannel Patrick Malloy**, *City of Stamford, CT*; **Gail L. Thompson**, *Vice President of Design & Construction, NJ Performing Arts Center*

OVERVIEW

This workshop will investigate strategies being used in four “Regional Downtowns” to promote growth and urban revitalization. Mayors and business and civic leaders—representing Newark, Brooklyn, Stamford and Bridgeport—will outline new strategies that are producing positive change in each of these centers.

BACKGROUND

Each center is at a different stage of its revitalization. And while each city is taking a different approach to economic renewal, common themes are expected to emerge from the strategies being employed to rebuild or expand their economies. These include:

- New partnerships between business, government and civic leaders,
- Expanded middle-class housing in restored buildings or new construction in or adjoining the central business district;
- Expanded arts, cultural and educational institutions and activities to attract visitors, improve quality of life and expand downtown payrolls;
- Reclaimed and revitalized industrial districts on former brownfield sites; and
- Creation of new multi-modal transportation facilities.

PROMOTING A NETWORK OF REGIONAL CENTERS

Regional Plan Association’s 1968 Second Regional Plan designated eleven downtowns (Trenton, Paterson, New Brunswick, Newark, Downtown Brooklyn, Jamaica, Hicksville, White Plains, Stamford, Bridgeport and New Haven) as “regional centers.” The Plan also promoted transit and other improvements designed to attract new employment growth, location of educational, health and other institutions, and residential developments these places. RPA’s goal was to make these centers a focal point for economic growth in the region’s outer rings, as an alternative to the growth of suburban office parks and retail strips accessible only by automobile. Over the past three decades, RPA has worked with all of these cities, with business leaders and with state and federal agencies to promote policies and investments needed to achieve these goals. In Newark, Jamaica, Brooklyn and Stamford, for example, RPA supported successful efforts to attract, retain or expand major educational and cultural facilities, and corporate headquarters or back offices.

BUILDING ON A UNIQUE SET OF LOCATIONAL AND TRANSPORTATION ASSETS

As a result in part of these efforts, these centers now contain nearly one million jobs—10% of the region’s employment base. All of the regional downtowns benefit from improved commuter rail service, and “reverse commutes.” Suburb-to-suburb commutes represent one of the fastest growing transit markets. RPA’s Third Regional Plan reiterated a commitment to these regional downtowns and recommended additional investments and policies needed to ensure their continued success. Completion of key links in RPA’s Regional Express Rx Rail system will, for example, significantly improve transportation access to most of the regional downtowns. And the Tri-state region’s booming economy and the tightening of residential, office and retail markets creates other opportunities.

SUCCESSFUL REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

Several of these centers have adopted their own revitalization strategies that will be presented in this workshop. Some highlights include:

- **Bridgeport** has successfully redeveloped formerly derelict industrial areas into new employment centers and is planning a major new inter-modal transportation center.
- **Bridgeport** and **Newark** have developed new minor-league baseball parks that are becoming focal points for community pride and related private sector investments.
- **Downtown Brooklyn** has completed its successful MetroTech redevelopment project, and is now looking to integrate this development with nearby educational, cultural and residential areas.
- **Newark's** new New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) has brought new life to downtown, and is becoming a catalyst for other proposed entertainment, office and residential development.
- **Stamford** has become one of the Region's (and the Nation's) top financial and service centers. Its new comprehensive plan, being developed with assistance from RPA, is focusing on ways to build on its success by making downtown a "24 hour center." Specific goals include reducing congestion and expanding new housing and entertainment, arts and related services.

SMART CORPORATE LOCATION

MODERATOR: Peter H. Nachtwey, Partner, Real Estate Solutions, Deloitte & Touche, LLP

PANELISTS: Michael R. Cowan, Senior Vice President, Corporate Real Estate & Purchasing, Merrill Lynch & Co.; Joseph Ripp, Chief Financial Officer, Time, Inc.; Stevan A. Sandberg, Executive Managing Director, Cushman & Wakefield, Inc.; James Schriener, Principal, Deloitte & Touche, Fantus Consulting

SESSION I: WHO IS COMING? WHO IS LEAVING?

The rationale behind corporate relocations, both within the metropolitan area and between regions, has changed over the years in response to trends in the global economy, technology, regulations and lifestyle preferences. Yet the fundamental basis for the relocation decision revolves around accomplishing three fundamentals: *reduce costs, reduce risks and leverage opportunities.*

From a historical perspective, several waves of relocation activity in the nation and the Tri-State Region are identifiable:

- The First Wave (1950s-1960s): *Lower-value manufacturing* migrates from the region to the Sunbelt as production facilities are modernized to expand capacity. *Higher value-added* corporate activities remain in central cities, held in place partly by limits in communication technology and infrastructure.
- The Second Wave (1960s-1970s): Cost, taxation, lifestyle issues and labor quality and availability trigger corporate moves out of Manhattan into suburban Connecticut, New Jersey and Westchester. The proximity to the growing, educated suburban workforce attracts many companies to sprawling campus environments and business parks.
- The Third Wave (1980s): The personal computer and pre-Internet technology reduces the importance of proximity. Sunbelt cities develop a critical mass of business infrastructure and quality-of-life attributes and become high stakes competitors for corporate relocations. Shortages of skilled labor, escalating real estate values, business climate and quality-of-life concerns influence location decisions for New York City companies, even as the preeminent image of the US and New York City encourage foreign investment in the financial and real estate sectors.
- The Fourth Wave (early to mid-1990s): Large corporate centers, whether in Manhattan or the suburbs, are affected by cost saving measures and business restructuring in response to global competition and merger & acquisition activity. Company-specific local and wide-area networks allow seamless business operations to be linked across dispersed geographic locations. Cost differentials between Manhattan and the suburbs decrease, reducing the attractiveness of the suburbs as relocation alternatives.

As we move into the 21st century, traditional market boundaries continue to dissolve in a context of free trade, technological advances and the Internet. Talent and knowledge development are of paramount importance for both companies and workers. The continued robust economy and low unemployment provides unprecedented leverage to knowledge workers in gaining flexible work schedules, telecommuting alternatives, hoteling and other means to balance work and personal time.

In this environment, the region is benefiting from a number of factors. Quality-of-life improvements, lower operating costs and reduced tax rates have improved the image of New York City and the region. Paradoxically, places like suburban Atlanta have become more congested with housing costs as high as many New York suburbs. With labor markets tight almost everywhere, companies are afraid of not being able to hire replacements if key people refuse to relocate. However, move-outs continue for companies that are most affected by high costs, shifts in their customer base, or low productivity in some segments of the workforce.

As the region assesses its competitive position, a number of questions must be addressed. What types of industries and firms are leaving, which are staying and which are coming here? What is our image, how

has it changed, and why? How important are high taxes and other costs of doing business? What industries appear to hold the most promise to insure our continued growth?

SESSION II: WHAT DO WE HAVE TO DO TO COMPETE MORE EFFECTIVELY?

The Tri-State region retains a number of advantages as we enter the 21st century. Few other areas offer the diversity of cultures, global access, job opportunities, urban/suburban/exurban living opportunities and entertainment/recreational venues. From a global basis, the region continues to be a safe haven for investment, including real estate. It is also in the forefront of several booming industries, including finance, E-Commerce, entertainment and pharmaceuticals.

However, much of the recent slowdown in move-outs is the result of a booming national economy and a narrowing of cost differentials that could end in the next few years. If the real estate and labor markets in New York City and suburban locations continue to tighten, then the cost gap with other regions could begin to widen again. Another risk could come from a national slowdown. In a weaker economy, the risks of disrupting a thriving business with a move will decline relative to potential cost-savings.

In the longer term, there is uncertainty concerning how knowledge-based work will evolve with new technologies. Will the virtual office and telecommuting become the norm or will close physical proximity remain a critical factor for the region's leading industries? As the dynamics of the workplace evolve, the region will continually face the tensions of a high-cost region with a powerful global image, a region that offers tremendous appeal with culture and diversity but one where these attributes can be overcome by congestion, crime and other quality-of-life issues.

With this outlook, what issues are the most critical issues for the region to address? How important is "quality-of-life," and what does it mean for corporate location managers? What taxes and business costs are most important to address? What transportation and other infrastructure investments are most critical? What education and workforce reforms would be most meaningful? How important are land use and environmental regulations? What aspects of current regulations are of greatest concern, and how can these be addressed through state land use plans and other "smart growth" measures?

STRENGTHENING NEW JERSEY'S STATE PLAN

MODERATOR: Joseph J. Maraziti, *Chairman, NJ State Planning Commission*

PANELISTS: Candace Ashmun, *Member, Pinelands Commission*; Peter Reinhart, *Vice President & General Counsel, K. Hovnanian Enterprises, Inc.*; Richard W. Roper, *Principal, The Roper Group*

OVERVIEW

New Jersey is one of 13 states that have adopted a comprehensive state “smart growth” plan, but it is alone among our three states in having such a plan. Last month, the State Planning Commission adopted a new interim plan, which is now the subject of a thorough economic analysis. This workshop will examine the content and intended outcomes of New Jersey’s new state plan.

THE PLAN’S PRINCIPLES

The new plan maintains the underlying concepts and principles of the 1992 State Development and Redevelopment Plan, including the goals of promoting reinvestment and redevelopment of existing urban and suburban centers (“Communities of Place”), reducing the rate of land consumption, reducing highway congestion, and preserving natural areas and farmland. While the plan builds upon these principles, it does so in a more precise and understandable way.

CROSS-ACCEPTANCE

The new plan was developed through the same process of “cross-acceptance” utilized to prepare the original 1992 plan. This process involved intensive negotiations between the State Planning Commission and the state’s 21 counties and 566 municipalities over the plan’s policies. More than 40 public meetings were held, from Sussex County in the north, to Cape May County in the south. More than 200 public comments were submitted, in addition to nearly 400 issues that were negotiated by county and local committees, in sessions with the commission and staff. Through this process, local governments also reviewed the content of their own plans and regulations and compared them with the provisions of the interim state plan. No requirement exists in New Jersey’s planning process however, for local consistency with the state plan.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

New Jersey’s plan is designed to promote “sustainable development.” This means patterns of development that meet the needs of the present residents of the state without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A key component of this strategy is the principle that the state’s resources must be devoted to the maintenance and revitalization of existing communities, especially the state’s urban center. Nodes and corridors of more intensive redevelopment will be identified in the policy area map that will accompany the final state plan.

HARNESSING THE MARKETPLACE

The State Plan calls for planning that is closely coordinated with, and supported by, investment programs and regulatory actions. The Plan calls for the creation, harnessing and building upon the power of market force and pricing mechanisms, through such tools as density transfers and emission trading.

An Important feature of the new interim plan is the inclusion of 17 separate policies designed to promote quality urban design in New Jersey’s communities, the first such provisions in any state plan. The plan underscores that the quality of design and the strengthening of a community’s sense of place are as important a goal as the location and intensity of development.

PROVIDING CLEAR PUBLIC INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

A criticism is that the 1992 plan did not clearly state public investment priorities. In the new interim plan these priorities are stated in a much simpler and more straightforward way, in order to provide clear

guidance to state agencies, which are required by law to follow the state plan. Another criticism of the 1992 plan is that it provided for designation of centers but did not provide incentives for the adoption of community-wide plans. The new interim plan includes a new provision for “endorsed plans,” through which the State Planning Commission will recognize comprehensive plans for whole municipalities or groups of communities.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEW PLAN

New Jersey is one of a growing number of states that utilizes incentives, not mandates, to promote consistency of municipal plans and regulations with its State Plan. If the plan is to be successfully implemented, the state must provide sufficiently strong incentives to municipalities to make their land use policies consistent with the new plan. Other states with incentive-based plans, such as Maryland, are now limiting discretionary state grants for infrastructure and school construction to locally designated growth areas.

Since the adoption of the 1992 State Plan, most New Jersey communities have not sought nor received center designation or amended their plans and regulations to reflect the policies of the state plan. Consequently, most new development has continued to occur on “greenfield” sites isolated from areas designated by the plan for development, and more than 200,000 acres of open land have been urbanized in the past six years. If the new plan is to succeed, the state must provide powerful new incentives to gain local consistency. State agency investments and permitting programs must also be redesigned to reflect the state plan’s goals.

WILL SMART GROWTH BENEFIT LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES AND A DIVERSE POPULATION?

MODERATOR: **Hooper Brooks**, *Program Director, Surdna Foundation.*

PANELISTS: **Constance Beaumont**, *Director of State & Local Policy, National Trust for Historic Preservation;* **Raymond Ocasio**, *Executive Director, La Casa de Don Pedro;* **Philip Thompson**, *Associate Professor of Political Science Columbia University;* **Dennis Walcott**, *Executive Director, NY Urban League.*

In theory, Smart Growth policies should benefit the residents of low-income urban communities. Growth limits in exurban areas, incentives to develop city and town centers and investments in public transportation would encourage the expansion of employment, business and housing opportunities in locations that are accessible to most low-income workers and families. These policies should also improve the fiscal condition of central cities by bringing more business activity to urban areas and by increasing the value of urban real estate. Greater tax revenues could then translate into improved services or lower tax rates for city residents.

In spite of these potential benefits, community development organizations, city unions, fair housing coalitions and other advocates for urban constituents have been underrepresented in Smart Growth coalitions. In part, this appears to be the result of how anti-sprawl sentiments, which provide most of the energy for the Smart Growth movement, have developed in the United States. Urban sprawl has a much more visible and immediate impact on suburban towns and counties that are being overrun by highway strip development, traffic congestion and population growth. The effects of sprawl are also of primary concern to constituencies whose main priority is the protection of environmentally important open space. As a consequence, the issues of greatest concern to impoverished city neighborhoods—unemployment, affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization—have usually received less emphasis than environmental and suburban quality-of-life issues.

There is also debate over how much poorer residents and communities of color will actually benefit from some Smart Growth policies. If managed growth and incentives for urban development are successful, then cities will have more robust economies, greater wealth and more jobs than they would have otherwise. However, there is no guarantee that the additional jobs will not be high-skill positions that are filled primarily by suburban residents, and increases in rents and housing prices could reduce, rather than expand, the supply of affordable housing. Restraining residential growth in low-density suburban areas could also limit mobility out of the city at a time when African-Americans, Latinos and Asians are moving to the suburbs in record numbers.

Most Smart Growth legislation is too new to evaluate, but there is some evidence that anti-sprawl measures have a beneficial impact on low-income city residents. For example, a 1977 study by George Sternlieb and Robert Burchell found that central city housing abandonment was linked to the growth of comparably priced housing in the suburbs. In addition, the city of Portland has one of the healthiest economies and some of the lowest housing prices on the West Coast in spite of (or because of) a growth boundary that has been in place since 1975. Even with these examples, it is difficult to determine how much sprawl contributes to urban decay or to identify who actually benefits from anti-sprawl measures. However, they do provide some indication of the potential for Smart Growth to create economic conditions that are conducive to inner-city community development.

Recent state and regional initiatives have also attempted to address both the tangible and symbolic issues directly. For example, in announcing Maryland's Neighborhood Conservation and Smart Growth Initiative, Governor Paris Geldenning linked suburban sprawl and inner city disinvestment as "two sides of the same coin." The initiative itself contains incentives to develop abandoned industrial sites in low-income areas, tax credits to encourage low-to-moderate wage job creation, and subsidies to home buyers

in low-income areas. While it is too soon to assess the initiative's impact, it does exemplify the types of actions that are being attempted to link inner city and suburban agendas.

As the Tri-State region considers Smart Growth legislation and policies, it has the opportunity to learn from previous efforts and define an agenda that addresses the concerns of both urban and suburban constituencies. To develop a multi-racial constituency that includes poor and moderate-income citizens, planners and public officials will need to address a number of questions: What issues need to be central to the agenda in order to attract diverse support? How will particular policies affect the housing choices, job opportunities and incomes of low-income residents? How can we effectively include representatives from different communities in planning and advocating for this agenda?

THE REGIONAL Y2K INITIATIVE

SESSION I

PANELISTS: Charles Halpern, *Nathan Cummings Foundation*

Michael Donnelly, *Year 2000 Program Customer Liaison, AT&T*; Robert Green, *Manager, Project 2000, Public Service Electric & Gas*

SESSION II

PANELISTS: Barbara Butler, *Philmont Software Mill*; John Gibb, **Deputy Director, NY State Office Of Energy Management**; Marc Pfeiffer, **Deputy Director, NJ Division of Local Government Services**

The “Y2K problem” denotes the inability of certain computer hardware, software and embedded processors to function properly when faced with dates past 1999. This problem could have serious impacts on the public infrastructure systems that are the underpinning of the regional economy. While much work has been done in both the public and private sectors to mitigate these risks, there remain sufficient gaps and misunderstandings to warrant reasonable concern and prudent action.

Regional Plan Association has launched its Regional Y2K Initiative to help minimize the negative consequences of the Y2K computer “bug” on the economy and quality-of-life of the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut metropolitan region through resource and information sharing and public education. RPA’s work is being overseen by a Task Force composed of business and civic leaders and Co-Chaired by Brendan Dugan, President of European American Bank and Bishop Joseph Sullivan of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

The Regional Y2K Initiative:

- Is an advocate for full disclosure and region-wide contingency planning and priority setting on the part of public officials and infrastructure providers in a process which is open and objective;
- Is raising public awareness and understanding of Y2K; and
- Is bringing the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut metropolitan region’s non-profit sector into a state of Y2K preparedness so that the needs of people served by this sector are met without significant interruption.

OUR WORK TO DATE

Last Fall, RPA held a series of meetings with corporate Y2K executives to tap into their research on Y2K and to learn which areas their organizations are most concerned about. Their principal concerns were the preparedness of basic infrastructure systems such as transportation, power, water and telecommunications. Participants also singled out the small and medium enterprises (SME), non-profit, service delivery, and state and local government sectors as areas of questionable Y2K preparedness. The minutes of two of these meetings are available on the Y2K pages of RPA’s web site.

In early February, RPA held a major all-day conference examining key areas of the region’s infrastructure: electricity, water supply and waste water disposal, and the three state governments and the New York City Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management. Most of the presentations made at this conference are available on RPA’s web site. RPA will soon be announcing additional forums on other key infrastructure areas, including telecommunications, transportation, banking/finance and health care.

FUTURE STEPS

RPA is focusing its remaining work on Y2K on the areas where we feel we can make the most useful contribution:

- Continued examination of our infrastructure systems;
- Providing reliable, accurate information to the public;
- Helping the non-profit sector prepare itself to continue to function effectively despite any Y2K related disruptions.

RPA's Regional Y2K Initiative will be releasing preliminary findings in connection with studies on health care, transportation and water supply and waste water disposal systems. It is our hope that these studies will form the basis for a more informed public discussion of the real Y2K risks the region faces in these areas, and what kinds of contingency planning, if any, must be done to mitigate and prepare for these risks. The Regional Assembly will also be RPA's first public meeting on Y2K, and there will be two sessions providing a regional overview and discussing contingency planning issues of concern to localities.

Between now and the end of the year, RPA will also be engaged, in cooperation with a group of major non-profit umbrella organizations, in an effort to raise the level of awareness of Y2K in the non-profit sector and to put non-profits in touch with the resources they need. A prime goal of this program will be to get the message across that each organization has a responsibility to continue to fulfill its mission regardless of Y2K-related disruptions. To meet this objective, in addition to addressing their internal Y2K issues, organizations will need to develop realistic contingency plans based on a thorough appreciation of the external systems upon which they depend.

Finally, a subcommittee of the Y2K Task Force will be working with leaders in the health care sector to develop an accurate picture of the status of this key area, identified in a recent Senate report as one of the weakest links in the nation's Y2K preparedness. RPA will be working with organizations and institutions in this sector to pinpoint remaining vulnerabilities and to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to address them.