



VISTA 2025 Goal 1:

Maintain and enhance “quality of place” as a key component of economic health

Goal 1 Team Meeting

April 20, 2017

Meeting Notes

Team Members Attending: W. Boulton Alexander, Nancy Corson, Ernie Hollings, Michelle Kichline, Susan Marshall, Molly Morrison, Todd Pohlig, John Theilacker, Craig Styer

Also Attending: Susan Hamley, Sonya Huntzinger, Brian O’Leary, Stephanie Stevens, David Sciocchetti

Michelle Kichline

Welcomed all team members and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Requested comments on meeting notes from previous meeting. None were received. Commented on the good feedback from the April S.A.V.E. smart growth event.

Bo Alexander

Noted that over 100 were in attendance at the event.

Michelle Kichline

Noted the positive impact of trails on quality of place and property values. Introduced Bryan Styche from the Chester County Planning Commission to review planning and activity on Chester County trail system.

Bryan Styche

Provided a high level overview of the trail system in Chester County and its connection to the Circuit of Philadelphia region trails. Noted that the main trails in Chester County are the Schuylkill River Trail, the Chester Valley trail and the Struble Trail.

Provided a description of the path of each trail and a status report on what activity was underway or scheduled.

Noted that work should start next year on an extension of the Schuylkill River Trail in the County's northern corridor. Noted that a feasibility study for the Northern Struble Trail had been completed and that an extension of the Chester Valley trail to Downingtown was being studied. Described concept for a 50 car parking area trail head for the East Branch Brandywine Trail. Reviewed Central Chester County Bicycle Pedestrian Circulation Plan. Previewed the 2017 Phoenixville Multi Modal Study TCDI grant application. Provided overview of Devault Line Trail feasibility study. Discussed the Chester Valley Trail West concept along the Route 30 corridor. Briefly commented on the proposed Warner Spur in the area of the Turnpike, Route 202 and Route 29 noting it was owned by Tredyffrin Township and could be a part of an inner loop of trails in the County.

Michelle Kichline

Noted that Vanguard would be excited at the possibility of a new trail near their headquarters. Added that a bridge over Swedesford Road would be needed that could possibly be funded by a P3 that included local employers.

Bryan Styche

Commented that getting people comfortable with the idea of trails is an important step in the process. Indicated that a study in the \$80,000 to \$100,000 range was the next step.

Michelle Kichline

Stated that the County could help with approaching private firms on the issue of trails. Suggested that the demographics were similar to Radnor where a trail was very successful.

Bryan Styche

Added that the Radnor trail was heavily opposed at the outset but is now viewed very favorably.

Susan Marshall

Asked if trail use was being tracked.

Bryan Styche

Confirmed that it was. Noted that 375,000 people use the Chester Valley Trail annually and another 35,000 use the Schuylkill River Trail. Suggested that total trail use in the County was over 500,000.

Todd Pohlig

Noted that the availability of trails was a big plus for millennials looking for a home.

Susan Marshall

Asked about emergency call stations on the trails.

Bryan Styche

Responded that they have essentially been replaced by cell phones.

Brian O'Leary

Indicated that crime on trails was very low.

Molly Morrison

Added that the more people who use a trail the safer it is.

Michelle Kichline

Reported on the County's Chesco Walks program. Noted that the County was participating in a national competition for a \$500,000 grant and had pledged to generate a billion steps. Encouraged everyone to sign up so their steps could be tracked.

Transitioned to Susan Hamley for an update on tourism in Chester County.

Susan Hamley

Reported that the recent change to the County hotel tax would add \$500,000 to \$600,000 new dollars to the Chester County Conference and Visitor Bureau (CCCVB) tourism marketing effort. Noted that the goal is to generate additional stays in County hotels. Illustrated how tourism is part of economic development through the use of a "Power of Tourism" video. Stated that CCCVB has a staff of seven full time people.

Indicated that the 2014 strategic plan for the Chester County Conference and Visitors Bureau had established a vision of "being universally recognized as the premier mid-Atlantic destination." Noted that the goals of CCCVB are brand awareness, total experiences, critical mass and operational excellence

Detailed tourism market segments including sports and special events. Indicated that China has the largest number of foreign visitors to Chester County. Described a "tough mudder" as an example of an event that brings different kinds of visitors to Chester County. Noted that a major musical event called County Spirit USA is scheduled for August 2018. Pointed out that a major focus is on "product development", such as events and activities including outdoor events, agricultural tourism, history, arts and culture and alternate venues, that will add to the number of visitors to the County.

Described the allocation of hotels across Chester County in terms of visitor/event demand. Suggested that southern Chester County is well balanced, that the West

Chester area is reasonable but that the Exton area is out of balance in terms of number of rooms versus attractions and events that can fill those rooms.

Michelle Kichline

Thanked Susan Hamley and transitioned to Sonia Huntzinger for an update on Coatesville economic development.

Sonia Huntzinger

Described the 2nd Century Alliance as a stakeholders group whose mission is to guide the City into a prosperous second century. Noted that though she was a staff member of the Chester County Department of Community Development, she was the de facto staff of the 2nd Century Alliance. Indicated that the 2nd Century Alliance had three subcommittees: economic development, place making and advocacy and policy.

Described one of the key challenges facing Coatesville as “too many silos”, groups and agencies acting independently and too often diluting their impact. Noted that one key objective was to change the conversation about Coatesville to be less negative.

Noted that some of the accomplishments to date included a new business packet, a recruitment brochure, and an updated website and Facebook presence. Reported that the Gateway project, scheduled to include 18,000 square feet of new first floor retail and 18,000 square of second floor office/retail space, at the main entrance to downtown was progressing. Added that the originally proposed second floor of market rate residential was replaced with commercial space to make the project more economically viable. Indicated that two existing buildings would also be part of the project with the Cultural Society building targeted for a sports bar and a bank building for a major restaurant. Stated that major improvements to the intersection of Business Route 30 and Route 82 would support the redevelopment.

Reported that efforts were underway to make improvements to the existing train station to make it more user friendly. Indicated that the new train station would now be located

closer to 4th Avenue and that the project would likely have three phases starting with the 3rd Avenue streetscape between the tracks and Business Route 30, then the 4th Avenue streetscape between the tracks and Business Route 30 and then the relocated Fleetwood Street and the new platforms between 3rd and 4th Avenues.

Stated that the upper portion of the Flats, above the trestle, was targeted for a medical marijuana facility and that the lower Flats area was under a right-of-first-refusal agreement between the RDA and DEPG, the developer of the Gateway project.

Described the status of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation \$100,000 grant noting that the neighborhood survey had generated 350 responses and that the study identified public safety, jobs and employment, youth programs and resident engagement as key focus areas for future programs.

Molly Morrison

Asked about the prospects for the next phase of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation funding approach.

Sonia Huntzinger

Indicated that it looked promising.

Molly Morrison

Thanked all for attending and adjourned the meeting.