



VISTA 2025 Goal 1:

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

Goal 1 Team Meeting

June 14, 2016

Meeting Notes

Team Members Attending: W. Boulton Alexander, Kim Brumbaugh, Nancy Corson, Denise Day, Don Hannum, Ernie Hollings, Regina Horton-Lewis, Michelle Kichline, Molly Morrison, Todd Pohlig

Also Attending: Pat Bokovitz, Marybeth DiVincenzo, Bill Gladden, Susan Hamley, Sonia Huntsinger, Brian O’Leary, David Sciocchetti, Gary Smith

Michelle Kichline

Opened the meeting and welcomed those attending. Requested any questions or comments on the meeting notes from the previous meeting. None were offered.

Molly Morrison

Commented on the county effort to look at commercial landscapes as part of an effort to determine their future.

Brian O’Leary

Provided an overview of the County’s Commercial Landscapes Task Force focus. Described four topic areas: office parks, brownfields, transit oriented development and greyfields. Noted that these were areas of concern for Chester County as a result of changing market demands and changing demographics. Added that understanding these areas was important to developing Landscapes 3.

Described impacts of millennial generation on suburban office market. Talked about millennial preferences for more urban, walkable living areas. Described how companies are responding to this preference by adding amenities. Noted the need for rents in the \$20 per square foot range to be able to afford to make the needed changes. Also noted that not a lot of new office buildings are being built in the suburbs. Described major mixed use redevelopment proposed by Liberty Property Trust to respond to millennial concerns and to compete with urban areas like the Navy Yard.

Briefly discussed the need to properly address brownfields in the County. Described the Southworks project in Pittsburgh.

Noted the many opportunities for transit oriented development along the Keystone Corridor in Chester County including Malvern, Paoli and Downingtown. Noted how the Rosslyn-Ballston Metro Corridor had been developed.

Described greyfields as properties where the market demand was changing including malls and certain retail shopping centers. Noted the need to determine the highest and best use for these properties going forward. Noted the transformation underway at Granite Run Mall in Delaware County.

Summarized by indicating that the Commercial Landscapes Task Force will be developing a range of ideas for responding to the different challenges presented by these types of areas. Anticipated a final set of strategies and deliverables in February of 2017.

Todd Pohlig

Noted that the demand for active adult communities for aging baby boomers was outstripping demand.

Brian O’Leary

Agreed and noted that a significant number of the housing units being developed in Phoenixville were being occupied by baby boomers.

John Theilacker

Asked about possible responses to the challenges.

Brian O’Leary

Suggested that office parks may need new zoning that allows mixed use, modified building heights, etc. Noted that local municipalities need to understand the challenges to effectively respond.

Pat Bokovitz

Suggested that the County’s Vision Partnership Program was one tool available to local municipalities.

Kim Brumbaugh

Noted that they were seeing more people moving out of the County, retiring at 65 and deciding to live elsewhere.

Brian O’Leary

Responded that there is an awareness and a concern regarding this issue and the hope is that we will be able to respond to it.

Todd Pohlig

Stated that millennials don’t want just an office building.

Brian O’Leary

Responded that change is in the air and we need to take note of it. Noted that one of the difficult issues in Chester County is that our office parks are not well served by transit. Suggested that suburban office parks may have some advantages in terms of

green infrastructure such as the ability to utilize solar and other alternative energy approaches.

Molly Morrison

Described an upcoming event sponsored by the William Penn Foundation called Reinventing the Commercial Corridor scheduled for May 27th at 5:00 PM. Noted that the event was being held at the Coventry Mall to showcase the issues being addressed, that the theme of the event is to reimagine struggling commercial areas.

Michelle Kichline

Noted the need for a centralized system to notify the entire county of activities and events like this as a segue to Susan Hamley's presentation.

Susan Hamley

Noted that all generations want to be entertained and have fun and that the ability to meet this need is a part of quality of place. Noted that this applies to workers as well as residents. Indicated that Chester County has a wide variety of activities and events and that people learn of these events from a wide variety of disparate sources.

Reported that the Chester County Conference and Visitors Bureau has established goches.co which is intended to grow into an easily searchable comprehensive website where all county events can be listed. Explained that this will allow people to pick a topic or an area and find out what is going on anywhere in Chester County. Introduced Mike Cresta who is working on the website.

Mike Cresta

Described goches.co as a repository where events and activities can be listed that will be easily searchable by topic. Noted that the website will be searchable by cell phone and that there would regular uploading of events with a goal of encouraging as many events as possible to upload to the site.

Susan Hamley

Noted that the prototype is using West Chester as a target area which will be expanded to the entire county over time.

Molly Morrison

Asked about the business model and whether there would be a fee for a listing or to access the site.

Susan Hamley

Responded that there would be no fees at this time but that this issue could be revisited in the future.

Mike Cresta

Commented that monetizing the product would not be difficult.

Gary Smith

Noted that millennials were one of the core focus groups at the outset of VISTA 2025 and asked how the site would be monitored.

Mike Cresta

Responded that this was an important issue and a process would need to be developed to address this concern.

Marybeth DiVincenzo

Noted that VISTA.Today does some of what is being proposed and asked if they can or will participate.

Susan Hamley

Responded that the CCCVB effort was intended to be led by CCCVB but fed by the broader Chester County community.

Susan Hamley

Identified an additional topic being worked on by CCCVB. She described a proposed Mid Atlantic Jam music festival that was targeted for the summer of 2017. Noted that they would be seeking sponsors for this major weekend event.

Michelle Kichline

Asked Bill Gladden for an update on the County's open space preservation activities.

Bill Gladden

Stated that 2,360 acres had been preserved in 2015, of which 1,500 had been land preserved for agriculture. Pointed out that the County's preservation efforts had three main components: the county, municipalities and conservancies. Noted that a total of approximately 130,000 acres or 26.7 percent of the county's land area had been preserved to date. Indicated that the County had set a goal of preserving 30% of the County's land area by 2019. Noted that it make take longer than that to reach the goal. He added that Chester County's preserved acreage represented almost half of the preserved area in the region and that it was a defining characteristic of the County.

Explained that leveraging was a major part of preservation noting that the cost to the County is approximately \$2,000 per acre but that these funds leveraged \$3,500,000 in state funding. Added that there was a rolling list of as many as 100 potential preservation targets with the highest leverage getting the highest rank and a better chance of receiving county funding.

Sonia Huntsinger

Introduced as new Coatesville economic development program administrator. Described initial months of office set up, meeting with stakeholders, holding a first merchants meeting and organizing four committees of the 2nd Century Alliance. Described key projects as the new train station, the Natural Lands Trust project and the Gateway commercial and residential project.

Pat Bokovitz

Described the Urban Centers Forum held in April at Victory Brewing in Kennett Square. Noted that the focus of the event was how to revitalize a brownfield/greyfield site. Described how Mike Pia spoke candidly regarding the range of issues that impact the ability to successfully redevelop one of these properties. Noted that the next Urban Centers Forum event would be held in the fall in Phoenixville and would likely focus on marketing.

David Sciocchetti

Briefly described planning efforts for a proposed Return on Environment event.

Molly Morrison

Noted the need to raise awareness and to use the event as a platform for discussion.