



JOINT UrbanStudies CENTER

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A Letter from the Executive Director

On Thursday, April 26th, the Joint Urban Studies Center (JUSC) hosted the “2007 Lackawanna and Luzerne County Indicators and Regional Forum”.

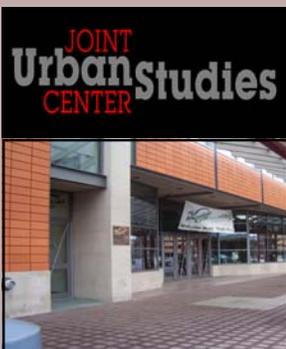
The event featured four workshop sessions, David Thornburgh as keynote speaker, and was highlighted by the official release and presentation of the “2007 Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties Indicators Report”, the second annual report of its kind issued by JUSC.

The 2007 Report tracks data and trends that are critical to the region’s future. The project measures the region’s progress over time on key economic, education, public safety, health and human services, environmental, and infrastructure measures impacting quality of life. It brings together in a single document a wealth information that contributes to building civic agendas by providing a common information base for policy makers, non-profit leaders and entrepreneurs. The thought-provoking document establishes a solid baseline indicating where the region has been, where it currently is and where it is heading. The most important outcome is the resulting dialogue that prompts specific action in moving the region forward, in an informed and thoughtful way, and drives future priorities to improve conditions needing special attention. Twenty-four new indicators are included in the 2007 Report.



The 2007 Forum’s workshop sessions included those on Housing, Land Use & Transportation, Education & Workforce Development, and Jobs & Economy. The keynote address featured David Thornburgh, President and CEO of the Alliance for Regional Stewardship. The Alliance for Regional Stewardship was created in 2000 to serve as a coach and advisor to regional leaders and civic entrepreneurs around the country on the strategies and tactics that lead to results. Thornburgh is the former Executive Director of the Southwest Pennsylvania Economy League.

Copies of the 2007 Lackawanna and Luzerne County Indicators Report can be ordered by visiting the JUSC homepage (www.urbanstudies.org), and by clicking on the “2007 Regional Indicators” icon. Next year’s forum and issuance of the next Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties Indicators Report will take place in April, 2008.



2007 Forum Workshop Session: Housing

The Housing panel focused on the continuing westward migration of New York/New Jersey populations, and how such migration is and will continue to affect the region's housing market. The discussion identified the importance of preparing for this growth, in order to avoid pitfalls experienced in other regions, such as the increased foreclosure rates and mortgage fraud in Monroe County.

The panel's plan of action called for identifying the concepts/issues that must be addressed, identifying organizations currently addressing such issues, identifying gaps and organizations that work to close them, and using the findings to inform legislators to tackle issues on a regional scale.



From the discussion, session attendees, along with the panelists, identified the following issues to be addressed:

- Providing increased assistance to the region's growing diverse population, such as providing home closing documents in languages other than English
- Protecting the low-income population through such methods as Land Trusts
- Closely monitoring House Bill 487 and all legislation affecting predatory lending
- Implementing in K-12 education basics on financial literacy – following Project 720, which was utilized in Northwest Area School District
- Strengthening efforts to hold absentee landlords responsible for their properties
- Promoting a successful housing industry via media outlets (rather than highlighting problems)
- Avoiding an increase in foreclosure rates

2007 Forum Workshop Session: Land Use and Transportation

The Land Use & Transportation panel focused on continuing the momentum created during the 2006 Indicators Forum and the subsequent task force meeting held in early 2007. Each panelist provided an overview of their particular field of expertise and then engaged in an interactive discussion among panelists and forum attendees. The discussion centered on maintaining a high quality of life, while continuing to focus on county collaboration – particularly the importance of the bi-county comprehensive plan.

Following the session, Tom Lawson, panel moderator, reported the next steps our region must take in order to continue the momentum:



- Enhance mass transit systems and consider the possibility of regional systems to maximize efficiencies
- Perform a strategic analysis of the region's infrastructure to meet the demands of the future economy
- Complete the Bi-County Comprehensive Plan and implement the Open Space and Comprehensive Plan; pursue legislation for implementation
- Study storm water issues to develop a comprehensive regional plan to minimize development-related flooding
- Streamline government project delivery related to grant assistance for private/public partnerships
- Review current zoning impacting new community lifestyle centers/villages to combat sprawl
- Continue efforts to revitalize urban centers for living, employment and entertainment
- Support transportation agencies with reliable, sustainable revenue to maintain the region's highways, bridges, transit and airports, and enable capacity expansion projects for economic development

2007 Forum: Workshop Session: Education and Workforce Development

The Education & Workforce Development panel discussed the importance of instituting a “systematic Pre-K to 16 model of education reform,” according to panelist Nancy Tkatch, superintendent of Northwest Area School District. Tkatch, who presented the panel’s findings, noted a need for collaboration among the schools, parents, students, and community, citing education’s prime role in economic development. To achieve such results, the panel discussed the following as the major plot points:



- Employing Pre-K programs to further strengthen the educational foundation
- Requiring accountability to keep efforts on track
- Providing educators with additional professional development so they become more familiar with their role in economic development
- Creating a comprehensive career development model (K-16) to introduce students to career possibilities at an early age
- Examining implementation of contextual learning, through which students are provided certain opportunities that allow them to apply academics to real world concepts
- Combining educational approaches in order to provide a broader learning foundation
- Using career/industry clusters to develop student awareness of opportunities beyond high school
- Devoting resources to improve high school dropout intervention strategies
- Providing community awareness regarding the importance of continuing education
- Concentrating on literacy
- Aligning human service and county agencies to business/educational partnerships

2007 Forum Workshop Session: Jobs and Economy

The Jobs and Economy panel focused on understanding the region as a whole – where we are, who we are, and what we can do to become more successful. The discussion, moderated by Glenn Pellino, director of Lackawanna County’s Office of Community and Economic Development, identified concepts currently used to generate economic development – in particular, which concepts are working.

Wilkes-Barre’s Mayor Tom Leighton discussed the City’s approach to attracting and retaining people. He noted the important cooperation between Wilkes-Barre’s government and residents, along with increased police protection, new street lights, and the various projects such as the Northampton & Main St. Theater project.

Mayor Chris Doherty of Scranton added his sentiments on the importance of taking action during this critical time, in particular embracing the growing/migrating population. He also highlighted the importance of investing in ourselves and our towns. By doing so, Doherty believes jobs and people will follow.

Penny Canella, President of Penn’s Northeast, also commented on the importance of collaboration among entities. She stressed that creating a regional identity, and a bond between communities, to properly market the region, is critical in the overall goal of achieving economic development.

Dr. Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the Kania School of Management, University of Scranton, added that growth in local entrepreneurship will spur additional economic development.

The panel’s overall consensus was to continue the collaborative effort among counties. Issues such as education, job growth, and even marketing of the region for business attraction and retention, must be addressed on a regional scale.

A Thank You to the 2007 Forum Moderators and Panelists



JUSC sincerely thanks all moderators and panelists who participated in the 2007 Forum. The event would not be possible without their continued participation and support. As always, we hope each panelist will be back for next year's event.

Following is a listing of the 2007 Forum moderators and panelists:

Housing Panel

- Moderator:** Joseph A. Boylan, *Research Analyst, Joint Urban Studies Center*
- Panelist:** Ron Fish, *ERA One Source Realty*
- Panelist:** Mike Hanley, *Executive Director, United Neighborhood Centers*
- Panelist:** Mike Johnson, *Executive Vice-President of Commercial Division, Lewith & Freeman*



Land Use & Transportation Panel

- Moderator:** Thomas Lawson, *Executive Vice-President, Borton Lawson*
- Panelist:** Cindy Campbell, *Economic Development Analyst, Pennsylvania DCED*
- Panelist:** Bill Letwinsky, *Mericle Commercial Real Estate Services*
- Panelist:** Nancy Snee, *Lackawanna and Luzerne County Metropolitan Planning Organization*
- Panelist:** Angela Watson, *Transportation Planning Specialist Supervisor/Land Use Coordinator, PennDOT*

Education & Workforce Development Panel

- Moderator:** Dr. Tim Gilmour, *President, Wilkes University*
- Panelist:** Dr. Peter Balsamo, *Vice-President of Workforce & Community Development, LCCC*
- Panelist:** Peg Moreck, *Owner/Director/Teacher, Apple Tree Nursery & Primary School*
- Panelist:** Nancy Tkatch, *Superintendent, Northwest Area School District*

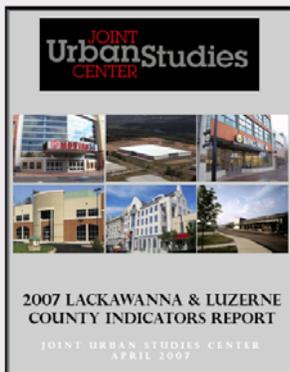


Jobs & Economy Panel

- Moderator:** Glenn Pellino, *Director, Lackawanna County O.E.C.D.*
- Panelist:** Penny Cannella, *President, Penn's Northeast*
- Panelist:** Chris Doherty, *Mayor, City of Scranton*
- Panelist:** Dr. Satyajit Ghosh, *University of Scranton*
- Panelist:** Thomas Leighton, *Mayor, City of Wilkes-Barre*

JUSC Summer Internships Available

The Joint Urban Studies Center is still accepting internship applicants for the 2007 summer session. All interested parties can contact Marla Doddo, JUSC Development Coordinator, at doddo@urbanstudies.org or 570-408-9850.



For additional information on JUSC internship opportunities, contact Marla Doddo at:
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JUSC Mission Statement

JUSC's mission is to assist in the revitalization of small to mid-sized cities and counties through the utilization of the center's expertise and resources. These include its member universities, colleges, and their respective faculties and students. JUSC serves as a resource and consultant for communities to develop more effective and efficient government, best practices, preparation of applied research, strategy development, and the process for its implementation. Based upon these efforts, JUSC will develop a model for replication by other small and mid-size cities confronting similar challenges.



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