

# The INSTITUTE for Public Policy & Economic Development

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Committed to  
research  
and analysis  
leading to  
economic  
development in  
Pennsylvania

## The Institute's Task Forces

The Institute has seven task forces, which look at different aspects of life and work in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Task Forces and their missions are:

- **Energy Task Force** — Mission: To convene community resources to strategically plan and promote the sustainable economic development of regional natural gas resources across business, education, political, and community stakeholders.
- **Jobs, Economy & Economic Development Task Forces** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of northeastern Pennsylvania through Pre-K-20+ educators and workforce development professionals partnering with business to create seamless, high quality NEPA education system.
- **Health & Healthcare Task Force** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of northeastern Pennsylvania through examination of health status, health care delivery, health care costs and insurance.
- **Housing Task Force** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of northeastern Pennsylvania through examination of housing stock and housing affordability.
- **Education and Workforce Development Task Force** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of northeastern Pennsylvania through Pre-K-20+ educators and workforce development professionals partnering with business to create seamless, high quality NEPA education system.
- **Planning, Land Use and Infrastructure Task Force** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of Northeastern Pennsylvania through examination of best practices and policy in planning, land use, transportation, and infrastructure development.
- **Public Safety Task Force** — Mission: To improve the quality of life and standard of living for the residents of northeastern Pennsylvania through improving public safety.

## 2012-2013 Task Force Work

Each year, the task force release policy statements or reports on issues impacting the region in hopes of encouraging meaningful legislation or regulation. Additionally, the research provides organizations with data to make informed decisions for problem solving and to evaluate best practices for possible. The Institute compiles these reports into a booklet that is released with our annual indicators report. Case studies show successful strategies to resolve problems.

**Energy** — The mission of this task force in its first year is to convene community resources to strategically plan and promote the sustainable economic development of regional natural gas resources across business, education, political and community stakeholders, the strategic priority is to facilitate. The task force conducted meetings with stakeholders from the natural gas industry as needed for information sharing, issue identification, policy implication, consensus, and research outcomes. As a result, The Institute prepared a regional strategic economic development plan to harness the economic opportunity generated by the natural gas industry for the benefit of business in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The report will be made public in September 2013.

**Jobs Economy & Economic Development (JEED)** — The task force is comprised of a diverse group of professionals to convene and participate in creating strategies, plans, policy solutions based on evidence, and best practices that have the potential to positively influence local and statewide economies and economic development in order to increase jobs, attract talent, and develop a more sustainable economic environment. The focus this year was local unemployment, cyclical or structural. National studies have shown that 86% of the people between ages 25-64 with a Bachelor's degree or higher participated in the workforce in 2009, compared with only 76% of those with only a high school diploma. Also, unemployment rates are usually higher for those with lower education levels. Job growth in northeastern Pennsylvania has been slow and even retracted during the past several years. It is most likely that the region's unemployment is tied to a combination of structural and cyclical causes. The paper can be accessed at this site <http://institutepta.org/PDF/Indicators/jeedskillmis13.pdf>.

**Health & Healthcare** — The focus this year was patient migration as a result of patient perception. Despite the fact that the data demonstrates some decreases in health care exports, it is too early to tell if this downward trend will continue, if it can be attributable to the recession, or if it is a product of the data covering a broader region. The PHC4 data, while identifying services by residents in the study region, only cover a portion of healthcare, yet are demonstrating increasing hospitalizations occurring outside of the economic region. Proper channeling of education is the key to enabling the patient to make more informed decisions. This is especially critical since the region's healthcare infrastructure has changed significantly over the past two years. The Health and Healthcare Regional Indicators Report can be found online at <http://institutepta.org/PDF/Indicators/healthcaretf13.pdf>.

**Housing** — The housing task force developed an educational website for homeowners and prospective homeowners in both English and Spanish. The site is <http://www.nepahousing.org>. This year, the task force created a toolkit on the site for small communities to learn about different aspects of housing planning. Each topic contains a definition, description, frequently used items, a case study, resource section, and sample regulation.

**Education and Workforce Development** — The focus this year was teacher evaluations and recruitment. Effective teacher evaluation and recruitment are imperative to improving school success and teacher quality. States should carefully review their current systems of evaluation and recruitment and conduct research strategies that will work best for their particular set of issues. No matter what type of assessment program or recruitment strategy is decided upon, their pilot models should test programs before they are implemented. This would ensure that the assessment program is the right type for the specific area in which it is being implemented. After all, these program are for the benefit of the children and the teachers. The entire paper can be accessed at this site <http://institutepta.org/PDF/Indicators/educwfdteachereval13.pdf>

(continued)

## 2013 Task Force Work

**Planning, Land Use, Transportation, and Infrastructure (PLuTI)** — An infrastructure district comprising Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties should be formed to serve as the lead entity to develop an infrastructure plan that creates an inventory and catalog all forms of infrastructure in the region, perform condition assessments of the infrastructure, perform studies to evaluate existing infrastructure rehabilitation, new system needs and life-cycle cost analysis, and prioritize projects while serving as the conduit for funding and the prioritization and oversight of projects. A policy should be developed to determine how a need becomes a project. With legislative action, the infrastructure district could generate its' own revenue for maintenance and/or capital projects through imposition of fees similar to municipal authorities. The PLuTI report can be accessed online at this site <http://institutepea.org/PDF/Indicators/plutiinfra13.pdf>.

**Public Safety** — Operation Gang Up is a regional initiative created to address the ongoing gang activity in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The initiative combines the expertise of key legislative, education, law enforcement and community leaders. Congressman Lou Barletta and Senator John Yudichak are working together to make it a success. The strategic priorities are to conduct assessments on crime related to gang activity and provide a profiles of various gangs, to increase and equalize after school activities, and provide education, training, and information to local law enforcement. More information for Operation Gang Up can be found online at <http://institutepea.org/PDF/Indicators/plutiinfra13.pdf>.

## Wells Fargo Donation Check to The Institute



In May, Wells Fargo presented The Institute with a generous donation to support The Institute's contribution to the community. Pictured (l-r) are Kevin Engelman, District Manager, Wilkes-Barre Market; Teri Ooms, Executive Director of The Institute, Greg Collins, Community Bank President – Northeastern Pennsylvania Region; Laurie Schwager, Commercial Relationship Manager; and David Kowalek, Business Banking Director.

*"We're proud to partner with Wilkes University and its higher education and business partners on this regional housing initiative which will help put people in homes of their own and move neighborhood revitalization forward. We share their commitment to improving neighborhoods across Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, and we look forward to helping communities throughout the region thrive."*

*Greg Collins, Community Bank President Northeastern Pennsylvania Region.*

## Research Symposium Abstract Released

The 2013 Northeastern Pennsylvania Research Symposium Proceedings are now available on our website at: <http://institutepea.org/PDF/FacultyResearch/abstract13.pdf>

# Meet Our New Staff

## Andrew Chew

Andrew Chew is a policy, planning, and economic development professional and a native of Carbon County, Pennsylvania. He has previously held positions at the Somerset County, NJ Planning Board, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium. His professional accomplishments include work on a Trends and Indicators Report, several neighborhood revitalization plans, and collection and analysis of critical primary and secondary data. Andrew holds a Master's Degree in City and Regional Planning from the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Muhlenberg College where he conducted a senior research project on economic development policies in Northeastern Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Lehigh Area High School. Andrew is excited to challenge himself and serve the community in his new role at The Institute.



## Nimita Patel



Nimita Patel was appointed the Research Assistant of the newly formed Joint Urban Studies Center (The Institute) in 2013. Patel is responsible for resource library and online resource maintenance, report and newsletter preparations, social media, and interns. The Research Assistant works under the direction of the Executive Director and provides support for The Institute's operations to include administrative functions, meeting & event coordination and logistics, fulfillment and dissemination of information, outreach functions to academic institutions to secure student and faculty research support; research and special projects as determined by the Executive Director. A rising senior at Wilkes University pursuing three Bachelor's degrees. At Wilkes, Nimita is majoring in Criminology, Psychology, and Sociology with minors in Mathematics, Economics, Political Science, International Studies, Leadership Studies, and Women's Studies.

## Intern Update

The Institute would like to thank our Summer interns and our high school scholar for all of their hard work throughout the semester. We wish them the best in all of their future endeavors! Our Summer 2013 interns and high school scholar:

**Julia Cikota—Wilkes University**

**Mark Henry—King's College**

**Michael Zurek— King's College**

**Matthew Caines — Mid Valley High School**

If The Institute has open intern slots and active projects it invites a student from the local community who is not a student at one of our partnering institution to join us for an non-credit, unpaid internship. The student is required, however to commit to 180 hours of service during the summer. In summer 2013, The Institute was able to offer one local resident this type of summer practicum—Kevin Watters— Lafayette College joined The Institute.

The Institute has internships available for the Spring/Summer/Fall 2014 semesters. Internships are available to students of any of our nine member institutions, who are in or entering their Senior year or are graduate students. Students of any academic major, with a 3.2 GPA or higher may apply. Spaces are limited and selection is based on interview, application, references, writing sample and GPA.

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**The Institute** provides research, technical assistance, and facilitation and convening services to the private and public sector to:

- analyze components for regional prosperity
- create state and local government development strategies
- market studies
- feasibility studies
- impact reports

**Research areas include:**

- demographics
- economic development projects and planning
- community development
- education
- workforce development
- health and healthcare
- best practices
- innovation indicators
- economic indicators
- tourism and arts & culture

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