

JUSC Releases Latest Study --- Regionalism: A Primer

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A Primer Joint Urban Studies Center (JUSC) announces the release of a report entitled "Regionalism: A Primer." In this report, you will see what effect regionalism can have on a variety of issues. From shared municipal and education services to regional visioning and planning, regionalism can play a vital role in furthering the development of a region. Case studies from across the country demonstrate how successful partnerships play a major role in energizing a region.

Through proper planning and communication, this region can adopt and use regionalism effectively. Our region contains many assets that could make it successful: recreation and venues, transportation, major employers, and a strong higher education infrastructure. Utilizing this foundation to move forward, we can begin to capitalize on our assets. The research and recommendations throughout this report create a strong base for future regional development.

With cooperation and collaboration, this region can be viewed as an attractive location, for not only businesses looking to relocate, but also tourists and residents. Together, both Luzerne and Lackawanna counties can work together to make this region a 21st century economic entity.

Our report identifies several regional collaborations that exist and points out that there are opportunities for increased stakeholder participation and even more collaboration among the organizations themselves. Numerous opportunities exist to expand regional initiatives into other areas of economic and community revitalization. What's more, there are opportunities to bring the public sector together for planning, cooperation, and collaboration to plan for a sustainable future.

Regionalism can continue to succeed, if we utilize the expertise, assets, and cooperative ventures to continue to solve problems facing this area. As identified in the JUSC's "Why Aren't We Average?" report, the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre MSA is struggling, and has been struggling in several important economic indicators. Many of these struggles are also seen throughout our towns and municipalities, along with several other serious problems. Problems, such as crime and absence of high-quality jobs, continue to affect communities throughout the MSA. We can fight these problems in our towns, municipalities, and MSAs by partnering together, and having a mind-set toward regionalism.

With most municipalities in or nearing Act 47 status, they can provide limited programs and services to residents and businesses at a greater cost; but several municipalities working together can be more effective. As mentioned on page 3 of

the report, Lester Thurow was right. If we don't start thinking as one unit, our strategic development plans mean nothing. Regionalism can work and will work. Through regionalism, the region can improve K-12 education, increase job and business creation, solidify strong police forces, and create a better overall quality of life for the residents of the northeastern Pennsylvania region.

The following is a list of concepts that — if adopted by Luzerne and Lackawanna counties — can aid in establishing and developing regionalism throughout the area with the sole purpose of becoming a successful region: Understand where we are as a region Visioning and goal setting Convening Research other successful regions across the country Maximize assets Innovation & Technology Educate the public Utilize the local media Incorporate the private sector Invest in ourselves

Luzerne and Lackawanna counties can work together to promote this region as one that is technologically up-to-date, rich in culture, has numerous natural resources, updated transportation infrastructure, and economic opportunities for everyone — including new businesses and residents — thus portraying our region as one with potential for growth and development.

JUSC is working to convene a regional visioning session, and regional meetings of local elected officials to lay down the foundation for mutually beneficial regional initiatives. All of the aforementioned meetings will occur over the next 120 days.