

JOINT UrbanStudies CENTER

Volume 3, Issue 2

Winter 2007

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A Letter from the Executive Director

Second Annual Indicators Forum Scheduled for Thursday, April 26, 2007; Time & Location TBD.

In keeping with an annual commitment, started last April, Joint Urban Studies Center (JUSC) has announced plans to simultaneously host its annual Indicators Forum and release its 2007 Lackawanna and Luzerne County Indicators Report on April 26, 2007 at a location to be determined. The Report will be released publicly to Forum attendees; immediately following its release, JUSC will convene breakout sessions on the following topics:

- Economic Development
- Housing
- Land Use and Transportation
- Education and Workforce Development.

Breakout sessions will focus on current issues affecting each sector, drawing upon statistics and information detailed in the 2007 Indicators Report. Sessions will feature a moderator, along with 2-4 panelists, each representing a different field or region within Lackawanna and Luzerne County. Each panel will lead the discussion - providing input through their expertise and experience. The goal of the breakout sessions is to review the short- and long-term goals identified last year, review progress, and identify new goals, strategies, stakeholders, or revisions for each respective field. Moderators and panelists will be identified in the upcoming weeks.

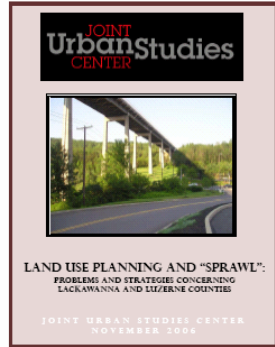
The 2007 Indicators Report will feature thirteen categories/indicators compared with ten profiled in last year's report. New categories for 2007 include: Demographics, Government, and Environment. They will accompany the original categories, including: Education; Jobs & Economy; Healthcare; Housing; Mobility, Logistics, Utilities, & Telecommunications; Public Safety; Social Services; Quality of Life; Technology & Innovation; and Civic Engagement. In addition, JUSC has added to the Report several sub-categories that reflect various suggestions from last year's Forum. Such sub-categories include Pre-K statistics, Meds and Eds employment, Foreclosure rates, and Assets of arts and cultural organizations. The Report will reference last year's as a base comparison for each indicator.



SAVE THE DATE
Thursday, April 26th, 2007
2007 JUSC Indicators Forum*
**Further details, including time, location, and participants will soon follow.*

Excerpt from “Land Use Planning and Sprawl”

The following excerpt is from the latest JUSC report, entitled “Land Use Planning and Sprawl: Problems and Strategies Concerning Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.” To view the report in its entirety, please visit www.urbanstudies.org.



“The development of the U.S. highway system served as the main catalyst of sprawl, as it facilitated development of the suburbs.”
-JUSC

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since World War II, American developers have implemented a new form of land usage, which sprung from the creation of new neighborhoods in rural areas just outside of cities. Such development didn’t stop at homes and neighborhoods. As new areas increased in population, additional development occurred to accommodate growth. Developers utilized more rural lands to build shopping centers, malls, and industrial parks. By the 1980’s, this sort of development was occurring at a rapid pace and soon cities really felt population losses in their residential and commercial sectors. Concerned environmentalists and urban planners call this phenomenon “sprawl.” The Vermont Forum on Sprawl defines it as “dispersed auto-dependant development outside of compact urban and village centers along highways and in rural countryside.”

This brief discusses the history of land use planning, the beginnings of sprawl and government policy. In addition, it summarizes a number of land use theories for better planning that focus on zones and central business districts. The paper provides information on and sites examples of New Urbanism (also known as Traditional Neighborhood Development – TND) and how this popular strategy is relevant in our region. The paper also discusses cases of areas in Washington and Florida, which have developed senior-friendly communities as part of overall land use planning. Finally, examples of communities undergoing revitalization and transit oriented development strategies round out the case studies presented. This paper is designed to create dialogue about options, to encourage regional thinking and planning, and to have the foresight to plan ahead as our region undergoes change.

The development of the U.S. highway system served as the main catalyst of sprawl, as it facilitated development of the suburbs. With faster and easier access made available through the highway system, more affluent residents moved from cities to suburbs to own larger houses on expansive pieces of land. To garner more space for expansion, many employers also moved facilities to the suburbs. With declining city populations, the remaining residents were often the [middle class and poor]. Further, federal government housing policies (through the Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Administration) encouraged people to buy homes in the suburbs and other policies seemingly restricted development of low-income housing within cities, and primarily in downtown areas.

As a whole, Pennsylvania has numerous land use issues. From 1982 – 1997, while the Commonwealth’s population increased by 2.5 percent, its urbanized footprint increased by a whopping 47 percent. Less than 5 percent of state farmland is protected and there have been a significant number of bond-funded projects in the state’s major cities. As a result, conservation is limited, dependency on cars increasing, and downtowns become ghost towns after 5 p.m.

Sprawl is the primary cause of population loss in our two county seats - Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. Suburban housing and commercial developments through construction of malls, shopping centers, and industrial parks have led to our regional sprawl. While the area’s sprawl score is only slightly above average, without mixed use, high density, reuse



Continued on page 3

Continued Excerpt from “Land Use Planning and Sprawl”

plans for our major cities [with adequate transportation infrastructure] — the region has potential to worsen.

Based on migration patterns over the past ten years, it is reasonable to expect population growth in Lackawanna and Luzerne counties. Such growth is expected from two distinct demographic groups coming to the area for the same reasons and from the same geographical areas — the low-moderate income group (ethically diverse population) and the middle to upper-middle income group, which are both leaving larger metropolitan areas (Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey and, soon, the Lehigh Valley) for more affordable housing. The low to moderate income group will seek blue-collar employment locally and the middle to upper-middle income group will continue to commute to the major metropolitan areas until congestion forces them to look for more local employment.

Such expected population growth suggests the need for an economic development plan to attract new businesses that match skill sets of the middle to upper-middle income base. This also requires changes in our thought processes and planning activities. Land-use and transportation planning for this change on a regional level should begin immediately.

Further, Pennsylvania’s Transportation Funding and Reform Commission was established by Governor Rendell to evaluate transit agency operations; recommended levels and sources of funding for transportation projects and maintenance; evaluate growth and development patterns; and establishment of best practices. The report, available at www.dot.state.pa.us/Internet/pdCommissCommitt.nsf, identifies a number of recommendations for managing transportation concerns across the Commonwealth.

For the full report, please visit the JUSC website at: www.urbanstudies.org

For the full JUSC report “Land Use Planning and Sprawl,” please visit our website

at:

www.urbanstudies.org

JUSC Joins Nanticoke’s ACT 47 Recovery Team

JUSC serves on the City of Nanticoke’s Act 47 Recovery Team. In this role, JUSC is working to analyze problems within the City, provide recommendations, and prepare an implementation plan. Tasks range from economic and community development planning, to preparation of policies and procedures, to organizational structure. Phase one of the implementation plan is expected to be adopted shortly by Nanticoke City Council and phase two will begin immediately thereafter.



Check out JUSC’s website for the latest research,
including the most recent releases:

Best Practices of High Growth States
&
Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Education

Joint Urban Studies Center Intern Update



Pictured above: Courtney Amrhein, Wilkes University

Pictured below: Dave Strenfel, King's College



During the Spring 2007 college semester, JUSC is tapping the expertise of five undergraduate student interns, including:

Courtney Amrhein – a Wilkes University history major, who is researching economic indicators.

Tessa Lynady – A letters, arts and sciences major at Penn State Wilkes-Barre, who is conducting research for the education/workforce development taskforce.

George Merrick – a College Misericordia marketing major, who is currently conducting market research.

Kelly Stashefski, a graphic design major at Luzerne County Community College, who is working on the layout and design of the 2007 JUSC Indicators Report.

Dave Strenfel – A political science major at King's College, who is working on marketing research and economic indicators.

All four interns anticipate matriculation in May 2007.

JUSC is also utilizing two graduate students, Olatokunbo Olabode – an MBA candidate from Wilkes University, and Kristen Rucinski - a candidate for a Masters of Social Work from University of Pittsburgh.

All interns will be involved in an intercept survey for the Luzerne County Cultural Plan to be conducted by JUSC and will also be involved in the planning, presentation, and workshops associated with the April 2007 Indicators Forum as well as other research.

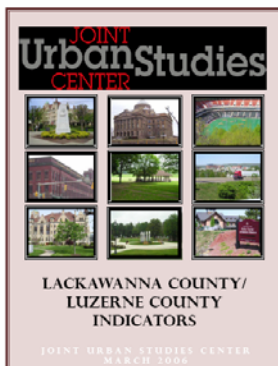
For additional information on JUSC internship opportunities, contact Marla Doddo at: doddo@urbanstudies.org or 570-408-9850

JUSC Indicator Committees Move Forward

A suggestion from JUSC's 2006 Indicators Forum was to convene meetings regarding the four breakout sessions featured. The meetings would serve as a platform for session participants to continue discussions and focus on determining methods and processes to achieve short- and long-term goals developed at the forum.

On Tuesday, February 27, JUSC will convene a meeting of the Land Use and Transportation Indicator Task Force. After this group meets, JUSC will have successfully convened meetings with three of the forum's highlighted sessions. The Education and Workforce Development Indicator Committee met on December 11, while the Housing Indicator Committee has convened twice—November 2 and January 18.

The Land Use and Transportation Indicator Committee meeting will take place at 9:00 a.m. at JUSC's Wilkes-Barre office. For more information, please contact JUSC.



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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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