



Pigs, Parks & Superstores: A Conference on the Sustainability of York County

September 23, 2005
Heritage Hill Conference Center

Conference Proceedings

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PIGS, PARKS & SUPERSTORES: A Conference on the Sustainability of York County **September 23, 2005**

Introduction

The best-known definition for the term “sustainability” or “sustainable development” comes from the book *Our Common Future* (also known as the “Brundtland Report”) prepared by the World Council on Environment and Development in 1987, where sustainable development is defined as that which “...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Scope & Purpose

On September 23, 2005, the Watershed Alliance of York sponsored “*Pigs, Parks & Superstores: A Conference on the Sustainability of York County*”. The purpose of the conference was not to explore all the many aspects of sustainability but rather to begin a dialogue about how we can improve the quality of life in York County by applying the concept of sustainability. WAY’s goal was that participants will leave the conference with a better understanding of sustainability and how it may be applied in York County. The audience of 125 stakeholders was challenged to take this new knowledge and apply it in at least one way to the local organizations they are involved with so we may collectively make York County sustainable for future generations. The conference was held at the Heritage Hill Conference Center in York Township, an Audubon Environmental Excellence Award certified facility.

Keynote Speakers

Keynote speakers included Pulitzer Prize Winner Thomas Hylton, Save Our Lands, Inc. who spoke about “Save of Lands, Save Our Towns”, and Dr. James Hamilton, Penn State Mont Alto, who spoke on “*Sustainability of York County – Impossible or Inevitable?*” Mr. Hylton spoke about the relationship between sprawling development and declining cities. He provided attractive alternatives to the car-dependent lifestyle, and discussed how to reverse 50 years of sprawl. In 1993, Hylton spent a year studying how 12 states, from Vermont to Oregon, have adopted statewide planning guidelines to promote real communities instead of suburban sprawl. Dr. Hamilton’s presented a definition of sustainability: living off the interest of the planet without doing damage. He concluded that the paradox of sustainability is: given current human attitudes, technologies, theologies governance, and cultural norms, human sustainability is impossible, but, barring the extinction of humanity, sustainability is inevitable.

Defining Sustainability

A group discussion was held for the purpose of helping the audience with defining sustainability for York County. The following definition components were identified.

- Affordability
- Comprehensive resource management planning
- Community diversity and vision
- Cooperation
- Culture change
- Employment opportunities
- Income ranges
- Leadership
- Neighborhood schools

- Political will
- Population
- Public-private partnerships
- Regionalization
- Sense of community and place
- Social change and equity
- Tax base sharing
- Transportation systems
- Urban service areas

Breakout Sessions

Following the two presentations above, four breakout sessions were held to engage the audience based on YorkCounts action items. Breakout sessions included

I.A. *Cleaning and dressing up York County's urban centers and neighborhoods* moderated by Genevieve Ray, York County Community Foundation's Codorus Endowment,

I.B. *Developing and delivering tools and training to foster responsible, sustainable natural resource and land use planning* moderated by Andrew McElwaine, Pennsylvania Environment Council,

II.A. *Developing and implementing a model for municipalities to utilize as they engage in joint land use planning activities* moderated by Felicia Dell, York County Planning Commission, and, lastly,

II.B. *Providing the appropriate technical assistance resources that can best help facilitate regional collaboration* moderated by Ann Devine, Susquehanna River Basin Commission.

Problems & Solutions

The conference closed with a general assembly of the audience reporting the problems and solutions outcomes of each breakout session topic followed by the group's recommendations for next steps for stakeholders and WAY to address.

I.A. *Land & Water Quality: Putting It All Together*

- Improve stormwater management
- Manage stormwater as a resource
- Implement Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy reducing sediment and nutrient inputs, improving water quality and restoring and protecting living resources
- Measure effectiveness of Best Management Practices
- Develop and implement a sediment and nutrient trading program
- Flexible transfer of building/development rights
- Promote municipal Environmental Advisory Councils (EACs)
- Public education through demonstration projects

I.B. *Strengthening the County's Urban Centers*

- Transect urban and suburban communities
- Continuum of land uses
- Prevent loss of young people i.e., brain drain
- Practice good urbanism

II. A. *Facilitating Regional Collaboration*

- Promote use of charettes as means of brainstorming and problem solving
- Facilitate Department of Community and Economic Development assistance
- Promote multi-municipal land development planning
- Strengthen role of Municipal Planning Code
- Leverage funding opportunities (i.e., grant programs)
- Encourage SRBC to be leader of regional water resources planning
- Work closely with SRBC to provide water resource information and data for regional planning

II. B. *Developing Municipal Models for Joint Land Use Planning*

- Promote and encourage multi-municipal, joint land use plans
- Promote and encourage consistency among and between local municipal and county comprehensive plans
- Break the suburban mindset with help of builders
- Establish per capita stormwater management fee programs

Next Steps

1. Sustainable agriculture forum
2. Educational programming on sustainability
3. Engage local elected and municipal officials e.g., council of governments
4. Political action
5. Advocate sustainable growth, development, resource management, and life styles
6. Economic sustainability forum
7. Demonstrate alternatives to growth, development, resource management, and life styles
8. Public forums on various sustainability issues
9. Develop/obtain tools to effect change
10. Public participation implementing sustainable systems locally
11. Protecting living resources
12. Natural resources valuation processes
13. Leveraging financial resources i.e., county bond initiative
14. Develop/obtain sustainable development talking points e.g., "*What Is Smart Growth*" fact sheet

WAY President Andrew Miller thanked the audience for attending and participating in the conference. The Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) is a coalition of stakeholders committed to being an innovative leader encouraging watershed planning, restoration and protection, through locally led conservation, education and stewardship initiatives, in York County and beyond. For more information on sustainability and what you can do, contact the Watershed Alliance of York at www.watershedsyork.org.

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