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Land Use Reform Key to Economic Development in New Jersey

100 Participants Attend PlanSmart NJ's June 3rd Conference

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ—PlanSmart NJ, in collaboration with the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, State Chamber of Commerce and NAIOP NJ Chapter, held a conference on June 3rd – Impacting Economic Expansion and Retention in New Jersey: A Land Use Perspective. Approximately 100 land use planners, business leaders, academic and non-profit leaders were in attendance.

The conference examined the connections between New Jersey's economic prosperity and its land use patterns and regulatory environment. **Assemblyman Albert Coutinho**, District 29, Chair, Assembly Commerce and Economic Development Committee delivered the keynote address. **James W. Hughes Ph.D., Dean**, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy summarized the prospects for the future of the State's economy.

Assembly Coutinho said "We cannot cut our way out of a recession. We must invest in our infrastructure if we are going to see real change in New Jersey's economy." Dean Hughes noted that New Jersey lost national market share even before the "great economic recession" and that New Jersey must take steps to become more economically competitive. He also delivered some positive news, "The recently released C-Suite Survey found that 75% of corporate leaders believe that state government is becoming more responsive to the needs of business, versus 30% who expressed that view in late 2009."

PlanSmart NJ rolled out results from a Focus Group of corporate business leaders conducted earlier in the year. The Focus Group participants asserted that, "For New Jersey to prosper, we've got to figure out housing. We've got to figure out costs. We've got to figure out transportation. We've got to figure out growth patterns. And if we don't...we're going to tip and become a "has-been" state and that's not what anyone wants." The report noted that "If [New Jersey's land use patterns are] fixed, all the things that are on top of everyone's list... housing, transportation, and taxes are going to be fixed right along with it."

Participants expressed optimism that the new Administration is taking affirmative steps in the right direction, creating a positive climate for business growth, through such moves as retaining Honeywell, Behr, and other large companies. Business leaders want to see Governor Christie take the next step and tackle property tax reform, home rule, and implementation of the State Plan.

Lucy Vandenberg, Executive Director of PlanSmart NJ said that “PlanSmart NJ invites members of the business sector, public officials, the planning community and the public to join in our efforts to reform New Jersey’s land use and governance systems for greater economic prosperity for all New Jersey residents.”

Event sponsors include: Avalon Bay Communities, Building Contractors Association of NJ, Federal Business Center, K. Hovnanian Homes, Maraziti, Falcon & Healey, LLC, NJ American Water, NJ LECET, NJ Natural Gas, Princeton University and Greener by Design.

For a copy of the Focus Group report go to plansmartnj.org.

PlanSmart NJ is an independent, non-profit civic planning and research organization committed to improving the quality of community life through the advancement of sound land use planning and regional cooperation.

Drawing on over 40 years experience, PlanSmart NJ concentrates on land use, transportation, housing, environmental conservation, and related issues throughout the state of NJ. PlanSmart NJ is the state’s premier source of cutting edge and pragmatic ways to transform the forces behind suburban sprawl and urban deterioration into laws and actions that foster natural resource conservation, economic vitality, and improved quality of life for all citizens, and the optimal use of private and public resources.

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