



# CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY

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## CENTRAL CONNECTICUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE MEETING MINUTES

Noon; Monday; June 14, 2010; CCRPA Offices, Suite 304; 225 N. Main Street, Bristol, CT

1. Call to order, introductions; determination of quorum (representatives from 4 different municipalities) the meeting was called to order at approximately 12:05 PM with the following members in attendance except as noted:

- a. Municipality Representatives

Berlin Jim Mahoney - Econ. Dev - AB  
Bristol Art Ward - Mayor - AB  
Jonathan Rosenthal (Chair) - Ec. Dev.  
Mike Nicastro - Chamber (com. org's.) -  
(represented by Cindy Scoville)  
Burlington Neil Beup - Ec. Dev. - AB  
Mike Scheidel - Chamber - AB

New Britain Tim Stewart (V. Chair) - AB  
Bill Millerick - Chamber - AB  
Steven Schiller - Ec. Dev.  
Plainville - Robert E. Lee - Manager - AB  
Mark DeVoe - Ec. Dev.  
Plymouth - Khara Dodds - Ec. Dev.  
Southington - Louis Perillo - Ec. Dev.

- b. Non-municipal Representatives

Angelo D'Alfonso - CWP (Un/underemployed) - AB  
Bruce Lydem (Organized Labor) - AB  
Jack Driscoll (Finance) - AB  
Janet Serra - NW CT CVB (tourism/women) - AB  
John O'Toole - Northeast Utilities (utilities) - AB  
John Tricarico - CCRPA Paratransit (Disabilities)  
Lynn Abrahamson - Bristol/Burlington Public Health - AB  
District (Health)

Peggy Sokol - Bristol Senior Center (aged/women) - AB  
Rosita Forte-Dobson - CT Small Business Center  
(Professionals/women/minorities)  
Tom Lorenzetti - CCSU ITBD - AB  
Victor Mitchell - Tunxis CC - AB  
Sarah Kowaleski - Urban Oaks (Agricultural) - AB  
CERC - N.A

Also present were Carl Stephani, Francis Pickering, Ethan Abeles, and Krystal Oldread, CCRPA Staff.

2. Approval of March 8, 2010, minutes  
MOTION: Louis Perillo moved approval as presented; seconded Mark DeVoe; passed unanimously.

3. CEDS

Carl Stephani reported on the Thursday June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting with Peter Simmons of DECD regarding the two letters sent out by the Commissioner relating to the establishment of Economic Development Districts (EDDs) and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process. DECD is seeking to have all areas of the state covered by a CEDS and the statutes limit the number of EDDs to 8. By simple math that would require approximately 20 towns in each EDD. The DECD letters indicated that DECD was inclined to require at least 20 towns in any EDD and that no towns participate in more than one CEDS. If those rules hold, there would be no way for the Central Connecticut Region's CEDS area to be recognized as an EDD. If the area is not recognized as an EDD, it would not qualify for US EDA funding; although it is not clear whether there would be any federal funding for EDDs, or whether all towns in an EDD would qualify for EDA infrastructure project support. Those two questions have been asked of the Philadelphia EDA office. At the DECD meeting the CCM, COST, CARPO and DECD all agreed to participate in a committee to review the two CEDS letters and to jointly develop a refined set of guidelines for transitioning from the current situation to something that would cover the entire state with EDDs; and to prepare a recommendation for the Commissioner in approximately 90 days. Mr. Stephani advised the Committee that he has ceased all work on the Central Connecticut CEDS pending the results of that Committee's work and the concurrence of the Commissioner. Ultimately, if the Region is required to become combined with other towns to meet the minimal requirements for an EDD, we will want to have our funding available to use to prepare the CEDS for the entire new EDD region. Mr. Stephani advised that his advocacy at the DECD meeting was to allow the existing 8 CEDS regions to become the initial EDD regions, and to have a transition plan over the next several years for these regions to expand to cover the entire state. The Committee members concurred with that approach.

4. Other matters - none raised.
5. Adjournment was declared at approximately 1 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Carl Stephani

# Work Plan – CEDS

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## November – December (2010)

- Collect background information
  - Demographics, physical layout, transportation, economics, housing, environment, previous plans/studies/projects
- **Meeting Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>**: Discuss and approve work plan

## January – February (2011)

- Analyze background data
  - Identify demographic trends, prior regional planning priorities, regional economic base, employment trends, environmental concerns
- Prepare *Regional Profile*
- **Meeting Feb. X: Present and discuss *Regional Profile*/begin SWOT analysis**
  - Discuss trends identified in *Regional Profile*
  - Begin to identify regional issues
  - Identify regional strengths and weaknesses
- Begin *Target Industry* analysis

## March – April (2011)

- Continue *Target Industry* analysis
- Prepare *Target Industry* report
  - Identify existing industry clusters
  - Identify potential industry clusters
  - Research industry cluster needs regarding labor market, sites, and amenities
- **Meeting March 21<sup>st</sup>: Present and discuss *Target Industry Report*/Complete SWOT**
  - Discuss regional strengths and weaknesses relating to target industries
  - Discuss opportunities and threats
- Collect priority projects

## May – June (2011)

- Continue collecting priority projects
- **Meeting May X: Discuss Vision, Goals, and Objectives**
  - Review vision, goals, and objectives from 2004 CEDS
  - Adopt new vision, goals, and objectives
- Prepare Strategy Portion of CEDS
- **Meeting June 20<sup>th</sup>: Present *Draft CEDS/Public Hearing***
  - Discuss any concerns
  - Hold a hearing to present the draft CEDS to the public
- **Meeting June 30<sup>th</sup>: Vote to Approve *Draft CEDS***

- Submit *Draft CEDS* for review by OPM and DECD (60 days)

### **July – September (2011)**

- OPM and DECD review continues
  - Should be done by the end of August
- **Meeting September 19<sup>th</sup>: Final Approval of CEDS**

### **Regional Profile**

The regional profile provides a snapshot of the region. It includes a brief history of the region and a description of its geography. Land use, transportation, and natural resources will be discussed. Issues such as housing will be covered as well. It also presents demographic data describing the current population and tracing development trends.

Additionally, an analysis of the region's economy will be included. Major employers and industries will be identified. Shifts in employment will be analyzed to determine what sorts of transitions are occurring. General employment and unemployment trends will be analyzed, along with statistics on income levels.

### **Target Industry Report**

The target industry report builds upon the data in the regional profile by identifying industries that are particularly strong in the region or may be attracted by the region's qualities. The locational needs of industry clusters will be analyzed in relation to the amenities that the region currently possesses. Declines or gaps in important amenities will be identified so that existing clusters can be strengthened and new ones can be attracted. Industry clusters will also be researched to determine what trends are occurring at the national and state levels.

Included in this report will be the full Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis (SWOT). Based on information contained in the regional profile, as well as information uncovered by the cluster analysis, we will gain a better understanding of the region's strengths and weaknesses. The cluster analysis will also allow us to identify opportunities to strengthen the region's position and deal with any threats that have been identified from the review of national and state trends.

### **Strategic Plan**

This report is the heart of the CEDs and builds on the two previous reports by providing strategies that will be used to build upon the region's strengths and addresses any weaknesses that were uncovered. A list of major regional issues will be identified, along with goals and objectives related to each issue. Each municipality will also provide a list of projects which will be evaluated for relevance to a given goal.

A discussion of state goals and objectives will also be provided to determine how Central Connecticut fits into the broader plans of the state.

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

**Work Program**

	Nov.	Dec.	Dec 20th	Jan.	Feb.	Feb. X	March	March 21st	April	May	May X	June	June 20th	June 30th	July	Aug.	Sept.	Sept. 19th
Collect background data and information																		
<b>MTG: Approve work plan</b>			*															
Analyze data																		
<b>Prepare Regional Profile</b>																		
<b>MTG: Present Regional Profile/Initial SWOT analysis</b>						*												
Analyze potential target industries																		
<b>Prepare Target Industry Report</b>																		
<b>MTG: Discuss Target Industries/Complete SWOT</b>								*										
Collect Priority Project lists																		
<b>MTG: Discuss Vision, Goals, and Objectives</b>											*							
Prepare Strategy Report (Draft CEDS)																		
<b>MTG: Present Draft CEDS/Public hearing</b>													*					
<b>MTG: Vote on Draft CEDS</b>														*				
Send CEDS for review to OPM and DECD																		
State reviews CEDS																		
<b>MTG: Final Approval of CEDS</b>																		*

\* indicates a meeting

# Previous CEDS

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The Central Connecticut Region's previous, and first, CEDS was finished in April of 2004. It covered the cities of Bristol and New Britain, and the towns of Plainville and Plymouth (referred to as the Central Connecticut Corridor). This document offered an analysis of available data regarding demographics, employment trends, the housing stock, education, the economy, and land availability. The picture that emerged from this analysis was of a region experiencing lagging growth with changing demographics that would present new economic development issues. Some of the key findings were:

- The population fell 2.89% at a time when the nation grew by 13.15% and Connecticut grew by 3.60%
  - Population decline was projected to continue
- The population was relatively old; just 58.4% of people were between 20 and 64, versus 59% for the nation and 72.2% for the state
- The unemployment rate was 6.4%, higher than the nation (5.8%), the state (5.0%), and the Hartford Labor Market (5.3%)
  - Central Connecticut did have a higher labor force participation rate
- The number of workers in the region declined by 8.72%, while the number in Connecticut only declined by 1.67% and the number nationwide grew by 12.58%
- The poverty rate outpaced the state (10.5% versus 7.9%), but was lower than the nation's (12.1%)
- While the economy has been shifting to services from manufacturing, and manufacturing employment has declined (52% since 1980), it is still a large portion of the regional economy at 31%
- Educational attainment lagged the state and the nation
  - 23% of people had less than a high school diploma (16% statewide and 19.6% nationwide)
  - 35.8% only have a high school diploma (28.5% for the state and 28.6% for the nation)
  - Only 16.6% have at least a bachelor's degree (31.4% statewide and 24.4% nationally)

Despite the issues uncovered by the data analysis, the CEDS also identified many strengths of the region that could be used to jumpstart economic development efforts. Strengths included:

- Institutions such as colleges, chambers of commerce, healthcare providers, and major employers like ESPN
- Locational proximity to Boston and New York
- Reasonable housing costs (compared to the state)
- Quality of life

The most pressing weaknesses that were identified during the CEDS process included:

- Lack of suitable sites for economic growth
- The regional transportation system
- Economic changes
- Pockets of poverty
- Negative regional image
- Retail leakage to surrounding communities

Other weaknesses were:

- Energy costs
- Lack of cultural opportunities
- Urban flight
- Aging workforce
- Older housing stock
- Lack of water/sewer infrastructure in some towns

An analysis of opportunities that could help address some of these weaknesses found the following:

- Revitalization of town centers
- Reuse of historic properties
- Using a regional approach to promote available industrial and commercial sites
- Develop an industrial heritage attraction
- Possibility of leveraging ESPN's presence for tourism development
- Business and industrial parks being developed
- Planned New Britain-Hartford busway
- Growing health care sector

The CEDS also included an analysis of industry clusters in the state and region. Clusters are concentrations of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and supporting institutions. Clusters increase productivity by allowing businesses to share suppliers, labor pools, and logistical infrastructure, increasing economies of scale. A cluster approach to economic development seeks to strengthen the cluster as a whole, instead of individual businesses. Areas of opportunity that were identified in Central Connecticut include:

- Metal trades
- Tourism
- Telecommunications
- Aging and gerontological
- Medical & health care

While many promising clusters and opportunities were identified, the CEDS also found a number of external threats to future economic development in the region:

- Offshoring of industries
- Declining manufacturing
- Slow growth recession
- High cost of higher education
- Distribution of funding/taxes
- High cost of business in Connecticut
- Industry preference for “greenfield” sites

Combined, the top regional issues were:

1. Need to retain existing businesses and attract new ones
2. Need to revitalize downtowns
3. Need for, and cost of, improving infrastructure
4. Difficulty of finding funding for necessary improvements
5. A weak regional structure

To address the threats and weaknesses, and capitalize on strengths and opportunities, the following goals were adopted:

1. To build a more effective regional approach to economic development.
2. To build the physical, financial and human capital capacity in the region necessary to support economic development.
3. To achieve an effective transition of the region’s economic base through business retention, expansion, attraction, creation and transition.
4. To improve the economic prosperity of the region’s residents and increase the profitability of its businesses.

24 objectives were also adopted to help reach the above goals. Additionally, 15 potential economic development projects were reviewed and the following four were selected as “priority projects”:

- Southeast Bristol Business Park at 229 Middle Street
  - Designed to provide “shovel ready” industrial sites with ready to use infrastructure
- Southeast Bristol Business Park at Redstone Hill Road
- New Britain SMART PARK I
  - Designed to address a deficiency of industrial land in New Britain by remediating and demolishing unused sites
- New Britain SMART PARK II

## **CEDS Updates**

Yearly updates were completed, detailing progress made towards implementing the CEDS, and discussing any changes made to it over the previous year. The following is a brief list of accomplishments made in each of the four towns:

- Bristol
  - Completed construction on Phases I and II of the Southeast Bristol Business Park in 2008
    - By 2010, two lots had been sold and buildings constructed
  - First portion of the North Main Streetscape project was completed in 2005. A second phase was scheduled to begin in 2010.
  - The city moved forward with private development of the Bristol Mall Site/Depot Square
    - Demolished former mall in 2008
    - Selected a preferred developer, Renaissance Downtowns, in 2010
- New Britain
  - Celebration Foods opened in the SMART Park I
    - Employs 300 people
    - Essentially completes the SMART Park I project
  - SMART Park II is mostly complete
  - Phase II of the Broad Street Reconstruction is underway
  - Moving forward with construction of new Police Headquarters
- Plymouth
  - 2005: Joined the Naugatuk Valley Brownfields Pilot program
  - 2005: Adopted a Village District Zone to encourage Smart Growth
  - Continued success of the Plymouth Business Park
    - Construction of water booster pump for the park
  - Waterwheel Park Plan
    - Brownfield remediation and historic site
- Plainville
  - Limestone Business Park
  - Downtown Beautification Program
    - Phase I and II completed
    - Beginning Phase III
  - Water Pollution Control Facility completed
  - Purchased Robertson Airport
  - Pursuing a second phase of the Strawberry Fields Industrial Park

**From:** David Fink [mailto:david@ctpartnershiphousing.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, December 15, 2010 4:05 PM

**To:** Carl Stephani

**Subject:** REgional forum

Hi, Carl.

Hope you're well and have some well-deserved time off planned for the holidays!

I wanted to get back in touch re the regional forum I asked you about several months ago that would be sponsored by the Connecticut Association of Realtors, the Partnership, the Home Builders Association of CT and, we hope, CTAPA, CCM, and CCDA. CAR and the Partnership just received a generous grant from the Natl Assn of Realtors to finance regional workforce housing forums around the state, and so I now write to ask for a little help/advice.

To refresh your memory, the goal of the regional forums would be educational: to get in one room muni officials (selectmen, but particularly zoning commissioners), planners, housers, economists, realtors, homebuilders and developers and conduct this type of region-specific program (understanding that, even in the smallest region, there are many, many housing markets):

1. Have the houser(s) talk about the supply/demand/need for additional housing options and how munis around the state are seeking to find locations, zone for and otherwise accommodate that demand, allowing for resident input on location, design control and answering local questions. Examples, with photos, would be used.
2. Ask the economists to underscore/add, based on the statewide and local market conditions and relevant statewide policy coordination and financing opportunities they see.
3. Have the realtors talk about what the market is for specific types of housing options in the region – specifically focusing on types of locations, designs, square footage, etc.
4. Have the homebuilders offer examples of what they have produced around the state, what they are prepared to produce and what they need (certainty on approvals, densities, etc.) to create mixed-income housing of varying types.
5. Ask the muni officials what they think about housing needs in their towns, what they think is the level of public support/opposition, and how further education of residents – about potential impact on school costs, land values, crime, town services, quality of life – could affect local attitudes, and how inclined they would be to help create a local committee, or provide support for an existing committee, to seek housing solutions in town.

We would seek to keep the forum to 90 minutes, build it around a breakfast or lunch, and have it at a central location within the region on a date that would be optimal given other schedules and needs of local officials (ie. Piggy back on an existing regional meeting, or create a separate event, etc.).

What I would request from you at this point is:

1. Whether you could help us convene the local officials?
2. What date(s) this spring might work (ie. 5<sup>th</sup> M-F of the month, Fridays, Mondays, etc.)? Please email me ALL potential dates that might work for scheduling purposes so the presenters wouldn't have to be in two places at the same time.
3. What time – breakfast time or lunch time – would you think would work best?
4. Whether there is a good no-cost or low-cost venue to bring together what we would hope to be 50-75 people for the forum? And whether that venue would come free, or what the rental cost might be?

Obviously, if you need to call me before you answer any of the above questions, feel free. Either of the numbers below will work.

I appreciate your help.

Best,  
David

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