

In 2004, over 100 Guyasuta Fellows participated in a 22-week series of lectures and workshops to learn about, discuss and explore different approaches to “regionalism” – thinking and planning on a macro scale for local development and governance.

We identified two consistent themes in our discussions: first, that there are multiple ways to think about regionalism and regional cooperation – and that exploring alternatives and weighing different options is a valuable part of developing coherent policy through cooperative effort. Second, that policy-making in our region, to its detriment, is often closed to public scrutiny, let alone to public participation. The fellows, all of whom were between the ages of 20 and 40, represent a wide variety of political opinions and social orientations – yet we were all able to agree that opening local governance up to empowered public participation is an important key both to encouraging rational planning and decision-making and – perhaps just as importantly – investing young people in the development and leadership of this region by giving them a voice, and thereby a stake, in our future.

At the conclusion of the fellowship sessions, the fellows identified four core interests that motivate and activate our thinking about regionalism. These are:

**Transportation Planning**  
**Green/Sustainable Development**  
**Strengthening the Urban Core**  
**Regional and Responsive Approaches to Governance**

### ***Transportation Planning***

#### **Summary**

What Guyasuta researched:

- Opportunities to collaborate with existing organizations in the region to advocate dedicated funding streams for existing public transportation, long-range thinking in the planning for future transportation options, and the development of bike- and pedestrian-friendly transportation options in the City of Pittsburgh
- Opportunities for participation in local decision-making processes through existing commissions and planning boards – for example, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission’s meetings and deliberations, and the Design Advisory Teams of the Mon-Fayette Expressway
- Opportunities to work with new partners in the broader region, to broaden our regional approach to planning and to encourage collaborative regional thinking among young people in suburban and ex-urban areas.

#### Recommendations:

- Support collaboration between government, business and nonprofit policy organization in long-term strategic transportation planning.
- Encourage the business community to be a vocal advocate of public transit funding and planning: the labor force will be disrupted by any reductions in service.
- City Council should withhold support from the Mon-Fayette highway construction project, and continue to ensure that available transportation funding be directed to a “fix-it first” and public transit-oriented development strategy.
- Work to create a city-wide comprehensive plan that includes improvements to pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and safety (e.g., improving city steps and repairing rights-of-way on bridges).
- Promote better planning through the application of public policy documents such as the “20/20 Vision” Study, Penn Future’s Citizens Plan and Sustainable Pittsburgh’s Citizens’ Vision for Smart Growth. With public support and funding from the legislature, these studies can become a tool for planning that will help to curb sprawl, encourage a “fix it first” approach, better land use and promote development that incorporates efficient transit projects.

#### **Remarks**

##### **Support Public Participation in Transportation Planning.**

Guyasuta Fellows plan to continue their participation in existing public input processes and advocate for the implementation of relevant public policy research.

At meetings of the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), Fellows will support the transit-related recommendations within the Brookings Institution’s Back to Prosperity Report, Sustainable Pittsburgh’s Regional Policy Guidance Document and other reports, as well as seek to have our own recommendations be part of the planning process.

Secondly, we will support public participation in the SPC’s Long Range Plan process by attending the input session at the Smart Growth Conference in Pittsburgh on May 20th, and encouraging others to do so also. Several of us have already attended Sustainable Pittsburgh’s input session for development of its Guidance Document.

In this area, we recommend that City Council encourage the SPC to release and implement elements of the “20/20” Vision study. With public support and funding from the legislature, this study can become a tool for planning that will help to curb sprawl in our region by taking a “fix-it-first” approach, encouraging better land use, and promoting transit-oriented development.

City Council should also support collaboration between government and nonprofit policy organizations in long-term, strategic transportation planning. Policy organizations can

raise red flags and propose solutions, but only our governing entities have the power to make the changes in funding and in the incentive structure that will avert crisis in our region.

### **Advocate for Dedicated Public Transit Funding.**

Fellows will continue to work for dedicated public transit funding in our state, and this is one of the most actionable items for us right now.

If Allegheny County public transit and other major systems around Pennsylvania do not run, quite simply, our local, regional, and state-wide economies will be crippled. And the best and most innovative public transit planning will remain just a vision without the funding to implement it.

Until members of the Pennsylvania legislature hear from suburban as well as urban residents they will not have a strong incentive to make sufficient funding a reality. We will use our contacts through other organizations whose members are interested in transit, environmental, and anti-sprawl issues to mobilize suburban constituents to contact their representatives. We have already started a conversation with counterparts in Indiana, PA, at Indiana Voter Initiative & Education (VIE), which previously did not have transit at the top of its agenda.

City Council should make a sustained effort to enlist more vocal support from Pittsburgh's business community for a dedicated stream of public transit funding. In cities that have major public transit systems, like New York, Washington D.C. and Portland, the business community has made it clear to legislators that public transit is key to their success. It is imperative that low-income workers who rely on transit have a reliable means to get to work, and businesses have a clear interest in making sure this happens. An added benefit is that young professional workers choose to live in cities that have multiple and convenient transportation choices.

### **Advocate Alternatives to New Road Construction in the Region.**

We will advocate for alternatives to new road construction in our region. We will encourage decision-makers to implement recommendations of PennFuture's Citizens' Plan and Sustainable Pittsburgh's Citizens' Vision for Smart Growth because we know that most of our existing roads are badly in need of refurbishment. The Citizens' Plan encourages repairing and bolstering the existing road network to connect Mon Valley communities, rather than building a new roadway that cuts through neighborhoods.

Each of the Turnpike Commission's Design Advisory Teams has one or two representatives of community or environmental organizations, but it is unclear what level of wider public input will be invited concerning the Mon-Fayette Expressway links. At every opportunity for public involvement during this process we will advocate for design that will minimize negative impacts on our neighborhoods.

In keeping with City Council's resolved "fix-it-first" approach to transportation, Guyasuta Fellows recommend that City Council should withhold support from the Mon-Fayette highway construction project and advocate that available transportation funding be redirected.

### **Work for Increased Pedestrian and Bicycle Accessibility and Connectivity.**

And lastly, Fellows will work for increased pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and connectivity in the Pittsburgh area.

Fellowship alumnus Khari Mosley identified several trends in his review of research on public transit and youth, including the importance of multiple transportation options and the connectivity of locations of regional importance. We will encourage the inclusion of pedestrian trails and walkways and accommodations for bicycles whenever updates are made to the current transit system. We hope that one of our members will be selected to sit on the SPC's Public Participation Panel this year.

We will look to the PA Bicycle and Pedestrian Checklist, found in the PennDOT Design Manual, for guidance in working to improve such routes between public transit hubs and cultural and entertainment locations.

Fellows recommend that City Council work toward creation of a city-wide comprehensive plan that includes improvements to pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and safety, for example, improving city steps and repairing rights-of-way on bridges.

## ***Green/Sustainable Development***

### **Summary**

What Guyasuta researched:

- Organizations within our region that are working towards sustainable efforts: The Pittsburgh Region has over one hundred organizations that are involved in sustainable issues that directly affect the region
- Experiences of other cities that have incorporated sustainable policies in their region: Cleveland, Chicago, Austin, Portland, New York City, and Minneapolis, just to name a few, all have an established office or department within the city government that is responsible for developing sustainable policy and practices.
- Markets and economies in the Pittsburgh region that incorporate sustainable practices: the construction industry, alternative energy companies, manufacturers, retail stores, and non-profits such as IBACOS, Construction Junction, Gamesha, Eco Planet and Artemis provide new opportunity for economic growth

## Recommendations:

- Actively support environmentally & socially responsible activity in the region
  - Consciously support businesses, non-profits, and citizens in the region who are involved in researching developing, marketing, or advocating environmentally-friendly products and practices
  - Support the YES vote on the environmental bond referendum asking to approve \$625 million in new funding that will protect drinking water, maintain state and local parks, and fund vital environmental projects
  - Create incentives for green building and other socially & environmentally responsible practices
  - Be proactive in finding and creating other opportunities to support this activity in the region
- Establish a regional plan for sustainable development
  - Support zoning law changes which allow for urban infill development and green building practices
  - Actively participate in the development of the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan and work with the county to develop sustainable economic and land-use development policies
  - Create a permanent sustainability program that focuses on redeveloping neighborhoods, improving parks and green space, integrating transportation and the workforce, and improving the quality of life in the city
- Establish a city policy for sustainable practices
  - Institutionalize sustainability as a city value by working with local organizations to provide workshops to educate staff and elected officials
  - Institute a green building program that requires all municipally-funded projects including buildings and public infrastructure to meet green standards
  - Create a permanent municipal sustainability program to analyze city operations and procurement policies and to develop managerial practices that promote energy conservation, clean energy sources, waste reduction, recycling, etc.

## **Remarks**

Guyasuta Fellows studied ways to create regional growth and assets by promoting sustainable industry, development, and policy.

We identified 150 organizations within our region that are working towards sustainable efforts on issues that directly affect the region. Much of the knowledge, resources, and people that can make a difference are already in place.

We looked at ways other progressive cities have incorporated sustainable policies into their regional planning and development. Cleveland, Chicago, Austin, Portland, New York, and Minneapolis, to name a few, all have an office or department within the city government that is responsible for developing sustainable policy and practices.

Cleveland has a sustainability program manager; Portland established both an office of sustainable development and a regional planning organization.

We identified markets and economies viable in the Pittsburgh region that incorporate sustainable practices and provide new opportunity for economic growth. We found that the green construction industry, alternative energy companies, manufacturing companies that produce products supporting sustainable principles or products made of recycled material, retail stores, and non-profits provide new opportunity for economic growth

**We believe that implementing sustainable strategies will save money, improve the environment, and improve the quality of life for every city resident.**

We recommend that Council advocate environmentally & socially responsible activity in the region, support and collaborate with businesses, non-profits, and citizens in the region who are involved in researching, developing, marketing, or advocating environmentally-friendly products and practices, and continue to create incentives for private sector green building development and other socially & environmentally responsible practices.

Allowing LEED Certified buildings to be larger and taller than current zoning requirement standards permit is a great start.

Be proactive in finding and creating other opportunities to support this activity in the region. Develop recreational and manufacturing industry utilizing our natural resources. Encourage and guide local manufactures and business to incorporate sustainable principles in their practices. Lastly, support the YES vote on the environmental bond referendum asking to approve \$625 million in new funding that will protect drinking water, maintain state and local parks, and fund vital environmental projects

**Establish a regional plan for sustainable development.**

Continue to reinforce urban infill development, brownfield development and high-density infill to reduce sprawl. Support new community developments such as Oak Hill and the LTV site in Hazelwood.

Create a permanent sustainability program that focuses on creating livable communities: redevelop neighborhoods, improve parks and green space, integrate transportation with the workforce, build vibrant public spaces, protect natural resources, and encourage mixed use development - all of which improve the quality of life in the city.

Actively participate in the development of the Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan and work with the county to develop sustainable economic and land-use development policies. The plan coordinates all 130 municipalities to develop a master plan integrating transportation, green belts, and economic development.

**Establish a city policy for sustainable practices.**

Institutionalize sustainability as a city value. Recruit local organizations to provide workshops to educate staff and elected officials.

Institute a green building program that requires all municipally-funded projects including buildings and public infrastructure to meet green standards. Green buildings represent the best practices of high performance, healthy and low-impact development. Green building means designing and constructing buildings to increase performance and enhance the experience of all people who work and live in the structures. Other progressive city and State governments have successfully instituted this requirement for all new construction and major renovations.

Lastly, create a permanent municipal sustainability program to analyze city operations, and to develop managerial practices and create outreach programs that promote energy conservation, clean energy sources, waste reduction, and recycling. Examples of successful implementation of such strategies are plentiful – for example, the city of Portland saves \$1.4 million dollars in energy costs per year through such measures. Act 47 gives the City of Pittsburgh the opportunity to develop innovative cost saving strategies – sustainable and green energy conservation planning should be part of them.

Implementing sustainable strategies will save money, improve the environment, and improve the quality of life for every city resident.

## ***Strengthening the Urban Core***

### **Summary**

What Guyasuta found:

- A strong urban core is central to the region's economic health and its promise for future growth. Sprawl, including the construction of redundant suburban housing at the expense of existing neglected urban architecture, is an unsustainable pattern for growth that ultimately weakens neighborhoods and drags on the region's economy.
- Barriers to collaboration and cooperation between the city and the region's smaller municipalities hamper economic development and foster cannibalistic zero-sum-game competition among struggling districts fighting over resources.
- Urban re-development planning in Pittsburgh tends to be an opaque process, in which public input – if it is permitted at all – is solicited only after the fact, when it can have no perceivable impact. This kind of planning can only produce bad projects, disconnected from the communities in which they are built, fracturing the very economies they are intended to stimulate.
- Vacancy and abandonment produce real physical barriers to neighborhood revitalization – but they also present opportunities for new construction and development, both public and private, that may revitalize the urban core.

Recommendations:

- Use housing construction and renovation as a tool to invigorate our older communities, reduce social problems and stimulate micro-economies. Work to

enact a system of “fair share” housing tied to any new infrastructure extensions. Lobby the state to create incentives to encourage workers to purchase homes near their workplace.

- Use county resources to concentrate future development efforts to vacant sites within the region. Work with the county to appoint a vacant-properties coordinator to use code enforcement, provide incentives, and develop partnerships to minimize and abate vacant and unsafe properties. Integrate pre-existing information on parcels of land with future GIS technology to have the information accessible to all. Conduct an “infill checkup” to evaluate and prioritize infill sites for redevelopment.
- Use Internet technologies to seek greater levels of transparency and participation in the visioning process for neighborhood development. Use this to encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in the Urban Redevelopment Authority’s development decisions.
- Renew the city’s commitment to transparency: make all reports and minutes publicly available via the Internet, and publicize planning and development planning meetings and other information through all available media.

## **Remarks**

The Pittsburgh region has been playing a zero-sum game of sprawl and abandonment that has had detrimental impacts on our older established communities, both physically and socially. As our older established communities have declined, so has our region. In spite of having the total area of developed land increase, the region has lost population. The consequences are seen in our physical landscape. Excessive consumption of undeveloped land has facilitated abandonment in our older communities. Sprawl and abandonment affect our quality of life by adversely impacting air quality and compounding traffic congestion. Our land use patterns have also created social inequities by concentrating poverty in our older communities. A declining quality of life for our region’s residents has actually hampered economic competitiveness in the global economy. The GUYASUTA fellows see this as neither sustainable nor desirable from an environmental or economic perspective.

Regional actors will need to address sprawl and its consequences directly. This includes both the physical and social impacts. Regional actors will need to revive the urban core of our region. A strong city will drive growth for the entire region. A strong urban core implies more than just a vibrant downtown. Cities like Cleveland and Philadelphia have vibrant downtowns while their neighborhoods struggle. Strong cities contain healthy neighborhoods. While the transformation of the Fifth-Forbes corridor is important, it is the health of communities like Homewood and Hazelwood that are indicative of how well the region will prosper. It is in these communities where the city has lost its residents, vibrancy, and consequently, its tax base. Invigorating our urban core reduces social inequities, protects the region’s natural landscape, enhances our quality of life, and hence, makes us competitive. Strengthening the urban core means empowering the primary economic engine for growth for our region.

A panel of Guyasuta fellows focused on three key areas towards reviving the urban core. The first is to use housing as a strategy that simultaneously engenders vibrancy and alleviates social inequities. The second was to develop strategies for infill development in our abandoned communities. The third area was to recommit to community input and transparency in economic development.

**Housing strategies can do more than simply provide shelter.**

Implementing a region-wide system of “fair-share” housing tied to infrastructure expansions can address social inequities by providing new opportunities for both housing and employment. Our region’s older established communities shoulder a disproportionately large share of affordable housing. Although residents of older communities contribute to expanded infrastructure in sprawl development, invisible barriers remain to poorer residents in new developments in the form of exclusionary zoning practices. If a newly developing suburb is to receive the benefits of expanded infrastructure, “fair-share” housing can make those communities show that they have enough land zoned for multifamily housing so to build all of the homes needed for lower income families. New opportunities for employment also occur by addressing the problem of “spatial mismatch” within the region as well. Spatial mismatch occurs when low-skilled laborers primarily found in urban areas have trouble accessing entry level jobs found in the suburbs.

Another housing strategy is to create financial incentives for employees to live in the same municipality as their workplace. Because the City of Pittsburgh is still the economic engine for the region, such a program would likely benefit the city while addressing quality of life issues for workers. The program could be modeled after New Jersey’s “Live Where You Work” program, and funded by the PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

To deal with the issue of vacant properties, leverage county resources to appoint a coordinator who can solely deal with the issue. Cities like San Diego have appointed a vacant-properties coordinator to use code enforcement, provide incentives, and develop partnerships to minimize and abate vacant properties. A coordinator could also work with individual communities to evaluate and prioritize infill sites for redevelopment. Information gathered on these sites could then be integrated into the County’s existing GIS database on parcels of land so that it’s accessible to all.

Vacancy and abandonment produce real physical barriers to neighborhood revitalization – but they also present opportunities for new construction and development, both from public and private sources, that may revitalize the urban core.

**Re-commit to community input in the visioning and planning process and work towards better levels of transparency in the use of public funds and lands.**

A failure to do this is the reason that Downtown redevelopment schemes have failed. Citizens must set the vision. Young people want to see enhanced participation. Internet technologies are available to help you. Without physically requiring attendance, the internet can enable citizens to conduct visioning exercises and also submit opinions related to developments. The recently released county comprehensive plan provides an excellent example of this and is a model to be replicated. The goal should be to have the public act as protagonists and not antagonists.

Although CDC's typically help set the vision for neighborhood redevelopment, there is a perception that the process is an opaque one. Planning and development information need to be disseminated consistently. The failure of the URA to not publish a quarterly report since May 2004 or post an annual report online since 2002 is not acceptable. This is a public body and information should be made as accessible as possible. These reports identify the indicators to show that developments are meeting community goals. Not making this information widely available contributes to a looming skepticism regarding the use of public funds in development.

***Regional and Responsive Approaches to Governance***

**Summary**

What Guyasuta researched:

- Six different approaches to city-county collaboration/consolidation including: preserving the status quo, sharing services with other municipalities and the county, consolidation of the many small municipalities within the county and region into fewer, larger municipalities, merging the city and county governments, merging the city and all other municipalities with the county, and creating a regional or "third tier" government
- Costs and benefits to other metropolitan regions around the country that have attempted similar experiments
- Efforts by leaders in this region to increase efficiency, eliminate redundancy and foster cooperation among various levels of government
- Opportunities at the city, county and regional level to participate in discussions about regional approaches to government

Recommendations:

- Educate the public on, and actively encourage public discussion about the costs and benefits of different approaches to city-county collaboration and consolidation. Open, rational deliberations will be more effective in the development of flexible, responsive government than the politically-motivated presentation of ultimatums at the polling places.

- Partner with elected officials throughout the state to lobby Harrisburg for revenue sharing to compensate for tax exempt properties
- Proceed with plans to share and consolidate services with the county and surrounding municipalities
- Continue and expand successful ventures into regional cooperation such as the merger of 911 communications centers and the nationally recognized Region 13 Working Group on Anti-terrorism
- Wherever possible, encourage public participation – and particularly the participation of young people – in city government. Involving young people in city and regional planning and governance will deepen our connection to the region and enrich our personal investment in its future.

## **Remarks**

During the Fellowship sessions, the complex nature and varying approaches to regional government became readily apparent. While the majority of public discussion among local leaders has revolved primarily around consolidating the city and county governments, the Guyasuta Fellows came to the conclusion that this approach does not fully or adequately address the range of options available for improved regional governance.

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant issues, we identified and examined six possible models of government. Under the current system, local government is highly fragmented, with 130 autonomous municipalities in Allegheny County alone and 418 general purpose governments in the metro Pittsburgh area. While this model allows for the maximum degree of representation and local control; it results in duplicated services, high costs of government, and stunted development.

One way to alleviate the inefficiencies of this fragmented system is for the multitude of government entities in the county and region to pursue opportunities to share services. Although a shared services model provides for long-term cost savings and improved, more consistent service delivery, it may require increased short-term startup costs and detailed implementation planning.

Another strategy to minimize the fragmentation of government in our region involves merging the many independent municipalities into fewer, larger local government entities. Under such a plan, citizens would still be guaranteed some degree of local control, while duplicated services and positions are eliminated to improve cost efficiencies and centralize decision making. Conversely, this model necessitates some loss of local autonomy and is susceptible to opposition from citizens fearful of change.

In part because of historical difficulties with consolidating municipalities, some local leaders are advocating the merger of the city of Pittsburgh with Allegheny County. Under this plan, surrounding municipalities would remain autonomous as the city is dissolved into the county. A city-county merger allows for more coordinated economic development strategies, increases cost savings by eliminating redundancy, and potentially

provides leverage to obtain debt relief from the state. However, this plan significantly dilutes urban representation, particularly among minority populations, and it fails to address the problems of other struggling municipalities in the region.

Another option involves merging all municipalities completely with the county government. This model allows for coordinated planning, provides a county wide tax base to help struggling municipalities, and eliminates the double representation of suburban voters that exists with the city-county merger option. But problems with diluted minority representation also exist with a full county merger and such a plan would likely face staunch opposition from suburban voters happy with the quality of services provided by their individual municipalities.

The final option we examined requires no government consolidations and, in effect, establishes a new “third tier” of government that overlays county and municipal governments in a multi-county region. Third tier governments are typically limited in scope to a few specific areas. Examples in other metro areas have been used successfully to restrain urban sprawl and promote regional tax base sharing. Critics argue that these same regional governments also have placed pressure of affordable housing and promoted flight to areas outside the government’s jurisdiction.

In addition to these six models of government, we also researched examples of local efforts to improve efficiency and promote cooperation among local governments. Council’s own Regional Cooperation Committee examined operations of city and county government to determine what services and resources can be shared or consolidated. The report generated by this Committee provides a strong foundation for establishing shared services between Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

We also examined local government cooperation within the 8 Councils of Government in Allegheny County. Local municipalities have successfully used the COGs to reduce costs through joint purchasing.

Multi-municipal planning grants funded by the Heinz Endowments and administered by the Local Government Academy encourage officials from local municipalities to collaborate on municipal planning and learn about smart land use.

While researching the six government models and the efforts of local leaders, Guyasuta Fellows also sought out opportunities for public discourse on regionalism. Fellows participated in Town Meetings sponsored by the Post-Gazette, an Urban League Young Professionals Forum on Minority Representation, a Prospects for Pittsburgh Forum at the University of Pittsburgh and a discussion on WQED television news magazine *OnQ*.

**After participating in the fellowship sessions, conducting additional research, and participating in community discussions, we’ve come to believe that it is imperative that the public be educated on the different approaches to regional government before being asked to vote on specific ballot questions to reform or consolidate government in our region.**

We would also suggest that council members and other city officials partner with elected officials throughout the region and state to lobby Harrisburg, particularly regarding the need for revenue sharing to compensate for tax exempt properties owned by nonprofit organizations.

We encourage council to proceed with plans to share services with the county and surrounding municipalities and to expand upon successful ventures into regional cooperation, such as the merger of 911 communications centers and the nationally recognized Region 13 Working Group on Anti-terrorism.

Finally and most importantly, we ask council to actively encourage public participation in city governance. We hope that this presentation represents not the end of the 2004-2005 Guyasuta Youth Policy Fellowship, but the beginning of a new approach to city and regional government, defined by widespread civic engagement and transparent decision-making.

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