

SMART GROWTH

Second Annual Smart Growth Conference

Lt. Gov., Victor Dover highlight Quality Communities Task Force, principles for rebuilding communities

By Alison Heaphy

More than 350 people attending the second annual Smart Growth Conference heard Lieutenant Governor Mary O. Donohue describe the work of Governor Pataki's Quality Communities Task Force. They also heard smart growth planner Victor Dover explain the importance of design in linking the private home to the community and the importance of mixed uses in community development.

Lt. Gov. Donohue said, "Thanks to Governor George Pataki's creation of the Quality Communities Task Force in January, state and local governments in the Empire State will have powerful new tools that will enable us to build upon our economic achievements while protecting our delicate natural resources."

"As chair of the task force, I can tell you that we have been given an important assignment: study community growth in New York state and develop measures to assist those communities in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic development and environmental protection.

"We will do this via a three-phase effort to (1) inventory key local, state and federal programs, (2) gather public comment and (3) offer recommendations designed to enhance local community development efforts throughout New York state." The task force will report to Governor Pataki by Jan. 31, 2001.

"The findings of this task force may represent the beginning of the next phase of economic development and environmental protection, as the intent of the task force is to insure New York's investment in environmental protection and economic development programs take into account and complement the priorities of individual communities.

"We will lay the foundation for a dynamic partnership between local and state governments that fosters economic and community development, protects the environment and promotes home rule. The Task Force will develop bottom-up strategies to assist local governments to implement land use plans that best meet their needs

and are sensitive to the needs of the environment and neighboring communities."

Victor Dover, AICP, partner in Dover, Kohl and Partners, is one of the nation's leading smart growth planners. His practice focuses on the creation and restoration of real neighborhoods as the basis for sound communities. He told the many local officials, planners, conservationists and homebuilders present at the conference that the space between the buildings is just as important as the buildings themselves.

He said the issue is: are you building and selling isolation or are you selling community? He outlined five 'good neighborhood' smart growth principles:

- there must be an identifiable center and edge;
- communities must be of a walkable size, that is, five minutes from the center to the edge;
- there must be a mix of land uses and building types;
- there must be an integrated network of walkable streets; and
- there must be special sites for civic purposes.

Dover emphasized that smart growth is indeed profitable, that there must be public participation in the process of planning and design, that the emphasis must be on environmental quality and that smart growth requires good regulations.

Dover, reviewing the history of the present land use systems, said we changed our planning vocabulary to talk about zones, not communities, and we allowed the highway system to suck away the economic power of cities. To undo this harm, he said that we must now return to the neighborhood as the basic planning unit and push urban infill and repair.

Dover said that we have systematically destroyed the continent with places that have no sense of place, but the old urbanism can tell us how to make new urbanism. He pointed out that New York state can take a leadership position in how to make livable communities because it has numerous historic examples that can be used as models showing the essential principles of smart growth.

For more information on other speakers at the conference visit our website at ny.audubon.org.



Above, Audubon's smart growth dinner May 3 introduced members of the smart growth working group to members of the business community in anticipation of the following day's conference at Albany's Empire State Plaza. From left to right are Phil LaRocque of New York State Builders Association, David J. Miller and Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff of National Audubon Society of New York State (NASNY), dinner speaker William Davis of Niagara Mohawk and NASNY Board, Secretary of State Alexander F. Treadwell and Dan Walsh of the Business Council of New York.



Middle right, Victor Dover, AICP, partner in Dover, Kohl and Partners, was the conference keynote speaker. He said that smart growth is indeed profitable, public participation is essential, and the emphasis must be on environmental quality.



Bottom right, Assembly member Sam Hoyt (D-Buffalo) — with Sen. Mary Lou Rath, both champions of proposed smart growth legislation — addresses the conference.

New York State Office photos



Professor John Nolan, at podium, speaks in a panel discussion on smart growth strategies.

1999 Smart Growth Conference proceedings available

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