***Power of Place Summit***

**Summary of Growth Center 301 Workshop – May 11, 2012**

Transcribed by Robert Leaver New Commons

May 18, 2012

This workshop had no formal presenters. Everyone in the workshop was an expert. People were asked to reflect on what excited them about the two previous workshops on growth centers: 101 and 201. As they reflected, they were asked to consider an actual place in RI to examine or a program element to integrate into an existing center.

Panelists from the previous workshops and participants formed learning cafes organized around 5 topics they wanted to talk about: affordable housing, agriculture (urban and rural), connecting urban corridors, rural growth center, and overall, making connections between places. The cafe discussions centered on identifying policies, practices and incentives by using the framework in the next section.

Participants wrote their ideas on flip chart paper on the tabletops. All of the ideas are topically organized in the last section of this summary. Each group was asked to identify two to three “nuggets” which are so noted as such later in this paper.

***Examine: Policies, Practices and Incentives***

To unfold growth centers to their next evolution, consider what policies...incentives...practices will be required?

**3 Ways to Use Policy**

* Can you better leverage an existing policy?
* Can an existing policy be tweaked?
* Develop new policy?

**3 Ways to Consider Incentives that are regulatory, zoning, financial and more**

* Can you better leverage existing incentives?
* Can existing incentives be tweaked?
* Develop new incentives?

***3 Kinds of Practices***

* Can a current practice be strengthened?
* Can you “build up” a promising practice?
* Develop new practice?

***Nuggets***

**Making connections**

* Corridor as a connector to surrounding community therefore expanding diversity – *policy* Urban corridors created via inter-agency and inter-neighborhood collaboration
* Using green infrastructure to connect, neighboring main street centers

**Overall Agriculture**

* Set a goal of X number of acres that RI needs to devote to agriculture to feed ourselves *– new policy*
* Transfer development rights (TDR) to work better for agriculture – *tweak the practice*

**Urban Agriculture**

* All available land should be used for agriculture: lawns, parking lots, campuses, parks and open spaces – *new policy*
* Allow roof top gardens/green roofs through zoning/building codes – *new policy*

**Affordable Housing**

* In-fill development for affordable housing (mixed use) *– incentive*
* Envisioning town build-out alternatives and sharing them in a forum *- practice*
* Change Section-8 voucher to count as affordable housing in the town where it is used – *policy*

**Public Engagement**

* Comprehensive Plan updates to involve large number of residents – support through community outreach and social media – *practice*
* Engaging the millennial generation in the discussion – *practice*

**Planning**

* Coordination between bordering states and towns on growth center/place types – *policy*
* Make technical assistance or training of facilitators available to towns to assist with facilitation and community discussions – *incentive and practice*
* Determine: what is the purpose of the built environment in the 21st century? To have an interesting place to live – *incentive*

**Other**

* Business has to build its market globally first (export stuff and import cash), then sell locally – *practice*

**Café Conversations**

**Agriculture**

*Land use policy*

* Land costs are high: How to find an incentive to reduce land costs
* Tax incentives for farm, forest, and open space act
* State to set a goal and policy for a certain number of acres in agriculture

*Options for growing food – code diverse uses*

* Working landscapes outside centers-preservation of agriculture capacity...Practice-tweak of TDR to work better/TDR fund-prioritize acquisitions
* Urban agriculture in community Gardens, home Garden, small spaces, city owned, churches, charter schools and the edible campus movement including Roger Williams
* Farmer’s markets
* Roof tops/green roofs – hospitals
* Street trees that are edible (apples)
* Practice of edible forest, shrubs, blueberries

*Policies*

* Green roof – code uses
* Urban grower networks and building reuse, mill reuse/storm water
* Policy: businesses use large parking areas for gardens
* Goal of so many acres in farming in RI – TDR – depends on crop grown
* Farm bill-make it work for Northeast and RI especially

*Financing*

* CDBG-resources
* Cost-sharing – Incentives
* Tax incentives
* In villages have the developer pay into a fund the town can use to buy development rights

*Urban agriculture*

* Small spaces-identifying where?
* Who owns-will let use
* City owned community
* Hospital, institutions
* Churches, right of way
* Businesses
* Educating re: gardening
* Green roofs-building codes
* Soil remediation
* Kitchen gardens
* Tree farms-edible forest
* Zoning
* Allow uses
* Incentives
* Where can
* Cost sharing
* Blueberry-fruit

**Affordable Housing**

*Policies*

* Change section 8 policy to count as AH in the town where it is used
* Affordable housing = rentals, infrastructure and stigma
* Transfer affordable housing across towns
* Eliminate any restrictions to infill apartments above businesses, etc.
* More pet-friendly rentals ☺
* New policy: “cap & trade” affordable housing ☺

*Models for affordable housing*

* East Greenwich Cottage Village
* Focus on existing buildings
* Look outside RI for good examples

**Rural Growth Centers**

*Basic qualities*

* Places for youth and elderly
* Need for access to services even if a small hub with the basics
* Must have linkages to employment, including transit options like shuttles to major transit hubs and more service that’s not centered with buses throughout the state going in and out of Kennedy Plaza
* Need coordination with neighboring states –Tiverton/Fall River and Westerly/Pawcatuck
* For a village to sustain itself, it needs to generate jobs
* Villages promote an independent lifestyle
* Village buildings can be used for agricultural support

*Barriers*

* Limited funding
* Aversion to change
* Ways to control key parcels in village areas
* Need for technical assistance to towns on zoning changes, communication with the public, etc. Including planning commissions, councils, etc
* Better utilize Comprehensive Plans to designate growth centers
* Need for a public discussion on the values of villages-public communications strategy

**Connecting Places**

*Design elements*

* Having two good, distinct endpoints as anchors
* Train presence important
* What is purpose of built environment in 21st century, e.g., have interesting places to live?
* In the face of traditional retail vs. online shopping: what is the purpose and uses of storefronts in new economy?

*Incentives*

* CDBG $
* Know the size and scope of the market prior in the storefront shop (also build capacity to expand market-start online with Broad market into retail locally)
* Access to credit
* Access to mentors

*Policies*

* Corridor as a connector to surrounding community therefore expands diversity
* Transit oriented development (one-stop hub with the train is valued)
* Education of population to have knowledgeable workforce

*Practices*

Transportation available/accessible

Walkable

Community engagement in decision making

Build market globally first, THEN locally