

**SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
COMMITTEE**

April 5, 2022

10:00 AM

SAP&DC Conference Room

Altoona, PA

ACTION SUMMARY

The following are the major actions taken by the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee at its regular meeting held on April 5, 2022, at the SAP&DC in Altoona, PA.

1. No actions were taken at this meeting.

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**April 5, 2022
10:00 AM
SAP&DC Conference Room & Zoom
Altoona, PA**

MEETING MINUTES

I. Welcome

The following members were present at the meeting:

- Lindsay Pyle, Somerset County
- Bette Slayton, Bedford County Development Association
- Mike Keating, Juniata College
- Rick Trucello, Resident
- Larry Myers, Schneider Electric
- Matthew Price, Huntingdon County CVB

Others in attendance included:

- Brian Points, Points Consulting
- Brandon Carson, SAP&DC
- Dustin Bishop, SAP&DC
- Zachary Lee, SAP&DC
- Janice Streightiff, SAP&DC

Each participant received a meeting packet that included:

- Agenda
- Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan Executive Summary
- Southern Alleghenies Recovery & Resilience Plan

II. Regional Housing Strategy

Brandon Carson welcomed the committee to the meeting and noted the completion of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Brian Points is attending today to answer any questions the committee may have on the plan. The lack of housing in the region was identified as an issue in the development of this plan, as it has been for many years. He turned the meeting over to Dustin Bishop.

Housing Study

Dustin Bishop informed the committee that there were three primary targets noted in the Executive Summary: housing and blight, workforce issues, and quality of place. All three

of these were discussed at the implementation kick-off meeting a few weeks ago and housing and tourism seemed to be very important to those attending. The hope for today's meeting is to discuss what the first steps might be to approach these issues from a regional perspective.

Dustin turned the meeting over to Brian Points who reviewed the main findings on housing noting that blight exists in both residential and commercial sectors of the region affecting both quality of place and housing opportunities. The plan recommended targeting redevelopment in the areas where it would have the greatest impact. Several strategies were discussed.

Workforce retention and attraction – The region continues to have an issue with population decline and out migration. With the new trend of working from home that came with COVID-19, the area did see some in migration as people working from home relocated here. Bedford, Fulton, and Blair Counties in particular had an increase in population during that time.

Quality of place – The Southern Alleghenies Region is rich in natural amenities. He recommended that a regional tourism program should be restarted. SAP&DC did this in the past but funding for these programs dried up and SAP&DC no longer has the capacity to take this on. It was recommended the topic be discussed with the economic development community to see if anyone is willing to take the lead on this.

Bette asked for a summary for her board meeting. Brian responded that SAP&DC hired an external consultant to determine a handful of strategies that can be taken on locally to provide more resiliency to the economy and they encouraged focus on additional housing units particularly small to mid-sized in urban areas, increased capacity and connectivity on quality of place, and focus on target recruitment for households with a high likelihood to immigrate to the region.

Dustin is currently putting together a meeting with the economic developers in the region. SAP&DC is very interested in developing a housing strategy. Points Consulting has offered to help with the implementation of the plan and have made several suggestions. He recommended the group focus on three or four select areas to begin.

Recommendation for Housing CDC

Dustin noted that they are in the early stages of putting together a housing steering committee to focus on this issue. The committee would be comprised of 10-12 members coming from all six counties. The group would contain members from both economic development and housing backgrounds with private sector members as well. Dustin shared a list of potential members with the group. He thought someone from UPMC and the School Districts would be a good fit and would also like to see some members from real estate. He asked the group for recommendations. Suggestions included someone from Johnstown Redevelopment Authority (JRA), the Cambria Redevelopment Authority, the Housing Authorities, Jeff Long, Copper Beech Construction, and someone from the Cambria and Somerset Realtors Association. The group will also need to identify 10–20-acre tracks of land where development could occur. It was recommended a plan be put in place so that when funding becomes available, the group is ready. There was some

discussion on the lack of student housing. They discussed some of the providers of student housing. For Penn State Altoona it is Peerless Properties. They are part of Durbin Properties and operate in the Juniata area.

Dustin summed the discussion up stating that step one is revising the list for the steering committee. Following that, the steering committee will oversee the development of a housing strategy by a consultant using EDA funds. There will be two parts to this strategy the first being a regional housing study. Dustin shared a list of housing studies noting those that stood out to him. Most of these are very local studies. Part two will be advice and assistance on the formation of an actual Community Development Corporation (CDC). Some of the areas have different needs so there may need to be two CDCs or one with different chapters. More localized data will be needed to get this started. The recovery plan noted the lack of regional coordination, so a six-county study would be very helpful. Someone noted that one of the interesting parts of the Elevate Johnstown Study was the input from local employers who surveyed their employees and provided information on what they were looking for, defining the market area. He suggested a survey of major employers of the region employees. Another suggestion was a heat map showing the school districts or municipalities where real estate demand has exceeded supply over the last five years. Brian suggested tasking the next consultant with identifying and engaging the real estate folks.

III. Regional Tourism Efforts

Quality of place came up a lot during the development of the plan. The region has great tourist attractions but lacks regional collaboration. There needs to be more of a regional focus on tourism. Matt added that there is a willingness between the marketing organizations to work together, but they lack a point of coordination. They grew accustomed to having a third-party administrator at SAP&DC but since the funding for that position dried up, they have gone back to doing that on their own. That third party is really important. He asked Steve Howsare at an implementation meeting to put together what it would take financially to have that happen. There was some discussion about getting the Chambers involved. SAP&DC can't serve as that third party administrator but can do our best to foster collaboration among the counties at the regional level. If the group would like us to host meetings for the regions CVBs that is something we can support. Matt asked that we do that. Cross promotion is important. He currently works with Explore Altoona and the Happy Valley CVB and Visit Clearfield County to host a Travel Marketplace. Matt would like to revive the Alleghenies brand. It was a good idea and should have continued.

IV. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM

<p>NOTE: The next meeting of the CEDS Committee is scheduled for November 8, 2022, at the SAP&DC beginning at 10:00 AM.</p>
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ACTION ITEMS

Action Items	By Whom	Due Date
Develop a list of potential members for the housing study steering committee.	CEDS Committee	No Date Given
Talk internally about developing a strategy for a housing study and how we can implement the housing CDC.	CEDS Committee	No Date Given
Get a list of potential contacts to attend meetings hosted by SAP&DC to discuss regional collaboration for the six-county Tourism Programs from Debbie Prosser and keep the committee updated on the progress.	Dustin Bishop, SAP&DC	No Date Given
Mike Keating added that he would be very interested in any public funding to support larger scale, higher priced development.	All	No Date Given