



*“Exploring Strategies...
The Next Step.”*

**Report on the
2005 York County Economic Development Summit**
April 1, 2005
The Cliff House

**For: The York County Economic Development Summit
Steering Committee**



**PLANNING
DECISIONS**
Research & Planning

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I. Executive Summary

A. Background

Throughout 2003, a diverse group of York County business leaders, elected officials, economic development professionals and educators met informally to discuss York County's economic future and to explore ways to increase awareness in Augusta of the County's needs.

Independently, Representative Nancy Sullivan, House Chair of the Business, Research & Economic Development Committee and newly elected Biddeford Mayor, retired general Wallace Nutting, met to discuss their desire to learn more about the Baldacci Administration's economic development plans and to find ways to include York County more fully in them.

From these two separate initiatives, the concept of a York County Economic Development Summit was born and a Steering Committee was formed to organize it and bring it to completion.¹ That meeting—Defining Solutions...The First Step—was held in March 2004, and its findings were reported in a report of the same name.²

To maintain the momentum generated by the first summit, the informal York County Economic Development Steering Committee worked through the fall of 2004 and spring of 2005 to organize a second summit entitled Exploring Strategies...The Next Step. This report presents the findings of the second York County Economic Development Summit.

B. The Key Findings

Following the recommendations of the first summit, the second summit focused more precisely on three specific issues:

1. collaboration between the business and educational communities;
2. identification and exploitation of regional competitive advantages; and
3. finding ways to increase inter-municipal cooperation.

¹ Members of the Steering Committee are listed in Appendix One of this report, the Agenda for the Summit is included as Appendix Two, Sponsors are listed in Appendix Three and the list of attendees is included as Appendix Four.

² Defining Solutions...The First Step: a Report on the First Annual York County Economic Development Summit Prepared by Planning Decisions, Inc. August 3, 2004. Members of the York County Economic Development Steering Committee are listed in Appendix One of this report.

Following an introductory session in which Chuck Lawton outlined the major economic trends evident in an examination of the York County economy, conference participants divided into groups to hear presentations on each of the three issues noted above.³

1. Business-Education Collaboration

Participants in both the morning and afternoon sessions focused on the need for better labor force information. Business needs to know more precisely the existing skill levels of the labor force and educational institutions need to know more precisely the skills needed by business. They concluded that educational institutions needed to improve their outreach to the business community and that the business community needed to help provide scholarships and other forms of payment such as paid leaves to help students overcome the financial burdens of pursuing higher education.

2. Regional Competitive Advantages

In the morning breakout session on regional advantages, Jeff Langan of bioSAA stressed the importance of York County's proximity to the greater Boston economy. He emphasized the importance of industry clusters (skilled workers, experienced managers, support services in finance and marketing and easy access to ongoing education). He emphasized the importance of building a faster link to the Manchester airport and thus of the need to build a public-private partnership to move the process along.

In the afternoon session, participants conducted a Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) analysis of York County. They concluded that:

- ✓ York County is a great place to live and bring up a family;
- ✓ York County has a relatively well-educated labor force eager to work closer to home;
- ✓ York County has a relatively well-developed transportation network;
- ✓ York County is relatively close to the entrepreneurial hot bed of Boston/Cambridge;
- ✓ York County has a great many empty old mill buildings suitable for redevelopment;
- ✓ York County's proximity to the ocean is an advantage for advanced research and development that has not been exploited adequately;
- ✓ York County has a large and growing electorate that has not flexed its political muscle sufficiently in directing state resources to exploit county advantages.

³ The Summit Agenda is included as Appendix Two of this report.

At the same time, York County suffers from the lack of a coordinated public sector strategy and the burden of many myths about the business unfriendly nature of Maine's tax structure. Progress depends on an active Public-Private partnership to create a coordinated economic development strategy and a powerful marketing campaign to ensure its success.

3. Regional Cooperation

In the morning break-out session on regional cooperation, Craig Nelson, President of First Park—a multi-town industrial park in Oakland, Maine—explained the painstaking process by which 26 central Maine towns came together to cooperatively fund the purchase and equipping of a 285 acre industrial park intended to attract jobs to a single location while sharing the tax benefits of new investment across all of the member towns.

Norm Labbe, President of the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Wells Water District, spoke of the process by which the state's second largest inter-municipal organization (only the Portland Water District is larger) has built a satisfied customer base through high quality service and cooperation with both member towns and neighboring water districts.

In the afternoon session, attendees (who were predominantly municipal officials) spoke of the desirability of regional cooperation and the difficulty of overcoming the resistance of those dedicated to "local control" who tend to oppose all efforts at regional cooperation. Cathy Goodwin, President of the Greater York Region Chamber of Commerce, spoke of the "Future Search" process undertaken by the towns of Kittery, Eliot, York and South Berwick (KEYS).

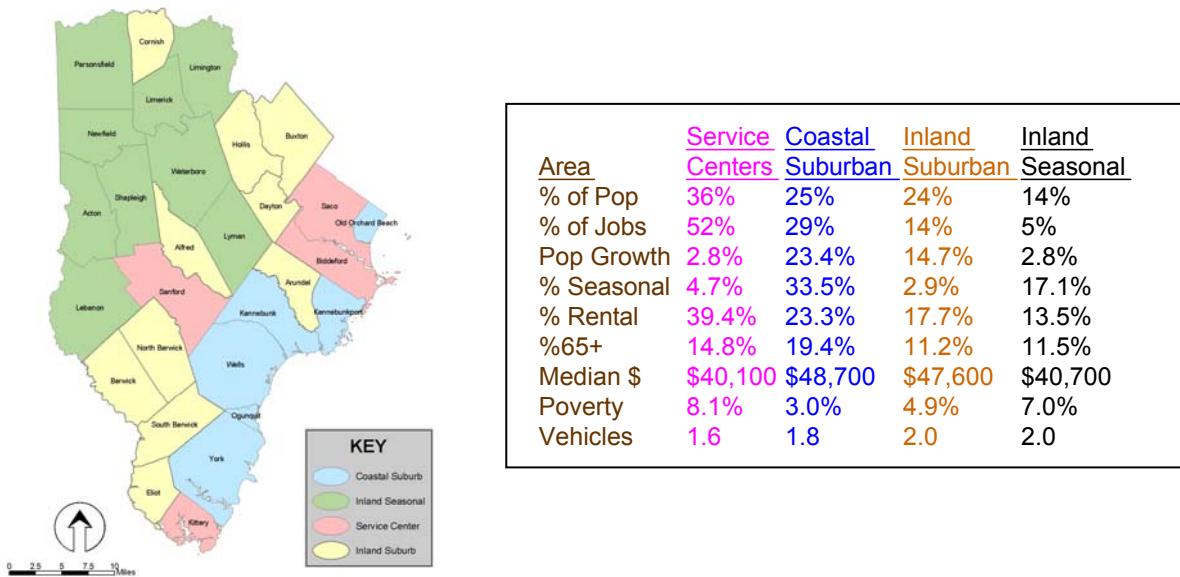
Attendees left convinced that increased regional cooperation must occur on a piecemeal, task-by-task, basis so that benefits can be achieved and demonstrated without raising the hackles of those fearing loss of local control.

II. Overview of the York County Economy

Chuck Lawton of Planning Decisions, Inc. said that York County faced two major obstacles to economic development—internal divisions and external orientation—but that each could be seen as a major opportunity for public-private organization and business development.

Internally, the county is divided among urban service centers and coastal and rural suburbs each of which tend to have distinct community definitions and needs and different attitudes towards economic growth. At the same time, state and federal agencies divide the county in ways that tend to reinforce these internal divisions. Figure 1 illustrates some of these divisions.

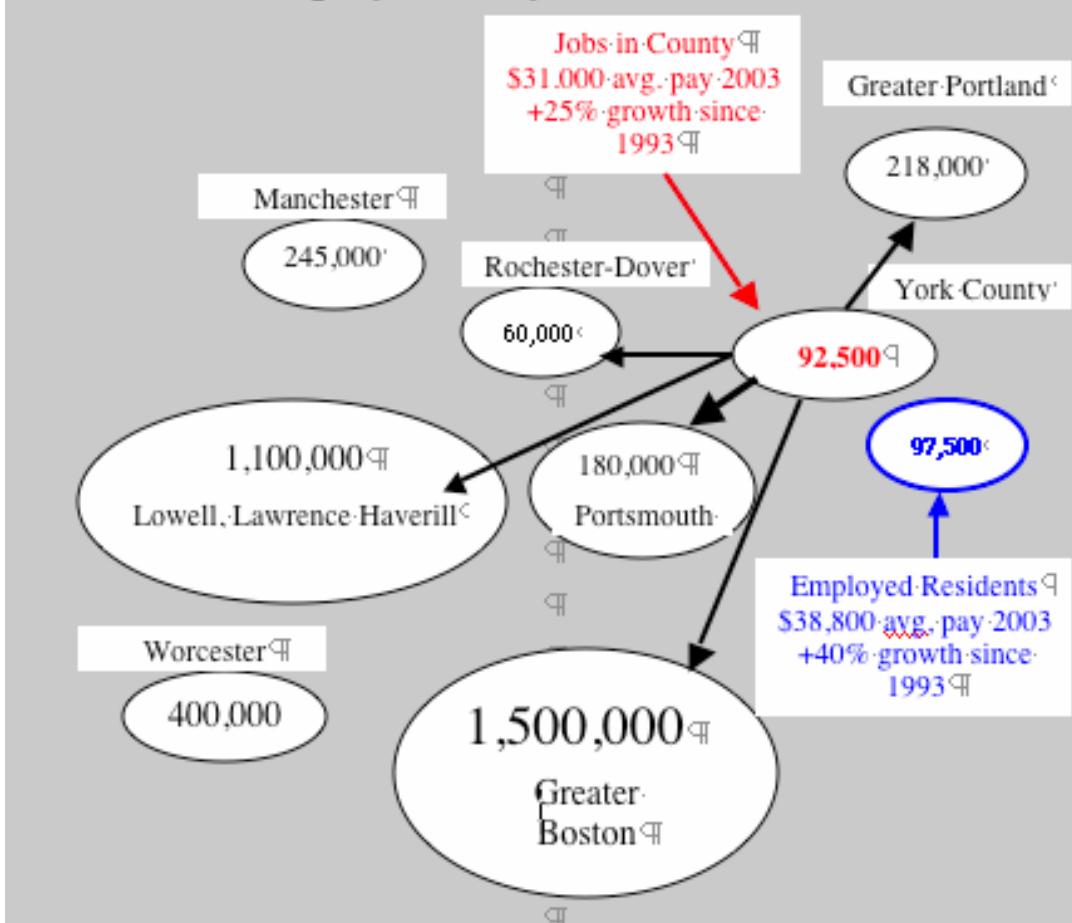
Figure 1
Organizational Divisions of York County



Source: Bureau of the Census 2000 Census of Population.

At the same time, many York County residents tend to be oriented outside the county because so many of them work in the Portland, Portsmouth and Greater Boston labor markets rather than locally. Figure 2 illustrates this external orientation.

Figure 2
Employment by Place of Work



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Over the past decade, the number of York County residents who are employed has increased by 40% to approximately 97,500 (blue circle). The number of jobs provided by York County businesses, on the other hand, increased only 25% to approximately 92,500 (red circle). In short, York County residents depend to a very large extent on businesses outside the county to provide their jobs. Looked at in a different way, York County has a tremendous opportunity to attract businesses that would draw on the skills of the more than 5,000 residents already employed but commuting out of the county. This is especially true in light of a survey done by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Southern Maine that indicated that

many already employed workers would change jobs if they could find comparable work closer to home.⁴

⁴ <http://www.usm.maine.edu/cber/>

III. Summaries of Breakout Sessions

Following the presentation on the general York County economy, participants divided into three work sessions: one on collaboration between business and education, a second on the county's regional competitive advantages and a third on regional cooperation.

Session 1: Education and Business Collaboration

Jim Amaral of Borealis Breads said that entrepreneurship was creating value, that the key driver for entrepreneurship is passion and that it is not always easy to find opportunities in Maine to exercise passion. He said that each business



must try to build connections with local schools. Fletcher Kittredge of Great Works Internet said that because the Maine labor market is so tight employers must spend time and money educating their own employees. Overall, the county must increase productivity in order to raise our standard of living. To do this we must raise the overall education level. We must teach people to learn,

thus the value of a liberal arts education. He suggested the need for:

- ✓ a greater presence by USM in York County;
- ✓ a greater focus on Adult Education (We can't just focus on K-12 kids);
- ✓ more support for YCCC;
- ✓ more entrepreneur clubs as at Harvard and MIT; they are real incubators.

General comments from participants were:

- ✓ Small business Incubators should be expanded;
- ✓ Policy focus should be more on small business - too much of our Congressional efforts are on big projects and bigger businesses;
- ✓ Many businesses have underutilized assets; we should find a way to share them;
- ✓ We must raise the aspirations of young people for higher education through work of Compact for Higher Education;
- ✓ High schools need reform;
- ✓ The YCCC Entrepreneurial Program needs more support;
- ✓ Business people should speak to classes, to get in front of students; educators should ask them to be involved.

Session 2: Regional Competitive Advantages

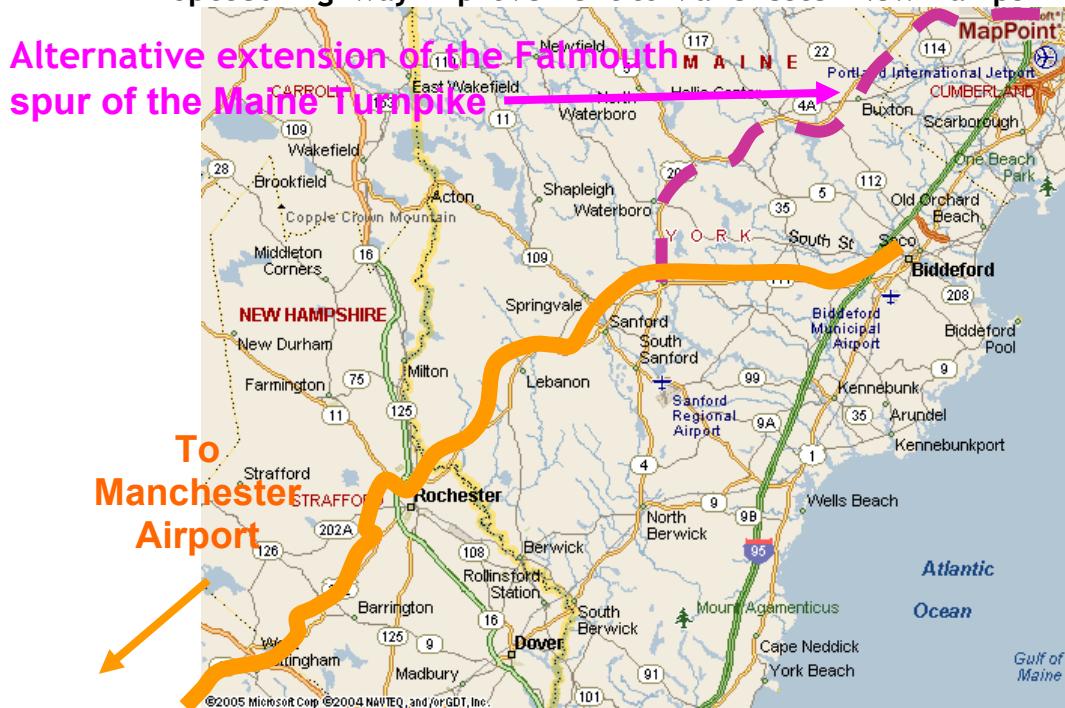
Jeff Langan made a presentation on:

- ✓ Defining biotech vs. bioscience vs. transplant "manufacturing;"
- ✓ What does a young biotech require?
- ✓ York County is the best and only place in Maine to focus on biotech start-ups;
- ✓ Competition and Hurdles to overcome;
- ✓ What York County needs to do.

He emphasized the importance of clusters—the ability of biotech owners and managers and key workers to connect with research facilities, educational institutions and venture capital firms within one hour's time. For this the linkage to Manchester Airport provides western York County a great potential advantage.

Figure 3

Proposed Highway Improvement to Manchester New Hampshire



To realize the county's great potential, we need to build a strong public-private partnership to encourage business to grow here and to build the infrastructure improvements needed to support them. At the same time, we need to greatly increase the county's business attraction efforts. Jeff cited the example of a biotech start-up he is now working with. The first venture

capitalist he spoke with said, "Not in Maine; are you nuts? You will never be able to attract the talented people that you need!" He suggested New Jersey!!!

In the afternoon, participants conducted a Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) analysis of what came to be called Yorkland. The central conclusion to emerge from the group's discussion was the need to strengthen the eight dimensions of a successful industrial cluster:

1. innovation;
2. regional business functions;
3. an entrepreneurial mentality;
4. financing, both venture and standard;
5. vertical and horizontal networks of business relationships;
6. strategic locations, particularly within a one hour's drive of a major airport;
7. development of a lead industry; and
8. constant promotion of the inter-industry market potential of the cluster.



Session 3: Regional Cooperation

Craig Nelson's presentation on First Park proved very interesting and provoked a great deal of discussion among session attendees, many of whom were municipal selectmen. The general consensus was that the idea of common support for an industrial park whose tax revenues would be shared among supporting communities was a perfect idea for York County. There was, however, great confusion about how to take the first step and great trepidation about the opposition of those fixated on local control.

Norm Labbe's presentation on the Kennebunk, Kennebunkport & Wells Water District gave precise examples of how to take the small steps to explore the benefits of regionalization without immediately committing to a long-term or permanent change. He likened the process to dating as opposed to marriage. He also cited the many examples of inter-municipal cooperation that come from regular communication among existing officials quite apart from any formal cooperative agreements.



Participants noted the self selection of communities with growth caps (predominantly suburban and rural) from those seeking growth (the urban service centers) and highlighted the need for coordinated land planning if each category is to

achieve its goals—maintenance of rural character and stable tax rates in rural and suburban areas and generation of new taxable property in urban centers. The session raised the question of affordable housing and the possible ways of creating a more truly regional strategy for economic development. Again, the select people in attendance voiced support for the theory of regionalization but fear for the opposition of those favoring local control.

Update on Tax Reform

The summit ended with a presentation by Representative Richard Woodbury on the history of tax reform efforts during the current session of the Legislature and prospects for future sessions. He concluded that, while major reform was highly unlikely this session, the issue is clearly on the agenda for the next session.

IV. Next Steps

The purpose of the York County Economic Summit 2004 was to "Define Solutions." It met that purpose with the following three "solutions":

1. *articulate a clearer sense of regional identity* by defining specific projects that serve multiple constituencies within the county, developing consensus around those projects and seeking state assistance to complete them;
2. more clearly *identify those industrial sectors* for which York County's comparative advantages are keys to growth and develop a strategy to attract and develop them; and
3. find ways to get the *business and educational communities to interact* more frequently and more productively to increase the range and accessibility of life-long learning for the county's labor force, both current and potential.

The purpose of the York County Economic Summit 2005 was to define "The Next Step." While there was no formal discussion of the recommendations included in the opening session of the Summit, much of the discussion in each of the breakout sessions did relate to those recommendations. It seems appropriate, therefore, to summarize them here as the next steps for those in York County interested in economic development to pursue.

County economic development officials and public policy makers should address **six areas of striking opportunity**. They should:

1. Develop business attraction materials and a **marketing strategy** to make the advantages of York County more widely known to businesses in the Greater Boston area;
2. Create a public-private **development authority** that can own property and initiate select real estate deals with significant county-wide impact;
3. Capitalize on the growing economic importance of York County and the presence of many national business leaders in the County (at least seasonally) to create an **Economic Development "Brain Trust"** composed of business, governmental and academic representatives and dedicated to ongoing review of the county's economic prospects and performance; and
4. Promote the allocation of **state investments in research and development** to York County's institutions of higher education and encourage increased support of the educational programs related to

- those investments; more generally, the York County legislative delegation should act in concert to exert more power in Augusta.
5. Undertake a full-scale inventory of the County's **old mill buildings** and prepare a redevelopment strategy encompassing industrial uses, business attraction programs, the creative economy and affordable housing; and
 6. Undertake a full-scale inventory of the County's **health care industry** and develop a strategy for meeting its physical plant expansion and labor training needs;

1. Market York County.

Several facts have come together over the past decade that present York County with an unprecedented opportunity for economic growth. Having:

- ✓ assembled more industrially ready land;
- ✓ demonstrated the success of old mill development;
- ✓ increased the size of both commercially available loan funds and quasi-public complementary revolving loan funds;
- ✓ been presented by the state Pine Tree Zone Program with a vehicle for offsetting Maine's "high tax" image;
- ✓ been blessed with a location on the northern edge of the expanding Greater Metropolitan Boston area

York County has the opportunity to articulate a clear message about why it is an ideal location to start or expand a business.

Economic developers should take advantage of the Pine Tree Zone Program to illustrate comparisons with "tax free" New Hampshire. This along with the quality of life available in Maine would make a very attractive package to the businesses that spin out of the centers of Boston entrepreneurship on a regular basis. This effort should be undertaken with a more systematic effort to document the volume of industrial land being filled and still available. The County has made strides in adding to its inventory of available industrial land, but it has not fully realized the goal of maintaining an easily accessible and up-to-date inventory of currently available land. In addition, based on the absorption of such land, county developers should maintain a target number of additional acres and square footage to bring on line on an annual basis.

To complement this effort, the York County legislative delegation should promote a truly comprehensive tax reform, one that eliminates the internal contradictions of the current system and further promotes a favorable comparison to New Hampshire.

2. Create a Quasi-Public Entity to Initiate Real Estate Deals.

The second area where York County needs to take its economic development

program to the next level is in the area of real estate development. Just as public loan funds can often mean the difference between success and failure in the financing of a "good deal," so the existence of a quasi-public body that could do more than just promote the development of old mill buildings or other real property with significant development potential would enable York County to get more projects off the ground.

SMRPC or perhaps a collaborative of development organizations should incorporate a regional development organization capable of taking title to property and entering into development deals with private and public entities on projects that have significant regional importance. The City of Lewiston has become actively and successfully involved in the economic development process—buying land, demolishing old buildings and negotiating lease arrangements with new tenants. The Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) has similarly established public-private entities to initiate development activities. Such an active involvement by a publicly oriented body could be the catalyst for significant new development in York County as well.

3. Create a County Economic Development "Brain Trust."

Because of its growing economy, York County has an increased importance for the fiscal well being of the state as a whole. Income, sales and property taxes generated by economic activity in York County finance schools, infrastructure and social programs throughout the state. At the same time, York County's growing population gives its voters increased importance in statewide elections. In addition, York County's unparalleled beauty and quality of life have attracted many residents (both seasonal and year-round) with extensive national and international business experience and connections.

However, because of the lack of regional identity noted above, York County's influence in state politics and economic development decisions does not match its economic and political importance. To a certain extent, this imbalance is the reason for the Economic Summit held in 2004 (as well as the follow up to be held in 2005) and for the suggestion by EDA for York County to apply for designation as its own Development District.

The County should build on this momentum by establishing a formal York County Economic Development Brain Trust dedicated to monitoring the county economy, highlighting and publicizing important development opportunities, recommending public policy actions and encouraging complementary private investments. This group should include representatives from county businesses, local, regional and state government, local educational institutions and nationally prominent business leaders with some York County connection.

It should serve as the Advisory Board to SMRPC's countywide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) preparation and as the sponsor of the annual York County Economic Summit. Its overall purpose would be to give York County the prominence in public perception that its economic and political significance warrant. On a more practical level, it should help identify and attract to the County businesses that could thrive here, particularly those now expanding in the Greater Boston area.

4. Encourage State Investment in Research Facilities and Associated Educational Programs.

York County needs to take greater advantage of its proximity to the world center of medical and bio-medical research. While investment in research facilities is clearly beyond the capacity of any county economic development organization, the County does have a role in furthering efforts at the state level and within educational institutions to increase the advanced educational and research capacities of The University of New England and The University of Southern Maine.

A proposal to issue a bond to help finance such facilities is now before the Legislature. York County economic developers should support this effort and direct their recruiting and marketing efforts in ways that complement it.

In addition, to the extent that such research and development activity does expand in York County, it will bring with it a demand for skilled technicians and other professional support personnel. County economic development professionals should encourage state officials to support the development and expansion of programs to train such R&D support personnel at the York County Community College.

5. Prepare an Old Mill Redevelopment Strategy.

One of York County's most prominent characteristics are the old brick mill buildings found in virtually every urban and village center. While, on the one hand, they represent the County's dying heritage of textile and shoe manufacturing. On the other, they represent an opportunity for reinvigorating these downtown centers. In some cases, they have been converted to incubators for new business start-ups, in others to arts centers, in still others into affordable housing. All of these outcomes are extremely desirable given the rising cost associated with sprawling patterns of land use.

But how to develop old mill buildings is not a science. What works in one location, may not in another. For this reason, the County should undertake a full-scale inventory of old mill space, categorizing it by age, location, square

footage, number of stories, quality of surrounding infrastructure and other qualities deemed important for redevelopment. It should follow this work with a detailed analysis of the successes and failures of other old mill development projects, such as those in Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts. In particular, this process should involve the cities of Biddeford and Saco as they continue their negotiations with the Maine Energy Recovery Company (MERC) about closing that facility. Finally, the County should develop an old-mill redevelopment strategy to be included as part of the its overall Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

6. Prepare a Health Care Industry Development Strategy.

Health care and social assistance accounts for nearly 11,000 jobs in York County. This amounts to approximately 11% of the county total and represents a concentration approximately 20% above the national average (see Table 5 below). These jobs, moreover, pay, on average, 18% more than the overall average wage in York County. Finally, the Maine Department of Labor projects that Health Services will be the single greatest source of new jobs in Maine over the period from 2000 to 2010, accounting for over 12,000 new jobs.⁵

For all these reasons together with the fact that York County has the state's only medical school, three significant community hospitals and a growing array of health care businesses, county economic development professionals should examine the health care industry more carefully as a source of new employment. Traditionally, health care professionals have considered their enterprises as community service organizations as opposed to businesses. As a result, they tend to have operated in different arenas from the traditional world of economic development. This is an unfortunate and unnecessary separation. Therefore county development officials should empanel a York County Health Care Industry Task Force to examine the growth prospects for the industry, the major constraints to that growth and what actions should be taken to minimize those obstacles.

⁵ Maine Department of Labor [Employment Change in Maine, 2000 to 2010](http://www.Maine.gov/labor/lmis)
<http://www.Maine.gov/labor/lmis>.

Appendix One: Steering Committee Members

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following members of the Steering Committee who made today's event possible:

William Armitage
Biddeford-Saco Area Economic Development Corporation

Bernard Featherman
Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Charles Lawton
Planning Decisions

Paulette Millette
York County Community College

Charles Morgan
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission

David O'Connor
University of New England

Bonita Pothier
Key Bank

John Rainone
York County Community College

Paul Schumacher
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission

Barbara Tramontana
University of New England

Appendix Two: Meeting Agenda

8:30 - 9:00 am Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:00 - 9:30 am Welcome & Review

*William Armitage,
Biddeford-Saco Area Economic Development Corporation*

**9:30 - 10:15 am York County Defense Conversion Study
Update**

*Charles Lawton, Planning Decisions
Paul Schumacher, Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission*

10:15 - 10:30 am Break

10:30 - 12:00 pm Breakout Sessions - 1A-3A

Session 1A: Education and Business Collaboration: Workforce Development

Session 2A: Regional Advantages: Bio-Technology

Session 3A: Regional Cooperation: Tax and Cost Sharing

Cathy E. Minehan, President and CEO, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

1:30 - 1:45 pm Break

1:45 - 3:15 pm Breakout Sessions - 1B-3B

*Session 1B: Education and Business Collaboration: 21st Century
Management/Entrepreneurship*

Session 2B: Regional Advantages: Barriers and Opportunities

Session 3B: Regional Cooperation: Land Use Planning and Development

**3:15 - 3:45 pm Conference Summary and Closing
Speakers**

*William Armitage, BSAEDC
Maine House Representative Richard Woodbury, (U); and,
Congressman Tom Allen, (D), Maine, 1st Congressional District*

3:45 - 4:45 pm Reception

Appendix Three: Breakout Sessions

Session 1A: Education and Business Collaboration: Workforce Development

How can business and education better prepare the labor force, create a stronger business environment and increase investment opportunities? Discuss the importance of increased linkages between business and educational institutions with the following panel:

Henry Bourgeois, Executive Director; Maine Compact for Higher Education;

Joe Moreshead, President; Precision Screw Machine Products; and,

Kathryn M. Weare, Owner; The Cliff House Resort & Spa

Moderator: Yellow Light Breen, VP & General Counsel; Bangor Savings Bank

Session 1B: Education and Business Collaboration: 21st Century Management & Entrepreneurship

How do we increase linkages between business and educational institutions? What is the best way to build 21st Century management? Discuss the importance of management and entrepreneurial education to the vitality of the York County economy with the following panel:

James Amaral, President; Borealis Breads; and

Fletcher Kittredge, CEO; Great Works Internet

Moderator: Timothy Hussey, President; Hussey Seating Company

Session 2A: Regional Advantages: Bio-Technology

How do we get from R&D to Commercialization? Discuss the economic advantages derived from York County's proximity to the Gulf of Maine and biotechnology research and development in Boston/Cambridge with the following panelists:

Jeff Langan, President and CEO; bioSAA, Inc.; and

Edward P. Legg, V.P., University Relations; University of New England

Moderator: Janet Yancy-Wrona, Director of Innovation; Maine Department of Economic & Community Development

Session 2B: Regional Advantages: Barriers and Opportunities

What should Maine do to support the existing industries that continue to dominate our

economy, as well as promote new industries that will transform our economy? Participate in a SWOT analysis of Business in York County with the following panel:

Steven Michaud, V.P.; Maine Hospital Association;

David Nickerson, General Manager; Rubb Building Systems;

Dr. Patricia Ryan, President; York County Community College;

Kathryn M. Weare, Owner; The Cliff House Resort & Spa; and,

Alden Wilson, Director; Maine Arts Commission;

Moderator: David Gould, President; Southpark Business Development

Session 3A: Regional Cooperation: Tax and Cost Sharing

How do we define “productive regionalization”? Are there common interests and projects that cross municipal borders and do not threaten local control? Discuss the costs and benefits of regionalization with the following Panel:

*Norman Labbe, Superintendent; Kennebunk, Kennebunkport & Wells Water District;
and*

Craig Nelson, Esq., Board of Directors; FirstPark

*Moderator: Laurie Lachance, President & CEO; Maine Development Foundation;
and,*

Martha Freeman, Director, Maine State Planning Office

Session 3B: Regional Cooperation: Land Use Planning and Development

How can inter-municipal cooperation address the transportation, infrastructure and affordable housing needs of the region while protecting municipal self-interests and keeping Tax Rates from increasing? Discuss the benefits of Land Use Planning and barriers to Regional Cooperation with the following panel:

Roch Rodrigue, Owner; Saco House Group; and

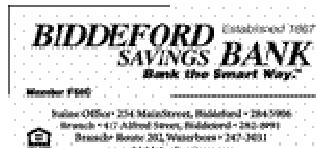
Michael L. Finnegan, Board of Directors, Grow Smart Maine

Moderator: Paul Schumacher, Executive Director; Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission

Appendix Four: Meeting Sponsors

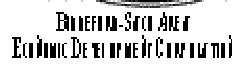
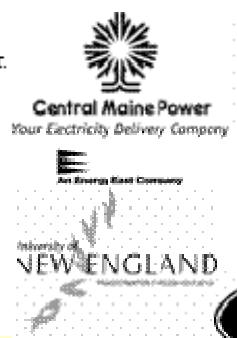
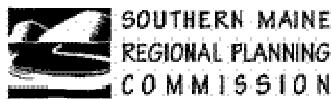
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Sanford Institution for Savings
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission
University of New England
Verizon
York County Community College



Contributors

With special Thanks to:

Biddeford-Saco Chamber of Commerce & Industry • Kennebunk Chamber of Commerce •
Ogunquit Chamber of Commerce • Old Orchard Beach Chamber of Commerce • Robinson
PR • Sanford-Spryngvale Chamber of Commerce • State of Maine • Wells Chamber of
Commerce • York Chamber of Commerce • York County Legislative Delegation

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