

Metropolitan Economic Policy Task Force (MEPTF)

Meeting Summary - March 11, 2003

Portland State University, Smith Memorial Student Union, Cascade Room 234/6

John Castles filled in for Chair Rob Drake who could not attend the meeting. He convened the meeting at 6.30 pm.

The following MEPTF members attended: David Bragdon, John Castles, Steve Clark, Erik Hovee, Ron Johnson, Kim Kimbrough, Kathy Long Holland, Michael Jordan Don Mazziotti, Craig Pridemore, Carl Talton, Diane Vines, Rick Willams, William Wyatt.

Not attending: Jesus “Jess” Carreon, Rob Drake, Vera Katz, Maria Rojo de Steffey, Bob Terry, Jose Tornero.

Introductions

John Castles welcomed task force members and the audience to the fifth meeting of the Metropolitan Economic Policy Task Force. Following short introductions, Ethan Seltzer, Director of the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies, presented key findings and themes that emerged from the last four meetings. Seltzer also referred to a memo from Jess Carreon who could not attend the meeting.

Presentation

Seltzer reviewed the taskforce charge and the accomplishments so far. The task forces held three meetings and received briefings from Joe Cortright (inventory analysis), Duncan Wyse (Oregon Business Council), Dave Chen (New Economy Coalition), Diane Vines (Oregon University System and Oregon Council on Knowledge and Economic Development). In addition, Sheila Martin (Governor Locke’s policy advisor) and Marty Brantley (Director of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) presented on economic development efforts at the state level. Seltzer also discussed the timeline and the tasks for the next meetings.

He then presented the findings, which are organized in two sections: Strategy and Regions and Our Region. Regarding Strategy and regions, he emphasized that a strategy is a means for differentiating the region from its competitors. He noted that strategies ought to be long-term and vision-driven. Second, metropolitan regions are the essential units for analysis for economic development. Third, clusters offer an important way to organize a strategy. Fourth, retention and expansion are essential cornerstones for future economic growth. Fifth, innovation is critical. Sixth, despite the fact that competition is waged at firm and metropolitan levels rather than jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction, most incentives before jurisdictions promote competition rather than collaboration.

Taskforce members then had the opportunity to discuss the findings and to add additional observations. In the discussion, the following additional findings came up:

- There is a need to address regional interdependence in various areas such as policy sectors, geographic areas, etc. The region is an ecosystem in which the economy intersects with transportation, workforce, etc. Economic development is interdisciplinary in nature and this needs to be taken into account.
- Business recruitment efforts especially with regard to bioscience can play an important role.
- Both competition and collaboration are important aspects of today’s regional economic structure.
- The cornerstones for economic success are the intellectual assets present in a region.
- Entrepreneurship and spin-off activity are important drivers for economic growth and need to be addressed in a strategy.
- Education and workforce development are critical.
- A strategy needs to incorporate all knowledge-based / innovation-based industries that can potentially be clusters and would normally be considered resource-based / traditional industries (i.e. agriculture, nursery, etc.).
- Global competition is inevitable and influences how business is done in the region.

Seltzer then discussed the specific findings for this region. He said that a regional strategy should complement the economic development activities of both local and state governments. Second, quality of life is a vital competitive advantage for this region, but not one that we are guaranteed to keep. Third, the region lacks a clear articulation of its “brand” and a “brand manager.” Fourth, both the private and public sectors have key roles to play in developing and implementing a regional economic development strategy, but most of all the strategy needs a champion.

Task force members added the following:

- There is a need to specify quality of life.
- Branding the region needs to be complemented by extensive marketing and PR efforts. The region needs to link to state efforts that are already underway.
- The brand needs to be founded on regional strengths and it needs to work inside and outside the region.
- Articulation and communication to the public are important. Additionally, public participation is key to the strategy’s success.
- There is also a need for involving the private sector and achieving a balance between public and private leadership. Private sector needs to lead and needs to provide funding.
- The Regional Partners need to be leveraged since this organization is already working well and has developed necessary trust and collaboration.
- Issues such as the availability of “shovel-ready” land need to be incorporated into the strategy.

Seltzer then presented a set of strategic goals for the region. These are:

- Visionary: explicit goals, forward looking, widely accepted, and sustainable
- Pioneering: clusters and knowledge
- Talented: Growing and attracting talent
- Authentic: Metropolitan, localized
- Productive: Competitive
- Organized and engaged: Leadership and outcomes.

Task force members added that measuring outcomes should be a goal in itself. Also, creating and sustaining prosperity should be a goal for the region.

The group then discussed to what extent a regional economic strategy should have a long-term or a short-term orientation. Diane Vines was anxious to move on to an action plan and discuss the vision of the economic development strategy. Steve Clark commented that both long term and short term are important for a strategy since the audience can become impatient. Kathy Long-Holland said that it’s important to also incorporate a global perspective. Michael Jordan argued that there are already short-term efforts underway in every jurisdiction in the region and that it is important for the Task Force to focus on the long term and to build a framework. Craig Pridemore agreed with Jordan. Kim Kimbrough argued that the short-term decisions will lead to long-term outcomes and that collaboration and coordination are necessary.

Ethan Seltzer commented that the Regional Partners are already doing a great job regarding short term economic development efforts and that the long term perspective is missing right now. Kimbrough said that it is also a matter of how the short term is defined and added that five years are long term. Bill Wyatt argued that there are risks involved in focusing just on the long term and that it is important to ask who sustains the long-term vision. Michael Jordan added that it is important to do both, long term and short term.

Seltzer reminded the Task Force that the Regional Partners incorporated as a non-profit organization recently and that it is important to give them very clear directions regarding the regional economic development strategy. Don Mazziotti said that the Task Force needs to identify critical issues for the Regional Partners and that this will help his organization, PDC, in focusing how to spend \$22 million on economic development. Steve Clark asked about ownership of the strategy efforts.

Seltzer summarized the discussion and said that two time scales, short term and long term, measurable outcomes, and public outreach are important. Don Mazziotti elaborated on the history of the Regional Partners and highlighted that many public organization such as the Portland Business Alliance, the Port of Portland, and Metro have joined. He also stated that there is a need for more direction in from of a strategy and implementation plan and to involve the private sector. Carl Talton commented that community development organizations also need to be included.

Seltzer said that staff and the Technical Advisory Committee to the taskforce would redraft the findings and principles for the Taskforce review. Staff will make suggestions regarding combining short and long term economic development efforts and the process for developing the strategy.

Next Steps

At the next meeting, the Taskforce take action on principles, the process and the organization of the regional economic development strategy. In May, the group will distill short- and long-term objectives.

Again, the final report of the Task Force will be adopted at its June meeting, thereby concluding the work of the group. Consequently, the Task Force currently will conclude its work in three more meetings. Task Force members are asked to make attendance at all of the next four meetings a priority. With good participation, a good product can be expected from this process.

Next Meeting

All MEPTF meetings take place on the second Tuesday of each month. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 6.30 pm to 9 pm, in Portland State University's Smith Memorial Student Union, Room 327.

Public Comment

John Castles gave the audience the opportunity to make public comment. No public comment was received. Castles closed the meeting at 9 pm.