



NEW YORK PLANNING FEDERATION

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June 18, 2007

To the members of the NYS Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you at last week's hearing. I stayed to hear the other speakers and your discussion that followed. This brought other thoughts to mind that I would like to share.

In your discussion, several of you expressed an interest in taking bold, new action but didn't feel as though you had heard any bold proposals, excepting David Rusk's proposal for county compacts. My proposal to transfer some of the traditional local planning authority from the municipality to the county follows right in line with Rusk's ideas. Let me expand on how that might work.

First, I would foresee the State developing minimal planning and zoning standards for municipalities. These standards would guide the majority of new growth and development into and adjacent to existing built areas with infrastructure and away from farmland and other open space areas. The standards would call for generally higher densities in developing areas and much lower densities in non-developing areas. They would call for clear and objective approval standards to streamline the development approval process. Existing State subsidies would need to be changed to favor development in priority development areas and public and private infrastructure providers should be required as well to direct new infrastructure to these areas. Other legislative changes are needed as well as described in my letter of June 12, 2007.

Second, the State would provide adequate funding and direct all counties to develop growth management plans in conjunction with municipalities that include and map 1) priority development areas and 2) priority open space areas. Some land areas would not fall into either of these categories. This would be a cooperative, intermunicipal process. Municipalities would continue to be responsible for deciding the appropriate planning and zoning for the priority development and open space areas so long as they are consistent with the State's minimal standards. Greater flexibility would exist for municipalities to plan and zone for non-priority lands. Incentives, such as the sharing of revenues for parks, roads and infrastructure, could be granted by counties or the State.

I believe that this is what David Rusk means by "inter-governmental collaboration" for greater regional effectiveness. He stressed that going after greater service efficiency such as joint police or fire departments, etc. is *not enough* to build greater competitiveness. Yet service efficiency was the subject of much testimony and much of the subsequent staff contribution to the later discussion at the table. I urge you to make *greater regional effectiveness* your primary goal. If you do, you will find that greater service efficiency will naturally follow in that there will be a logical framework for growth in place to guide future service provision. Start with the big picture and work from there.

I have worked for the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development and its Statewide land use planning program with its 19 goals and guidelines, as well as the Lancaster County, PA, planning department, where I was responsible for the development of the growth management plan there. I've also been in the private sector, where I worked with municipalities to develop local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Experience tells me that many New York municipalities would be open to a more collaborative planning process if it provides them with greater planning effectiveness. I see part of the Commission's task being educating citizens and local officials on the benefits of regional planning as well as the high costs of continuing on the fragmented path we're on.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if I can help in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Daniels".

Katherine H. Daniels, AICP
Senior Planner