



The Rearview Mirror and the Road Ahead

Regional Economic Developers Reflect on Where They Have Been and Where They Are Going

The Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, the economic development marketing affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, recently asked its 10-county economic development partners to share insight and maybe some hindsight about business investment and the economy's growth - at the county and regional levels - looking through the rearview mirror at 2016 and at the road ahead and where it might be taking them, their counties and our region in 2017 and beyond.





1 What do you count as the most strategically significant (not necessarily the largest in size or investment dollars) economic development-related deal or activity in your county in 2016 and why?

“Shell Pennsylvania Chemical’s commitment to – and continued development of – its Potter Township site is the most significant activity. It provides a strategic direction and an impact that can influence the direction of Beaver County and region for generations to come.”

- Jim Palmer, Beaver County

“The FedEx Distribution Center on Tomlinson Road in Jackson Township. A phased opening started on Aug. 5 after approximately three years of project planning and construction of a new intersection on Route 528. Encompassing more than 320,000 square feet, the center will employ some 230 people, 90 of whom are new FedEx employees. The remaining 140 employees transferred from other FedEx facilities in the greater Pittsburgh area.”

- Ken Raybuck, Butler County

“The Windy Ridge Business & Technology Park is our most strategically significant economic development-related project in Indiana County. The project reached significant milestones in 2016 with the completion of Phase II (pad-ready sites with all utilities, stormwater, fiber optics, etc.) and the completion of off-site highway improvements (e.g., widening, dual lane traffic signals) to State Route 286, which provides easy access on and off of US 422 and US 119. Engineering and permitting for Phase III is underway and bidding and construction will begin in this spring.”

- Byron Stauffer, Indiana County

“On May 1, 2016, Lawrence County’s Jameson Health System and UPMC announced their merger, which preserved several hundred jobs and saved our county’s largest healthcare provider. UPMC will invest \$75 million to develop services and facilities in our community and provide an additional \$10 million dedicated to physician recruitment for expansion of clinical advancements in the region.”

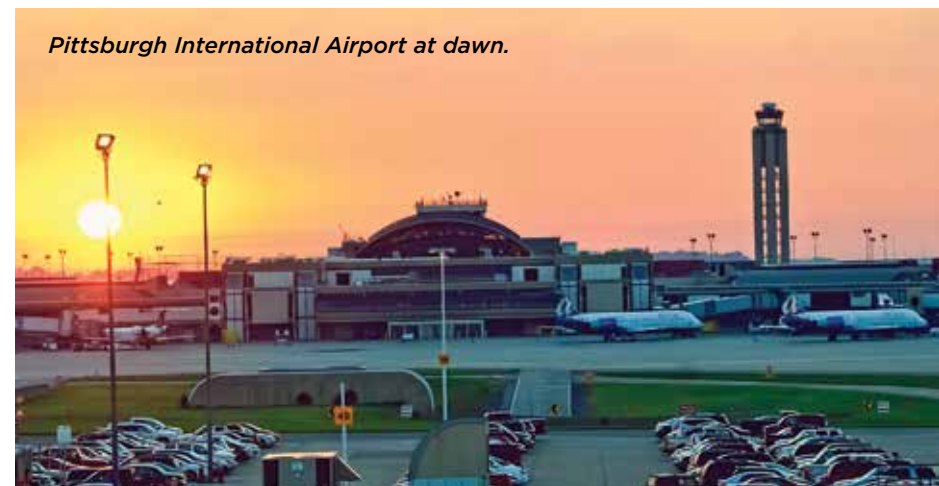
- Linda Nitch, Lawrence County

“The decision by Involta, LLC to locate its new multi-tenant data center in Northpointe. This investment, after many months of site selection due diligence, has helped to raise awareness of the infrastructure and locational benefits of Northpointe. This is especially true for tech companies needing extreme bandwidth and access to Pittsburgh.”

- Michael Coonley, Armstrong County

“Over the past two years, the Pittsburgh International Airport has increased its nonstop destinations 80 percent to include 68 markets, and in January 2017 it was named Airport of the Year for 2016 by *Air Transport* magazine. The growth of our airport is certainly a testimony to the incredible work that the team at the Allegheny County Airport Authority is doing, but it’s also recognition of the work of the economic development partners and agencies, corporate partners and others are doing together within southwestern Pennsylvania to attract and grow business investment all over our region.”

- Bob Hurley, Allegheny County



Pittsburgh International Airport at dawn.

“Approximately 50 PTC software development jobs in downtown Uniontown were retained by the revitalization of a former VFW recreational hall into a state-of-the-science business center. In addition to retaining jobs, there is now potential to attract additional PTC or other job investment to remaining space in the building. The development also has created a new anchor for the western portal to downtown, which is spurring additional revitalization efforts in that area.”

- Bob Shark, Fayette County



Global software developer PTC's state-of-the-science business center in downtown Uniontown, Fayette County.



In Greene County, Mined Minds is training displaced coal miners to be computer coders.

2 Last year, the Allegheny Conference released a landmark report, *Inflection Point: Supply, Demand and the Future of Work in the Pittsburgh Region*, detailing a dramatically changing workforce – both in numbers and skill sets. What has your county done, is doing or planning to do to turn a regional workforce challenge into opportunity? What do you consider your county’s greatest workforce asset(s) to be and why?

“Greene County is partnering with neighboring Fayette County to form a manufacturing consortium to assist manufacturers in both counties in connecting with workforce and job retraining groups, educators and other key players including Pitt’s and St. Vincent College’s Small Business Development Centers, Catalyst Connection, Innovation Works and the [federal government’s] “Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization” (POWER) Initiative. The latter helps communities, formerly with coal-focused economies, find their way forward. Greene County’s workforce strength is turning out employees who are skilled with their hands and show up for work.”

- Don Chappel, Greene County

“The Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) is transforming its workforce training division into a quality-driven, sales-oriented enterprise that will work closely with the area’s employers and economic development officials. The Center for Professional Development is becoming the trainer of choice for southwestern Pennsylvania for many industries. In order to help accelerate the region’s economic development, CCAC is working with regional players to forecast which hard and soft skills employees will need, and it’s retooling programs to meet that forecast.”

- Bob Hurley, Allegheny County

“*Inflection Point* showed us – by giving a deeper dive into data and the facts – that there’s a true story of huge employment opportunity across the region and across all our industry sectors, but we must prepare for it. In the county, educators are responding by working with each other, as well as with educators in the region to expand STEAM curriculum. We are also spreading the word with our manufacturers and other businesses. Workers here are availing themselves of a premier coding boot camp, Mined Minds, and their participation is proving, beyond a doubt, that the occupational, safety and dependable team skills of our energy workforce lend themselves to a natural transition to the technologies that drive our industries and opportunities of the future.”

- Robbie Matesic, Greene County

3 What is one of your top priorities for your county, relative to economic development, in 2017 and why?

“We need to identify the next generation of site development opportunities. All the obvious locations are developed or are under development. The lack of supply is anticipated to be an issue in the mid- to long-term.”

- Jim Palmer, Beaver County

“Butler County is going through a transition year wherein it’s hiring for a new county position: chief of economic development. The individual in this position will coordinate and focus on economic development activities within county departments. The new hire will work with all organizations providing economic development related services, such as the Butler County IDA, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, CDC, and Tourism to form a strategic plan for economic development in the county. At the same time, CDC will complete a search and select a new executive director to replace me because I will be retiring at the end of June.”

- Ken Raybuck, Butler County

“Our top priority is getting Lawrence County ready – in a hurry – to properly take advantage of any opportunities that will become available because of Shell’s ethane cracker being located near our southernmost border. Workforce, greenfield sites, existing facilities and more must be made ready as soon as possible considering the boon that is now upon us.”

- Linda Nitch, Lawrence County

“Our region has an abundance of great human and natural resources, as well as premier institutions focused on driving advancements in new technology and manufacturing. During the past decade, Greene County witnessed a major industry shift to non-conventional energy extraction which demonstrated the unparalleled ingenuity and business savvy of many people right here. In 2017 we will continue to seek out our most innovative individuals and dedicate every resource available to their success.”

- Robbie Matesic, Greene County



International plastics packaging manufacturer Retal’s regional headquarters and production plant in Donora, Washington County.

“Affordable housing, infrastructure and transit improvements, business expansion and attraction. Pittsburgh has the opportunity to be a place for all to have well-paying jobs, great housing and ease of mobility from home to work to recreation. If Pittsburgh misses the mark on any of these fronts then it will not have fully recognized its opportunity to be truly world-class.”

- Tom Link, Pittsburgh

“A three-pronged strategic emphasis in 2017 is a top priority. 1. Business start-up: establish a business accelerator focused on the AgTech sector. (Address lack of a current entrepreneurial ecosystem by focusing on an undeveloped niche market for Fayette County.) 2. Business expansion: expand loan activity. (Put more low-cost money in the hands of local small businesses to facilitate expedited growth.) 3. Business attraction: implement a targeted marketing campaign to augment recently completed business park sites.”

- Bob Shark, Fayette County

MA'AT Construction Group, along with Bridgeway Capital, assembled a contract team with 85 percent minority contractor participation for repurposing of 7800 Susquehanna St. in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood.



4 How important is regional partnership to economic development success in your county and what do you count among your best partnership assets/allies for achieving success. Can you share a particular memory or reflection about a project when partnership moved the needle?

“The Washington County Commissioners, Washington County Chamber of Commerce and county economic development agencies are all committed to providing a coordinated and single point of contact for companies interested in expanding and locating to the county. We are very proud of the success we achieve by working together. We are also fortunate to have regional and state agencies that share our customer-focused philosophy. For instance, we coordinated – with the Mon Valley Alliance (MVA), another regional agency – on the international Retail project in Donora. It was, and is, great to work with agencies that share our vision and focus.”

– Jeff Kotula, Washington County

“Beaver County growth must be part of regional growth. To the extent that any of us grows without the region growing only means our success has occurred at the expense of our neighbors. The Shell project partnership was successful and clearly moved the needle. The unparalleled and selfless commitment of elected officials and public and nonprofit agencies at all levels sent a clear message to Shell about the ability of this region to work together to achieve results.”

– Jim Palmer, Beaver County

“Although certainly not an exclusive, the Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP) is one example of a partnership/network that includes multiple private and public sector economic development professionals. If someone in my organization does not know the answer or doesn't have the specific expertise needed for a given project, we are able to reach out to this network for assistance.”

– Michael Coonley, Armstrong County

“By definition, regional partnerships erase boundaries and emphasize the common ground among us in critical infrastructure and institutional development. The new opportunities in an emerging petrochemical manufacturing industry and its value chain are without precedent, and the region's dedicated effort to make this opportunity a reality is a great example of partnering. Southwestern Pennsylvania's elected officials, planning, policy, economic development agencies, and private sector are aligned like never before.”

– Robbie Matesic, Greene County

“Local government cannot achieve economic development success in a vacuum. We rely on our partnerships with local academia, the Allegheny Conference/Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, tech-based economic development, state and federal partners and our corporate and philanthropic community to achieve success. Our working relationships across all of these are paramount to success. For example, 7800 Susquehanna in Homewood was developed by Bridgeway Capital with financing support from the URA's Federal New Markets Tax Credit affiliate Pittsburgh Urban Initiatives, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, PNC Bank, and the state's RACP program.”

– Tom Link, Pittsburgh



7800 Susquehanna Street creates a stable economic core in Homewood that encourages commercial activity through its tenants, such as the craft business Urban Tree.

“Westmoreland County has always had strong and collaborative partnerships with our other county-based organizations such as the Economic Growth Connection, the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce and numerous other agencies and service providers. However, over the past few years we've had the opportunity to develop a stronger working relationship and partnership through the PREP program – specifically with the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission, Catalyst Connection and other county-based economic development organizations across the region. Additionally, the Westmoreland County IDC has built a strong partnership with the RIDC. This relationship is project-specific to redevelopment of the former Sony Technology Center. This 2.8 million-square-foot regional asset requires the strength and attributes of both organizations to ensure its success.”

– Jason Rigone, Westmoreland

“The county's best partnership is with the St. Vincent Small Business Development Center in Latrobe. It is a true symbiosis in terms of lead generation and development, and it runs the gamut from business plan concept to new small business establishment and subsequent growth.”

– Bob Shark, Fayette County

5 What is better about the economic development/business investment climate in the region now, versus 10 years ago? Conversely, what do hope will be improved within the next decade?

“Ten years ago we entered a deep recession in the U.S. and the world as a whole. But Butler County weathered the recession rather well and continued to build and grow. Our relative success was due to the strength and diversity of the county’s individual companies. We don’t rely on one particular industry or only a handful of companies. The county has a wide variety of manufacturing, management of companies, healthcare, retail and other industries supporting its economy. Maintaining this into the future will require execution of an economic strategy for the county, in order to compete for a decreasing amount of state and other funds allocated to assisting companies looking to grow and expand here.”

- Ken Raybuck, Butler County

“Over the last decade we have focused our collective southwestern Pennsylvania assets under the umbrella of the term the “Pittsburgh Region.” In the coming decade – beginning in 2020 – a new highway will be completed from the south to the Pittsburgh International Airport corridor, the Shell petrochemical should be in full swing and a new generation of leaders will be emerging – placing even more emphasis on how we all stand to achieve even more when we’re banded together as one region.”

- Don Chappel, Greene County

“Our transportation network has been dramatically enhanced in the region. Although there are still challenges, it is easier to move people and goods from place to place. Fiber optic investments have also improved our opportunities, in particular in the rural segments of the region. There is only so much that can be addressed at the county and/or regional levels with regard to business investment climate, but I sense some optimism that in the coming years there will be: 1. federal tax policies addressed for businesses and individuals; 2. trade agreement renegotiated to encourage U.S. reinvestment back into manufacturing; and 3. the easing of regulation on top of regulation so as not to diminish the environmental gains in air and water quality, but to allow more companies to comply and compete.”

- Byron Stauffer, Indiana County



FedEx's Distribution Center in Jackson Township, Butler County.

“The shale gas industry has grown to provide an abundant domestic energy source and has been a game-changer for Washington County, the region and the country. Our economic successes, coupled with a need to move products to market, have attracted hundreds of millions of dollars of investments in infrastructure construction. These include projects to replace and repair the locks on the Monongahela River, the reconstruction of Interstate 70, the construction of the Southern Beltway, pipeline projects and numerous utility company projects. This activity has enabled us to maintain and grow a diverse economy that includes strong energy, healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture and financial services sectors. A diverse economy, excellent location, low taxes and great infrastructure has positioned Washington County for continued success for decades to come.”

- Jeff Kotula, Washington County

“National developers are now willing to view the region as a place of opportunity, and this interest has created value locally. With the growth of the urban core, the outlying counties can feed off that positive buzz and energy. And with companies such as Google and Uber continuing to invest in R&D and technology in Pittsburgh via their academic partnerships with CMU and Pitt, manufacturing opportunities are coming to life in nearby, but more cost-competitive locations, such as Westmoreland County. The Aquion Energy investment is a case in point.”

- Jason Rigone, Westmoreland County



The Southern Beltway: a critical piece of regional transportation infrastructure in the works.



6 BONUS QUESTION: If you were a fan of “Mad Men,” you’ll likely recall Don Draper’s concept – “New York: Oh Little Town of Bethlehem” – for a Bethlehem Steel campaign the Sterling Cooper agency was trying to land. When considering economic development marketing, the product that we’re selling in southwestern Pennsylvania is “10 counties, 1 region.”

Channeling your inner “Mad Men,” what would be the headline on an ad you’re charged with creating to market our product – the region?

“Southwestern PA has workers, not employees. Build your company here with hands that work and minds that think.”
– Ken Raybuck, Butler County

“Southwestern Pennsylvania: not afraid to put all our eggs in one basket! 10 Counties, 1 Call.”
– Linda Nitch, Lawrence County

“All for one and one for all; together the Pittsburgh region succeeds.”
– Don Chappel, Greene County

“We’re making again – like never before.”
– Robbie Matesic, Greene County

“Pittsburgh: put your money to work and find peace of mind.”
– Tom Link, Pittsburgh

“Pittsburgh: Midwestern values embodied in Silicon Valley swag.”
– Bob Hurley, Allegheny County

“The Southwest Pennsylvania Region – Focused on your success!”
– Byron Stauffer, Indiana County

Who's Who



Don Chappel, Executive Director, Greene County Industrial Development Corporation



Michael Coonley, Executive Director, Armstrong County Department of Economic Development



Bob Hurley, Director of Economic Development, Allegheny County



Jeff Kotula, President, Washington County Chamber of Commerce



Tom Link, Director, Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh



Robbie Matesic, Executive Director of Economic Development, Greene County Department of Economic Development



Linda Nitch, Executive Director, Lawrence County Economic Development Corporation



Ken Raybuck, Executive Director, Butler County Community Development Corporation



Jason Rigone, Director of Planning and Development/Executive Director, Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation



Bob Shark, Executive Director, Fay-Penn Economic Development Council



Byron Stauffer, Executive Director, Indiana County Office of Planning and Development

Jim Palmer, President, Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development



Pittsburgh Regional Alliance

An affiliate of the Allegheny Conference

For responses to all of these questions from each of the PRA’s economic development partners, watch the PRA Blog at PittsburghRegion.org, starting the week of March 12.

We’ll feature one partner’s responses each week for 12 weeks!