

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

***GREATER PRINCE GEORGE'S BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE***



## A COMMUNITY FORUM

***REALIZING THE VISION:  
PRINCE GEORGE'S MOVES BEYOND  
PERCEPTION PAST***

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***GREATER PRINCE GEORGE'S  
BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE:  
COMMUNITY FORUM***  
**Realizing the Vision: Prince George's  
Moves Beyond Perception Past**

Prince George's Community College  
Largo, Maryland Campus  
Community Meeting Rooms  
October 17, 2003, 9am -12noon

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The first *Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable (GPGBR) Community Forum* was held on October 17, 2003 at the Prince George's Community College. Those speaking included: **Maryland Lieutenant Governor Michael Steele; GPGBR Chair Gary S. Murray, Sr.; GPGBR President and CEO M.H. Jim Estep; College President, Dr. Ronald Williams; County Executive Jack B. Johnson; County Council Vice Chair Tony Knotts; Maryland State Senator Ulysses Currie; States Attorney Glenn Ivey; Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Executive Director David Robertson; Brookings Institution Senior Fellow and Director of the Greater Washington Research Program, Alice Rivlin and County Council Member Thomas Hendershot.** These speakers addressed myriad opportunities within the county as well as challenges we face moving into the future. Attendees at the forum included: local, state and regional business; community; npo's; education; government and faith-based leaders.

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**GPGBR CEO Jim Estep** welcomed everyone to the *first GPGBR Community Forum* and provided an orientation for the days' activities. He thanked everyone for coming, acknowledging that it was remarkable that such a distinguished group could arrange schedules to attend the forum despite its rescheduling following Hurricane *Isabel*. He explained that GPGBR is composed of prominent county CEO's who work with county leaders such as those in the audience to

improve the political, economic and community environments of the county. As such, it was encouraging that such a diverse group could come together at this forum to connect and network while striving to make the county an even better place to live and work. Encouraged to work toward a common model for action, those in attendance could be empowered to enhance the economic development climate in our county as well as the quality of life for all county residents. In addition, GPGBR, as facilitator, will strive to bridge any gaps that exist between businesses, government, local elected officials, community groups and faith-based leaders.

This forum is only the beginning and will be followed by other mini-forums with smaller, focused groups of attendees planned countywide. Those will include all interested parties, as GPGBR serves as a facilitator, fleshing out major issues. CEO Estopp stressed how important networking and face-to-face dialogue can be in a busy environment with such diversity of opinion and priorities.

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**Maryland Lt. Governor Michael Steele** set the tone of the forum with his comment, “For the longest time we have lived under this cloud of its ‘PG’. Well, we are not ‘PG’. We are Prince Georgians who are very concerned about business and investment. We do business, and we do it damn well! And, it’s about time we share that with the state and the communities of this region.” He noted that the county should be a county of ascendancy, not decline, with tremendous opportunities to move forward, although with significant challenges to face.

The Roundtable can facilitate understanding of these challenges, bringing local and regional leaders together, to dialogue to determine and develop a viable plan to capitalize on the opportunities and remove barriers. Doing this requires more than touting that the county is the wealthiest African American County in the country, if not the world. Prince Georgians need to work together to achieve all the successes for small, medium and large businesses and the communities that they can. We can no longer separate local and regional business, county, community education and faith based opportunities and challenges. Since they are all interrelated, they must all be considered together.

The Lt. Governor stressed that he “will be there for us” and that he and the Governor view “what’s happening in the county as important to the state.” He also pledged to work to increase economic development opportunities and reduce the unnecessary burden that government often places on small and

medium-sized companies. Lt. Governor Steele was upbeat and very pro-business in his remarks.

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**GPGBR Chair Gary Murray**, after welcoming everyone to the forum, offered some background on the evolution, purpose and mission of GPGBR. He explained the need for all key players to meet to dialogue and remain connected with each other as well as with other key players throughout the county, state and region. He stressed the importance of sharing lessons learned from conducting one's own various businesses and brainstorming about better ways to do things. The connection between key players is essential to seize opportunities to better ourselves and therefore the county/community. Mr. Murray stated that GPGBR would facilitate this and make it happen. The Chair then introduced the members of the Board of Directors and wished everyone a successful and productive morning.

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**Community College President Dr. Ronald Williams** welcomed the group to the Largo campus and discussed the importance of this type of forum and the interaction of participants. He talked about the College and its role in the community and how it can be a strategic partner in both convening and facilitating large working groups. He emphasized the importance of higher education and how a trained work force can be a magnet for attracting corporate investment. He mentioned the mission of the College to be the "intellectual hub for the community."

In addition, President Williams discussed two case histories involving prominent business leaders giving back to the community. One was about **GPGBR Member Reginald Daniel, President & CEO of SES Corp.**, and how he and his employees assisted PGCC with the development and delivery of the five-course *Business Information Technology Management* certificate program. The impetus for this effort was the need for mid-level management to interact with and supervise information technology personnel. The other was about **GPGBR Member Mike Little, President & CEO of B & W Solutions**. His company partnered with a local school, Fort Foote Elementary, and persuaded other businesses to do the same. Together they were able to provide funding and support to the school. The U.S. Department of Education subsequently recognized Fort Foote as a *Blue Ribbon School of Excellence*.

Dr. Williams stated that “our goal is not only to provide high quality education, but also to be at the center of all conversations designed to improve the lives of the county’s citizens.” He pointed out that an alliance between business, education, the community-at-large, government and the faith community can achieve more than any single segment of the county going alone.

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**County Executive Jack B. Johnson** thanked the participants for caring enough to attend and for their willingness to meet challenges head-on. He specifically praised the GPGBR for its efforts and indicated that he and CEO Jim Estep are friends and colleagues working together.

He then provided an overview of the county, its advantageous location within the greater Washington-Baltimore corridor; its excellent transportation systems, initiatives and future plans; including several county programs which are designed to enhance opportunities for all.

He discussed the current crisis in the county hospital system. \*To alleviate the financial problems, he has made changes in the overall governance and management and appointed a review commission/panel to identify problems and solutions. County Executive Johnson acknowledged that the hospital badly needs an infusion of funds, but emphasized that he will not accept the state taking over control of the hospital and possibly even selling it. If the system is sold, he stressed that it will only be done if county citizens are assured of continued access to affordable healthcare. The county should continue to control the hospital because the county values its citizens and their needs. A healthy population can be productive and successful.

The Executive also stressed his “Livable Communities” Initiative and explained how its quality-of-life theme touches every aspect of governance. He stressed that government cannot meet all the challenges by itself and that business and the community at large must be engaged as well. He again thanked the GPGBR for initiating this forum and pledged to work with us to eliminate obstacles to business growth and investment in our county. He stressed that it was not the quantity of these opportunities but the quality that counts.

**\*Note: During her presentation, Director of the Greater Washington Research Program Alice Rivlin noted that Washington, DC has had similar problems with the closing of its hospital. She recommended Prince George’s County and Washington, DC, together explore the facts and needs of their communities and how they can best meet many health care challenges, especially those posed by residents who fall below the poverty line.**

**County Council Vice-Chair Tony Knotts** also praised the group for coming together to deal with some of the “complex challenges we face in the county.”

He described what is often an arcane legislative process by going through each of the prime steps that a bill or resolution must traverse. In doing so he pointed out how citizens and businesses can get involved if they are familiar with the process and have the perseverance to stay the course and inform elected officials of their views. The Vice-Chair indicated that he is pro-business and recognizes that without the jobs and revenue opportunities created by business and investment, we cannot achieve a vision for the county and meet service demands. He wants to remove obstacles where he can and create opportunities where there is consensus. Mr. Knotts indicated a strong willingness to work closely with the Roundtable and business in general to take advantage of our great strategic position in the region.

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**States Attorney Glenn Ivey** began by acknowledging that crime prevention presents a significant challenge to the county. He emphasized that Police Chief Melvin High administers an expanding Community Policing Program for the county, which puts more police on county streets in a higher profile community role. Having more police on the streets will lead to faster response times and better intervention/prevention he stated. In addition, States Attorney Ivey indicated he will expand this program concept, putting prosecutors into communities where crime problems are most significant to allow them to get a good grasp of whom the players are and who needs to be off the streets to lower crime.

Quite often, the most serious crimes are committed by a small percentage of criminals; and identifying and dealing with them can be extremely productive. In addition to vigorous enforcement, county judges need to ensure sentences are stiffer and cases are prosecuted more aggressively, especially with respect to violent crimes. Further, the county should look closer at a typical profile for those whose denominators often lead to violent crimes; struggles in school, frequent truancy, family history of substance abuse, domestic violence and life in the foster care system. Key players need to reach out to individuals who fit these denominators to prevent them from committing crimes.

States Attorney Ivey also stressed that we must develop a system of crime prevention similar to New York and others where the entire spectrum of law enforcement activity is focused. Small crimes, which can lead to larger ones, should be prosecuted as well. GPGBR provides an excellent forum in which to meet, discuss and brainstorm ways to satisfy the county's needs in Public Safety. However, he noted, county citizens must embrace volunteerism, to fill the gaps left by career/elected/appointed county residents. The county has very talented resources in its citizens, which, if marshaled together, can meet the crime problem head-on and help to solve it.

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**State Senator Ulysses Currie, Chair of the Budget & Taxation Committee** pointed out that, although the current state administration is Republican, as in similar governments nationwide, he is confident that the county and state can achieve great successes, as long as the spirit of bipartisanship prevails. However, everyone needs to be committed to working together for the good of the state and our respective communities regardless of party affiliation.

One looming issue the state, in particular, must resolve is the current fiscal crisis it faces. Costs within the state are rising steadily, and revenues are not increasing at similar rates. The current year's deficit could reach \$750 million and next year it could be over \$1 Billion. Based on discussions with state elected and appointed officials, Senator Currie expressed concern that many of the cuts that will undoubtedly be proposed for the next fiscal year's budget will adversely impact healthcare and education. In addition, there are definite transportation needs and issues that must be addressed as soon as possible. If cuts within healthcare, education and funding of transportation needs are deep, those most severely impacted will include individuals and families who fall at or below the poverty line. Both the state and county need to look at how to fund education costs as well as rising healthcare fees. He indicated that legalization of slot machines within the state is one method to improve revenue for "Thornton" and other vital needs. The upcoming session in 2004 will provide some significant challenges for state government, according to the Senator. \*\*

**\*\*Note: Throughout the forum, speakers, in addition to Senator Currie, focused on the importance of business, education, elected, community and faith-based leaders working together to capitalize on the region's human resources, and their values and abilities to resolve issues successfully.**

**COG Executive Director David Robertson** presented an overview of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and those programs which can assist the region in their needs. Regionalism is the secret to our success; and within Prince George's County, GPGBR can facilitate bringing stakeholders together for dialogue and visioning as COG does regionally. With representation from 18 local governments, COG provides a broad, powerful voice as well as a way for all participants to gather and share information and data so they can focus on issues every community faces, working together to find and implement solutions. In the past, members have worked closely, meeting the region's challenges, from synchronization of traffic lights to developing a method to improve traffic flow throughout and within the area. The establishment of a comprehensive framework for developing a Regional Homeland Security and Disaster Preparedness Plan was a major undertaking by COG that has proven extremely valuable in preparing the area for possible terrorist attacks.

COG's issues are every community's issues. For example:

- The environment (including air and water quality)
- Healthcare

Access to federal funds for such things as, improved:

- Transportation maintenance and planning
- Wise and efficient use of water
- Emergency preparedness; for weather related events or homeland security
- Public health issues such as West Nile Virus and HIV/AIDS
- Adoption
- Foster care and stability for children and families
- Access to affordable housing requirements to support a broad range of multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-financial needs

Because it involves all the key players from communities within the region, COG, can enhance planning and forecasting regional growth and economic or other development. COG maximizes its resources and pools ideas and experiences to change communities for the better while cutting across jurisdictional boundaries. Some of the area's most important compacts have been developed and implemented through COG's consensus building system.

**Alice M. Rivlin, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and Director of the Brookings Greater Washington Research Program**, presented information on Prince George's County and the region based on the 2000 Census. She particularly emphasized that Prince George's County shares a number of issues and challenges with Washington, D.C. and encouraged the two jurisdictions to work together to address such issues as affordable housing, access to healthcare and workforce development.

The Washington region is dynamic, growing and generally prosperous. The region grew from 4.2 million in 1990 to nearly 5 million in 2000. Prince George's County is part of that growth, increasing its population from about 730,000 in 1990 to approximately 800,000 in 2000.

In addition to noting the county's growth in population, Ms. Rivlin recognized Prince George's as a diverse and changing jurisdiction. Pointing out the increasing African-American and immigrant populations and decreasing white population, the following figures were provided:

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>% change</u>
<b><u>Prince George's</u></b>			
Whites	303,149	194,836	-36%
Blacks	366,114	498,301	36%
Latinos	28,927	57,057	97%
Asians	27,298	31,121	14%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>729,268</b>	<b>801,515</b>	<b>9.9%</b>

( **NOTE:** Totals don't equal the sum of the categories because some classified themselves as "multi-racial" or "other.")

**In 1990, 9.5% of the population in Prince George's County (69,809) was foreign-born, a figure that grew to 14% (110,481) in 2000.** Top immigrant groups in the county include those from El Salvador, Mexico, Jamaica, Guatemala, Nigeria, Ghana and India. Areas with high concentrations of immigrants are mostly clustered near the county borders with Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. These areas include Adelphi, Langley Park, Chillum, Greenbelt and East Riverdale.

While Prince George's has a substantial number of immigrants, other suburban jurisdictions in the region have higher numbers. In Alexandria, Montgomery County and Arlington County, more than one-quarter of the population is foreign-born. Fairfax County is just shy of the one-quarter mark. The District has a similar percentage to Prince George's in terms of its population that is foreign-born (13%).

Ms. Rivlin also presented Census data on the movement of people in and out of the county between 1995 – 2000 that shows high levels of movement between Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County. **Almost 40,000 people from Washington, D.C. moved to Prince George's County from 1995-2000 and about 14,000 Prince George's residents moved to the District, for a net gain of about 26,000 to Prince George's from the District.**

However, the preponderance of those moving from Washington into the county had at least a high school education, and many had bachelors degrees, which helped offset the number of county residents with higher education who moved out of the county during this time. Ms. Rivlin stated, however, that more individuals with high school and college degrees moved out of the county than in during the period.

**The Brookings Greater Washington Research Program will be releasing a report in 2004 that examines the population flows in and out of Prince George's County in more detail.**

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**County Councilman Tom Hendershot** spoke briefly about the results of a Potomac Research Poll commissioned by the *Business-Education Alliance* last summer. The survey indicated that *Education* is the number one issue to most county citizens by a rather large margin. The survey, according to Councilman Hendershot, also revealed that residents would support a modification of *T.R.I.M.* (Tax Reform in Maryland) if they knew the money would go directly to improve and enhance education initiatives. However Mr. Hendershot indicates that most residents surveyed did not believe that officials would direct the money exclusively to education if additional funds were authorized by the voters. Clearly, he said, confidence must be restored in governments' ability to solve problems and raise revenues to meet service needs.

**A Panel**, consisting of: Schools Chief Executive Officer Andre Hornsby, Alice Rivlin, David Robertson, President Ron Williams, and Councilman Tom Hendershot fielded random questions from the audience.

The questions were varied, but the majority concerned educational issues. Such as: What are the school budget priorities? How are we dealing with a school budget deficit? How do we find ways to secure additional funding? Questions about school personnel assignments were also raised. At least one participant asked about the inter-county connector and whether it would ever be built. Some questions were also raised on the viability of modifying TRIM and whether such an effort would be launched in the near future. No consensus on that issue emerged. At least one question on the pace of growth and the adequacy of the residential fee structure for school construction was asked. One participant asked; "is the money being used for its intended purpose?" Answers by panelists were varied and not unexpected in some cases. Most audience participants agreed that more time should be allotted to this segment in the future with elected officials remaining to participate in the panel discussion.

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**CEO Jim Estepp** summarized the days' activities and the reasons for meeting. He indicated that the dialogue would continue with GPGBR continuing to sponsor these types of sessions in the future. He explained that a summary of the day's presentations would be distributed in the near future and that a series of mini-forums would be held throughout the county using the information gleaned from this meeting as the basis for discussion. More Q&A would be programmed into those subsequent meetings and the number of attendees at each session would be small to facilitate detailed discussion. From these sessions a consensus should begin to form on a vision for the county which would help to provide a basis for public policy initiatives, and enhanced cooperation among groups and government.

Mr. Estepp suggested that our goal would be to not only have a more unified county but to help develop a base of *civic entrepreneurs* as envisioned by the Book "*Grassroots Leaders for a New Economy*". These individuals would be the *Influentials* that could provide the leadership and direction to assist government and business to improve the county's revenue opportunities and meet service demands. Such a coalition has never been fully developed and implemented in our county, he stressed. Consequently, a minority of opinion usually captures the headlines and dictates, by default, the policies that govern most of our decision making. This process is often flawed and its results are a mixed bag

with no vision and focus for the greater good. Prince Georgians deserve better, Mr. Estepp stressed.

The session ended at 12:15 p.m.

Approximately 300 individuals attended the forum

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This report was written by Kathy Talley and M. H. Jim Estepp.

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