

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

A national, nonprofit, membership organization
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Note for reporters: During the event, please check in at the conference registration desk at the Key Ballroom Foyer of the Baltimore Hilton Hotel to obtain a media credential.

Taking the lead in building great communities

Policymakers from around the country gather to share innovations and successes in creating more livable and sustainable communities

Local elected officials are charged with making some of the most difficult and important decisions about how cities and counties grow and change. Faced with the challenge of addressing critical issues such as shrinking budgets and scarce resources, public health and safety, access to transit and affordable housing, climate-change impacts, and so much more – policymakers need access to practical tools, strategies and resources that can help them make the right decisions for their communities.

“Because the majority of decision-making about land use and transportation planning occurs at the local level, elected officials and staff play an essential role in creating vibrant, equitable communities. By providing a range of transportation and housing choices and assuring access to good food, jobs and recreation, local policymakers can create resilient communities that are built for everyone,” said Kate Meis, executive director of the Local Government Commission, which is organizing the conference.

More than 1,200 participants are expected at the New Partners for Smart Growth conference in Baltimore this week (Jan. 29-31). In addition to state and local officials from around the country, the speaker lineup includes federal agency officials from the EPA, FEMA, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as the departments of transportation, housing and urban development, and agriculture. Dozens of local and state staffers from Vermont to Florida to California, representing every discipline imaginable, will also be on-hand to share successes, new innovations and lessons learned from their communities’ recent initiatives.

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

As developers and investors begin to reemerge from recession dormancy, local governments are working to breathe new life into their communities. Local elected officials across the country are now grappling to find the right developer, location and financing to get projects in the ground and struggling to assure that the development benefits, and doesn’t displace, community members.

The pre-conference workshop on “**Light after the Storm: Strategies for Revitalization after the Recession**” (Jan. 28) offers a candid conversation about models for assuring that development provides equal access to local jobs and affordable housing, while managing displacement as communities work to revitalize their economies and neighborhoods in ways that ensure existing residents will enjoy the benefits of that renaissance.

As public servants, local leaders are driven to seek the best deal that will return good public value in terms of equity, economics, sustainability and quality of life. But local government can’t do it alone. Developers and investors play a critical role in building great communities. During the workshop, infill developers and other private-sector leaders will talk about the key factors that attract or detract private investment, and how they evaluate market readiness and what risks to take when going into a community.

The market has been consistently saying yes to vibrant, walkable communities, and this development approach offer big returns in revitalization, sustainability and fiscal stability. In this session, experts and leaders will share their insights and experience in how to line up the financing portfolio for compact, infill and transit oriented projects. Value capture, land subsidies, bonding, and leveraging existing funding pools can all help your community go from concept to construction to ribbon cutting.

Workshop speakers include Washington, DC, Mayor Muriel Bowser, Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Councilmember Bill Henry, Tom Murphy, former mayor of Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia mayor Michael Nutter (invited).

POLICYMAKING PLENARIES

Our health, safety and prosperity are threatened unless policymakers and businesses take immediate action to respond to and reduce climate risk. The "**Building Resilience in the Face of Climate Risks**" plenary will highlight innovative public-private solutions and discuss how businesses, governments and communities can work together to become more resilient. Joel Beauvais, Associate Administrator of the U.S. EPA's Office of Policy; Harriet Tregoning, Economic Resilience Director at the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development; Kate Dineen, NY Rising Community Reconstruction Program Director for the New York Governor's Office of Storm Recovery; and Pam O'Connor, Mayor of Santa Monica, CA.

To conclude the conference, Hoboken, NJ, Mayor Dawn Zimmer will deliver the closing keynote with an uplifting message about climate resiliency as she recounts Hoboken's experience before and after Superstorm Sandy, the progress they have made and the barriers that remain.

The new openness about making City information more widely available has allowed entrepreneurial residents to create apps that track crime, map abandoned property, find the closest transit stop with real-time arrival predictions, identify city parks, and find real-time information on parking availability and prices. With limited cost to municipalities, local governments are employing the ingenuity and creativity to help improve the lives of community residents, visitors and businesses through use of technology.

In the plenary on "**Open Data + Civic Hackers = New Technology for Age-Old Problems**," Sacramento, CA, Councilmember and Thom Guertin, Rhode Island's Chief Digital Officer, will detail their open-data initiatives that have bred new community solutions.

ELECTED OFFICIALS SCHEDULE IN OTHER POLICYMAKING SESSIONS

At the half-day workshop on "Equitable Development: Tools and Strategies for Making a Visible Difference in Communities" will feature a panel that includes Gaithersburg, MD, Councilmember Mike Sesma, South Carolina State Representative Harold Mitchell, Jr., and Pennsylvania State Representative Dwight Evans.

In a session on "Rising from the Storm: Turning Devastation into Opportunity for All," Linn County Supervisor Linda Langston will describe recovering from an Iowa flood that displaced 10,000 people, with the greatest impacts being felt among socially at-risk groups. In a related session on "Delivering Equity in Economic Development," Denver Councilmember Robin Kniech and Brooklyn Councilmember Mark Treyger will share how they were able to build meaningful equity and accountability measures into revitalization projects like Hurricane Sandy relief.

Philadelphia Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr. will discuss efforts to deal crime and violence and crime in his city in another Thursday session.

Seminole County, FL, Commissioner Robert Dallari and Washtenaw County, MI, Commissioner Conan Smith will share their innovative strategies for retrofitting and redesigning suburban communities through targeted transit investments, coordinated planning and partnerships with anchor institutions.

Little Rock, AR, Mayor Mark Stodola will talk about efforts to integrate arts investments and smart-growth policy as a way of energizing neighborhoods, downtowns and rural Main Streets.

Small cities and rural areas often have very different growth and development issues from their big-city cousins – but their zoning codes are often drawn from the same templates. In "Saving the World through Zoning: Small-Town Success Stories," Derry Township, PA, Boardmember Sandy Ballard and Campbell, NY, Supervisor David Tennent will share their experiences in tailoring their towns' zoning codes to promote smart growth at the small city and rural scale.

With another small-town perspective, Salisbury, MD, City Council President Jake Day and Edmonston, MD, Mayor Tracy Farrish Gant share examples of how implementing smart growth and catering to a shifting demographic of Millennials is not just for big cities anymore.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE: With a dynamic mix of over 300 speakers and 80 sessions, the New Partners for Smart Growth conference will draw a national audience of more than 1,200 elected officials and government agency leaders as well as developers, builders, bankers, realtors, and advocates and professionals in planning, transportation, public health, landscape architecture, architecture, housing, parks and recreation, public works, crime prevention, education and the environment. For a full list of sponsors and more details about the conference agenda and special features: NewPartners.org

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