Transforming Suburbs into Economically Vibrant Communities with Opportunity for All

The Metro Detroit Experience
About Metro Detroit

• Highly fragmented: seven counties, more than 300 cities, village and townships, hundreds more school districts and public authorities

• Essentially, a 50-mile arc around Detroit, from SSW to NE

• 4.8 million people – half of Michigan’s population

• A third of the population lives in built-out inner-ring suburbs close to the City of Detroit

Transforming Suburbs

January 29, 2015

New Partners for Smart Growth
Our Key Challenges

- Economic decline and recovery: Detroit’s bankruptcy made headlines, but many others have been in emergency management
- Racial segregation and cultural migration
- Concentration of poverty and its social and fiscal consequences
- Equitable and sustainable redevelopment
The Essential Question

How does a built-out city revitalize in a weak economy?

- Everything costs money we don’t have . . . planning, brownfield redevelopment, Main Street maintenance, transit, etc. . .
- That money comes from a strong tax base . . .
- Tax base growth depends on property market competition . . .
- That competition depends on a robust jobs environment
Solution #1: Focus on Talent

• “Talent” is about every worker and potential worker.

• Communities need to understand the macro trends in their regional economies to address talent needs and opportunities.

• Limited government funds should be strategically allocated to gin up strengths, even more than compensating for weaknesses.
Case Studies and Examples

Asking How Transportation Serves a Talent Agenda

Regional surveys of employers, workers and job seekers in priority industry clusters to understand their needs and desires for both form and function.

- M-1 Rail and Woodward Bus Rapid Transit
- A Regional Transit Authority to Connect Residential and Employment Centers
- New Mobility Planning to Expand the Boundaries of the Region’s Transportation Economy
Case Studies and Examples

Sharing Resources for a Clean Power Transformation

Regional Energy Office creates a unique joint planning, finance, implementation arm for cities to be cleaner, greener and running cheaper.

• Joint authority to finance projects

• Shared cost-savings for administration and project management

• A regional message about the importance of cleantech
Case Studies and Examples

Other Talent-Oriented Regional Smart Growth Approaches

- Rethinking adult education deliver on a metro scale

- Losing our parochialism and moving services to the right level
  (government is a big employer and the best talent wants to do big things . . . so aggregate to empower)

- Shared placemaking investments in regional assets: the Detroit Zoo, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Cobo Center