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## Region Seen as NJ's Growth Driver

By Eric Peterson

ATLANTIC CITY—"The major growth in New Jersey is going to happen here. We are the driver, and it's all private money. We are into economic development--we can be the impetus."

The speaker was Tom Carver, executive director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, a state agency that, by statute, invests casino-generated money into development projects around the state. The audience, here yesterday, was a conference on Southeast New Jersey's economy co-sponsored by PlanSmart NJ, a Trenton-based regional planning organization, and Richard Stockton College.

Despite the rosy growth outlook, "we are faced with a dynamic, proactive private sector, but an inactive public sector," Carver told the audience of planners, government officials and others. "If we don't take the next step and become a true international resort, we will not succeed vs. the competition around us. We need a system to make it happen," he said, pointing to such challenges as a transportation master plan, housing and home rule.

And besides casino/resort development, one of the focal points for that growth figures to be Atlantic City International Airport. Emphasizing that potential, Sharon Gordon of the South Jersey Transportation Authority, which operates the airport, pointed out that the land area occupied by the facility is the equivalent of all of Philadelphia and Newark Liberty international airports, plus 60% of LaGuardia Airport all rolled into one.

"We are trying to be a solution to the region's capacity problems," she said, pointing at an effort to woo passengers from Philadelphia and Newark, but admitting that AC International is underserved. Just two airlines, Spirit and Delta, currently have scheduled service there.

But preparing to pave the way for future growth in service, Gordon listed a number of expansion projects at the facility totaling more than \$130 million. She also pointed out that AC International, with its 10,000-foot runways, is an alternate landing site for NASA's space shuttle. The runway system is also shared with a wing of the famed New Jersey Air National Guard, which has its installation on the opposite side of the sprawling property.

"We believe that we are a catalyst for economic development," Gordon said, specifically noting the amount of land under the authority's aegis.

But with rapid growth come concerns about regional planning and controlling sprawl. Noting that her organization is involved with solving such problems as job losses, traffic, urban distress, increasing costs and taxes, crumbling infrastructure and more, "all these issues are not just interconnected," Dianne Brake, president of host PlanSmart NJ told attendees. "They're inseparable. And land-use planning underlies all of these conditions."

In the absence of clear goals at the state and regional level adding, "that's the agenda for this organization," she said. "Coordination is the key, and we must plan for it all, pulling it all together under the 'smart growth' agenda," Brake said.

The basis, according to Brake, is what she termed "4-E Planning." The four "E's" are economy, environment, efficiency and equity, the latter referring to social justice.

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