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## **Government Officials and Urban Experts Call For Mass Transit and Zoning Changes to enhance the Competitiveness and Sustainability of American Cities**

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Over 150 attendees came to “The Competitiveness and Sustainability of American Cities and Regions,” a panel discussion among key government officials and urban experts sponsored by the Penn Institute for Urban Research (Penn IUR) and the National Building Museum on May 21, 2009.

Derek Douglas, Special Assistant to President Obama for Urban Affairs, kicked off the session. He pointed out that China, India, and the European Union have all invested in their urban infrastructure and asserted, “if we want to maintain our leadership in the world, we need to make a similar commitment to our cities and regions.” He outlined several principles to guide such investments: reinforcing cities as the anchors of regions, approaching urban issues with interdisciplinary urban policy, following clearly defined goals to guide policy, and allowing change to come from the bottom-up by giving cities and metros more flexibility in shaping policy. Visit [www.upenn.edu/penniur](http://www.upenn.edu/penniur) to download a copy of Derek Douglas’ speech.

Several national experts followed, offering examples of how their cities are making changes in their policies and practices to become more sustainable and competitive.

Harriet Tregoning, DC Planning Director, spoke about how the District is enhancing its rich supply of non-car transportation alternatives. The current infrastructure enables 46 percent of the city's residents to travel to work and school by bike, bus, rail or metro, placing it the second behind New York in use of mass transit. In order to accommodate the expected population growth, DC plans on expanding and enhancing its non-car modes of transportation and implementing high-density zoning at transit stops.

Marina Khoury, Director, Town Planning, Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co., is the project director for Miami 21, an initiative to rewrite Miami's current zoning code into the largest-known application of form-based code. She spoke about how Miami 21 emphasizes building form over land use as a means to integrate sustainability at all scales.

Andrew Altman, Deputy Mayor for Planning and Development of Philadelphia, introduced the city's new Greenworks plan. The goal for Greenworks is to make “Philadelphia the greenest city in America” and the plan outlines 15 specific targets with measurable results to achieve by 2015 to reach that goal. One of the

targets is to double the number of low- and high-skilled green jobs in the city by 2015 from 14,400 green workers to 28,800 green workers.

Robert Yaro, President of the Regional Plan Association, focused on the necessity of developing a comprehensive regional rail system with high speed rail at its center. He noted that the US was well behind the rest of the world, including China, Japan, France, Spain and England who have already invested in these systems.

Paul Farmer, President of the American Planning Association, highlighted the need for higher residential and commercial densities to support the public transportation initiatives necessary for sustainable and competitive cities.

The William Penn Foundation provided partial funding for the event as part of its sponsorship of Penn IUR's "Philadelphia 360°" project that examines contemporary planning and economic issues in Philadelphia and beyond.