

Maryland's Regional Approach

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In today's ultra-competitive economic development environment, states cannot afford to let traditional intrastate geographic rivalries stand in the way of job creation and retention efforts. In Maryland we recognize that marketing our state's assets as a whole, not as parts, is key as we grapple with the day-to-day challenges of competing in the global marketplace.

Geographic Diversity a Challenge

A look at the map underscores our challenge. Maryland's three westernmost counties are located in the Appalachian Mountains sandwiched between Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia. All are located within the Pittsburgh television market and one county, Garrett, is closer to Canada than it is to Ocean City, Maryland on our eastern border. Maryland's Eastern Shore, physically separated from the rest of the state by the Chesapeake Bay, was until the 1950s the site of periodic secessionist efforts. Baltimore, our largest city, lies only 40 miles from our nation's capital but until recent years, the two jurisdictions paid little attention to each other.

It was the stark realities of the newly-energized global economy of the late 20th century that helped Maryland overcome these hurdles, and today our Department of Business and Economic Development is

able to use our geographic diversity to its advantage and bundle all of Maryland's assets into a single package. In cooperation with the private sector, educators, economic development officials, and local government leaders, the state of Maryland is fostering regional partnerships specifically designed to market local strengths in the context of our statewide strategic economic development plan—Maryland's first comprehensive economic development roadmap.

Not an Urban or Suburban Phenomenon

While large organizations like the Greater Baltimore Alliance and the Greater Washington Initiative represent and market the interests and assets of their respective regions, these marketing partnerships are by no means an urban or suburban phenomenon. In Southern Maryland, the Patuxent Partnership teams St. Mary's and Charles counties together to jointly market their assets, in particular the economic growth associated with the expansion of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

Also, several organizations represent the economic interests of the Baltimore-Washington corridor, recognizing and taking full advantage of the fact that the Baltimore-Washington market is the fourth largest in the nation. On our Eastern Shore, the Upper Shore Economic Development Council

markets five counties from under one roof, with facilities and staff provided by Chesapeake Community College.

Scattered across the state are a number of Advanced Technology Centers (ATCs), designed to meet specific job training needs as identified by individual local businesses. Established in cooperation with community colleges, Maryland's regional ATCs are focused on the growth sectors of aerospace, agriculture, biotechnology, distribution/warehousing, health care, information technology, manufacturing, minority business, telecommunications, and tourism. These programs are specifically designed to be flexible in order to meet evolving regional needs.

In Western Maryland, the regional concept goes a step further with QUADCO, an organization that joins together Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia in a tri-state marketing framework. This collaborative approach acknowledges the geographic realities of this area.

Linking Regional Priorities to Economic Development

Regional planning in the form of Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation links regional priorities to economic development. As proposed, it is a multipronged approach designed to preserve our forests and farmland, revitalize our older urban and suburban communities, and protect the high quality of life that is one of Maryland's strategic assets. Under this plan, state aid funding will be used to support efficient and economical growth—encouraging the use of

existing or planned development infrastructure, rather than growth that fosters sprawl, loss of farms and fields, and loss of neighborhoods.

To tie these initiatives together, the state and the private sector have joined to help support the nonprofit Maryland Communications Center, designed to provide a central location to showcase the state's resources and facilitate the delivery of information to existing and potential employers. The center is currently developing a database system that will allow a business prospect to access pertinent information about any region of the state with a single keystroke.

In Maryland, we remain focused on enhancing our recognition of these regional assets and strengthening these local public-private partnerships. We firmly believe that economic strength can be, and is, derived from celebrating and marketing our regional diversity, as we recognize that this state is not a melting pot, but rather a mosaic. ■

Parris N. Glendening was elected Maryland's 59th governor in 1994. He received a bachelor's degree (1964), a master's degree (1965), and in 1967 a Ph.D. in political science, all from Florida State University. That same year he joined the faculty of the University of Maryland at College Park, where he taught for 27 years, until his election as governor. He began public service in 1973 as a city councilman in Hyattsville. He was elected to the Prince George's County Council in 1974 and twice served as council chair. In 1982, he was elected county executive of Prince George's County and became the only county executive in Maryland history to serve three terms (1982-1994).