

# York's in demand - how can we manage growth?

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Jan 21, 2007 — Recently, David Rusk, one of the nation's top urban experts, gave a compelling presentation at York College concerning the future of our county. The auditorium was packed with people standing in the aisles. This turnout demonstrates how much York countians care about their children's future.

The overall message of the evening was that we face many challenges but that great things lies ahead if we meet these challenges head on. The truth is, York is going places. This is especially evident in the heart of the county.

More and more, you hear people talking about exciting projects. These include the stadium complex, the Northwest Triangle, Old Town East, The Crispus Attucks Child Development Center, The Greenway Tech Center, The Pullo Performing Arts Center, recent renovations to the Martin Memorial Library, Dreamwrights and The Strand-Capitol, the Recapture the Riverfront Project, the Pine Street School Redevelopment and Broad Street Commons. The projects I've mentioned so far represent well over \$100 million worth of investment to the core of York. They have required enormous cooperation between political, business and community leaders. We all ought to be proud, and we should look forward to the powerful impact this development will have on our community.

Our downtown has become more than a place to do business, eat a great meal and enjoy the arts. It has become a residential destination. People enjoy the convenience and charm of leaving their cars behind and walking to central market, retail stores, coffee shops, galleries, restaurants and nightlife. They like to bike and run on the rail trail, which will soon be extended all the way to the new stadium.

As a result of all these attractions and a national trend towards returning to cities, there has been an increase in demand for housing in all price ranges in the heart of York County.

On George Street, the Loft Condominiums, which are priced in the \$200,000 to \$300,000 range, have all sold.

On Hartley Street, the Mon- arch Mills condominium complex just came on the market in the \$100,000 range - 22 of 27 of these condos have already sold.

Houses in the areas of Newton Square, Locust Street, Springdale, the Avenues and Fireside are in high demand. According to the Realtors Association of York & Adams Counties, the average sales price for a home in the city in the first quarter of 2005 was \$53,200. In the first quarter of 2006, the average sales price was up to \$69,600. Homeowners and investors are starting to see property values rise.

More large-scale townhouse, condo and apartment developments are on the way, and smaller investors are likely to pursue properties nearby.

New tax incentives for renovation are helping to create a boom in York. Additionally, any Realtor will tell you that Marylanders are coming north and are joining others in buying property downtown, both as investors and as residents. Our rich history and architecture coupled with low prices make our real estate very attractive, especially to those used to paying more than twice the price 40 miles to the south.

The point is, as you walk or drive around York, there seems to be an energy and an excitement building that makes our community prime for progress. With all of these factors aligned, it seems that we are approaching what I would call a "perfect storm" of opportunity. And others see it too. I am not the only person who's noticed folks from Lancaster, Harrisburg, Baltimore and other regions snooping around York County trying to figure out how to become a part of what's happening. The truth is, we're hot.

But with this heat comes responsibility. There are important choices we can make now that will have a real impact on our future and the future of our children.

One of the most important challenges we face is that we have 72 separate municipalities making decisions that affect the region as whole. This increases the complexity of charting a clear course for the county. In addition, the sheer number of school districts, police departments and fire departments presents a challenge. Many people around our community are asking how public entities might coordinate efforts in a way that creates efficiency, improves service and encourages decision making from a regional perspective. As Rusk puts it, we need to act like a big box, even if we are divided up into 72 little boxes.

Achieving this holistic approach might, in fact, be the key to our future. If we reach across the boundaries of race, class and municipality, so will our political leaders. It is then that we will be able to build a strong, vibrant community, one that we will be proud to some day hand over to our children. Imagine their gratitude.

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