

1996 Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Post-Conference Report: "Bridging Boundaries without Losing Local Control"

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Conference (Valley Forge Convention Center, March 30, 1996) was the first large-scale meeting devoted to inter-municipal cooperation in this region. Roughly 250 municipal officials and business and civic leaders representing 60 municipalities gathered to consider the notion that cooperation among municipalities can make local government more efficient and cost-effective as part of a larger effort to make the region more competitive in the global economy. The Conference's subtitle -- "Bridging Boundaries without Losing Local Control" -- suggests that cooperative approaches can be pursued with a healthy regard for the value of local autonomy. The half-day program featured an opening plenary, six public policy sessions, ten small group discussions and a closing luncheon with comments from Lt. Governor Mark Schweiker and a keynote address by James Unruh, Chairman and CEO of the Unisys Corporation. Unruh spoke emphatically about the road ahead. "Regional cooperation is no longer a matter of choice," he said. "It is absolutely essential for our region to thrive, let alone survive in its present form."

This report summarizes the Conference proceedings in four sections:

- I. Opening Plenary
- II. Keynote Remarks
- III. Policy Breakout Sessions
- IV. Small Group Discussions and Next Steps

Readers seeking more in-depth information are encouraged to purchase audio tapes of individual conference sessions. In addition, a limited number of copies of the 1996 Municipalities Conference Briefing Notebooks are available from the Center for Greater Philadelphia. The Briefing Notebook contains contact information for each speaker, profiles of success stories in the region and elsewhere, and background material for each of the six policy sessions. The Center for Greater Philadelphia has assembled these resources to help municipal officials and citizen leaders move forward with specific cooperative projects and initiatives.