

## **1997 Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Post-Conference Report: "Bridging Boundaries without Losing Local Control"**

On March 15, 1997, the Center for Greater Philadelphia hosted the second Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Conference: Bridging Boundaries without Losing Local Control at the Desmond, Great Valley Hotel and Conference Center in Malvern. The 1996 Conference was the first large-scale meeting devoted to inter-municipal cooperation in this region. We sought this year build on the strong support for this project by again convening municipal officials from across the region. Their charge: to consider cooperative strategies to make local government more cost-effective and efficient as part of a larger effort to make the region more competitive in the global economy. The half-day program featured an opening plenary, three concurrent public policy Issue Forums, five concurrent "Best Practices" case studies, and a luncheon panel on regional economic development. Luncheon panelist Mark DeMichele, retired CEO of the Arizona Public Service Corporation and Past Chair of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, decried "economic development efforts (that are) fragmented, inefficient and ineffective" and explained how the Greater Phoenix region has banded together over the past decade with enviable results.

This report summarizes the Conference proceedings in three sections:

- I. Opening Plenary
- II. Luncheon Panel: Regional Economic Development
- III. Issue Forums and "Best Practices" Case Studies

Copies of the 1997 Southeastern Pennsylvania Municipalities Conference Briefing Notebook are available from the Center for Greater Philadelphia. The Briefing Notebook contains background material for each of the Issue Forums and "Best Practices" sessions and biographical information on each speaker. Like the inaugural 1996 event, the subtitle of the 1997 Conference, "Bridging Boundaries without Losing Local Control," reflects an awareness that local governments must learn to cooperate and the political sensitivity that cooperation does not have to mean loss of local autonomy. Nearly 200 municipal officials and business and civic leaders representing roughly 50 municipalities gathered on March 15, a testimonial to the fact that local governments in this region are interested in learning about the strategic advantages of cooperation.