

OPENING REMARKS

MARY O. DONOHUE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



For more than 200 years, New York state has been the center of our nation's economic power and home to some of our country's most precious environmental resources. Thanks to Governor George Pataki's creation of the Quality Communities Task Force in January 2000, state and local government in the Empire State will have powerful new tools that will enable us to build upon our economic achievements while protecting our delicate natural resources.

As chair of the task force, I can tell you that we have been given an important assignment: study community growth in New York state and develop measures to assist those communities in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic development and environmental protection.

We will do this via a three-phase effort to (1) inventory key local, state and federal programs, (2) gather public comment and (3) offer recommendations designed to enhance local community development efforts throughout New York state.

This initiative is designed to build upon Governor Pataki's state-wide environmental achievements by promoting effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation

programs at the local level and will foster inter-municipal cooperation in responding to the needs and opportunities arising at the local level.

Since 1995, Governor Pataki has taken unprecedented measures to protect the environment while promoting economic growth. The governor has acted to safeguard New York's environmental health through the \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, provided record-high funding of the Environmental Protection Fund and has protected 250,000 acres of important natural and recreational resource lands, including the acquisition of priority open space projects, such as Sterling Forest in the Hudson Valley and the Long Island Pine Barrens.

The findings of this task force may represent the beginning of the next phase of economic development and environmental protection, as the intent of the task force is to insure New York's investment in environmental protection and economic development programs take into account and complement the priorities of individual communities.

We will lay the foundation for a dynamic partnership between local and state government that fosters economic and community development, protects the environment and promotes home rule. The task force will develop bottom-up strategies to assist local governments to implement land use plans that best meet their needs and are sensitive to the needs of the environment and neighboring communities.

The task force is extremely interested in working with localities on economic development issues, so that all of New York can share in the

prosperity our economy is generating.

We want to help revitalize existing communities and make them economically desirable places to live. We want to understand how each community works with the private sector to advance shared economic development goals. We want to ensure that new economic development projects are sustainable and grow for future generations.

The task force will prepare a final report which I will present to Governor Pataki by Jan. 31, 2001. That report will make recommendations for improving the coordination and delivery of key federal and state programs, as well as recommendations for strengthening the capacity of local governments and propose as necessary, changes to rules and legislation.

I want to stress that the success of this effort depends upon community involvement. This is a program intended to help local governments meet their responsibilities and needs.

We need to understand communities have logical expectations of what they want to become and that those visions of themselves are based upon a solid understanding of their economic niche, environmental constraints and cultural strengths. We need to understand how a community relates to its neighbors — how communities address shared economic opportunities and resolve conflicts.

We want to begin working collaboratively towards advancing clearly defined community visions and ensure that these community visions, as a whole, continue the improvements begun by the Governor, and expand the dynamic and diverse economy, environment and cultures that are New York.