

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable**

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## **Community Forums Spark Activism and Enthusiasm in Prince George's County**

### **Recognizing the Power of a Single Voice-Making a Difference:**

The first step toward challenging negative perceptions about our county has already taken place. Last year, the *Greater Prince George's Business Roundtable (GPGBR)* was formed. There are multiple purposes for the *Roundtable*, but the most important may be facilitating communication. To that end, the *Roundtable* has conducted two grass roots forums this year, in Greenbelt and Laurel, reaching out to leaders in the business, political and civic communities. Thus far the results have been both encouraging and fruitful.

The forums represent a chance for the citizens of the county to voice their concerns over a variety of issues, from current hot topics such as crime, education and transportation, to future concerns over economic development and marketing. There will be an additional two to three forums this year alone, all held with the goal of provoking dialogue and gaining input for drafting the *Roundtable's Visionframework®*, creating a strategic vision and economic model for the county. This unique marriage of the business, political and civic communities makes the opportunities for success in this venture extremely high.

### **Replacing Silence with Salience:**

The two forums have produced an energy and enthusiasm that have provided some surprises for the *GPGBR* staff and members. For example, the level of participation by each panelist has been prominent and their desire to be heard is overwhelming. "There seems to be a pent-up need to vocalize their hopes and aspirations that is compelling," says M.H. Jim Estep, President and CEO of the *GPGBR* of the participants at the forums. "At this point we'll have more than enough input to complete the *framework* by the end of the year," Estep observes.

Some of the following topics are high on the priority list and in need of significant work according to forum participants: **A quality education system, a sense of security and safety, ease of mobility and an in-depth understanding of planned growth and density changes, both residential and commercial.**

"The dedication of the men and women of the *Roundtable*, Chief Executive Officers of firms with strong ties to this community, creates a synergy for this venture to be very successful," Estep suggests. "It is their goal to make Prince George's County the gem of the Washington, D.C. region, and their own track records suggest it is time for an air of optimism too long absent in this county," the President and CEO stated.

**Learning from Success-Following the Charlotte Blueprint:**

**Roundtable** members point to the implementation of such an effort in Charlotte, North Carolina. The Charlotte plan focused on items that seemed commonplace and obvious, but are often overlooked within the divisions of government and the electorate. These important challenges, the promotion of safety, health and quality of life for the populace, often get lost in rhetoric and red tape. Through the use of strategic business planning and a receptive leadership, a long desired partnership between governmental agencies, the business community and residents finally occurred in Charlotte.

**One Step Further-Recognizing the Value of Diversity and Consensus:**

The GPGBR devised a unique method to make certain that all voices in the county are heard, regardless of race, gender or belief. That method, the *Community Advisory Council (CAC)*, eventually consisting of more than a hundred men and women, will represent the diversity of the county. The counselors of the *CAC* are being selected from the entirety of the county's geography and their backgrounds pose the greatest opportunity yet to engage the seemingly disparate views present within the county. The *CAC* membership boasts professionals in real estate, education, health care, state and local political arenas, and law enforcement fields. In addition, the *CAC* is strongly represented by other groups vital to this county, the faith-based community and civic organizations. These dedicated men and women will take the results of the community forums and will work together to draft the *VisionFramework®*, the integral component in facilitating the progress we seek.

The next forum will be held in central county with the location to be finalized shortly. In the meantime, opportunities abound for participation in achieving results for the future of the county. The GPGBR invites all citizens to inspect the **Roundtable** website at <http://www.bizroundtable.org> and use our *VisionFramework®* and *Contact* portals to provide opinions and insight and to seek answers to questions on matters of import to all Prince Georgians. "This interesting process is a first and helps to fill a void in planning," according to Gary S. Murray, Sr., Chairman of the GPGBR, who was recently elected to a second one-year term as well as Gary Michael of the Michael Companies who was tapped to serve a second term as Secretary/Treasurer.