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**A More Sensible Direction for Pittsburgh**

The Allegheny Institute recently hosted internationally acclaimed author Joel Kotkin, an authority on economic, political, and social trends. Using findings from his recent work, Mr. Kotkin discussed how Pittsburgh could adapt and compete in a period of rapid change in metropolitan areas.

According to Mr. Kotkin, there are six key factors that are driving demographic change in metropolitan areas around the country:

- The de-clustering of industry and population, where job growth and office space growth is happening in low- and moderate-density areas;
- The increase in housing costs, which serve to drive growth to the suburbs. Kotkin identified housing cost and quality as the "largest reasons why people move";
- Increasing diversity in family structure and ethnic makeup, which causes a desire for more housing and lifestyle options;
- Personal security and traffic congestion are weighing more heavily in location choices;
- The rise of the "Ephemeral City". Cities with low percentages of children that are geared toward a hip and trendy lifestyle but in many cases experiencing a relative decline in economic status;
- The new opportunity for affordable, family-friendly cities.

Looking at these change-driving factors, the opportunities for Pittsburgh become clear. It cannot and should not attempt to compete with the trendy and hip cities like Boston or San Francisco. Unfortunately, it has tried to do just that. In the process, it has lost years focusing on top-down redevelopment schemes and building glitzy attractions such as the stadiums and the convention center in an attempt to lure the elusive twenty-five to thirty year old demographic, a group Mr. Kotkin refers to as "nomadic".

Other non-starters that won't grow Pittsburgh are regional governance, putting culture before growth in commerce, and failing to address the lack of wealth and income growth.

So what can Pittsburgh do to achieve growth and claim a place in the metropolitan future? According to Mr. Kotkin, first, it has to build on the advantages it has in cost of living. Pittsburgh's median home price (\$105,000) ranks well behind those of Philadelphia, San Diego, D.C. and several others. The key advantage would be to stress the quality of neighborhoods where people can attain a decent middle-class lifestyle.

Second, it has to focus on the basics--improvements to schools, neighborhoods, infrastructure, and business climate. Things the Allegheny Institute has stressed for a long time. Public safety is

also critical on any list of services the City must deliver. If people do not feel that they or their property is secure, keeping them or attracting others will be extremely difficult.

Lastly, Pittsburgh has to sell itself as a place with a good quality of life for families. Kotkin's message is clear. Build on the region's strengths, and be true to that message. The next Mayor, members of City Council, community and civic groups in the City, and those who have pushed economic development schemes that have failed miserably owe it to the City to look at Mr. Kotkin's recommendations as a better direction for Pittsburgh to take.

Mr. Kotkin's recommendations are extremely sensible as well as conservative in their approach. For one thing, they call on governments and government entities to simply do a good job of carrying out their core functions. Keep the City safe and clean, provide a quality education and make the business climate one that is welcoming and appreciative. The glitz and the special interest pandering are dead end detours.

Of course, this message has little meaning if Pittsburgh fails to adopt changes to make its government more cost-effective. That means reining in its authorities, outsourcing services to the private sector and Allegheny County, and bringing its spending down from current levels.

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