

Secretary Ash Holds Six Economic Development Listening Sessions Across Massachusetts

Listening tour engages more than 700 residents to set priorities for economic development in the Commonwealth

Boston – Friday, June 26, 2015 – On Thursday, June 25th, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development held six input and listening sessions across Massachusetts. The sessions provided Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash, Deputy Secretary Carolyn Kirk, and Regional Directors from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development, an opportunity to engage with a diverse set of businesses, local elected officials, and community leaders before drafting a comprehensive economic development plan for the Commonwealth.

“Addressing business and community needs directly requires significant, continued engagement, and a concerted effort to understand concerns and craft effective solutions,” said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash. “I look forward to continued partnerships with local officials, businesses, and non-profits as we work together to grow our economy and provide every resident with the opportunity for training and employment.”

The six sessions drew more than 700 attendees, who offered thoughts on topics from talent retention and workforce development, to competitiveness and regulation, to zoning and infrastructure. The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development will spend the next two months preparing a draft plan, followed by further engagement over the proposed plan.

“The feedback and engagement we received from residents and businesses was thoughtful and useful,” said Assistant Secretary of Business Development Nam Pham. “It was a rare opportunity to talk through complex issues and look at potential solutions with a wide range of well-informed stakeholders, and the ideas we heard will help us grow the Massachusetts economy.”

“Community and business leaders came ready to participate in these roundtables,” said Deputy Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Carolyn Kirk. “The discussions were lively, thought-provoking and will prove to be invaluable in shaping the Commonwealth’s economic development plan.”

“The thoughtful input we received from Central Massachusetts business leaders was very helpful,” said Massachusetts Office of Business Development Regional Director Jon Golnik. “The community leaders were well informed and organized, and the ideas they generated will help shape our path as we work to develop an economic development plan.”

“The best way to effectively target our investments in housing, infrastructure, and workforce development is to look at what companies need, and where they need it,” said Massachusetts Office of Business Development Regional Director Peter Milano. “The feedback we received from leaders from the MetroWest and Merrimack Valley region will help us ensure that money spent here is well spent.”

“It speaks volumes that the residents of Western Massachusetts, the most rural area in the state, turned out in the largest numbers to the listening tour,” said Massachusetts Office of Business Development Regional Director Debra Boronski. “Our concerns differ widely from those in other parts of the state, and participants communicated thoughtful, actionable feedback for Governor Charlie Baker and Secretary Ash.”

“The greater Boston area is growing and expanding – but we face real barriers that inhibit our ability to attract and train workers,” said Massachusetts Office of Business Development Regional Director Dick Dalton. “The feedback, both

solutions and problems, that we heard at Quincy College will help us overcome these barriers and see smarter growth across the region.”

“The Southeastern region is home to a wide array of cities and towns that each face individual barriers to success, but the region is united in pursuit of sustainable growth,” said Massachusetts Office of Business Development Regional Director Maria Marasco. “Participants had interesting, innovative ideas that will help us address these problems – locally, regionally, and as a Commonwealth.”

Massachusetts law requires the secretary of Housing and Economic Development to draft a comprehensive economic development plan within the first year of a new gubernatorial administration. Secretary Ash has committed to grounding the Baker-Polito Administration’s economic development strategy in public dialogue, and in regional opportunities. These regional listening sessions began a six-month economic development planning process, and serve as a first step in drafting the statutorily-required plan.

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