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As a student of public administration, I was excited to see many sessions at ULI's Fall Meeting in Washington, D.C. related to policy and how it impacts land use and development. During the morning Thursday I sat in on an excellent session in the subject area. You know you're in a good room when some of your peers who are asking questions would be just as qualified to be on the panel themselves!

Mobilizing the Private Sector for Public Good

This panel focused on organizations with missions to develop entire communities, cities, and regions towards shared goals.

Stefani Pashman, CEO of Allegheny Conference on Community Development, leads a long-standing organization in the Pittsburgh region. They have been convening and organizing private sector leaders to contribute to public works since shortly after World War II. When asked by an attendee about the next 75 years of work in this area she emphasized listening to constituents above all. Her organization spoke to over 1,500 residents in creating their most recent strategic initiatives, and she expects these numbers to increase going forward.

Jason Miller, CEO of the Greater Washington Partnership, is responsible for a massive economy ranging from Baltimore down to Richmond - the seventh largest economic district in the world. He talked about their need to focus on just two strategic goals given the huge number of moving pieces in such a complex region. The organization has launched efforts focused on talent development and public transportation. Both of these have the potential to transform the lives of residents - both economically and socially as quality of life increases.

Steve Leeper, President and CEO of Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC), spoke about the importance of priority when it comes to addressing disinvested areas. When a city is faced with neighborhoods suffering from extensive blight and vacant lots, they can choose to remediate the properties in terms of potential (i.e. highest potential end-product targeted first), ease of acquisition (easiest to most difficult), or public nuisance (highest first). It's much easier said than done, but a helpful touchstone when setting a strategy for redevelopment.

I left the session feeling more strongly than ever that the development community can continue to improve in their collaboration with civic institutions. One subject that was discussed tangentially, but could use more exploration was data sharing.

How can cities, non-profit partners, and the private sector better evaluate their progress? How might shared data and outcome goals reduce duplicative efforts? Questions like these could be the basis for a future panel on the subject.

Overall, I really enjoyed my experience at the 2019 Fall Meeting. I'm looking forward to attending again next year!