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Philly tries to lure New Yorkers

In a new report, the city of brotherly love says it's cheaper to live there.

By Lisa Fickenscher

The City of Brotherly Love is picking a fight with the Big Apple—and not just on the baseball diamond.

Long before the Phillies and Yankees started battling in the World Series, Philadelphia's controller, Alan Butkovitz, had been working on a plan since 2007 to lure New Yorkers to his town.

The result is a 25-page report released Friday on why residents of New York City should move to Philadelphia—it's cheaper—and how Philadelphia's mayor can convince them to do so—advertising and tax credits.

“It's a convenient time to release this report,” says Mr. Butkovitz, but New Yorkers should know they can “live like a king in Philadelphia.”

Since 2002, Philadelphia has seen a net gain of more than 1,000 New Yorkers every year through 2006, according to the report. It is a number Mr. Butkovitz believes could grow if his city invests in marketing and creates tax incentives and train discounts for New Yorkers who relocate but continue to work in Manhattan.

“There has been a lot of commentary about Philadelphia being the sixth borough of New York City,” said the controller.

His report is aimed at staunching a population decline in Philadelphia and to seize on the fact that 150,000 people move out of New York each year.

According to 2000 Census data, nearly 900 people commute from Philadelphia to New York each day. More people might consider the trek if Philadelphia provided certain tax breaks, argued the controller.

The chief reason why New Yorkers should consider Philadelphia instead of their typical choices—including Poughkeepsie, Bridgeport or Mount Pocono—is the lower cost of living in Philadelphia.

For example, a dinner and movie for two costs \$86 in Philadelphia compared with \$108 in New York; a dentist visit is \$86 or \$22 less in Philadelphia; and comparable apartments that go for \$3,500 in Manhattan rent for \$1,330 in Philadelphia, according to the report.