

Schuylkill County's VISION

Progress Report
October 23, 2000

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Chairman

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Introduction

Schuylkill County's VISION Partners' commitment to the Schuylkill community is crystal clear in the outcomes of the Strategic Alliances, which have diligently worked together to create solutions for our community's enrichment.

Since the summer of 1998, businesses, community organizations, schools, churches and government entities have forged new relationships charged with a positive attitude about Schuylkill County and its future. More than 65 partnerships have developed action steps to create over 70 solutions that address 38 strategies within our plan. More than 1000 people have contributed to the development of the action steps in the past two years of implementation.

Schuylkill County is now recognized as a leader in the Commonwealth in the pursuit of collaboration and partnering. Dave Kerr, Executive Director of the Rural Development Council describes Schuylkill County's VISION process as a "Best Practice". Barry Denk, Executive Director Center for Rural PA, referred to Schuylkill County's VISION process as "one of the best in Pennsylvania". Kim Coon, Deputy Secretary, Department of Community and Economic Development points to our process and outcomes as a model for other communities to consider. The Census 2000 Complete County Committee was honored as the best census partner in the eastern half of the Commonwealth. As a result, many communities across the Commonwealth are looking at our vision process to gain insight about our partnership.

The VISION Partners are to be celebrated for their strong commitment to our county. Their efforts assure that our VISION becomes a reality.

Note: This report contains all of the action steps provided to the VISION office by the Partners. Any omission is not intentional and should be brought to the attention of Executive Director.

Schuylkill County's VISION

2000 plus • forward together

Our Mission

The mission of Schuylkill County's VISION is:

1. To evolve a strategic plan for the future of Schuylkill County in the areas of economic development, education, infrastructure, quality of life, government and private sector leadership
2. To accomplish this mission Schuylkill County's VISION will provide leadership by the networking and facilitating of partnerships within the community businesses, organizations, schools and government.

OUR VISION

By 2018 Schuylkill County:

1. will be recognized as a leader among counties as effectively competing on a global basis for growth and developing an economic base that offers meaningful employment, enhances quality of life and creates community pride.
- education systems will be versatile, cost effective, supported by the community and result in lifelong education in a real world context.
 - will have a clean healthy environment where every citizen finds opportunities for economic and personal growth, community involvement, and cultural and spiritual expression.
 - will develop and maintain infrastructure oriented to the future that sustains economic growth and quality of life.
 - will have responsive government providing effective and efficient public services that enrich the lives of its citizens.
 - will have leaders and role models at all levels that foster a positive living environment.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our citizens and the community will develop and use these Core Values as the guideposts as we pursue our interdependent Visions and Strategies. (Core Values are character traits that guide in daily decisions.)

~ Positive Attitude ~ Integrity ~ Responsibility ~
 ~ Traditional Family Values ~ Hard Work ~ Faith in God ~

Qualitative Outcomes

Many of the positive outcomes developed through the VISION process are qualitative rather than quantitative. During our first two years of implementation collaboration and partnering has become the norm. Rather than competing against ourselves, we have begun to understand the importance of working together with the county as our central focus. Systems change is, for the most part, intangible but none the less important when learning to work together to implement the community strategic plan.

Positive Attitude was the number one Core Value selected by the Task Force. The VISION process has developed a strong sense of community identity and through the partners' efforts a new, positive self-image is emerging throughout the county, that visitors who come to work within our community report that the county feels different...better...positive.

The partnerships have leveraged us for new financial resources. Today, private foundations, and the state and federal government require collaborative partnerships in order to apply for resources and funding for new initiatives.

The VISION process has created a holistic approach to community development. Partners are working to enhance Schuylkill County in all sectors of our community.

New relationships have been inspired through the VISION process. The development of partnerships such as the Keystone Opportunity Zone Strategic Alliance, the Healthy Community Strategic Alliance, the Schuylkill Community Education Council, The CareerLink, The Unity Coalition, and The Schuylkill County Conservancy are just a few examples of new partnerships developed in our county.

In just two short years of implementation, the partners have made monumental enhancements. The Schuylkill County's VISION strategic plan is a twenty-year process. Just think where we will all be in twenty years!

Key Benchmarks

The following key benchmarks will be used **to measure the county's progress** each year. Although we have a lot to accomplish over the next 20 years, we expect to see continual improvement every year along the way.

1. Job creation: Schuylkill County's net new jobs based in the county will increase at least 1300 net new jobs in 1998, 1400 in 1999, 1500 in 2000, 1600 in 2001, and 1700 in 2002.

Pennsylvania Department of Labor does not collect net new jobs but has provided the following information on annual growth. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry reports the following data.

Year	Non-farm Jobs**	Annual Growth	Percent Growth
1997	49,500	400	0.8%
1998	49,800	300	0.6%
1999	51,100	1300	2.6%

Jobs are for all ownership types (public and private)
**Non-farm job data is rounded to the nearest hundred.

2. Earnings: Private sector earnings per job will increase at an annual percentage rate at least two times the Pennsylvania annual percentage increase.

Year	Private Sector Jobs	Earnings Per Job	Schuylkill County Annual Growth	PA Annual Growth
1997	41,771	\$23,110	2.6%	4.6%
1998	41,944	\$24,167	4.6%	4.8%
1999	42,779	\$24,556	1.6%	3.7%

Data provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry

- **Education: Ninety percent of Schuylkill County Citizens age 25 to 65 will have a high school degree/GED or higher. The percentage with a two-year degree or higher and a four-year bachelor's degree or higher will be at the national average.**

A primary survey of adults age 18-65 will need to be developed, implemented and analyzed in order to measure this Benchmark. This data is not collected or available from the Pennsylvania Department of Education or the US Department of Education.

The 1999 American Community Survey reports that 10% of our community holds a Bachelor's degree. This is a 2% increase in individuals with a four-year degree in Schuylkill County since the 1990 Census.

- **Poverty: Decrease the percentage of persons living in poverty so that Schuylkill County's poverty rate will be at least below the lower of the US or Pennsylvania rate in each poverty category.**

According to the US Census Bureau, the data on Poverty in Pennsylvania is not available beyond the 1995 estimates. The Census 2000 data will be available in the fall of 2002.

Economic Development

VISION

Schuylkill County will be recognized as a leader among counties as effectively competing on a global basis for growth in developing an economic base that offers meaningful employment, enhances quality of life, creates community pride and wealth.

STRATEGIES

A. Creating Schuylkill County as a product.

- 1. Provide incentives to businesses, creating new jobs that allow Schuylkill County to be competitive for our targeted industries. Ensure that the incentives provide an acceptable total return on investment and that the recipient is contractually required maintaining the jobs for the time period required to meet the return on investment.**

*The Keystone Opportunity Zone program for tax-free economic development zones was developed and implemented. Ten percent of the Commonwealth's Zones are in Schuylkill County. More than \$1 million dollars in capital investments has begun in the zones. To date approximately 986 new jobs have been created with the zones.

*The Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation and the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, along with others continues their efforts in job creation and retention for the county.

*In an effort to reduce confusion related to the numerous funding resources available for training, the MAMP has created a training resource team that is available to meet with local manufacturers regarding funding opportunities for which they are eligible. Our team consists of representatives of Customized Job Training dollars, WEDNetPA, On the Job Training, cost sharing through Industrial Resource Centers, and many more programs. The team meets regularly and will be providing a full update on the latest changes at our October 17 Human Resource Conference. The partners include Schuylkill Training & Technology Center and Lehigh-Carbon Community College.

* The MAMP partnered with our local Team Pennsylvania CareerLink and with other local education providers to establish the world of work orientation programs for job seekers. Participants of the program will become proficient in basic math, reading, writing, and measurement skills and in team work and communication skills. They will also be instructed in basic work maturity issues such as: how to dress for work, being on time for work and how to handle child care and transportation issues more effectively. Tests will be administered to ensure that participants meet baseline measures in each skill before graduation. Upon graduation, participants will receive a certificate certifying that they have the skills needed for entry level work. Job seekers

who are already proficient in these areas may test out of each section to eligible to receive a certificate. Employers will be recruited to hire participants of this program.

2. Obtain recognition by US Office of Management and Budget and the Bureau of Census as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

*Efforts in obtaining MSA Status or micropolitan status continue through the efforts of the MSA Taskforce. A committee of SEDCO continues to work closely with Congressman Holden concerning this issue and an improved designation for Schuylkill County.

3. Create a positive and welcoming environment throughout the county that makes the county attractive and desirable for business owners, employees and their families. Help every citizen to realize responsibility to become a member of the “Sell Schuylkill Team” that will attract new jobs.

*A new *Schuylkill Quality of Life Book* has been prepared, and an updated video is in the planning phase. In addition, the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce has updated its Welcome to Schuylkill package.

4. Create an environment that encourages and supports entrepreneurs and small business with capital, advice, support and receptive government regulation.

*The Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce is serving as the lead Chamber for the new Team PA Entrepreneurial Network that will establish a more effective support system for small business development in the county and region. The new office is anticipated in the late fall of 2000.

*The Schuylkill Chamber is serving as the lead Chamber for a new Team Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Network that will establish a more effective support system for small business development in the county and the region. This new program has been launched and a web site is in operation. Schuylkill County now is recruiting mentors and navigators to support this new network.

*Wilkes University Small Business Development Center, Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce and the Pottsville Area Development Corp. (PADCO) are providing financial support for a full time small business consultant who will serve Schuylkill County exclusively. This new position is expected to be operational by November 1, 2000.

5. Develop Schuylkill County with high worker productivity and the best support from government, the private sector and citizens for expanding, creating and relocating businesses.

*The Team Pennsylvania CareerLink system, established and chartered first in Schuylkill County is a new system developed by twelve county partners, which brings employer and job seeker services together under one roof. Managed by a local

Workforce investment Board, the CareerLink will manage more than \$4,000,000 in funding for worker training and education services for Schuylkill County this year. This program also connects with human services, transportation, child-care and welfare services in a comprehensive network. Pennsylvania's first mini center in Tamaqua and program access points are planned for at least three other locations in the county.

6. Create a business friendly tax and regulatory environment that consistently works to improve the productivity of our citizens, businesses and government.
7. Elect people to public office with a commitment to job creation and economic development as described in Schuylkill County's VISION.
8. Commit long term to join county resources with Pennsylvania's Agriculture Land Preservation Act to permanently preserve Schuylkill County Farm lands for the future.

*The county has developed a network of services coordinated through the Conservation office to preserve county farm land and open space. The proposal for a \$10,000,000 county bond issue recognizes this area of concern as a high priority for future funding.

9. Focus on the basics that entice the families of business executives and employees to want to live in Schuylkill County including education, cultural events, housing and hotels.

*SEDCO, Schuylkill Chamber and local hospitals are using the Schuylkill Living Magazine as a recruitment tool.

10. Increase the level of economic education for all citizens beginning in the K-12 System. This should include a basic understanding of the free enterprise system and how Schuylkill County fits into the competitive global economy.
11. Involve business, finance, colleges and government in the development of business incubators.

*A proposal to develop a Technology Incubator in downtown Pottsville is supported by nineteen partners. A feasibility study for the incubator has been completed that presents a positive opportunity for the county to develop a technology incubator program. More than \$500,000 in financial resources have been identified to initiate and support the incubator program and a facility acquisition plan for incubator siting is underway,

12. Recognize the inherent danger in the circulation of untrue rumors and develop a mechanism that establishes countywide credibility in rumor control.

13. Improve and increase retail-shopping opportunities.

*Retail opportunities are expanding in the county. Wal-Mart will open in the spring of 2001. In addition, Ruby Tuesday and Hoss's Steakhouse are not operational, both regional food service businesses that have recognized the new economic potential of Schuylkill County.

B. Selling the Schuylkill County product internally and externally

1. Maintain a competitively funded economic development program that creates new value-added jobs⁴ through retention and expansion of existing businesses, creation of new enterprises and relocations.

*Due to the partnership and diligence of SEDCO and the Schuylkill County Commissioners, economic funding is available at a high level of investment as compared to the past. Through the Team PA Business Calling Program that is connected to CareerLink partners, job retention efforts are maintained through an effective network of information sharing and follow-up.

2. Target industry clusters for value added job expansion and creation of networks to improve productivity and exports out of Schuylkill County to the United States and world in the following areas:

- a) Agriculture
- b) Food and kindred products
- c) Tourism
- d) Mineral, coal and exporting of electricity
- e) Back office operations and telecommunication centers
- f) Chemical and allied products
- g) Distribution
- h) Fabricated metal products
- I) Technology based manufactured products
- j) Textiles

*Targeted industry clusters in many ways depends on the capacity of the work force to fill job requirements represented in the respective clusters. At the current time, the distribution center cluster has been successful with the recruitment of Lowe's and Consolidated Stores. A major Fortune 100 Prospect is also close to a decision that at the present time appears very favorable for county job creation. This industry cluster may represent as many as 2,000 new jobs in a four-year period.

3. Maximize Schuylkill County's location as the hub of surrounding metro areas with 2.3 million in population.

4. Maintain continuous communications with Schuylkill Citizens about the ongoing economic development process. This will be accomplished while recognizing the absolute requirement for secrecy in dealing with prospects for job creation until that prospect is ready to make a public announcement.
2. Identify existing buildings that are candidates for renovation and market them to prospects.

*A complete inventory of available buildings and sites for economic development and job creation is available at the SEDCO offices

6. Recruit entrepreneurs to set up new businesses in Schuylkill County.

*The technology incubator, small business development programs and continuing promotional efforts represent the greatest capacity that “Schuylkill County has ever had for small business development.

3. Participate in the marketing program of the nine county Penn’s Northeast Region.

*SEDCO participates as an active partner in the Penn’s Northeast marketing effort. This program is in the process of developing a new strategic plan that is intended to build more effective marketing capacity for the region while also assuring equal consideration and participation on behalf of all of the geographic regions of Penn’s Northeast service area.

Education

VISION

Schuylkill County's education systems will be versatile, cost effective, supported by the community and result in life long education in a real world context.

STRATEGIES

A. K-12 Education Systems

1. **Ensure³ that each student graduates with the education and skills needed to go to a technology school, two-year or four-year college or immediately into the work force.**

*The Schuylkill Training and Technology Centers, the Schuylkill County Airport and Schuylkill County developed and implemented a heavy equipment training program.

*The Manufacturer's Association of Mid-Eastern PA, Schuylkill Intermediate Unit and the 12 school districts have partnered together to create a new curriculum for teachers and guidance counselors that focuses on soft skills and the language and math skills necessary for school to work initiatives. The curriculum has been submitted to the Commonwealth for approval.

*Wilkes University and MAMP have implemented a new program, which offers the adult graduate students the opportunity to explore Schuylkill County businesses first hand

*The Schuylkill County Bar Association and the 12 school districts partnered together to bring lawyers into each school district to provide educational training to seniors concerning basic legal situations such as contracts, leasing and other life skills legal information.

*The MAMP implemented PA Free Enterprise week geared to 11th grade students to help increase their level of economic education, including a basic understanding of the free enterprise system and how Schuylkill County fits into the global economy

*The MAMP is working with six school districts to set up Manufacturers Day programs in the upcoming school year. These programs are targeted at high school seniors and sometimes sophomores and juniors; to introduce them to the variety of technical jobs available within the manufacturing facilities in their hometown area. Many of our students are totally unaware of the products manufactured in the county they live in or of the high level of technology-oriented jobs that are available here. CEO's and Human Resource Managers educate students by bringing into the schools the products they produce. Some companies even bring in some of their equipment to provide students live demonstrations of manufacturing processes.

*The MAMP is working with our local vocational-technical schools to help boost enrollments in highly technical education programs. This two-day event will be held October 16 & 17 at our two local vocational-technical centers. Seventh and eighth grade students from all county schools will be touring the centers and will have an opportunity to talk with CEOs and Human Resource Managers of area manufacturing facilities. The CEOs and Human Resource Managers will be on hand to demonstrate the products they make and to talk to the students about the kinds of job opportunities that will be available to them if they pursue some of the technical education programs offered by both the vocational-technical schools.

*The MAMP has joined with the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce and the Team Pennsylvania CareerLink (Our local one-stop under the Workforce Investment Act) To host a job and career fair October 24 and 25. The job fair will feature local businesses and manufacturers who are seeking to fill job openings. The career fair will be targeted at local high school students and will consist of a series of special presentations related to interviewing, resume and job search skills. High school seniors will then be directed toward the job fair to speak to company representatives about potential career opportunities. The career fair is free to county high school students.

* The MAMP continues to support Schuylkill, Luzerne, and Carbon Counties' School-to-work programs through active participation and staff support for school-to-work activities such as job shadowing, classroom speaking, co-operative education, internships, and tours. In addition, MAMP works with our local Team Pennsylvania CareerLink to build a database of summer employment and internship opportunities for area youth and regularly accepts externs from secondary programs. The MAMP Executive Director, Darlene J Robbins, is the Chairperson of Schuylkill County's Youth Council.

*The following activities are coordinated primarily by the Schuylkill County Workforce Development Director. Schuylkill County Businesses are all encouraged to participate in the program(s). There is a working relationship with many employers and the database is growing each year.

Job Shadowing

This program is promoted to all high school students in the county. It is a Short-term, unpaid, visit to a job site to observe adults in work settings. Students have the opportunity to learn basic job requirements and experience the flow of a typical workday.

Speakers in the Classroom

Business professionals are invited to local schools to share their talent and experience with the students. Both the middle and high schools in the county have used this program.

Work Site Tours

Employers open their doors to students. A staff person at the work site will share the technology and competitiveness that future workers need to understand as they prepare to enter the workforce.

** FIND YOUR PLACE IN SCHUYLKILL COUNTY* was the 1999 Leadership Class project. It is located through the Chamber web site and is focused on individuals who left the county and are looking to relocate and are trying to find a job in their field.

**The Life Skills Training and World of Work Orientation is coordinated by the Schuylkill Community Education Council is coordinating this program. The focus is workplace readiness and participants will receive certificates for completing the program in areas of reading, mathematics, computer navigation, communications and job search skills.*

- 2. Create market driven technology training and apprenticeship programs that lead to the opportunity for satisfying careers in Schuylkill County. These programs should be academically based, with applied skill training, and there should be an opportunity for ease of transfer between these programs and college prep programs. Teachers and parents are encouraged to understand these careers and to learn to value these opportunities.**

**The Schuylkill Community Education Council is now incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 and has hired an Executive Director. They have developed a partnership with all local and many regional educational facilities and are working to meet the educational and training needs of local employers.*

3. Focus the curriculum on reading, writing, math, citizenship, science, geography, history, technology and communication skills that lead to an accumulation of basic knowledge, critical thinking, wisdom and life skills.

**The Schuylkill Leadership Class of 98 developed the Schuylkill Career Connection- a career guide for students. This guide received national recognition and is now web based for all county students to access.*

- 4. Achieve high-performance education by holding school boards responsible for setting policy and providing essential resources; administrators for providing quality leadership and efficient/effective management of resources; and teachers for quality teaching. Provide an annual report card to the community and the parents for each school that clearly demonstrates the general accountability of teachers, administrators and boards. Expect the community and parents support the efforts of boards, administrators and teachers in creating a quality learning environment.**
- 5. Require mandatory community service with a full range of opportunities.**
6. Evaluate the entire K-12 education governance and delivery system and revise the system to ensure that student performance is maximized within the available resources.

7. Provide an opportunity for every student to attend the school closest to where they live.
8. Maintain school facilities, curriculum materials, and technology that provide an opportunity for a globally competitive education.
9. Create strong partnerships between the K-12 system, technical schools, colleges, universities and business.
10. Create and enforce a countywide dress code acceptable to the community.
11. Provide an opportunity for a broad range of arts, cultural and humanities experiences.
 - *Orwigsburg Borough implemented a Community Heritage Day Festival.
 - *Schuylkill County Council for the Arts planned & implemented a Schuylkill County Garden Tour & Tea.
 - *The Historical and Preservation Societies of Greater Shenandoah, Ashland Area, and Frackville initiated a Countywide Historical Association/Coalition.
12. Create continuous opportunities for a large number of teachers and guidance counselors to serve internships and partnerships within the business community.
13. Provide all services on a regional basis that are cost effective and do not adversely affect academic performance.
14. Create countywide youth forums for high school and middle school students for participation in VISION implementation.
 - *The Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Penn State and Volunteers in Action developed INSIGHT (Instigating New Standards Involving Goals, Helping Teens) countywide youth group. The group held a Battle of the Bands and which provided an event for youth and raised money for cancer research.
15. Strengthen and increase inclusion opportunities for students with special needs.
 - *The local Taskforce on the Right to Education implemented the Annual conference for families who have children with disabilities.
16. Focus on understanding our past and using this experience as a way to create a great Future for our community.
 - *Alvernia College's curriculum also provides the opportunity for students to learn about Schuylkill County in the Pennsylvania and Schuylkill History class as well as our new special topics---Schuylkill Writers class.

17. Create an achievement and “others first” based environment that results in improved student self-esteem.

*Pottsville Area High School and the Pottsville Jaycees implemented a VISION essay contest at the PAHS.

* The Schuylkill Living Magazine developed and published a special annual article for honoring and recognizing outstanding achievement in all schools with a “Best of the Class” issue.

B. Higher Education

1. Create a comprehensive higher education system by increasing the delivery of associate, bachelor and graduate degree programs in Schuylkill County.

*The Schuylkill Community Education Council has developed a partnership with all local and many regional educational facilities and is working to meet the educational and training needs of local employers. Many more opportunities for two, four and graduate degree programs are being offered.

*Since 1995 Alvernia College has enabled approximately 60+ students to complete their bachelor’s degree while studying primarily, if not completely, in Schuylkill County.

*Alvernia College has added the Law Enforcement Management degree in Schuylkill in response to students’ requests.

C. Life-long Education

1. Involve educators and employers in a system that satisfies the requirement of short term and long term employment opportunities and eliminates illiteracy. This will include a competitive training program for potential employees of new and expanding businesses.

*The MAMP brought to Schuylkill County the National Association of Manufacturer’s Virtual University to Schuylkill County and formed the first alliance in the United States to create a national agenda for distance learning.

2. Promote life skills, parenting, family development and growth opportunities for learning.

*The Interagency Coordinating Council, the Pottsville Hospital and Warne Clinic, the Pottsville School of Nursing, the Head Start Program and the Schuylkill County Children and Youth provided a one day training program titled: “Child Development Workshop”.

D. Community Support

4. Increase parent, business and community support for education.

*Alvernia College, in working with local businesses, has formed the Schuylkill Advisory Board, to encourage communication with area businesses and leaders to respond to the educational needs of the community.

2. Provide decision making and goal setting opportunities for all students to help with leadership development.
3. Provide opportunity for weekend, after school, summer, part-time jobs, internships and apprenticeships for high school and college students.

Quality of Life

VISION

Schuylkill County will have a clean, healthy environment where every citizen finds opportunities for economic and personal growth, community involvement, and cultural and spiritual expression.

STRATEGIES

A. Quality of Life in General

1. Develop and maintain a positive attitude.

*Schuylkill Living Magazine is working to develop & maintain a positive attitude by producing a coffee table magazine that celebrates life in Schuylkill County called “Schuylkill Living”.

2. Develop, encourage and support an aggressive code enforcement program for building appearance, landscaping and littering.

*Mahanoy City Borough encouraged collaboration and formation of the Northern Schuylkill Council of Government (12 Municipalities) to be officially chartered and to review code enforcement procedures.

3. Maintain a very low crime rate with zero tolerance for spouse, child and elderly abuse; and maintain high quality emergency services.

4. Promote and market all countywide services with access in one-stop regional centers.

5. Strive to provide equality of opportunity for every citizen and be recognized as a community that is open to our diverse population.

*The Schuylkill County Unity Coalition was formed in 1998 in response to the KKK Rally in Pottsville. Unity Day has become a week long event involving our schools, community, churches and businesses. Schuylkill County was included in an educational video for kids.

*The Local Interagency Coordinating Council and Schuylkill County Child Development created a workshop to educate families with children with disabilities about community services.

*The Pottsville REPUBLICAN and Evening Herald produced a “Defying Out-Migration” series featuring young adults who chose to remain in Schuylkill County. A reception was provided at the Schuylkill County Council of the Arts to provide a networking opportunity for all of the featured young adults and their families.

*Schuylkill Savings and Loan provided a reception for the Out-Migration young adults who provided a continuation of networking for all of them.

6. Increase volunteerism.

*NEPA Women of the ELCA, Schuylkill District has increased awareness of the needs within the county and provide a monetary and/or other gifts for these needs, by sharing projects with the following recipients: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Schuylkill County, Angel Babies Ministries, Inc., The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Disaster Fund, Schuylkill County Area Nursing Homes, Bridge Housing and the Rainbow Home of Berks County

*The Schuylkill Ministries raised enough funds for 500 special holiday meals for shut-ins.

*SKIP in partnership with PA DOT and Waste Management implemented the 1998, 1999 Fall Cleanup program with the help of over 600 volunteers.

*The Schuylkill Living Magazine will run a Winter 2001 feature celebrating county volunteerism to increase awareness for defining volunteerism.

*Community Volunteers in Action have established a Schuylkill County International Year of Volunteers 2001 Planning Committee which has been meeting since Jan 2000. Planning a kick-off celebration on Dec.5, 2000. Also working with the Pottsville REPUBLICAN on a Volunteer of the Week series during 2001. They will also be promoting other countywide volunteer related projects. To build awareness and appreciation of all the different aspects of volunteerism in Schuylkill County, with the goal of increasing the numbers of people involved in volunteering.

*Make a Difference Day 1999 was recognized as one of the top ten projects in the nation. Participants included 21 businesses, 17 churches/church groups, 13 community Groups, 36 school groups, 20 scout groups, 10 service clubs, 16 social service agencies, 1 sports team, and 12 individuals.

7. Maintain a rural atmosphere.

*The Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission, Downtown Tamaqua, Inc. has implemented a Main Street program.

8. Emphasize the qualities and virtues of our cultural heritage that can provide a great future for our community.

9. Increase marketing and utilization of our library resources and when required increase government, corporate and individual support for libraries on a countywide basis. Extend the availability of resources throughout the county through technology.

10. Provide an accessible community for all citizens.
11. Encourage all community newspapers to focus on the positive.
12. Use the strategy benchmarks for the Quality of Life Foundation as an annual indicator of our progress.

B. Youth, Families and Elderly

1. Encourage the provision of proactive family support services that include programs such as parenting skills and mentoring for those children who need it.

*Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center and 25 other partners implemented the “Kids are Great Day” which provided educational programs to the county’s 8th graders on peer pressure, depression, smoking, drugs and alcohol.

*Schuylkill County Coalition for Drug-free Beginnings and the Schuylkill Mall held a “Mock Baby Shower” to educate mothers-to-be about the dangers of consuming alcohol and using drugs during pregnancy.

2. Eliminate the cycle of “learned helplessness” by requiring all able people receiving unearned government checks to provide community service.

*The Schuylkill County Department of Human Services and six local banking institutions implemented Operation Phoenix which provides low interest loan program designed for welfare to work population.

3. Create intergenerational programs where youth benefit from the wisdom and the experience of the elderly, including integrated county-wide adult and child care programs staffed at least partially by senior citizens.
4. Strive for the provision of quality, affordable childcare.
5. Support and encourage youth oriented programs including Scouting, YMCA, YWCA and other similar youth activities.

*The Schuylkill YMCA, the City of Pottsville and the PA National Guard developed and is operating a Terrence Reiley Youth Center in Pottsville.

6. Encourage every citizen to be self-sufficient and to plan for his/her future requirements for housing, health care and other needs.

*Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center donated a home for rehabilitation for habitat for Humanity.

7. Increase the religious involvement of our citizens.

8. Provide a continuum of care for the elderly that eases transitions from home-based services through assisted living to congregate settings.

*The Office of Solid Waste Management, the Department of Aging and the Schuylkill County Department of Aging developed and implemented a program to remove home hazardous materials from the homes of the elderly.

C. Health Care

1. Focus on community health assessment, preventative care and wellness programs that create the healthiest community in Pennsylvania.

*Lanel Consulting is providing on-going Eddy Eagle gun safety programs for gun clubs, schools and other children programs.

*The Good Samaritan Hospital recruited 29 community partners to hold the “Up with Parent’s Program” and a Father’s boot camp.

*The Pa Department of Health, Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center and Penn State began the Healthy People 2000 Women’s Health Progress review.

*A five-part series on Food Safety was published through the partnership of the Schuylkill County Intermediate Unit, the Agricultural Extension of Penn State and the Pottsville REPUBLICAN.

*The Healthy Community Strategic Alliance was developed with 84 partners. The Alliance has been designated as a State Health Improvement Planning Partner (SHIP), which will offer technical assistance and data information.

*The “New Drugs on the Block-Inhalant Abuse and Awareness” program was provided by the Schuylkill County Drug and Alcohol Executive Commission, Schuylkill County Children and Youth and the PA Department of Health.

*The Schuylkill County Tobacco-free Youth Coalition provided a training program for teens and implement a community check program to assure that the vendors who sell cigarettes are not selling to underage youth.

*Schuylkill Wellness Services provided a community educational awareness program on HIV/AIDS.

*The MAMP, The PA Department of Health, the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, the Pottsville Downtown Fitness Center, the Schuylkill County’s Visitor’s Bureau, the Schuylkill Rehabilitation Center and the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center developed and began a wellness education awareness series for seminars on wellness targeted at local businesses.

*More than 50 partners have joined together to develop the Schuylkill End-of Life Care Coalition to provide education, promotion and awareness to our citizens facing end-of-life decisions.

*The Schuylkill Living Magazine has partnered with Cooking Light Magazine to bring Cooking Light's Healthy Kids Challenge to our elementary schools. As of October 16, 2000 eight (8) schools have expressed as interest in the challenge.

*Alvernia College is partnered with Good Samaritan Counseling Center on the Tobacco Cessation grant proposal.

2. Integrate the services of our hospitals and home/community based health services in a program of health service collaboration to encourage a greater amount of our citizens' health services being delivered in Schuylkill County.

*Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in cooperation with Drs. Jenkins and Burke worked to set up a Dental Clinic focused on Medical Access patients who normally had to travel to Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia for care. To date the Clinic which opened in March 2000, has seen 600 patients and have 200 more on a waiting list. The clinic is currently open 2 days a week.

3. Strive to attain zero tolerance of alcohol and substance abuse on a countywide basis.

*The Schuylkill Haven Jaycees, the Schuylkill Drug and Alcohol Executive Commission and the Good Samaritan Medical Center implemented a parent inhalant awareness program.

D. Arts, Culture and Recreation

1. Enhance and promote access to a broad array of arts and cultural activities and events.

*The Schuylkill County Council for the Arts created the Vision of Schuylkill County Arts program, which has continued from 1998 to 2000.

*The Cultural Arts Strategic Alliance held a Summit and developed Celebrate Schuylkill 2000 which provided a venue for more than 25 different artists at the Arts Center for the community in one day.

*The Schuylkill Symphony Orchestra developed and implemented a "Young Artists Competition" to recognize out county's most gifted young musicians.

*The Schuylkill Symphony Orchestra began a program to move the concerts around the county so that all citizens have the opportunity to enjoy the symphony.

*The Schuylkill County Council for the Arts brought the Tyler School of Art to the county to blend an exhibit with the students in Schuylkill County.

*The Schuylkill County Council for the Arts expanded the county's cultural experience by presenting "3 Foxy Ladies", "Spring music and More" and other new stage venues for our community.

*Alvernia College and the Council for the Arts presented the life and works of Lord Alfred Tennyson.

*The Pottsville Area Development Corporation along with 15 other partners is renovating the Majestic Theater.

*Orwigsburg Borough coordinated and implemented a Community Heritage Day Festival.

*Schuylkill County Council for the Arts planned & implemented a Schuylkill County Garden Tour and Tea.

*Historical & Preservation Societies of Frackville, Ashland Area and Shenandoah initiated a coalition to create a countywide historical association/coalition.

*Alvernia College has sponsored a number of educational/cultural events with the Schuylkill County Council for the Arts.

*Alvernia College, working with businesses, has formed the Schuylkill Advisory Board to encourage communication with area businesses and leaders to respond to the educational needs of the community.

2. Develop a countywide parks and recreation delivery system.

3. Provide adequate indoor and outdoor recreation in regional community centers. Place strong emphasis on youth access.

*The Schuylkill Headwaters Watershed Association and Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mines held the Schuylkill River Walk to provide community education and awareness of the headwaters of the Schuylkill River here in Schuylkill County.

4. Develop a Performing Arts Center for our citizens and to stimulate tourism.

*The Majestic Theatre Association Renovation Project, begun in 1999 is well underway. The building is being stabilized, events are being held to raise funds and grants are being sought to renovate the theater.

5. Use our natural and historical resources to enhance recreational and cultural opportunities.

Infrastructure

VISION

Schuylkill County will develop and maintain infrastructure oriented to the future that sustains economic growth and quality of life.

STRATEGIES

A. Comprehensive Master Plan

1. Create a countywide comprehensive plan of land management that controls the zoning process with a small number of regional urban growth areas. Each regional urban growth area will incorporate the appropriate interdependent elements of a complete community including infrastructure, education, housing (including affordable housing), commercial, industrial, office, recreation, education and environmental sensitivity. Walk-able, livable communities with a wide range of housing densities will be encouraged. Each regional urban growth area will be a quality community based on the following simple principles:

- a.) a sense of place
- b.) human scale
- c.) self contained neighborhoods
- d.) diversity
- e.) transit-friendly design
- f.) trees
- g.) alleys and parking lots to the rear
- h.) people-friendly architecture
- i.) outdoor rooms
- j.) maintenance and safety
- k.) parks and open space
- l.) inviting downtowns

Preserve prime agricultural land outside the regional growth areas.

*The Infrastructure Foundation Action Team, upon request of the County Commissioners, researched, reviewed and provided recommendation for a \$10 million Bond for Schuylkill County to address key issues in community and economic development. The Bond was passed in September 2000.

*The Infrastructure Foundation Action Team is currently meeting to discuss comprehensive master planning and what process will work for Schuylkill County.

*The Schuylkill County Conservancy has been established to address the county's key land preservation needs including: Key in promoting the Bond issue; Promote awareness of land use issues in the County; Promote farmland preservation program; Promote natural diversity Inventory and Promote the statewide "Growing smarter" initiative.

*The City of Pottsville, through the leadership of the late Mayor Terry Reiley, began a city vision for a healthy, livable community.

2. **Ensure that high quality industrial and office parks complete with full infrastructure and speculative buildings are available and ready for occupancy in strategic locations in the county.**

B. Improved Physical Appearance

1. **Develop and vigorously enforce a countywide code that establishes minimum acceptable standards for the physical appearance, safety and occupancy of housing, all other buildings and associated landscaping. Every building in the county will be surveyed and certified as meeting code or requiring renovation, rehabilitation or demolition within strict time limitations. Particular attention will be given to absentee landlords.**
2. Promote downtown restoration and historic preservation, and provide adequate parking countywide.
3. Improve the ability to take property on a timely basis that is not meeting the building codes or is delinquent in taxes.

C. Utilities

1. **Provide countywide water and sewer authorities with the operating responsibility to effectively and efficiently provide water and sewerage services in the regional urban growth areas that supports growth in jobs. Eliminate dumping raw sewage in our streams.**

*A water study was commissioned by the Schuylkill County Commissioners to review the water resources for the county.

2. Ensure access to the global information highway that gives people business and government competitive advantage in the global market place. Train Schuylkill County citizens and employees in the use of this access.
3. Ensure that any landfill fees collected above cost will be used by the county in environmental improvement.

D. Transportation

1. **Improve and expand transportation capacity on existing highways including Route 61, Route 209, Route 901, Route 309; and adequate access between I-81 and I-78.**

*A T-21 grant application partnership was jointly developed to enable Schuylkill County to compete in the region and not against its own citizens.

2. Maintain all existing roadways with expedited time schedules, to protect our investment, provide quality transportation and increase individual productivity. Improve the airport instrument landing system and add jet fuel capability.
3. Develop a commuter inter-county transportation system providing access to Reading, Allentown and Harrisburg.
4. Increase rail transportation.
5. Develop a relationship with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation that ensures Schuylkill County receives its fair share of transportation dollars.
6. Enhance public transportation within Schuylkill County.

E. Environment

1. Restore abandoned economic sites and reclaim mining sites and eliminate acid mine drainage into creeks and rivers.
2. Promote a balance between industry and environmental concerns that encourages industrial development while recognizing that we must maintain regulatory environmental standards.
3. Enhance air quality through control of air pollution.

F. General

1. Annually review the impact of migration of individuals and families.
2. Support the political leaders that have to make decisions on countywide and regional development of infrastructure.
3. Increase the supply of high-quality hotels, motels and residential housing.
4. Maintain effective tourism directional signage on Interstate 81 and all other highways. Cooperate with the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor.
5. Create toll free calls and one area code within Schuylkill County.

*A countywide partnership worked to assure one area code for Schuylkill County. The work resulted in 80% of the county is in the 570 and the Southwestern area remained in 717 their request.

6. Create comprehensive Schuylkill television coverage.

Government

VISION

Schuylkill County will have responsive government providing effective and efficient public services that enrich the lives of its citizens.

STRATEGIES

1. **Consolidate and/or encourage collaboration** between regional entities of **all services which can be most effectively** and efficiently provided at a **regional or county level**.

*The municipalities within the Pottsville Area School District is evaluating and pursuing a regional police agreement.

*The PADOT Agility Program is under expansion within the county leading to increased intergovernmental cooperation.

*Mahanoy City initiated the coalition of code enforcement officials within Schuylkill County to discuss issues regarding code enforcement.

*The Keystone Opportunity Zone program was instrumental in creating collaboration between municipalities, schools and county government.

*Northern Schuylkill Council of Government was formed of 12 municipalities and officially chartered.

2. **Encourage all government entities to endorse Schuylkill County's VISION and to adopt those strategies uniquely within their realm of responsibility for implementation.**
3. **Develop open communication between government and citizens that results in Schuylkill County's citizens believing that government is responsive to their needs and increases citizen input and participation at all levels.**
4. **Create a tax and regulatory environment that leads to dramatic productivity increases of our citizens and businesses so that we can expand the number and quality of jobs in Schuylkill County.**
5. **Ensure that the core functions of local government are customer-driven and market-oriented and that the most effective and efficient business practices are being used at all levels of Schuylkill County Government.**

*The City of Pottsville undertook a performance assessment for the police department to compare itself with existing norms for performance. This model can be replicated through other departments within the county.

*A northern county Council of Governments was formed to enhance municipal cooperation and collaboration.

6. Encourage our most qualified citizens to run for public office and to campaign on the issues. Ensure the availability of appropriate training for all elected officials.
7. Collect all municipal, school, and county taxes by a county tax collectors office to ensure accountable, responsive and the least costly service.
8. Ensure that police and emergency services are operated under uniform countywide standards and are accountable for all emergency requests with appropriate monthly reporting and an opportunity for citizen review.
9. Develop collaborative relationships with surrounding counties, Metropolitan Statistical Areas and the state and federal governments.

*Efforts in obtaining MSA Status or micropolitan status continue through the efforts of the MSA Taskforce. A committee of SEDCO continues to work closely with Congressman Holden concerning this issue and an improved designation for Schuylkill County. (See also Economic Development A2)

10. Create the best partnership between public and private sectors in Pennsylvania and the Northeast.
11. Expect all municipalities to hire or share professional managers.
12. Create and maintain citizenship curriculum in the school systems.

Private Sector Leadership

VISION

Schuylkill County will have leaders and role models at all levels that foster a positive living environment.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Encourage every private sector organization (both profit and not-for-profit) to endorse the VISION; to be an active ambassador for the VISION in the county, the region and the world; and to adopt the strategies uniquely within their realm of responsibility, for implementation.**
- 2. Promote our Core Values throughout the county and encourage the alignment of our actions with our Core Values: Positive Attitude, Integrity, Responsibility, Traditional Family Values, Hard Work, and Faith in God.**
- 3. Encourage employer/employee collaboration and sense of interdependency that enables Schuylkill County businesses to compete in the global marketplace and to maximize the expansion of jobs.**
- 4. Maintain a private/public partnership with a continuous communication of the business and/or government sectors alternative scenarios of the future and the community response needed to make the best scenarios reality.**
- 5. Enhance volunteerism and community service for all ages that create a better quality of life for all our citizens.**

*SKIP implemented the fall clean up program in 1998 and 1999 with over 600 volunteers.

6. Encourage corporations to share their human and financial resources as good corporate citizens.
7. Encourage the development of strong leaders of all ages and walks of life through programs like Schuylkill Leadership, Scouts, 4H, Future Farmers, Junior Achievement, etc.

*INSIGHT, the countywide youth organization was provided leadership development workshops.

8. Recognize, appreciate and honor those public and private organizations and individuals that demonstrate the strongest commitment to making our VISION reality.

*The Schuylkill Symphony Orchestra honored the county's most gifted young adults through the Young Artists Competition.

9. Develop activities, events and symbols that create the Schuylkill community of the future.

10. Promote and encourage diversity within our communities.

* A Women's Leadership Breakfast series was developed and implemented through the partnership of twenty VISION partners. New networking and educational opportunities will be developed in the years 2000 and 2001.