

NEW FRONTIERS FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S HEARTLAND



*A summary report
of the findings of
a Regional Needs Analysis
conducted by
the Central Pennsylvania
Forum for the Future.*

Throughout this report the reader will encounter references to the Appendix. This is a companion document, where supporting information is presented in much greater detail for the benefit of those who may wish to delve further into the results of the various study elements. The Appendix is being published separately from this document, both on the Worldwide Web and in hard copy. To request a hard copy, call the Forum for the Future at 570-524-4491, or it can be accessed on the Web at: <http://www.forum4future.org>.

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This report was funded by a generous grant from the Degenstein Foundation based on their intense interest in building a bright future for the communities and people of this region. Their willingness to invest in our future should encourage all of us to do likewise.

A particularly enjoyable part of this endeavor was the involvement of representatives from three of our universities in the region: Susquehanna University, Bloomsburg University, and Bucknell University. University representatives participated on two task teams addressing focus groups and the regional survey. The involvement of these capable individuals added great value to our endeavor. A sincere thank-you goes out to all of them and to the other community representatives who helped with the focus groups and survey development, along with more than 150 other individuals who participated in interviews and focus group sessions during the course of the analysis.

Maurice Forrester of the SEDA-Council of Governments staff deserves special recognition for his constant and capable support. In so many ways, this report demonstrates the power of collaboration and commitment that are the key ingredients of our look to the future. Our region is blessed with tremendous assets and a broad array of high quality businesses, institutions, and organizations. Most important of all are the talented and committed people.

It is my hope that this analysis and the challenges offered result in increasing this region's ability to seize the great opportunity that our new frontiers offer us.

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The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.

Albert Einstein

New Frontiers for Pennsylvania's Heartland

Foreword

1

The dawn of a new century is a time of decision for the 11 counties* where the Central Pennsylvania Forum for the Future has been focusing its efforts. Two broad paths lie open before us, and we stand at the fork. Will this be a time of bold leadership, expanding opportunities, and challenges accepted for our communities and people? Or will controversy and parochialism result in undirected, sporadic reaction to events that allows us only to be overwhelmed by change that we do not want, but which we find ourselves powerless to avoid?

Not unlike those residents who stood at the dawn of the two previous centuries, we hold the future in our hands. The most imminent danger is that we will let it slip out of our grasp. Time and the world around us are both moving ahead at a steadily accelerating rate. Without urgent action on our part, we may quickly lose any ability to catch up.

Surprisingly, there are still recognizable similarities here in Central Pennsylvania between 1800, 1900, and 2000 – rich natural resources, striking physical features, comparative peace and quiet, and a sense of expectation. In 1800, when the second census of our young country was taken, fewer than 50,000 people lived within the 11-county region.

What were their hopes and dreams? Much of their existence in those days was necessarily devoted simply to survival, as they struggled to establish themselves in a new Pennsylvania frontier.

Population

Area	1800	1850	1900
11 County Region	46,820	189,220	368,097
Pennsylvania	602,365	2,311,786	6,302,115

... an array of ... communities that emerged during the 19th Century flourished during the early 20th Century, and have become more challenged as we begin the 21st Century.

By 1850, in fifty short years, that population had more than quadrupled to nearly 190,000 people. There was a sense of newness, exploration, discovery, and strong links among those people who chose to journey to this part of Pennsylvania, settle, and make their homes. The population at that time was young and diverse. The vast majority represented the first generation of their family to find

themselves in this new country. These were the people that explored their new frontiers, established fine independent communities that were relatively self-sufficient islands of economic activity.

At the dawn of the 20th Century, there was eager anticipation of the new technologies emerging from the industrial revolution – aggressive harvesting of the region’s tremendous natural resources of timber and the soon to be extracted resource of coal. These potentials lent a whole new drama to frontiers being explored, and ultimately became part of Central Pennsylvania’s history. By 1900, many of our region's communities were well established, strong, and dynamic centers of commerce and economic activity, poised to take advantage of the opportunities of a new century.

In 1900, there were 368,000 people living in the 11-county* region. Over the next fifty years, much would change. In 1950, there would be 520,000 people living in the region. This period also witnessed an intensification of impact from resource extraction activities, as well as more fluctuation in economic cycles. The region’s forests were essentially exhausted, and it would be many years before timber harvesting regained its former importance in the area’s economy. The coal industry experienced a rapid decline after moving through a significant boom period. At the same time, the manufacturing sector of the region was approaching its zenith, providing the principal source of employment for the area’s workers. The role the region played in supporting World War I and World War II created a sense of accomplishment and pride in the productive capacity of the area’s people.

In many respects, the communities of that era were functioning at an ideal efficiency level, as public services were improved and water and sewer systems were made more complete. Young families being established following World War II recognized the many advantages of life in this part of Pennsylvania.

Population

Area	1900	1950	1999
11 County Region	368,097	520,057	651,779
Pennsylvania	6,302,115	10,498,012	11,994,016

* Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder and Union.



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Although many basic similarities persist here at the brink of another new century, the frontiers that need to be overcome are much different. What are these new frontiers? What fate awaits these 11 counties* as they move through the long succession of tomorrows? The natural environment, although altered, depleted, and in some cases refreshed over the decades, remains a major asset. Also an asset is the resilience and creativity of over 650,000 people who call this heartland of Pennsylvania their home. Likewise an asset, although currently beset by problems, is an array of stable, but challenged communities that emerged during the 19th Century, flourished during the early 20th Century, and have become more challenged as we begin the 21st Century. What are the hopes and dreams of this population? What path must the collection of communities that make up this 11 county* region follow to explore our new frontiers and to make the best of what the future holds?

These were the core questions that furnished the driving impetus for the Central Pennsylvania Forum for the Future to begin a unique collaboration of interests in Central Pennsylvania in 1989. During the decade of the 1990's, the Forum sponsored a series of conferences to bring people together to discuss future issues, and conducted research to help document those issues, along with the desires and objectives of organizations, communities, and individuals across the 11 county* region.

Although we are tremendously fortunate to have such a rich history and heritage, our focus must be on the future. What lies ahead will require bold leadership, the ability to manage change in our own best interests, and the flexibility to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. This challenge is one that confronts every sector of the regional community, whether it is business, industry, education, local government, nonprofit organizations, or individuals and their families. The external pressures on this region are increasing and are likely to continue doing so. Only prompt action on our part can bring us the future we want.

A Special Opportunity

In the fall of 1999, the Central Pennsylvania Forum for the Future was provided the means to attempt to look into the future of Central Pennsylvania. This opportunity took the form of a grant from the Degenstein Foundation, the purpose of which was to explore with individuals, through interviews, focus groups, and by

means of a regional survey, what might be the best ingredients for a regional action agenda.

**We cannot avoid the future,
but we can manage our
approach to it.**

This regional needs analysis did not emerge in a vacuum. It is a continuation of a long series of forward looking planning activities across the 11 county* region. A mixture of public and private initiatives, these efforts have, for the most part, been localized by community or county. The activity covered by this analysis, however, takes a broader focus, and attempts to assess the region in a carefully crafted attempt to weigh the region's past in the context of the present, but with primary focus on the future.

The effort was undertaken by the Central Pennsylvania Forum for the Future, with assistance from faculty members of Bloomsburg, Bucknell, and Susquehanna universities, as well as SEDA-Council of Governments and other community resource people. The three-phase process of gathering information started with a series of interviews with selected citizens, followed by a series of focus groups, and culminating in a statistically valid telephone survey of the region. Additional input was obtained from the annual Make A Difference youth conferences and other earlier activities of the Forum for the Future.

Although the interviews and group input focused on the five counties of Union, Snyder, Northumberland, Montour, and Columbia, the survey was conducted across the entire 11 county* region of the Forum for the Future. Nonetheless, it is our belief that much of the analysis is as relevant for the entire region as it is for the five-county sub-region.

The challenge is clear, if the ultimate outcome is not. Our region is offered a great window of opportunity, although not without risk and uncertainty. We cannot avoid the future, but we can manage our approach to it. We should strive for a common shared agenda and vision for Pennsylvania's heartland. Such a vision should provide hope and promise for both young and old, and the strongest and weakest of our communities.

Those of us involved in the Central Pennsylvania Forum for the Future sincerely hope that this report will help in setting that regional agenda and in providing the catalyst that can bring together all sectors of our society on common ground; increase our ability to deal with the information age; and create a region that thrives on change, turning the change into innovation, and innovation into long-term beneficial results.



Survey

The Base Camp

An integral part of exploring the future is establishing a baseline of information regarding broad-based attitudes and opinions about the present. For this endeavor, a regional survey was developed based on input from individual interviews and focus groups that were conducted as part of the process.

This random survey was prepared by a task team with representation from the Forum for the Future, Susquehanna University, Bloomsburg University, Bucknell University, and SEDA-Council of Governments. A random assortment of telephone numbers from across the region was purchased from a commercial firm specializing in such services. Most calls were made by specially trained students.

The Appendix provides a complete description of the process followed to undertake the survey and a complete summary of the survey results. A total of 402 surveys were completed, a number considered by authorities sufficient to make the results statistically reliable for this region.

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Born in Pennsylvania, Lived Here 25 Years, 48 Years Old...

Respondents to the survey had lived in their community an average of 24.9 years, and their average age was 47.9. Overwhelmingly, they were born in Pennsylvania, with 313 so indicating. Neighboring New York was the birthplace for 19, New Jersey 7, and Maryland and Texas 6 each. Nine of the respondents were born in foreign countries.

Of the total number of respondents, 38 percent were male and 62 percent were female. The reasons for this disproportionate ratio can only be conjectured, in view of the efforts made to make the selection random, as discussed in the Appendix.

A total of 78% of the respondents indicated that their household owns the home in which they live, while only 22% rent their homes. More than half – 54 percent – indicated that they attend a place of worship regularly.

More than 40 percent of the respondents are high school graduates, with 166 falling in this category. An additional 33 have four-year college degrees, while 42 have graduate degrees. A total of 65 indicated that they have some college training, although without a degree, and only 55 have less than a high school education.

Some 72 percent of the respondents indicated that they use a



computer at work, and 56 percent have Internet access at work. In contrast, only 54 percent have access to a computer at home, and 46 percent have access to the Internet at home. Only 29 percent use a computer at home in connection with either school or work. A still smaller number, 22 percent, use a computer for on-line shopping.

Valued Communities, Good Services, Need to Attract Good Jobs...

Community Satisfaction. An astonishing 92% of the respondents consider their communities to be either a somewhat desirable or very desirable place to live. This reflects a high level of general contentment. When asked to name the major strengths of their communities—presumably the factors that contribute most to the high satisfaction level—339 responded, of which 93 cited the **rural setting**, and another 43 the **peace and quiet**. The **neighbors and people in general** were noted by 59 respondents. **Benefits for families** in the community, **safety**, and **public schools** were all cited by a significant number.

Community Weaknesses. The region's communities are not without perceived weaknesses, however. When asked to cite the major weakness in their municipality, 284 responded, of which 49 pointed to the **lack of jobs** and the generally **low pay available here**. **Lack of services**, including stores, was noted by 45; while 31 find a **lack of recreational opportunities**. **Drugs**, the **poor economy of the area**, **local government**, **traffic**, and **high taxes** were listed by at least ten respondents.

Adequacy of Services. Respondents were presented with a menu of local services and asked to rate them as excellent, adequate, or weak. Fire protection received the highest number of excellent votes, with 54. Ambulance service received 49, the local library 37, grocery stores 34, and college and university services 32.

The highest number of weak votes went to public transportation, with 48. Close behind, with 44 votes, were retail stores and recreation with 37 weak votes.

... only ten percent chose the high school graduate level ...

Local Government. When asked to rate the quality of their local government, 24 called it excellent, 138 rated it good, 107 said fair, and 45 ranked it poor. A total of 87 said they didn't know, in response to this question.

Educational System. In considering various aspects of their community's educational system, 45 percent considered the school facilities and safety very adequate. Programs and services were found very adequate by 41 percent, and 40 percent considered the curriculum very adequate. At the opposite end of the spectrum, 14 percent considered communication with students' homes to be weak. The school board was called weak by 13 percent, and 11 percent said that class sizes fell in the weak category.

Regarding the level of education that is considered desirable for success in life, 42 percent selected a four-year college degree level, 26 percent said some college, only 10 percent chose the high school graduate level and the graduate degree level.

Community Issues. When asked to rank an assortment of issues as they affect their own community, 43 percent put the need for

43 percent put the need for economic growth at the top of the "very serious" list

economic growth at the top of the "very serious" list. Second place went to **high tax rates**, with 41 percent. The **problem of young people moving away** was seen as very serious by 38 percent, and 36 percent cited **teenage**

problems. **Substance abuse** was considered a problem by 33 percent of the respondents.

Quality of Life. Respondents were first asked to consider the impacts of various activities on their quality of life. Heading the list of things that would improve the quality of life was "**more recreational facilities**," with 80 percent of the respondents so indicating. **Good schools** got 67 percent support, and 60 percent went to **communication technology services.** **Industrial parks** was the only other activity receiving more than 50 percent support.

Next, when asked to rate potential strategies for improving the quality of life in their communities, the highest number of votes (298) went to **retaining and attracting young adults.** Close behind, with 294 votes, was more or **increased cooperation among local and county governments.** Other possible strategies receiving more than 200 votes were, in order: **better roads and highways,** **tax breaks for new businesses,** a clear **community action plan,** **better schools,** and **better Internet access.**

Glimpses of Future Frontiers and the New Economy:
What forces will propel us forward, and what will hold us back?

Worldwide economic competition and instant communication are just two of the external factors that will directly affect our future.

Although these trends are beyond the control of local and regional areas, we must try to understand their implications for Central Pennsylvania. Without such understanding, we run the risk of being overwhelmed by developments for which we have let ourselves remain unprepared. What follows is a summary presentation of trends that seem most directly related to the region's future.



An Accelerating Pace of Change

Every aspect of our lives is bombarded with change, fueled in part by a tremendous volume of new information that, in turn, leads to an ever expanding level of knowledge. Now, and certainly in the future, the ability to manage change will become increasingly important for individuals, institutions, businesses, communities, and regions. Like water, air, and our natural environment, change will continue to be a fundamental part of our future. Rural areas—ours included—are often identified as slower to adapt and adjust. Acquiring the ability to improve our region's response to change poses the greatest challenge, but also the best promise for our region.

Aged Populations Increase; More Elderly, Less Young People

For decades the population of the United States as a whole has been getting older. Pennsylvania's population has been getting older, and getting there faster. At present, the Keystone State's percentage of its population age 65 and older is second only to that of Florida. In 1998, some 15.9% of Pennsylvania's population was over 65; the region included in this analysis had 14.6% in the over-65 bracket. Moreover, the detailed population projections issued by the Pennsylvania State Data Center in July 1998 indicate that the elderly segment of our population will continue to grow through at least the year 2020. At the same time, a recent report indicated that Pennsylvania was losing the 22-35 age bracket at a quicker rate than many other states. The number of children being raised in single-parent households has also been increasing.

Technology

Although technology may prove to be the most exciting and promising factor for our future, it is also seen by many as the most threatening. Most experts say we are in the midst of a revolutionary



technological upheaval that will substantially impact all that we do. As a consequence of this revolution, innovation and entrepreneurship are emerging as lifelines for success in the new economy. The challenge is to move boldly forward, grasping these lifelines and pursuing tomorrow's promise, rather than passively accepting what comes.

Agriculture

Agricultural activities have historically been an important part of the culture and economy of Central Pennsylvania. Agriculture will continue to be an important part of life in this region in the future. It is clear, however, that the role of the traditional family farm will face challenges from emerging trends and technologies, such as bio-technology and concentrated animal feeding operations. These challenges will need to be reconciled in one way or another.

Quality of Life

Factors affecting quality of life will become increasingly important. These include environmental quality; community safety; school quality; community access to life-long learning opportunities; and recreation, cultural, and leisure pursuit opportunities. Measured in terms of these factors, the quality of life currently found in our region is relatively high. We can already claim a network of livable communities, an abundance of publicly owned open space, and a rich history. If protected and enhanced, these factors can provide an important competitive advantage for the future.

Innovative Regions

Around the country, there are a number exemplary areas with lessons for adapting to the information age and the new economy. Such areas include Silicon Valley; Austin, Texas; San Diego; and the Washington-Dulles high-tech corridor. These regions are often described as innovative. What ingredients have impacted their development? What stands out as their shining successes, and what represents their failures? What frontiers have they explored that may be relevant to the future of our region?

Innovative Regions, The Importance of Place and Networks in the Innovative Economy, commissioned by the Heinz Endowments and prepared by Collaborative Economics from Palo Alto, California,

suggests what ingredients need to exist or be created to make a place innovative. That report offers some basic ingredients to nurture an innovative culture. They include: regional leadership using assets, networks, culture, and community as cornerstones of innovation; making good information available to everyone; using information as a tool to connect diverse interests; continually promoting vision; thinking regionally while acting regionally; tearing down walls between people; and learning from others, but creating your own vision and theme. There are lessons here for our region, if we choose to accept them.

Collaborative Leadership and Shared Vision

Across the national and world scene, new innovative partnerships seem to emerge daily. These new alliances, acquisitions, or relationships provide new insights on how businesses, institutions, and organizations work together. In a fast changing world where differences between the public sector, the private sector, and the nonprofit sector become ever more blurred, and where worldwide competition is a fact of life, leaders must continue to find ways to collaborate and to develop visions that encompass broad cross-sections of interest. This emerging atmosphere (collaboration, shared leadership, and vision) challenges the old strategies of separateness and self-sufficiency, while creating new opportunities for businesses, communities, and regions.

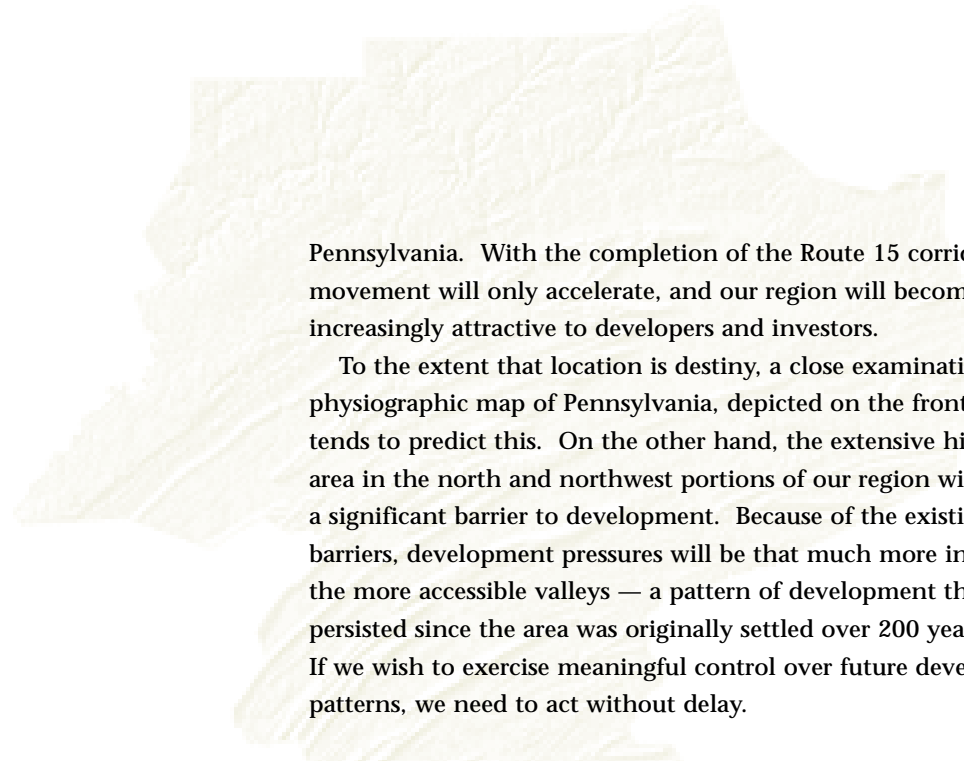


Increased Commitment to Strategic Planning

Those businesses that have been most successful in the recent past and those communities which have maintained and enhanced their quality of life share a commitment to strategic assessment, analysis, planning, and action as part of how they do business. Without a clear sense of expectation, vision, and a strategy for taking bold action, organizations and communities are at the mercy of others, rather than directing their own destiny and exploring their own frontiers.

The Boston/Washington Megalopolis

The megalopolis that now extends from Boston to Washington continues to move west from New Jersey and north from Washington, D.C., through Maryland and into Southern



Pennsylvania. With the completion of the Route 15 corridor, this movement will only accelerate, and our region will become increasingly attractive to developers and investors.

To the extent that location is destiny, a close examination of a physiographic map of Pennsylvania, depicted on the front cover, tends to predict this. On the other hand, the extensive highland area in the north and northwest portions of our region will present a significant barrier to development. Because of the existing physical barriers, development pressures will be that much more intense in the more accessible valleys — a pattern of development that has persisted since the area was originally settled over 200 years ago. If we wish to exercise meaningful control over future development patterns, we need to act without delay.

Pennsylvania's Heartland

Across the broad expanse of Pennsylvania, from Pittsburgh and Erie to Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley, the next 20 years will represent a coming of age for Pennsylvania's heartland. The convergence of trends affecting technology, quality of life, and innovation can position this 11 county* region to reap the benefits of education, knowledge, and innovation in all aspects of regional life. Recent monthly reports issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry have consistently included a number of this region's counties among the ten counties in the state with the lowest unemployment rates. Moreover, the U.S. Census Bureau's 1999 population estimates indicate that from the time of the 1990 Census through 1999, the population of this region grew at a rate of 2 percent, more than double the Commonwealth's 0.9 percent growth rate. The vast holdings of state forests and other public lands, coupled with an array of institutions of higher learning; good quality, stable communities; and all the other quality of life attributes combine to assure Pennsylvania's heartland a key role in the state's future.

Assets, Liabilities, and the Path to the Future

This region has always been blessed with many natural assets. For the most part, those assets are still in place, offering resources on which to build an abundant future. Other assets are to be found in the deeply held commitment to values and principles of the people who settled here, and whose descendants often still make

this region their home. At the same time, the region has limitations that it would be folly to ignore.

Over the past 10 years, through gatherings of regional residents, conferences, and earlier survey work, a wide range of assets and liabilities have been identified. In the course of the study that led to this report, certain quality-of-life assets stood out as holding particular promise for the future. These include the region's natural environment; its small comfortable communities; the people themselves; our geographic location; the generous expanses of public land; good schools; an improving transportation system; and an exceptional network of colleges and universities.

Most recently, the results of the survey indicate substantial regional agreement on many of the quality-of-life assets here in the region. These include a rural setting, small community living; the importance of people-to-people interaction; benefits of good schools; health care, and related services; and a substantial amount of optimism about the future. This strong confirmation of previous findings should be a powerful catalyst in encouraging local and regional leadership to formulate aggressive strategies and move boldly to conquer our future frontiers.

The Challenge of Our Liabilities

Independence vs. Cooperation. As our region settled, communities became relatively self-sufficient islands of economic and social activity. As our state constitution evolved, it recognized the importance of local interest and local control.

Today, those same principles of self-sufficiency and independence often become barriers to cooperation and regional action. Fundamental to our success in exploring new frontiers will be our success in assuring that no boroughs or townships are left behind, and that every community has an opportunity to undertake its own innovation, and to connect with other communities and local governments in finding

new opportunities and ways to improve. The increasing tendency of residents to live in one community, while working in a second community, and participating in aspects of the life of one or more additional communities will continue to challenge all of us to find ways of fostering group cooperation between communities.

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Economic Restructuring. The process of restructuring the world's economies has impacted our region through the loss of jobs in certain industries. The resultant dislocation has sometimes obliged workers to accept lower paying jobs in order to survive. In this region, manufacturing jobs in 1998 accounted for 27.6% of all jobs; whereas, in the state as a whole, manufacturing jobs represented only 16.7% of the total. While this is viewed by many as beneficial, it must be acknowledged that not all of the manufacturing jobs in this area are particularly high paying ones. Moreover, the constant risk of having a major employer close up or leave carries the potential of producing a large number of unemployed workers whose only training is for jobs that have suddenly disappeared.

Decline in Youthful Vigor. One of our most difficult challenges is the chronic decline in younger populations, either as the result of migration or a general decrease in family size. This outflow of young people dampens enthusiasm, saps vitality, and diminishes the promise of the future. This significant challenge may be reversible through a regional commitment to learning, knowledge, and innovation, coupled with the commitment to engage the imagination and creativity of our young people in providing our future leadership.

Innovation and Entrepreneurs. Pennsylvania and our region tend to produce a relatively small number of business start-ups and entrepreneurial activity when compared to other states and regions. Working to create a culture of innovation should have as one of its basic tenets, a commitment to entrepreneurial activity for all sectors of our economy and communities. As has been done many times before, a perceived liability can be transformed into a significant asset.

Parochialism. The structure of Pennsylvania's local government system tends to fragment public approaches to problems, requiring action by one local government at a time rather than a coordinated regional approach. The strong local commitment to rural living, while a positive value from one perspective, also creates an inherently parochial attitude toward joint action, shared leadership, and shared vision. Once thriving communities now struggling to find new roles and regain old vitality, tend to breed an atmosphere of low expectation, rather than one of excitement and higher expectations.



Assets in Abundance

Among the many assets that this region can already claim is our superb network of colleges and universities and the young people who turn to them for their education. The still largely unspoiled natural environment, much of which is incorporated in the region's vast expanses of public land, is also a major asset. To this list must also be added the numerous comfortably sized, safe communities, which are home to many of our citizens. We likewise have many creative citizens who are already taking a variety of steps to seize the future we want.

Colleges and Universities. Looking to the future, the most important assets will be the involvement of our young people in community leadership; the central involvement of our colleges and universities in creating a culture committed to education, knowledge, and innovation; and the preservation and enhancement of our natural environment and livable communities. Foremost in our considerations should be our young people and the region's superb cluster of colleges and universities. To be successful, our regional leadership must find ways to keep more of our best and brightest young people here, and to activate the tremendous assets represented by our college and universities.

Each year more than 17,000 young people begin their adventure in higher education somewhere in this region. The region is thus already well positioned to create a learning environment that

There exists a great opportunity for our region as a whole to work with these fine educational institutions in molding a future to benefit all. If we are successful in energizing these key assets, there is the potential to create an all-pervasive learning environment.

permeates every aspect of our communities and region. This, in turn, would position our young people and these fine institutions of learning to be major forces in our community-building effort. At the same time, our communities can continue to provide favorable settings for the many students from outside the region who come here to learn – and perhaps to stay.

Indeed, many other parts of Pennsylvania would welcome the circumstances that exist here in these 11 counties. Considering the needs of the information age and the new economy, possibly

the most under-utilized asset within our regional arsenal is our institutions of higher education. While other institutions, businesses, and local governments have for some time been experiencing continual pressures to change and redefine their roles, this process has only just begun to impact colleges and universities. There exists a great opportunity for our region as a whole to work

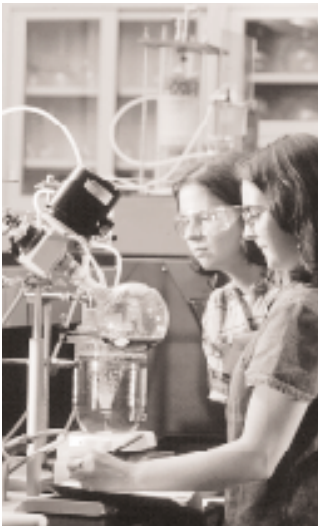
with these fine educational institutions in molding a future to benefit all. If we are successful in energizing these key assets, there is the potential to create an all-pervasive learning environment.

Building on Existing Efforts. Although it may at first seem that we are setting ourselves an overwhelming task, we must keep in mind that we will not be starting from scratch. All across the region, as well as at the state level, planning and implementation activities are pioneering our future frontiers. These innovations can enable us to continue the journey with excitement and confidence.

Our challenges, again, are not insurmountable and can become blessings. With solid information, the region can move ahead in its efforts to manage change and create an atmosphere of innovation. The existing barriers to progress can be overcome, and at the same time, we can also discover new dimensions of progress.

Principles to Guide Future Exploration

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To be successful, people from all walks of life in the region must come together to challenge, change, and debate while forging a vision and future strategies. This vision must capture the excitement and imagination of young and old residents. It should be a vision that celebrates enjoyment of life, and the vital values that make up the fabric of communities within our region. Tomorrow's leaders must be committed to discovering and exploring new frontiers so a culture rich in imagination, creativity, and innovation can emerge. We can create an atmosphere that embraces change with excitement and expectation, that encourages and supports risk taking, and maintains a vital commitment to obtaining the most from research, information, and analysis. Within this broad context, the following principles are offered to foster an environment of consensus-building and bold action:

1. *From the vast array of assets the region has on which to build a bright future, the most important are the power and potential of every individual, whether residing here now or choosing to come in the future, and the grace and beauty of our natural environment.*
2. *While the most important raw materials for earlier generations were water, coal, timber, and farmland, this century's most important raw materials will be knowledge, learning, and people.*
3. *There must be an abiding commitment to the power of shared leadership, shared visions, and shared resources.*

4. *Change is inevitable. Pro-active change requires advocacy. Advocacy inevitably involves choices. Choices inherently confront differences of opinion. Our region must be committed to engaging in constructive debate, to pursuing research, and increasing understanding in all that we do to explore our new frontiers. This should all be done with civility and with respect for the freedom of expression that we all share.*
5. *Respect must be accorded to and support provided for the value, capacity, and potential of existing businesses, institutions, organizations, and local governments. There must also be a commitment to ensuring that all community sectors share in the opportunity to move forward to our new frontiers.*

Hope for The Future: Ideas, Dreams, Concerns, and Frustrations

A critically important part of our analysis included individual interviews with 65 regional residents. These were followed by a series of organized focus group sessions on a variety of topics, in which more than 90 additional regional residents participated. In addition to the information developed by the interviews and focus groups, we were also able to draw upon the questionnaires and discussions that occurred around the Make A Difference youth leadership conferences that are held each year within the region. The aggregation of this input represents a collective expression of needs and possibilities for our organizations, communities, and region.

The interviews were hour-long conversations with people from all walks of life. Those conversations focused on the future of the region and perceived opportunities and challenges. The information from those conversations was used to organize focus group sessions that addressed the economy and environment, government, technology, brain drain, education, and community health. A focus group "task team" comprised of representatives from Susquehanna University, Bloomsburg University, Bucknell University, Susquehanna Institute, and SEDA-Council of Governments provided guidance in the selection of topics. The task team also provided facilitators and recorders for the group sessions. The Appendix includes the introductory information utilized to stimulate discussion during the focus group sessions, along with other details.

The material resulting from the Make A Difference initiative was distilled from the expression by the young people of school, community, and regional problems they perceived. Focus groups held during the Make A Difference conferences provided additional information.

In total, this information provides a tremendous resource from which to launch the formation of strategies and action agendas to explore the new frontiers that lie ahead for the region. In contrast with the survey, where there was substantial convergence of opinion, there are significant differences within this information. This difference of viewpoint can only enrich the debate to come, and ultimately, the effectiveness of strategies and actions that eventually emerge.

What follows is a summary by focus group topic area. This information serves as the primary source of later recommendations. A more complete list of summary information is included in the Appendix.



Community Health

- Conduct research to determine what community health problems really do exist.
- Involve colleges and universities in a community research partnership.
- Achieve broad community involvement in dealing with identified community health issues.
- Engage young people in addressing community health issues.
- Make it easier for the public at large to participate in community organizations and local government.
- Childcare issues should be made a part of the overall community educational agenda.
- Successes need to be widely publicized.
- Neighboring communities need to cooperate in planning and in providing services.
- Encourage acceptance of minority populations.

Education

- Schools and communities need to work together in planning delivery of services.
- The traditional K-12 educational format must be blended with life-long learning.

- Parents and the community at large must be given a sense of joint ownership in the educational process.
- Inflexible and restrictive rules that inhibit community involvement in schools need to be modified.
- Communities and schools should jointly support strategic planning to achieve our goal of an educational future.
- Regionwide support should be given to raising expectations and standards for the educational process.
- Best practices information should be widely shared, and incentive funding for innovation should be developed.
- Communities should become marketers of education and the value of learning as part of our regional culture.
- The relative safety of our communities and schools should be presented as a major community asset.
- Educational opportunities should be extended to the home either through technology or otherwise.
- Innovative curriculum changes are needed to catch the interest of young people during their formative years.

Technology

- The region's future will be a function of its adaptability to the technological demands of the new economy.
- The new economy demands education and learning throughout all of life.
- Creativity and innovation have replaced capital in importance.
- Cooperative regionwide leadership is needed for innovation.
- The brain drain is most critical for the new economy where much of the leadership comes from the 35-and-under age bracket.
- The region needs to confront the potential of technology to accomplish community and regional goals.
- An understanding of the organization and use of information is fundamental.
- A regional information clearinghouse is needed to stimulate technological investments and other opportunities.
- More education and training in the use of new technology is needed for the region's labor force.
- The work force must become high-tech adaptable.
- Demand for competitive technologies must come from all regional sectors in a united voice.
- The region must build an engine of innovation with technological support to encourage entrepreneurship and initiative.





Brain Drain

- The region needs to create an atmosphere that encourages more young people to stay and make their homes here.
- We must open the doors to involvement by young people in all aspects of the community.
- The region's colleges and universities should cooperate in seeking ways to involve their students in the local community.
- We must change the current perception that the region's communities are not receptive to newcomers.
- It is perceived that the culture of the region does not welcome young women professionals.
- Competitive wages are not provided to young people.
- A wide range of job selection is not available. Entrepreneurship should be stressed.
- In many respects the area continues to resist change.
- Local leadership does not often include younger people.
- We need to market to young people the cultural and recreational opportunities available here.
- Communities should provide centers for positive youth activities and fun.

Economy/Environment

- We need a longer term perspective that extends over at least two generations.
- The public must be informed about the needs of a sustainable economy and its relationship to a healthy environment.
- All levels of government throughout the region should develop policies for facilitating sustainable development.
- Regionwide support for long-term planning should be developed.
- Among the issues that require special attention are the need for housing options, the need for more recreation facilities, waste disposal management, a policy toward concentrated animal feeding operations, cluster development, and a possible need for limiting growth.
- Plans should aim to eliminate sprawl and to have development supported by public infrastructure.
- Job value must be weighed against possible negative industry impact on the community and the environment.
- Colleges and universities should be encouraged to become more involved in overall community research and planning efforts.

Government

- All levels of government should assign greater importance to effective community and regional planning.
- High quality planning will improve prospects for a better future.
- There should be incentives for local governments to undertake joint planning with other governments, schools, non-profits, and the private sector.
- Land use controls including good land use planning and zoning, purchase of development rights, and easements should be implemented across the region.
- A research capacity should be developed to assist local governments in their planning efforts, including an analysis of the relationships among new roads, new developments, and new sprawl.
- Leadership programs should be encouraged as a means of supplying local leadership needs.
- All governments should foster an atmosphere that is conducive to the retention of young people.

Included among the broad themes that begin to emerge from these summaries are: **lifelong education for everyone; connection between communities; regional leadership; a focus on innovation; the mandate for collaboration between all sectors, coupled with a commitment to community analysis and research; and high-quality, effective community and regional planning.**

New Opportunities/New Frontiers:

A Vision For 2000 And Beyond

The preceding exploration and analysis has reviewed the path that brought us to where we stand today, on the brink of the future. Along the way we picked up new insights and perspectives, while uncovering the region's basic hopes and dreams. The objective was to set the stage for what will be our calculated leap into the future. Although little of what we found was completely new, what strategies we adopt to deal with it will have to be more aggressive than in the past.

Along with the new dimensions and perspectives, we sensed an urgent need for a bolder leadership, focused on a common vision and a commitment to overcome our challenges and liabilities, while parlaying our assets into a brighter future.

There should remain no doubt that coordinated action, collaboration, and an expanded shared vision together form

the key that we need to unlock tomorrow's golden door. Our basic challenge is to find our way to the future frontiers in Pennsylvania's heartland, guided by the region's principles and open to the discovery of what lies ahead.

A Vision for Pennsylvania's Heartland –

What Vision Would We Have If We Knew We Couldn't Fail?

- ◆ A vital collection of connected, thriving communities embraced in a beautiful natural setting; focused on a quest for information, education, and knowledge; and based on our respect for the power and potential of each individual and for the natural environment.
- ◆ A regional community where innovation and achievement are celebrated, where entrepreneurship thrives, where civic pride and civility flourish, and where youthful exuberance creates an atmosphere for citizens from every background and every age to enter an open door that leads to vital personal participation in growing and healthy communities.

A Regional Agenda for the 21st Century

This heartland region of Pennsylvania has great potential, but the course of action is not clear. Critical to our success is the response to the call for regional action. The recognition that other highly successful regions can provide models and trends, combined with the assets of our region that promise great opportunity, should embolden our resolve. A vision is only as good as the actions inspired. What follows responds to the vision and the future promises for our region.

Establish a Regional Innovation Center

Primary Functions

- Operate within the concept of shared vision, shared leadership, and shared resource
- Build collaborative networks
- Guide, lead, advocate, encourage, empower, and support
- Provide public education and information
- Identify key regional strategies and policies and advocate a regional innovation agenda
- Sponsor an annual fair, showcasing successes and innovation

Structure

- Flat, fluid, and dynamic
- Participation open to all sectors throughout the region
- Leadership team selected from participants
- The Forum for the Future should serve as the nucleus

Action Initiatives

- ENRICH – Entrepreneur Network Regional Information Clearinghouse
- LEAD INSTITUTE – Leadership Education and Development Institute
- KEI FORCE – Knowledge, Education, Innovation Fund Organized for Regional Collaboration and Excellence

ENRICH

(Entrepreneur Network Regional Information Clearinghouse)

Primary functions

- Collect and disseminate best practice information from inside the region – practical examples of innovative efforts to carry out the overall vision and goals
- Provide information, support, and recognition to encourage innovation and non-traditional approaches to all aspects of community improvement
- Provide a world search to “mine the information age” and generate useful information on best practices relevant to innovation and research occurring in the region
- Undertake substantial amounts of community research supported by a collaboration between all the institutions of higher education in the region and related to all sectors of community needs
- Establish an electronic community bulletin board that provides community culture, education, leadership, research, and other pertinent information to the entire region to increase awareness, connections, and enthusiasm
- Develop Young VIP's initiative (Young Volunteers for Innovation and Progress)
- Undertake special efforts to provide for the involvement and targeting of information related to the broad range of people throughout the region



Key Players

- Colleges and universities
- Students
- Forum for the Future
- Schools
- Businesses
- Local government
- Nonprofits
- Entrepreneurs
- Development organizations

LEAD Institute

(Leadership Education And Development Institute)

A world class innovative training program to encourage community involvement by all citizens regardless of age, education, or background.

Primary Functions

- Provide education and training for college students and public school students
- Develop community education for all sectors
- Sponsor service learning initiatives, internships, community volunteer programs
- Foster experiential learning opportunities
- Offer collaboration – facilitation, team building, and technical assistance
- Encourage multi-generational mentoring programs, such as young people mentoring businesses on technology and vice versa on workplace skills
- Hold Make A Difference annual youth leadership conferences

Key Players

- Regional colleges and universities - shared leadership design, guidance, and curriculum. Credit would be available to all students
- Public education
- Existing leadership partners
- Students of all ages
- Forum for the Future

Working Models For Development

- Center for Creative Leadership and University of Richmond School of Leadership Studies



KEI FORCE

(Knowledge, Education, Innovation Fund Organized for Regional Collaboration and Excellence)

Primary Functions

- Provide incentive funding to encourage innovation
- Advocate and support regional education and information initiatives that build innovative culture
- Leverage investment in key regional projects to implement a regional innovation agenda
- Provide awards for innovation and excellence
- Support Regional Innovation Center
- Help settle our future frontiers

Key Players

- Regional Innovation Center
- Private and public foundations
- Regional community representatives from all sectors

Funding Targets

- \$50 million by 2005
- \$100 million by 2010

Funding Sources

- Foundations (regional, state, and national)
- Individual philanthropy
- Private sector
- State and federal governments

Steps to the 21st Century Agenda

Presented here are potential agenda items for a broad cross section of components of our communities and region. Included in the Appendix are more detailed recommendations that relate to each of these categories. These categories are not meant to be exhaustive in representing the entire breadth of the community; but it is hoped by providing specific information for the various sectors, it will help in defining the connections and encouraging others to join in this effort. It is the future of all of us that hangs in the balance.

Implementing the Agenda. This proposed agenda is far from being an “all or nothing” package. It should not be viewed as a blueprint, in which all of the component parts are essential to the success of the overall design. Rather, it should be thought of as a menu from which the region can pick and choose whatever items the eventual consensus seems to suggest.

Neither is the agenda a fixed itinerary which must be followed sequentially from point to point. It is more in the nature of a road map, showing where we are and where we want to go, while acknowledging the possibility of making some detours in getting to our destination.

Businesses

- Build strong alliances among businesses, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and local governments to help spur innovation.
- Advocate investments for education and lifelong learning.
- Aggregate demand for regional technological infrastructure.
- Encourage the involvement of young adults in every aspect of our community life.

Development Organizations

(TEAM PA Partners and the Existing Network of Service Providers)

- Advocate development and growth standards that support sustainable development.
- Support sustainable economic growth that provides opportunities to all ages, especially young adults, and enhances the region's natural setting and environmental quality.
- Seek economic investments in the region that will have long-term benefit.
- Encourage the acceptance and utilization of the latest available technology.
- Advocate the need for analysis and community research that encourages entrepreneurship, initiative, and innovation.
- Oppose the proliferation of sprawl.

Entrepreneurs

- Advocate actions that will encourage innovation.
- Encourage technological support, education, training, and capital availability.
- Support the development of regional networks.
- Identify research and analysis needs.



Colleges and Universities

- Recognize that the region and its communities share with our institutions of higher education a common destiny.
- Help make education and knowledge become our region's most important product in the coming century.
- Encourage experiential and service learning to benefit both students and the community.
- Join with schools and community leaders from all sectors to provide leadership and specialized training to administrators, school board members, and teaching professionals to insure that all involved are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to create a regionwide education and learning culture.
- Provide incentives for all university employees, particularly faculty, to become engaged in their communities.
- Become active partners in the Regional Innovation Center, ENRICH, and LEAD Institute.

Schools

- School districts and communities should plan jointly to integrate their needs and facilities.
- School districts should cooperate to improve curriculums and technology use, among other areas. Possible targets for consideration might include:
 - ✓ **Parenting curriculum starting at middle school.**
 - ✓ **Community-based curriculum.**
 - ✓ **Inter-generational curriculum development.**
 - ✓ **Individual and civic responsibility.**
 - ✓ **Interesting curriculums with real life importance and applicability.**
 - ✓ **More creative methods of learning.**
- Develop community partnerships with emphasis on early childhood education.
- Identify innovative approaches to produce a community environment that values continual learning by individuals of all ages.
- Teach tolerance for minority populations and different points of view.

Nonprofits

- Identify key community issues and research needs; service delivery barriers; and inform the public concerning community issues, their inter-relationships, and needed actions.

- In collaboration with other community interests, develop action plans for the provision of lifelong learning, innovation, and social services to all of the population.
- Support community health research and advocate initiatives.
- Support collaboration among nonprofits, including the sharing of research, resources, and cooperative planning resources.
- Encourage the involvement of young people in nonprofit activities.

Local Government

- Work with county government and other community interests to improve the way communities function.
- Support continuing education and leadership development for everyone in local government.
- Pursue joint planning operations and sharing of resources with neighboring governments.
- Require sound analysis and good research to verify community problems and solutions.
- Work to eliminate parochialism and short sightedness.
- Engage young people in the business of local government.

County Government

- Take measures to enhance the quality of life and to protect the natural environment.
- Invest in improved planning and provide incentives for county/local cooperative planning.
- Seek out areas where cooperation with neighboring counties can profitably be pursued.
- Develop leadership in county government, and encourage similar actions by local governments and community organizations.
- Work with other community interests within and without the county to improve community research and the pursuit of innovation.

State

- Provide incentives for regional collaboration and innovation in communities and public education.
- Cooperate with communities in finding ways for them to benefit from nearby state-owned public lands and facilities.

- Continue to pursue innovative initiatives, such as the currently emerging telecommunications initiatives, Growing Greener, Link-to-Learn, and Team PA.
- Create the flexibility needed to allow innovation by county and local governments, school districts, public universities, and other community sectors affected by state policy and regulations.

Citizens

- Pursue information relating to community issues, problems, and opportunities.
- Encourage schools, local governments, and other community interests to foster an atmosphere receptive to information, education, and knowledge.
- Take initiative, get involved, be informed, engage debate, run for office, and encourage others to do likewise.
- Participate! Participate! Participate!

A Catalyst for Action

The Regional Innovation Center proposed here can serve as a catalyst for action. It can achieve the capacity to bring together an array of interests from across the region in an organized effort that can act forcefully to pursue the opportunities inherent in the vision. The ultimate outcome in all its specifics cannot be foreseen, but at the very least this proposal offers the kind of bold action and commitment to a search for knowledge that can move our region into the 21st Century with the confidence that we are not passively submitting to the whims of fate. We can be sure, at least, that the future frontiers for this heartland of Pennsylvania will become ever more exciting and more beneficial, and the region will be positioned for a stronger, steadily improving quality of life, with opportunities for all of our citizens.

