

Strategic Plan

Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress

August 19, 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Committees

COMMITTEE

Community Development:
Community Leadership:
Public Policy:
Business and Industrial Recruitment:
Comprehensive Marketing:
Transportation & Technology:
Education & Training:

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Strategic Plan

Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress

August 19, 2003

The Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress (PEP), formerly the Huntingdon County Economic Development Task Force, has revised its Strategic Plan used to guide the Partnership over the coming two to three years. This Strategic Plan is built on group input, previous plans and a review of the accomplishment of previously adopted goals and objectives. The draft Strategic Plan was presented to the Task Force on June 17, 2003 and adopted on August 19, 2003.

The Huntingdon County Comprehensive Plan notes that the County's economic symptoms are similar to those of other rural counties: low household income, high unemployment, substantial percentage of workers commuting to out of county jobs, blue-collar workforce, importance of agriculture, forestry and mining industries. It is the vision of the Comprehensive Plan to work toward economic prosperity for the County. The Plan defines economic prosperity as an increase in median family income and a reduction in unemployment. This strategic plan is one means of implementing the Huntingdon County Comprehensive Plan, "Continuity Through Conservation II."

Background

The Economic Development Task Force was created by the Huntingdon County Commissioners on April 11, 2000 by the adoption of Resolution #11. The general mission of the Task Force, is stated in the resolution, "the purpose of the Task Force will be to share information and encourage economic development in Huntingdon County." This Plan contains a vision statement to focus and motivate and an action plan of measurable objectives. After consideration and modification of the Draft Plan, the Task Force adopted a Strategic Plan on September 19, 2000 and amended it on November 21, 2000.

The fourteen members of the Task Force first met on April 18, 2000 to learn what the County Commissioners envisioned for the group. At the May 16, 2000 meeting, a panel of "experts" told the Task Force what resources were available to do economic development and gave some advice on how to proceed. At its June 20th meeting, the Task Force requested Planning Director, Richard E. Stahl, to undertake a strategic planning process for the group, including development of a vision statement and key objectives for the group. The Task Force met on July 18th and August 15th to develop the strategic plan and it was adopted in September 2000.

During 2002 the Huntingdon County Planning and Development Department and Delta Development Corporation prepared a "Huntingdon County Comprehensive Economic Analysis" to address the economic needs of the County. This study was published in February 2003. On March 20, 2003 and April 15, 2003 Task Force members met to

develop an assessment of the County’s internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats in the area of economic development. A nominal group process was used to develop a consensus among Task Force members.

The revised strategic plan was presented to the Economic Development Task Force on June 17, 2003 and was adopted by the group on August 19, 2003. During discussion on the strategic plan, the group agreed to a name change more befitting of a permanent organization, the Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress or PEP.

Accomplishments

Substantial progress has been made in implementing the goals of the Partnership. The goals of PEP are accomplished through the efforts of PEP members and committees. A complete list of Partnership members and committees can be found inside the front cover. After development of the Partnership Strategic Plan, the original Task Force organized a committee structure to parallel its goals. Therefore, there is a committee for each goal. Following is a partial list of activities that furthered the goals:

GOAL	ACTIVITY
Coordination and Communication:	Task Force Review of Agency Matrix
	Regular Task Force Meetings
Community Leadership:	Leadership Huntingdon County
Economic Analysis & Incentives:	Comprehensive Economic Analysis
	KOZ Expansion
	Enterprise Zone Designation
Business and Industrial Recruitment	Joint Fulton/Huntingdon KOZ Marketing Grant
Comprehensive Marketing :	Comprehensive Economic Analysis
	Quality of Life Video Project
Transportation & Technology:	HCPC Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Recommendations
	Municipal Technical Assistance (MTAP)
	Huntingdonarea.info
Education & Training:	WedNET Training
	Disney Institute Training

Vision Statement

The vision statement stands much as originally adopted in 2000. At that time the Task Force was asked, “What elements should form the mission or vision of the Task Force?” In answer to this question several key ideas were ventured by the group: education, coordination, innovation, improve the quality of life, develop a marketing focus and plan, improve economic health, promote Huntingdon County. These functions remain the

It is recommended that the following vision statement, developed from these ideas, continue to guide the Partnership's activities:

It is the vision of the Huntingdon County Partnership for Economic Progress to improve the economic health and the quality of life of Huntingdon County residents by fostering and enhancing community education and innovation, agency communication and coordination and promotion of a positive image of the County.

The key to success for the Partnership lies in maintaining a streamlined organization and in fostering a climate where there is a free flow of ideas and communication.

Implementation of ideas developed by the Partnership will come through the activities of its members, acting either individually or in cooperation with one another. It is a means of focusing the Partnership on needed change.

Top Priority Issues

The high quality of life far outpaced other issues when the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are combined into a list of key issues. Strengths (35 votes) and opportunities (32 votes) received a total of 67 votes, while weaknesses (42 votes) and threats (27 votes) received 69 votes.

Quality of life is followed by the threat of loss of hospital services and doctors (threat) and negative press (weakness). Brain drain/skill drain and lack of amenities follow as weaknesses that need to be addressed. Raystown Development Opportunities lead the list of opportunities voiced by the Partnership. Other key issues include: poor community self-image, attractiveness of the surrounding area for development, good local economic development network/team, incubator and entrepreneurs, low crime, quality health care, retirement community, Juniata College visitation, developable land, self destructive nature, lack of planning and zoning, infrastructure and availability of quality health care. The Partnership should focus on implementation activities that address these top issues.

Issues

Votes	Issues
11	High Quality of Life
8	Loss of hospital services and doctors, insurance crisis
8	Opinion Line / Negative Press
7	Brain Drain / Skill Drain
6	Lack of Amenities (restaurants & motels)
5	Raystown Development Opportunities
5	Poor community self-image
5	Attractiveness of surrounding areas for development
4	Good Network/Team
4	Incubator and entrepreneurs
3	Low crime
3	Quality health care
3	Retirement community
3	14,000 visitors to Juniata College per year

3	Developable land
3	Self destructive nature
3	Lack of community planning and zoning
3	Infrastructure
3	Quality Health Care

Action Plan

This Action Plan is based on the critical issues facing Huntingdon County and the actions needed to address those issues. A new goal, number 6 below, is suggested to deal with issues of public infrastructure and community appearance. The other goals are retained from the 2000 Plan. A detailed list of issues and actions follows later in this document. They were developed using the same Nominal Group Technique.

- 1. The Partnership will work proactively, through regular communication and coordination, with local organizations to meet community needs and to minimize duplication of services.**
- 2. The Partnership will work to create and support an ongoing community leadership development program to build leadership capacity in the County.**
- 3. The Partnership seeks the development and implementation of a comprehensive economic analysis of the County and provision of economic development incentives to qualified businesses..**
- 4. The Partnership will work to identify a target market for business/industrial recruitment focusing on small and medium sized companies.**
- 5. The Partnership seeks the development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing plan for the County to communicate positive images of the County using all possible methods (including print media, web sites and special events).**
- 6. The Partnership will work with public and private organizations to improve community appearance and public infrastructure.**
- 7. The Partnership encourages implementation of identified highway and transit priorities and technology initiatives such as fiber optics, web sites and e-commerce to facilitate the movement of people, goods, information and services.**
- 8. The Partnership encourages the offering of continuing education and job training to new and existing employees.**

Critical Issues (SWOT Analysis)

In developing this Plan, the first question tackled was the following: “What are the most critical issues limiting the achievement of economic prosperity in Huntingdon County?”

These issues were addressed by focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the County in the area of economic development. After “brainstorming” the issues for nearly an hour, each member in attendance was given six votes to cast. A complete listing of issues developed is contained in the Appendix. Following are the top issues as ranked by the Partnership:

Strength

Votes	Strength
11	High Quality of Life
4	Good Network/Team
3	Low Crime
3	Quality Health Care
2	Raystown Lake

Weakness

Votes	Weakness
8	Opinion Line/Negative Press
7	Brain Drain/Skill drain
6	Lack of Amenities (restaurants & motels)
5	Poor community self-image
3	Infrastructure

Opportunity

Votes	Opportunity
5	Raystown Development Opportunities
4	Incubator and entrepreneurs
3	Retirement Community
3	14,000 visitors to Juniata College per year
3	Developable Land

Threats

Votes	Threats
8	Loss of hospital services and doctors, insurance crisis
5	Attractiveness of surrounding areas for development
5	Loss of labor force (youth)
3	Self destructive nature
3	Lack of community planning and zoning

Implementing Actions

The Partnership developed a list of actions needed to address the issues identified by answering the following question: “What actions are needed to improve the Huntingdon County economy?” These actions will be added to those already undertaken by the Partnership. The next task of the Partnership leadership is to assign these actions to the various committees. The following list contains the top ranked actions and recommended committee assignments.

Actions

Votes	Recommended Action	Suggested Committee
15	KOZ's: expand, market, fill	Business Recruitment
12	Establish Enterprise Zone	Business Recruitment
7	Support Infrastructure for STEDCO	Community Development *
7	Continue to promote the community assets that distinguish Huntingdon County as a progressive rural community, and establish an indirect marketing campaign that complements the Quality of Life Video Project.	Marketing
7	Conduct a workforce assessment to document workforce availability and skills within Huntingdon County's labor force.	Workforce Development
6	Diversify Huntingdon County's tourism sector and encourage year-round visitation.	Marketing
5	Promote Work Force Development	Workforce Development
5	Improve Community Appearance	Community Development *
5	Advocate improved access to the regional transportation system for Huntingdon County (airport, interstate, highways, rail).	Transportation & Technology
4	Support the continuation of Huntingdon County's family farms by identifying market niche opportunities, supporting agricultural land preservation, and advocating policy changes at the State and National level.	Public Policy *
4	Perform a market analysis of Huntingdon County's retail and service sector.	Business Recruitment
4	Establish an Early Warning Network to monitor the health of existing business and to provide rapid response to at-risk companies.	Business Recruitment

Committees

It is recommended that the Coordination and Communication Committee become the Community Development Committee and that the Economic Analysis and Incentives Committee be renamed the Public Policy Committee. These changes will align the committees more closely with the goals and activities.

PRESENT COMMITTEE	RECOMMENDED COMMITTEE
Coordination and Communication:	Community Development
Community Leadership:	Community Leadership
Economic Analysis & Incentives:	Public Policy
Business and Industrial Recruitment	Business and Industrial Recruitment
Comprehensive Marketing :	Marketing
Transportation & Technology:	Transportation and Technology
Education & Training:	Education and Workforce

APPENDICIES

Recommended Partnership For Economic Progress Committee Assignments and Structure

PRESENT COMMITTEE	ASSIGNED ACTIONS
Community Development:	Improve Community Appearance
	Expand retirement housing
	Fix identified weaknesses related to community image
	Support Infrastructure for STEDCO
Community Leadership:	Leadership Huntingdon County
Public Policy:	Support the continuation of Huntingdon County's family farms by identifying market niche opportunities
	Hospital/Insurance Crisis
Business and Industrial Recruitment	KOZ's: expand, market, fill
	Establish an Early Warning Network
	Implement Enterprise Zone
	Market to small companies
Marketing:	Indirect marketing campaign (community image)
	Implement regional marketing plan
	Perform a market analysis of Huntingdon County's retail and service sector.
	Encourage year-round visitation.
Transportation & Technology:	Advocate improved transportation access
	Develop technology consortium
Education & Workforce:	Promote Work Force Development
	Train small employers, to encourage training as an employee benefit

MEMO

TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEMBERS

FROM: RICHARD E. STAHL, PLANNING DIRECTOR

DATE: FEBRUARY 12, 2003

RE: STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

The next meeting of the Huntingdon County Economic Development Task Force will determine future activities of the group. We will be meeting on February 18th at 1:00 PM in the Sill Board Room, von Leibig Center for Science at Juniata College. Parking is available along Mifflin Street between 17th and 18th Streets or near Knox Stadium off of 17th Street. Here is some information on what we will be covering at this meeting.

The draft "Huntingdon County Comprehensive Economic Analysis" notes that the County's economic symptoms are similar to other rural counties: low household income, high unemployment, substantial percentage of workers commuting to out of county jobs, blue-collar workforce, importance of agriculture, forestry and mining industries. It is the vision of the Economic Analysis to work toward economic prosperity for the County. The Comprehensive Plan defines economic prosperity as an increase in median family income and a reduction in unemployment.

What are the most critical issues limiting the achievement of economic prosperity in Huntingdon County?

AGENDA
Huntingdon County Economic Development Task Force
Strategic Planning Meeting
March 20, 2003

- I. Welcome and Introductions (1:00 PM)
 - II. Review the Meeting Agenda (1:05 PM)
 - III. Review Current Strategic Plan Vision and Goals (1:10 PM)
 - IV. Development of SWOT Analysis (1:30 PM)
 - V. Break (2:30 PM)
 - VI. Development and Prioritization of Critical Issues (2:45 PM)
 - VII. Development and Prioritization of Implementation Activities (3:15 PM)
 - VIII. Other (3:45 PM)
- Adjourn (4:00 PM)