



**Planning for the Future:  
A Handbook on  
Community Visioning**

**Third Edition**

*The Center for*



*Rural Pennsylvania*

*A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly*

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The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy research within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. It was created in 1987 under Act 16, the Rural Revitalization Act, to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities. The Center seeks to preserve and enhance the rural environment which makes the Commonwealth a unique place to live, work or visit; awards grants for applied research and model projects; maintains and disseminates information on rural trends and conditions; develops publications to share research and project results; and sponsors local, state and national forums on rural issues.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends:

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is pleased to offer this third edition of the Handbook on Community Visioning. Our first editions, published in 1998 and 2000, were so well received and widely distributed that we were encouraged to issue a third edition.

This edition offers the same basic information on creating a vision for your community's future and includes updated contact information on successful visioning projects initiated statewide. By offering this mix of information, we hope to encourage you to further think about the process and determine how you might use the information to create a visioning plan of your own.

As we mentioned in the first edition, a cookie-cutter approach to visioning cannot work since every community is different and must determine its own needs. While the information in this handbook can help to get your visioning project started, it is up to the entire community to come together to create, refine, and implement the plan that it has set out to achieve. Examples of what other communities have done and their successes and suggestions may give you some good ideas on how to keep the process moving along, but again, it is up to you to realize your vision.

Inside you will find practical information on everything from establishing a steering committee to planning community workshops. There are also sample worksheets and a list of resources for further assistance. Use this information to your advantage.

Best wishes for much success in your efforts. I hope you find this handbook to be a useful guide and reference.

Sincerely,  
*Representative Sheila Miller*  
Chairman

# INTRODUCTION

It's not easy planning your community's future. In most cases, residents are too busy making sure that the roads are in good condition or that their volunteer fire company is properly equipped to think about or plan what they want their community to be in 10 or 15 years.

Yet, if a community doesn't think about its future, who will? It might be a private developer who is trying to construct a large shopping mall or housing subdivision, or it might be state or federal agencies located hundreds of miles away deciding where to locate a new highway or hazardous waste site.

Residents who don't think about and actively play a role in shaping the future of their community may become victims of that future.

Planning your community's future requires leadership, patience, determination, and most importantly, community involvement. What it doesn't require is a great deal of money, technical skills or outside consultants.

The purpose of this handbook is to help communities like yours begin thinking and planning for the future. It is not, however, a cookbook on community visioning. Every community in Pennsylvania is unique, so it must develop its own vision and plan for the future. On the other hand, many of the same principles and activities that are included in the process may be useful to many communities. To help communities find that common ground and allow them the freedom to decide what their plans might include, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania designed this handbook to focus on the process of visioning, not the outcome.

This guide is divided into the following sections:

- What is Community Visioning
- How to Create a Vision for the Future
- Elements of Success
- Nuts-and-Bolts of Visioning
- Lessons Learned

This guide also includes a list of recommended readings, a list of federal, state, and private resources that can be used to help implement different parts of your community vision, and sample project materials.

# WHAT IS COMMUNITY VISIONING?

Community visioning is both a process and a product. The process gives residents the opportunity to express what they value about their community and to develop a consensus on what they would like to change or preserve. During this process, residents discuss their ideas on what they would like their community to look and feel like in the next five to 10 years. The product of these discussions is a vision statement. This short statement describes what residents value about their community and what they would like their community to look like in the future.

The process of developing a vision statement is more important than the actual statement. The process helps residents to take a realistic look at their community; not to assign blame but to establish an honest appraisal of what their community is. This information is critical for developing a strategy for change.

The product, the vision statement, is important because it helps keep the community on track. Think of the statement as

a compass that guides a community through the ups and downs of economic, social and political change. If the statement is truly community developed and supported, changes in these landscapes will have little impact. In addition, the statement may be used to assess the compatibility of new initiatives and programs with the residents' ideas. A community will always have new opportunities, such as new businesses, highways, and government programs. But it is up to residents to determine if these opportunities will either hinder or help their community achieve its vision for the future.



*The Center for Rural Pennsylvania*

# HOW TO CREATE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The process of creating a community vision is inexpensive and straightforward. It does not require outside consultants or a government grant. However, it does require residents to develop a mutually agreed upon vision for what they want their community to look and feel like in the future.

While the actual process of developing a vision may vary from place to place, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania found in its study of examples throughout Pennsylvania and other states that every community goes through the following five steps to develop and implement its vision:

- Define Community Boundaries
- Inventory and Analyze Community Resources
- Write and Adopt a Vision Statement
- Develop an Action Plan
- Implement the Action Plan



## DEFINE COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

One municipality does not make a community.

In Pennsylvania, as elsewhere, every township, borough, and city are linked together physically, economically, and culturally. These links should be the basis of a community's boundary. To define their community, some groups have used the school district boundaries; some have used physical features such as river valleys, mountain ranges, or watershed regions; and others have used the county boundaries as the basis of their "community."

The purpose of defining a community's boundaries is to give the vision a focus. According to one count, Pennsylvania's 2,580 municipalities can be boiled down to slightly more than 200 communities. Each of these places are unique and special. A vision statement developed by residents in one community is not transferable to another community since these residents have no investment in its creation.

Another reason for defining a community's boundaries is to make the process more manageable. Residents may not become involved if they must travel more than 30 miles one way. By focusing on a specific area, residents can more strongly develop a sense of community. Additionally, they can begin to identify issues and affect change.

## INVENTORY AND ANALYZE COMMUNITY RESOURCES

One of the most exciting parts of the community visioning process is the inventory and analysis of community resources. This is the stage where residents are asked to identify and define those things that make their community special. For example, residents are asked: where do you like to take out-of-town visitors; how do you describe your community to outsiders; and what types of changes do you think will happen in the next five to 10 years? Residents are also asked to identify and explain problems in their community; where they avoid taking out-of-town guests; and what negative trends are affecting their community.



The purpose of the inventory is to gather as much information as possible about the community and its resources. This information should include both the good and the bad, the quantitative and the qualitative, and the attitudinal and the behavioral. Information on economic, demographic, and social conditions should be added to the mix as well. (A partial list of information needed and data collection techniques are included in the section entitled, *Nuts-and-Bolts of Visioning*.) The purpose of this information is to provide the community with the most complete snapshot of what it is and the resources it possesses.

The analytical aspect of this process involves taking all the information and developing a series of probable scenarios of what the community can be in the future. These scenarios should range from pie-in-the-sky to doom-and-gloom. In each instance, however, they should describe where the community currently is, how it got there, and where it is going.

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**V**ISION STATEMENTS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE PLACED ON A BOOKSHELF OR IN A PICTURE FRAME. THEY ARE MEANT TO BE USED.

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## WRITE AND ADOPT A VISION STATEMENT

Once the inventory is completed and the probable scenarios are developed, the next step is to allow the residents to select one scenario and further define it. This process is relatively straightforward and should be done at a community-wide workshop where residents have the opportunity to review and discuss the information and to select the scenario they believe best reflects their community's hopes and dreams. Residents should also be encouraged to change or modify all the scenarios.

With the preferred scenario in hand, residents should spend the rest of the community workshop developing a simple two-to-three paragraph statement that captures the essence of the preferred scenario. This statement is the vision statement.

The next step is to publicize and adopt the statement. Diverse community groups such as the Rotary Club, fire companies, and large businesses, should be formally asked to adopt the vision statement and use it as a guide when making decisions affecting

the community. Official bodies such as municipal governments, school boards, and sewer and water authorities should also be asked to adopt the statement in the form of a resolution. The purpose of this activity is to get as many groups and organizations as possible to adopt the vision statement and participate in its implementation.

## DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

Once the vision statement is written and adopted, the next most critical step is the development of an action plan. The purpose of the plan is to prioritize and coordinate components of the vision statement. Often this is not a difficult process. In many communities, social, business, religious, and governmental groups and organizations already have plans and strategies to improve aspects of community life. If these groups participate in the visioning process, it should be relatively easy to coordinate these individual plans with the vision's objective. Another way to think about it is that the vision statement acts as a huge umbrella for these groups, and that their individual plans may be used to implement the community's larger vision for the future. No group or individual should be forced to change their plan. Instead, they should be encouraged to adopt the community's action plan as their own and to act accordingly.

## IMPLEMENT THE ACTION PLAN

Vision statements are not meant to be placed on a bookshelf or in a picture frame. They are meant to be used. Creating a vision statement is only the first step in a larger process of community development.

Once the statement is adopted and the plan is identified, the community must implement the plan. It is important not to get hung-up on the lack of resources for major projects. Many communities have turned themselves around by taking small steps and making small improvements here and there. Once residents see change occurring, they are more likely to get involved. Success breeds success.

The most important thing to remember is to use the vision statement as a guide to begin improving the community. Don't wait for others!



### *TIMEFRAME*

The time it takes to develop a community vision will vary from place to place. Some communities are more active and already have a corps of participants ready to go. Other places need to spend time and energy recruiting people and organizations to work on the visioning process.

By examining the visioning process throughout the state, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania has found that many rural communities need between eight to 12 months to write a vision statement and another three to six months to have it widely adopted. With a larger population base and many organizations, urban and suburban areas may take shorter periods of time.

There is no exact timeframe for the implementation of the vision statement. In general, vision statements should have a five to 10-year timeframe.

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

To implement a community visioning project, every community needs to tap into some basic local resources and keep in mind some of the same basic principles. Following are the basic resources that are available to every community and the principles that communities should remember as their visioning projects begin and progress.

### **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

The most important resource for any community in creating its vision is its citizens. Each member of the community must be given the opportunity to participate in the visioning process. The vision cannot be created or driven by local or state government, the chamber of commerce or some special interest group alone because, chances are, it will fail. To create an



effective vision for the future, every resident must be given an opportunity to participate in its formation.

Local buy-in is the reason why citizen participation is so critical. The more people and groups that participate in the visioning process, the more likely they are to invest in its outcome and work towards its achievement.

A special effort should be made to involve area youth. The youth of a community can offer different viewpoints and have specific skills and talents that can really add to the visioning process. By including youth in the visioning process, the community may also help its youth develop a greater sense of civic commitment. For example, it has often been observed that youth who

Residents are the most important resource for any community as it begins the visioning process.

are involved in their community are more likely to remain in or return to that community after completing their education. This can be an important consideration in areas that have seen a large exodus of youth because of a lack of opportunities.

In an age of home entertainment centers and declining leisure time, it is not always easy to get people involved in community activities. Every community has a healthy number of people or organizations that will not participate for any number of reasons. Getting “nay-sayers” to actively and constructively participate can be challenging. In most cases, the best advice for dealing with these groups or individuals is to let them know what is going on and that the door is always open for their participation.

### LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Community leaders come in all colors, shapes and sizes. Elected officials are often seen as traditional community leaders and they are important to the process. But others are needed, too. Nonprofit organizations, businesses, youth groups and people from different walks-of-life can take on important roles in the process. They are needed to weave the diverse threads of a community together, delegate responsibility, and ensure that projects are completed.

Local leadership is critical to ensure that the entire process is kept on track. People who lead a community vision process do not need special training or education, but they must be able to listen, direct, work as part of a team, and let go so others can follow through. These skills can be found in many individuals, whether they are involved in area businesses, volunteer fire companies, or even little league baseball teams. The important thing to remember is that leadership is not exclusively the domain of municipal governments, chambers of commerce, or other organizations.

The role of a leader in the visioning process is to manage the process and ensure that activities are completed. Leaders are also responsible for making sure that other groups are involved in the process and for keeping a positive focus

on the activities at hand. Visioning leaders are not super heroes. They are people like you who want to improve their community.

### COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

A community’s vision for the future must be its own. It will not be effective if it is imposed by either state government or consultants. Similarly, simply photocopying and adopting a neighboring community’s vision statement will not work. Each community is different and unique, and each has the responsibility to figure out what it wants to be in the future. There are no short cuts in this process.

Outside groups and consultants can help in the visioning process, but it is ultimately the community’s responsibility to ensure that the vision it develops addresses its own particular needs and aspirations.

### REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In Pennsylvania, one municipality does not make a community. Every borough, township, and city in the state is linked physically, economically, and culturally to others.

While there are natural limits to the size of a community, municipalities that undergo the visioning process must realize that they are one community. Communities need to look beyond their immediate municipal boundaries and establish a long-term picture of what kind of place would be suitable for present and future generations.

A community vision works best when it is limited to a specific geographic area. Whether these limits



are manmade, such as county or school district boundaries, or natural, such as a river corridor, it is important that the majority of residents identify these as the starting and ending points of their community.

## OUTCOMES ARE NOT PREDETERMINED

When people are asked what they want their community to look like in the future, they can come up with some surprising answers. They may want more strip malls, less trees, and more parking lots. They may also want a revitalized downtown, better residential neighborhoods, and better bus service. The point is, the entire visioning process is a learning experience. No one should go into the process with preconceived expectations that the final outcome will support a single opinion or idea.

A single issue should not drive the visioning process. Whether that issue is downtown improvements, the need for schools, or reducing crime, the visioning process is a comprehensive process. This process addresses where the entire community will be in the future, not how some individual issue will change. While these individual issues need to be examined and addressed, they should not be the sole focus of the community's vision.

To this end, the process should not be packaged as economic development. A vision focuses on improving the quality of life, not on creating more jobs or filling up industrial parks. While a vision should certainly have an economic development component, it should not be the driving force behind creating a vision.

# NUTS-AND-BOLTS OF VISIONING

Now that we have a good idea of what a community vision is and what some of its elements are, we can focus on technique. There are no hard and fast “rules” for this process. Each community will need to find its own pace, players, and tools that work best. What this handbook offers is a set of principles, a process, and a variety of tools that have been used effectively in communities just like yours.

Below are elements involved in the process of developing a community vision. These elements are neither magical nor absolute. They should be modified to meet your own community's needs.

Three principle components to these elements are:

- ☛ **The Steering Committee:** Responsible for oversight and organization of the entire process.
- ☛ **Community Workshops:** Open public meetings that are used to inform citizens about the visioning process, to discuss the progress being made and to discuss issues affecting the community.
- ☛ **Taskforces:** Small groups that gather information on a specific issue affecting the community and identify possible solutions.

Each of these components are included in the elements listed on the following page. The

timeframe in developing a vision statement can range from eight to 12 months depending on the level of commitment of the participants. In general, the main elements of a community visioning process are:

**Getting Started:** Steering committee forms and begins planning for first workshop.

**First Community Workshop:** Steering committee provides an overview of the visioning process and asks participants to identify issues affecting their community.

**Establishing Taskforces:** Steering committee tallies results, develops list of taskforces, and plans for second workshop.

**Second Community Workshop:** Steering committee reviews activities to date and breaks participants into small taskforces, giving each a specific issue to examine in detail.

**Keeping on Track:** Steering committee ensures that taskforces are meeting regularly and plans for the third workshop.

**Third Community Workshop:** Taskforces report major findings to the community. Participants are asked to discuss what they want their community to look like in the future.

**Drafting the Visioning Statement:** Steering committee ensures that taskforces are meeting regularly and drafts a tentative vision statement.

**Fourth Community Workshop/Celebration:** Public unveiling of vision statement and celebration of the community and its residents.

**Marketing and Making the Vision a Reality:** Steering committee and taskforces present the vision statement to community groups, local governments, and other groups for their formal approval of the statement. Committee and taskforces request these groups to use the statement when making decisions affecting the community.

**Action Plan:** Working with various community organizations and governments, the steering



When forming the steering committee, remember to invite those who are actively interested in improving the community.

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committee develops an action plan by implementing the taskforces' recommendations and other elements of the vision statement.

**Annual Progress Report:** The steering committee plans a meeting that reviews the activities and accomplishments to date and what activities will be implemented the following year.

Keep in mind that in community visioning there is no absolute formula where step one will automatically lead to steps two, three and four. The steps outlined here have worked in some communities, but not all, so you should feel free to combine, rearrange, or even eliminate steps. The ultimate measure of your vision's success is not how closely you follow this model, but how effective you are in improving your community's quality of life.

## GETTING STARTED

In all communities, there are people and organizations that are respected and active. Business owners, elected officials, members of non-profit agencies, educators, health care professionals and others who are actively interested in improving their community should be members of the visioning steering committee.

Key points to remember in forming a steering committee include:

- ✓ Open membership up to many organizations;
- ✓ Reach out across sections: public, private, and nonprofit;
- ✓ Be inclusive, not exclusive;



- ✓ Don't avoid differences in opinion; and
- ✓ Don't get stuck on the past. Remember this is a plan for the future.

Once the list of likely members has been put together, invite them to a meeting. Don't be disappointed if only a few show up. Initiating change is not easy. It can be a slow and frustrating process. At this first meeting, and at others if necessary, do the following:

1. Identify who is missing from the group. Make a concerted effort to identify persons and/or organizations that should be involved in the visioning process. At this point, the list should include those who are considered influential in shaping community opinions. These individuals should be invited to the next steering committee meeting.
2. Establish a positive attitude. Initiate a brief discussion on the community's strengths to help get a positive tone going.
3. Develop an action plan. This plan doesn't need to be very detailed, but it should include the next step in the process, when the public should be involved, what resources are available to see this process through, and who will be available to provide guidance and technical support.
4. Develop a working definition of the community. Meeting participants should leave with an understanding of the geographic boundaries of the community and an understanding of the economic, cultural, and social bonds that make them a community.

A facilitator should be selected. The facilitator's job is to keep the process focused and to give every participant the chance to have a say in the process. The facilitator must be a leader, a follower, a diplomat, and a person with the ability to complete projects. The facilitator must also be able to link resources such as talent, money, and ideas together for the betterment of the community.

In subsequent meetings, the steering committee needs to develop a good sense of what its role is and how the community could benefit from the visioning

process. It is a good idea to ask other organizations or communities for technical support. Appendix 3 includes a list of organizations that have helped others complete visioning projects. Most of these organizations can provide assistance at little or no cost.

Once the steering committee has met and feels confident to take the next step, it is time to hold a community workshop. While there is no sure-fire way to know when the committee is ready, it is important that its members don't fall into the "waiting-for-the-right" trap . . . like waiting for the right time, the right politics, the right information. There is no right or wrong time to start involving people as long as you do it right away. Collecting massive amounts of information before having any idea what it is to be used for or how it fits with what the community wants is an excuse for not getting started.

*Key Outcome: Form a functional steering committee made up of 10 to 20 members who represent a broad cross section of the community*

*Time: Two to three months*

*Cost: None*

## FIRST COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

At the first community workshop, the steering committee needs to be concerned about organization and outcome. The organization is how the workshop is put together; outcome is what information is generated during the workshop. Both of these elements are critical for a successful workshop.

### ORGANIZATION

Organizing a community workshop is not difficult, but it can be challenging. The steering committee organizes the first workshop. Below are some items that need to be considered in planning for the workshop. Appendix 4 is a detailed checklist of how to organize a workshop.

**Location:** The first step in planning a community workshop is to select a location. As a general rule, you should choose a facility that people are familiar with and comfortable visiting. It may be a senior citizen center, American Legion, fire hall, school, church, municipal building, or hotel. In



Two general rules to follow when selecting a workshop date are to make sure no other community group has an event scheduled at the same time and to give the steering committee plenty of lead time to adequately promote and organize the workshop.

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many cases these facilities are free to community groups or can be rented for a nominal fee.

**Date:** Selecting a date for a community workshop is always a tricky matter. Weekday morning workshops can be just as popular as evening workshops. Similarly, Saturday morning can also be very popular. There are two general rules to follow when selecting a workshop date: first, make sure no other community group has an event scheduled at the same time; second, give the steering committee plenty of lead time to adequately promote and organize the workshop.

**Agenda:** Developing and following an agenda is critical. An agenda lets participants know what is going on and how long the workshop will last. The steering committee can use the example agenda in Appendix 7, or create its own. Some key items to include in the agenda are:

- ✓ Welcoming remarks and the purpose of the workshop (Why are we here and what do we want to accomplish?);
- ✓ An overview of the visioning process;
- ✓ A large block of time for small group discussions; and
- ✓ Concluding remarks and a discussion of the next step (where do we go from here?).

**Speakers:** When selecting speakers, it is important to choose people who have effective communication skills and who are comfortable speaking in front of large groups. The welcoming speaker should be a member of the steering committee. The person giving the overview of the visioning process can also be a steering committee member, or someone from outside the community (government agency, leader from a community that developed a vision, or a consultant). A list of groups that may have a speaker for your workshop is in Appendix 3.

Pre-select and pre-train a small group of facilitators for the workshop. Again, facilitators can be members of the steering committee or local resource people like the county planner, RC&D coordinator, or county extension agent.

**Promotion:** To ensure good attendance, promote the workshop. You may consider printed brochures, which are an inexpensive and effective way of letting residents know about the workshop. Appendix 6 is an example of a flier. With permission, these can be left at areas banks, grocery stores, and churches. If the fliers are to be mailed, keep in mind that someone will have to pay for the postage. Area groups, such as chambers of commerce and Rotary Clubs, may be able to supply mailing labels.

Contact members of the media about two weeks before the workshop. A sample media release announcing the workshop is in Appendix 5. A representative of the committee may want to call local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations a week before the workshop to ask if a reporter will attend the workshop.

Next, the steering committee may want to consider personally contacting municipal and county officials as well as state and federal legislators. The group may also want to put posters in community gathering places, photocopy fliers that school children may take home to their parents, or place announcements in church and club bulletins.

**Refreshments:** Offering light refreshments or a meal sponsored by an area organization is always a good idea. Refreshments are an effective ice-breaker and can range from coffee and donuts to ice cream sundaes.

## OUTCOMES

Key outcomes from the workshop include:

- Participants understand the visioning process and how it might help their community.
- Steering committee obtains a list of top issues affecting the community.

The first outcome is the responsibility of the speaker. The second is the product of the small group discussions.

After the keynote speakers, the large group should be broken into small discussion groups of no more than 10 people. Participants should be randomly assigned to different groups to help break up any cliques and help the discussion flow more freely. Each of the small groups should have a facilitator, who must make sure that everyone in the group has a chance to participate and that the group develops a list of issues.

The facilitator's first task is to ask group members to list the issues in their community. Worksheets that may help to initiate discussion are included in Appendix 8. These sheets should be changed to meet the community's specific needs. After all participants have completed the worksheets, each person should discuss what they see as community issues. Comments should be recorded on a flip chart. Afterwards, every participant should "vote" for the top five issues by placing a colored mark next to the five most important comments recorded on the flip chart.

This discussion can be exciting and informative. Make sure your facilitator steers people away from negative comments or personal "sermons" about pet problems. Participants should be reminded that they are not here to solve every problem but to take stock of all the issues and identify the most important issues for the community's future.

*Key Outcome: Community understands the visioning process and develops a list of key issues*

*Time: Two-and-one-half to three hours*

*Cost: Printing, postage, refreshments, supplies: about \$100 to \$200*

## ESTABLISHING TASKFORCES

A week after the first community workshop, the steering committee should meet and assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to be improved. The committee also needs to take the results of the participants' issue lists and identify similarities and differences among the lists. The lists need to be condensed or combined into four or five broad topics. These topics will serve as the basis for the taskforces.

Each taskforce needs to be assigned a temporary leader, who is usually a steering committee member. The leader is responsible for informally recruiting members to the taskforce and collecting information on that particular topic.

In addition to identifying the taskforces, the steering committee should begin preparing for the next community workshop, which should be scheduled within two months after the first workshop.

*Key Outcome: Develop list of taskforces with temporary leader*

*Time: Two to three months*

*Cost: None*

## SECOND COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Following the same organizational procedures as the first workshop, steering committee members should design the second workshop to get the taskforces up and running. The second workshop should offer individuals who could not or would not attend the first workshop the opportunity to become involved.

The workshop should begin with an overview of the activities of the first workshop and the visioning process. Participants should then be directed to meet with their taskforce group. Except for the temporary taskforce leader, try not to pre-assign members to each taskforce. Each participant should be allowed to join the taskforce in which they are most interested.

In the taskforces, several things should happen:

- 1). Select a leader. The leader may be the temporary leader or someone else.
- 2). Identify who is missing from the group. Are there individuals or organizations that have special expertise that the group needs?



- 3). Select the next meeting date. The taskforces should begin meeting regularly after the workshop.
- 4). Complete the SWOT analysis of the taskforce issue (see below).
- 5). Begin identifying the resources available to address the taskforce issue.

The workshop should adjourn after each taskforce reports what it has accomplished and what its next steps are.

**SWOT ANALYSIS—STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS**

Borrowed from business, SWOT analysis is a quick way to assess an issue or topic in terms of its strengths — what is good, what are its positive attributes; weaknesses — what is wrong, what are the problems; opportunities — what can be done to improve the situation, both short and long-term; and threats — what are the external/internal threats in the future.

For communities, SWOT analysis is a useful tool to explore an issue. Below is an example of a group that used SWOT analysis to assess their downtown.

**Downtown Revitalization**

- ✓ Strengths: Good mix of retail and service; good traffic flow; many historic buildings.
- ✓ Weaknesses: Not enough parking; lots of vacant store fronts; high property taxes.
- ✓ Opportunities: Recruit a downtown manager; coordinate store hours; repave the sidewalks.
- ✓ Threats: Being ignored by municipal government; shopping malls; highway bypass.

Key Outcome: Establish active taskforces  
 Time: Two-and-one-half to three hours  
 Cost: Printing, postage, refreshments, supplies: about \$ 100 to \$200

**KEEPING ON TRACK**

A week after the second community workshop, the steering committee should meet and again assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to

be improved. The second job for the committee is to make sure that the taskforces are meeting regularly. The leader of each taskforce should be asked to give a brief report on their findings and activities to date.

The steering committee should also continue to grow. New members should be asked to join and to take a leadership role. The committee should also begin informally surveying other groups to determine what their mission is and how they can work together.

Finally, the steering committee should begin planning for the third workshop. This workshop should be scheduled no later than two months after the second workshop.

Key Outcomes: Keeping the taskforces active, planning for the next workshop  
 Time: Two to three months  
 Cost: None



During the first community workshop, participants should be asked to take stock of all community issues and identify the most important ones for the community's future.

**THIRD COMMUNITY WORKSHOP**

Following the same organizational procedures as the first workshop, the steering committee should design the third workshop to allow for the actual writing of the community's vision statement. This workshop should also give individuals who could not attend the first two workshops the opportunity to become involved.

After the welcoming remarks and a review of the activities to date, participants should be randomly

assigned to small groups of no more than 10 people. Each small group should have a pre-assigned facilitator. The role of this person is to record the answers to the questions below on a flip chart and to keep the session focused.

- 👉 What features (physical, social, cultural) do residents use to identify their community?
- 👉 What are the community's principle values?
- 👉 What defines a "good" quality of life in the community?
- 👉 What are the community's opportunities?
- 👉 What things in the community should be preserved? What things should be changed?
- 👉 What five things would really improve the community?
- 👉 What should the community physically look like in the future?
- 👉 How fast should changes occur?

By now, most workshop participants should have a keen understanding of their community, including its problems and opportunities. The facilitator should encourage an open discussion of the questions above and should strongly discourage participants from focusing on "how" issues. The facilitator should also steer clear of any discussions about money and how projects will be financed since these issues tend to stifle creativity. The "how" questions will be addressed during the planning stage.

The timeframe for answering these questions can vary from community to community. Typically, most places incorporate a five- to 10-year timeframe.

After a short break, the small groups should meet again to begin writing a vision statement. Using the responses from the first session, participants should write a short two-to-three paragraph statement about their community and its future. Elements of this statement may include a list of community values; a list of future opportunities; and a description of what the community will look and feel like in the future.

Each small group should develop its own statement. Because the statements will ultimately be combined, the groups should not get overly concerned about phraseology or grammar. At this point, it's important to flesh out ideas and dreams about the community's future.

**Key Outcome:** Develop small group vision statements

**Time:** Two-and-one-half to three hours

**Cost:** Printing, postage, supplies, refreshments: about \$ 100 to \$200

## DRAFTING THE VISION STATEMENT

A week after the third community workshop, the steering committee should meet and assess what went right at the workshop and what needs to be improved. The key assignment for the steering committee is to take the small group vision statements and combine them into a single statement.

This task is not as daunting as it may seem. In most instances, the small groups will come up with very similar statements. Oftentimes, the only tricky part is wordsmithing the final statement.

Once the statement is completed, it should be test driven. The small group facilitators, selected community leaders, and others active in the visioning process should have an opportunity to make sure the statement captures what participants actually said at the workshop. Any modifications should be done at this time.

The steering committee should also make sure that the taskforces are meeting regularly and should ask taskforce leaders to provide brief updates on their activities. Plans for the final community workshop should also be underway.

**Key Outcomes:** Draft the vision statement, keep taskforces active, plan for the next workshop

**Time:** Two to three months

**Cost:** None

## FOURTH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP/CELEBRATION

The fourth workshop should be a community celebration. It could be a picnic or street festival, or even be a part of some other type of community-wide event. The only "work" that should take place

at this workshop is to make sure that everyone is having fun!

Ideally, the celebration should be held no later than three months after the third community workshop and should mark the official unveiling of the community's vision statement. Try to introduce the statement through some sort of ceremony. For example, the steering committee members may want to publicly sign some type of document supporting the statement, and later ask community, business and government leaders who are attending the event to do the same. These leaders may also be asked to talk to the audience about the community's future.

Remember to invite members of the media to attend the event so that the activities of the day and the vision statement may be introduced to an even wider audience. It's a good idea to print and mount the statement on large posterboard and to have extra copies of the statement to pass out to the media and the audience.

Key Outcomes: Unveil the vision statement to the public and celebrate

Time: Varies

Cost: Varies



***T**O GAIN WIDE ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT FOR THE VISION STATEMENT, THE STEERING COMMITTEE SHOULD DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO INTRODUCE AND "SELL" THE STATEMENT TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS*

## MARKETING AND MAKING THE VISION A REALITY

After the community celebration, the steering committee should meet and begin developing a marketing strategy for the vision statement and, more importantly, a strategic action plan. Both of these activities can occur at the same time.

- The marketing strategy is designed to get the word out about the vision statement. More specifically, it should explain what the vision statement is, how it was created, and how it is to be used. The strategy should include features that will help to recruit volunteers for developing the strategic action plan.
- The strategic action plan is the detailed strategy on how the vision statement will be implemented. The action plan should include any resources needed to implement the plan.

### MARKETING STRATEGY

To gain wide acceptance and support for the vision statement, the steering committee should develop a strategy to introduce and "sell" the statement to public and private groups and individuals. This strategy should include sending representatives of the steering committee to various public and private group meetings. Representatives should ask the leaders of these groups beforehand to make a presentation to the entire group to introduce and explain the vision statement.

For example, a steering committee representative may request to speak at a municipal or school district meeting to talk about the statement, and later ask these groups to approve a resolution in support of the vision statement. This resolution should ask these groups to:

- Refer to the statement and its principles when discussing issues affecting the entire community;
- Consider taking an active role in implementing various aspects of the statement's goals; and
- Consider cooperating with other organizations to improve the community's quality of life.

The resolution should be non-threatening. It should not be legally binding or require the expenditure of funds. It is much better if these governing

bodies volunteer their time and resources rather than being coerced.

The same resolution — or a modified version — should also be presented to the community’s social clubs, volunteer fire companies, and businesses for their formal approval.

Make sure that the groups have a chance to comment on the statement. The steering committee representative should help these groups understand that the visioning process and statement are not trying to supplant the groups’ authority or responsibilities.

Remember, the objective of this activity is to get as many groups as possible to support and use the statement, and to get as many people as possible involved in the planning and implementation process.

### ***STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN***

The strategic action plan is a detailed plan on how the community will make the vision statement a reality. This is where the work of the taskforces comes into play. Although the plan is a community-wide activity, it may be necessary to get outside technical advice.

To begin, the steering committee should break the vision statement down into its basic components, and explain the intent behind each component. Next, it should describe the individual goals and objectives of the taskforces. With this information and input from different community groups, the committee can also identify and prioritize specific projects. Simple, low cost projects should be tackled first and larger, more expensive projects should be placed near the end of the vision timeframe.

After goals and projects are identified, the committee should examine funding resources. Appendix 3 includes a list of state, federal, and private funding sources. Experience has shown that communities with an identified vision and action plan are more successful in securing funds than those communities that want money for a project here and there without any knowledge of how these projects will ultimately fit together.

Local governments, community groups, and others should all have a hand in writing the plan. They should also be asked to volunteer to take on specific projects.

The role of the steering committee and taskforces is to make sure the projects are completed and that groups are coordinated.

*Key Outcomes: Secure community support for the vision statement and develop a strategic action plan to implement the vision statement*

*Time: Ongoing*

*Cost: Varies*

### **ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT**

As the strategic action plan is being implemented, it is a good idea to let residents and others know how the plan is progressing. Develop an annual progress report and make it available to the public. Consider passing out copies of the report during some type of annual community awards dinner or sending a copy of it to the local newspaper.

The progress report should:

- Include a copy of the vision statement and a summary of the strategic action plan;
- Review any accomplishments to date;
- Recognize every individual or organization that made meaningful contributions during the year;
- Highlight success stories;
- Describe any difficulties encountered; and
- Outline the coming year’s activities.

The report may also include any before-and-after pictures and should provide an opportunity for new residents and businesses to become involved in the plan.

*Key Outcome: Report implementation progress to the community*

*Time: Every year*

*Cost: Varies*



# LESSONS LEARNED



Every Pennsylvania community is unique. By initiating a visioning project, residents will learn what is truly important to their community, set goals that make sense, and take the necessary steps to achieve those goals.

There are many approaches to organizing and creating a community vision. And no matter which approach your community takes, you must remember that all projects are works in progress and that there is no one single formula when it comes to creating a community vision. Like other communities, your community should use the steps and approaches that best suit your area and your project so that your community may realize its own successful project.

In its work with many of the visioning projects launched statewide, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania has learned more about the elements that work and do not work in the visioning process. Below are some points that communities may want to consider before they launch a community visioning project.

**1. Every Community is Unique:** Although Pennsylvania has nearly 2,600 municipalities, each one is different and unique. What works in one community may not necessarily work in another. The needs and aspirations of each community must be examined and addressed separately. State and federal political leaders should understand that a community vision does not happen by command. Communities need to figure out for themselves what they want and don't want. Political pressure to make a vision will have limited results and impact.

**2. Regionalism:** In Pennsylvania, one municipality does not make a community. Every city, borough and township in the state is linked physically, economically, and culturally to one another. While there are natural limits to a size of a community, it is important that the municipalities within these limited areas recognize themselves as one community, not separate political entities. Intergovernmental cooperation is a must.

**3. Geographic Limits:** A community vision works best when it is limited to a specific geographic area. It is important for the majority of residents to recognize these areas as the beginning and ending points of their community.

**4. Wealth/Poverty Not Important:** The amount of money a community has does not affect its ability to create a vision for the future. Instead, a community must be able to focus its resources where they are needed to make the vision a reality.

**5. Leadership:** Local leadership is critical for creating a successful vision for the future. In many of the visioning projects listed in Appendix 2, the leadership for creating a vision did not come from elected officials but from concerned individuals who were willing to work for the betterment of their community.

**6. Citizen Participation:** A community vision is not the vision of the local chamber of commerce, its elected officials, or even a special interest group. It is a vision that must represent the views, aspirations, and dreams of the entire community. It must have a regional perspective in which communities look beyond their immediate municipal boundaries and establish a long-term picture of what kind of place they want their children's children to grow up in. Remember, citizens come in all colors, shapes, sizes and ages.

**7. Visioning Is Not Economic Development:** A community visioning project should not be packaged as economic development. A vision focuses on improving the quality of life — not creating more jobs or businesses. While a vision should certainly have an economic development component, it should not be the driving force behind its creation.

**8. Community Inventory:** Armed with clipboards and maps, residents can begin inventorying their community to find out what they have and don't have. The inventory helps citizens to better understand their community and to answer such basic questions as, "where are we now?" and "where are

we going?" The inventory also enables residents to see and assess the good, the bad, and the ugly of their community. The community inventory is a non-threatening way to get citizens involved in the visioning process.

**9. Outcomes are Not Predetermined:** You can never be sure what people might say when they are asked to envision their community's future. They may want more chain department stores or strip malls, less trees, and more parking lots. They may also want a revitalized downtown, better residential neighborhoods, and better bus service. The point is, community visioning is a learning process and results are not predetermined.

**10. Community Visioning is a Challenging Process:** Community visioning is not an easy process. There are many starts and stops. People who participate in the process many have different agendas and may be combative towards one another. Moreover, it is very difficult to get the naysayers involved in the process. Community visioning is frustrating in part because it requires people to look beyond their front yard or neighborhood to address concerns of the entire community.

**11. Visioning Should be Fun:** Although visioning is hard, challenging work, it should also be fun. Events celebrating the community and fun activities to get residents more involved should be part of the process. Community visioning should be a positive experience.

# CONCLUSION

In communities all over America, citizens are more aware and involved in shaping their future. The key is to keep up the momentum and take some concrete actions that will sustain the long-term process of building sustainable communities. There are several things you can do right now to help your community build its future.

**Recognize that the vision process goes on all the time:** Every time your community responds to change, it has a chance to incorporate the values expressed by the community.

**Stay active and get others involved in the process:** There are many things that can be accomplished simply by talking to others about the goals and objectives highlighted in this handbook.



**Take stock of your community:** Follow up on some of the remaining questions about your community's resources. Identify the things that make your community special and a good place to live. Collect old photographs and look at the impact of both good and bad changes.

**Celebrate your successes:** Have an event like a potluck supper, poster contest at school, or an outing with members of the steering committee and other friends. Work without some socializing and celebrating often leads to volunteer burnout!

**Look for ways to collaborate:** Continue to expand the number of people and organizations that are involved in the strategic plan so that it may be sustained and expanded.

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**R**EMEMBER TO CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESSES.  
WORK WITHOUT SOME SOCIALIZING AND  
CELEBRATING OFTEN LEADS TO VOLUNTEER  
BURNOUT!

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**Develop local leaders:** Check out programs offered by area leadership forums, chambers of commerce, and other organizations to begin building a steady source of civic leaders. Convince your elected officials and organizations to support such programs.

**Make good use of your local media:** Let people know what's happening and how they can help through regular articles or reports in area papers, and radio and television news or informational programs. The media can be very helpful in generating support for the actions needed to implement some of your vision's objectives.

**Work with your state officials:** Your legislators and regional offices of state government can help you but they need to be asked and involved in the process.

**Work on your county Comprehensive Plan:** Find out how your county plan meshes with the community's vision. Build a consensus around the county plan and use it to develop local actions that will implement the plan's goals and objectives.

**Develop a "road show":** Take your vision statement, some visual aides, and your colleagues' ideas and develop a presentation that you can make to local organizations, at public meetings and to other communities. These road shows will help build cooperation and identify new allies in the process.

America has a long history of civic pride and community idealism. Many of Pennsylvania's early settlements were experiments in creating the "perfect" community. You can continue that tradition by initiating a visioning project in your community. Dream first and then act. Future generations will thank you.

# APPENDIX 1 — RECOMMENDED READING LIST

## *Building Communities From The Inside Out*

John P. Kretzman and John L. McKnight  
Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University, 1993

Authors Kretzman and McKnight introduce a concept of “asset-based community development.” Because they have little else to rely on, leaders of troubled communities have used their community’s good points and their own creativity to alleviate economic trouble, instead of expecting state or federal funding. The authors point out that communities can either concentrate on their problems and fester in economic ruin or they can emphasize their strong points and return to economic vitality.

## *The Costs of Sprawl in Pennsylvania*

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania and Sponsoring Organizations, 2000

The executive summary is based on a study conducted by the nonprofit group, 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, and other organizations to identify the hidden costs of sprawl in the state. The study may be helpful to individuals and organizations making location and development decisions; to local government officials to understand the impacts of development patterns and land use decisions in their areas; and to state government officials when making policy decisions.

## *Growing Greener*

The Natural Lands Trust and Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1996

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources published this guide to assist and encourage community developers to plan in a way that conserves green forest areas and makes more efficient use of already developed areas. The publication gives examples of efficient zoning practices.

## *Land Use in Pennsylvania: Practices and Tools*

Governor’s Center for Local Government Services with assistance from the Governor’s Sound Land Use Advisory Committee, 2000

The book is the product of an intense examination of land use in the Commonwealth and part of an ongoing educational outreach program. It contains more than 100 practices and tools currently used in Pennsylvania to promote responsible land use.

## *Managing Change in Rural Communities*

The National Endowment for the Arts and the United States Department of Agriculture, 1995

The Natural Resources Conservation Service assisted in a Rural Design Demonstration Project. Model sites were selected in Utah, Iowa, and Georgia. Projects included planning a scenic highway, protection of a community on a flood plain, and preserving a historic downtown.

## *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*

Thomas Hylton, RB Books, 1995

Thomas Hylton, along with Preservation Pennsylvania, notes that a sizable portion of the Keystone State is being destroyed by uncontrolled suburban sprawl. Hylton advocates preserving as much of Pennsylvania’s unspoiled land as possible for future generations through altered municipal zoning and planning policies, as well as a change in lifestyle and attitude for many Pennsylvania residents.

# APPENDIX 2 — RESOURCE GUIDE

## *STATE / LOCAL GOVERNMENT*

**Center for Rural Pennsylvania**  
200 North Third St., Suite 600  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 787-9555  
[www.ruralpa.org](http://www.ruralpa.org)

**County Planning Commission**  
See blue pages in your local telephone directory

**Penn State Cooperative Extension**  
See blue pages in your local telephone directory

**Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency**  
PO Box 1167  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1167  
(800) 692-7292  
(717) 787-2040  
[www.pccd.state.pa.us](http://www.pccd.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture**  
2301 North Cameron Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408  
(717) 787-4737  
[www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)**  
Governor's Center for Local Government Services  
400 North Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225  
(888) 223-6837  
[www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com)

**Pennsylvania DCED Strategic Planning and Operations Office**  
400 North Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225  
(866) 466-3972  
[www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com)

**Pennsylvania DCED Community Empowerment Office**  
400 North Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225  
(866) 466-3972  
[www.newpa.com](http://www.newpa.com)

**Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**  
Rachel Carson State Office Building, 7th Floor  
P.O. Box 8767  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767  
(717) 787-2869  
[www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)

*A Handbook on Community Visioning*

**Pennsylvania Department of Education**  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
(717) 783-6788  
[www.pde.state.pa.us](http://www.pde.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)**  
Bureau of Municipal Services  
P.O. Box 8211  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
400 North Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor West  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8211  
(717) 787-2183  
[www.dot.state.pa.us](http://www.dot.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission**  
300 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
(717) 787-3362  
[www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PENNVEST)**  
22 South Third Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 783-6798  
[www.pennvest.state.pa.us](http://www.pennvest.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Rural Development Council**  
506 Finance Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
(717) 772-9030  
[www.ruralpa.state.pa.us](http://www.ruralpa.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania State Data Center**  
Penn State University  
Harrisburg Campus  
777 West Harrisburg Pike  
Middletown, PA 17057-4898  
(717) 948-6336  
[www.pasdc.hbg.psu.edu](http://www.pasdc.hbg.psu.edu)

**Wild Resource Conservation Program**  
Rachel Carson Office Building, 9th Floor  
PO Box 8764  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8764  
(717) 783-1639  
[www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/index.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wrcf/index.aspx)

## *FEDERAL GOVERNMENT*

**Center for Environmental Research Publications**  
26 West Martin Luther King Drive  
Cincinnati, OH 45268  
(513) 569-7098

(continued on next page)

# RESOURCE GUIDE (CONTINUED)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development**  
One Credit Union Place, Suite 330  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
(717) 237-2184  
[www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov)

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**  
Office of Community Planning and Development  
The Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East  
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3390  
(215) 656-0624 ext. 3201  
[www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

## ***STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS***

**American Society of Landscape Architects of PA/DE**  
908 North 2nd Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
(717) 441-6041  
[www.landscapearchitects.org/index.html](http://www.landscapearchitects.org/index.html)

**County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania**  
17 North Front St.  
P.O. Box 60769  
Harrisburg, PA 17106-0769  
(717) 232-7554  
(800) 895-9039  
[www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org)

**League of Women Voters**  
226 Forster St.  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
(717) 234-1576  
[www.lww.org](http://www.lww.org)

**Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts**  
25 North Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 238-7223  
[www.pacd.org](http://www.pacd.org)

**Pennsylvania Downtown Center**  
130 Locust Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 233-4675  
[www.padowntown.org](http://www.padowntown.org)

**Pennsylvania Economy League**  
17 South Market Square, Suite 310  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 234-3151  
[www.peleat.org](http://www.peleat.org)

**Pennsylvania Environmental Council**  
130 Locust Street, Suite 200  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 230-8044  
[www.pecpa.org](http://www.pecpa.org)

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**Pennsylvania Farm Bureau**  
510 South 31st Street, PO Box 8736  
Camp Hill, PA 17001  
(717) 761-2740  
[www.pfb.com](http://www.pfb.com)

**Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations**  
130 Locust Street, Lower Level  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 909-6905  
[www.pamuseums.org](http://www.pamuseums.org)

**Pennsylvania State Fire Academy**  
1150 Riverside Drive  
Lewistown, PA 17044-1979  
(717) 248-1115  
[www.osfc.state.pa.us](http://www.osfc.state.pa.us)

**Pennsylvania Fire Services Institute**  
223 State Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 236-5995  
[www.pfsi.org](http://www.pfsi.org)

**Pennsylvania Highway Information Association**  
800 North Third Street, Suite 501  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
(717) 236-6021

**Pennsylvania Landowners Association**  
PO Box 391  
Waterford, PA 16441  
(800) 757-5178  
[www.palandowners.org](http://www.palandowners.org)

**Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities**  
414 North Second Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 236-9469  
[www.plcm.org](http://www.plcm.org)

**Pennsylvania Library Association**  
220 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 10  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
(717) 766-7663  
[www.palibraries.org](http://www.palibraries.org)

**Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association**  
1000 North Front Street, Suite 401  
Wormleysburg, PA 17043  
(717) 737-7655  
[www.municipalauthorities.org](http://www.municipalauthorities.org)

**Pennsylvania Planning Association**  
587 James Drive  
Harrisburg, PA 17112-2273  
(717) 671-4510  
[www.planningpa.org](http://www.planningpa.org)

*The Center for Rural Pennsylvania*

Pennsylvania Rails to Trails Conservancy  
2133 Market Street  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
(717) 238-1717  
[www.railstrails.org](http://www.railstrails.org)

Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association  
PO Box 1266  
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266  
(717) 233-5704  
[www.prea.com](http://www.prea.com)

Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs  
2941 North Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17110  
(717) 236-9526  
[www.boroughs.org](http://www.boroughs.org)

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners  
414 North Second Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 236-9469

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors  
4855 Woodland Drive  
Enola, PA 17025  
(717) 763-0930  
[www.psats.org](http://www.psats.org)

Pennsylvania Sierra Club  
300 North Second Street, Suite 601  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 232-0101  
[www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org](http://www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org)

Preservation Pennsylvania  
257 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
(717) 234-2310  
[www.preservationpa.org](http://www.preservationpa.org)

RULE — Pennsylvania Rural Leadership Program  
6 Armsby Building  
University Park, PA 16802-5602  
(814) 863-4679  
<http://rule.aers.psu.edu>

SEDA-COG  
201 Furnace Road  
Lewisburg, PA 17837  
(570) 524-4491  
[www.seda-cog.org](http://www.seda-cog.org)

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
425 6th Avenue, Suite 2500  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
(412) 391-5590  
[www.spcregion.org](http://www.spcregion.org)

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania  
1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1329  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(866) 985-3201 (toll-free)  
(215) 985-3201  
[www.10000friends.org](http://www.10000friends.org)

### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance  
1151 Oak Street  
Pittston, PA 18640-3795  
(570) 655-5581  
[www.nepa-alliance.org](http://www.nepa-alliance.org)

Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission  
395 Seneca Street  
P.O. Box 1127  
Oil City, PA 16301  
(814) 677-4800  
[www.nwcommission.org](http://www.nwcommission.org)

North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission  
651 Montmorenci Road  
Ridgway, PA 15853  
(814) 773-3162  
[www.ncentral.com](http://www.ncentral.com)

Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission  
312 Main Street  
Towanda, PA 18848  
(570) 265-9103  
(888) 868-8800  
[www.northerntier.org](http://www.northerntier.org)

Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission  
541 58th Street  
Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-6500  
[www.sapdc.org](http://www.sapdc.org)

# RESOURCE GUIDE (CONTINUED)

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS (RC&DS)

Endless Mountains RC&D  
Stoll Natural Resource Center  
R.R. 5 Box 5030D  
Towanda, PA 18848-9354  
(570) 265-5288 ext 5  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

Headwaters RC&D  
478 Jeffers Street  
DuBois, PA 15801  
(814) 375-1372 ext 4  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

Mid-State RC&D  
20 Windmill Hill #7  
Burnham, PA 17009-1838  
(717) 248-4901  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

Penn Soil RC&D  
265 Holiday Inn, Suite 3  
Clarion, PA 16214-8702  
(814) 226-6118 ext 5  
[www.pennsoilrc.d.org](http://www.pennsoilrc.d.org)

Penn's Corner RC&D  
Donohoe Center  
R.R. 12, Box 202C  
Greensburg, PA 15601-9217  
(724) 834-9063 ext 3  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

Pocono-Northeast RC&D  
1300 Old Plank Road  
Mayfield, PA 18433  
(570) 282-8732 ext 4  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

Southern Alleghenies RC&D  
702 West Pitt Street  
Fairlawn Court, Suite 7  
Bedford, PA 15522-8800  
(814) 623-7900 ext 5  
[www.parc.d.org](http://www.parc.d.org)

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Farmland Trust  
1200 18th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 331-7300  
[www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org)

American Planning Association  
1776 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 872-0611  
[www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2444  
(202) 898-1185  
[www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)

American Water Works Association  
Small Systems Program  
6666 West Quincy Avenue  
Denver, CO 80235  
(303) 794-7711  
[www.awwa.org](http://www.awwa.org)

Heartland Center for Leadership Development  
941 O Street, Suite 920  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 474-7672  
[www.heartlandcenter.info](http://www.heartlandcenter.info)

National Association of Towns and Townships  
and the National Center for Small Communities  
444 North Capitol St., NW  
Suite 397  
Washington, DC 20001-1202  
(202) 624-3550  
[www.natat.org](http://www.natat.org)

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(800) 944-6847  
[www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)

Scenic America  
1634 I Street, NW, Suite 510  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 638-0550  
[www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)

Small Towns Institute  
PO Box 517  
Ellensburg, WA 98926  
(509) 925-1830

Trust for Public Land  
116 New Montgomery Street, 4th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 495-4014  
[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)



# APPENDIX 3 — WORKSHOP CHECKLIST

Following is a list of questions to be used as a guide for planning a community workshop. The list is not inclusive but it covers many of the activities that go into implementing a successful community event. Before a workshop is conducted, a steering committee should be in place and duties be shared equally among committee members. The steering committee may use this list as a starting guide and add or delete items as needed.

## **LOCATION**

- ✓ Does the room have adequate seating ?
- ✓ Can seating be arranged to maximize participation?
- ✓ Is the room suitable for AV equipment? (Can lighting be adjusted in the room?)
- ✓ Will AV equipment (projectors, VCR/TV etc.) and flipcharts be available?
  - If AV equipment is needed, who will provide it?
- ✓ Are there breakout rooms, or areas, available for small groups to meet?
- ✓ Is there a place to serve refreshments?
- ✓ Are there suitable restroom facilities?
- ✓ Is the room/building handicap accessible?
- ✓ Is there adequate parking?
- ✓ Is the building conveniently located and well known to residents?
- ✓ Is the building considered a “neutral” site?
- ✓ Is there a phone for emergency use?
- ✓ Is there a single contact person to make sure the building will be open?

## **PROMOTION**

- ✓ Will an invitation/flier be used to promote the workshop?
  - Who will design and print it?
  - How many will be printed and who will pay?
  - Who will supply the names and addresses for the flier’s distribution?
  - Who will pay for postage?
  - Will the flier be distributed in other ways?
- ✓ Who will keep track of the registration?
- ✓ Will a media release be sent?
  - Who will write it and send it to the media?
  - Who will be the contact person?
  - Who will make sure the media attends the workshop?
- ✓ Who will contact local officials to ask them to attend the workshop?

## **AGENDA/SPEAKERS**

- ✓ Will the workshop have a formal written agenda?
  - What is the timeframe for agreeing to the agenda?

- Does the agenda allow for breaks and time for open discussion?
- Can everything be accomplished in the time given?
- ✓ Will a guest speaker(s) be asked to make a presentation?
  - Who will identify and contact the guest speaker?
  - Will the guest speaker be paid?
  - Do you have a biographic sketch of the speaker?
  - Will the speaker need AV equipment?
- ✓ Will local speaker(s) be asked to make a presentation?
  - Who will identify and contact the speaker?
  - Do you have a biographic sketch of the speaker?
  - Will the speaker need AV equipment?
- ✓ Will moderators be used for the breakout sessions?
  - Who will identify and contact the moderators?
  - Will the moderators require any training?

## **AT THE WORKSHOP**

- ✓ Will pre-printed name badges be used?
- ✓ Are directional signs needed for the meeting and breakout rooms?
- ✓ Will someone be available to greet attendees as they arrive?
- ✓ Will there be a sign-in sheet for attendees?
- ✓ Will there be an information packet for attendees?
  - What will be included in the packet?
- ✓ Will there be worksheet(s) for attendees?
- ✓ Will someone be available to oversee refreshments?
  - Who will pay for the refreshments?
- ✓ Will participants be pre-assigned to breakout groups?
- ✓ Will the proceeding be recorded?
  - Who will record the meeting and how will the recording be distributed?

## **FOLLOW-UP**

- ✓ Will any type of information be sent to attendees after the workshop?
  - Who will prepare this information?
  - Who will pay for the postage?
  - Who will answer any follow-up questions?



# APPENDIX 4 — SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 21, 2006

Contact: Ms. Sue List (123) 456-6789

## Workshop scheduled for September 5 to discuss future goals of Any Town

Any Town, like other towns in Pennsylvania, is changing. Change can mean increased economic and social opportunities; and it can also mean sprawl, loss of farm land, and changes in the quality of life. To make the forces of change work in Any Town's favor, a group of concerned citizens will conduct a workshop at the Any Town Community Center on Tuesday, September 5, 2006.

Citizens for a Better Any Town, in cooperation with the Any Town Area Chamber of Commerce, State Representative Mary Jones, Big Manufacturing Company Inc., and Any Town Area School District invite area local government officials, community and economic development groups, downtown merchants, civic groups, media representatives and all others who are interested in the future of the Any Town area. The workshop is free and open to the public and will be held from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

It's not enough for a community to know what it doesn't want: a community needs to know what it wants and to have a strategy for achieving it. To achieve this, Any Town needs a vision. A vision is a process by which residents are given the opportunity to inventory their community's resources, and develop shared goals to determine what the community should be in the future.

The purpose of the evening workshop is to identify and explain the tools and techniques area residents can use to chart Any Town's future. Speakers will highlight methods for building local heritage, both social and physical, into an overall community development program. Time will be set aside for small group sessions to discuss strategies for developing a community vision. Topics to be discussed are:

- How to inventory your community's resources
- The latest lessons and tools for community revitalization
- Heritage tourism as a community development tool

The workshop is free but registration is encouraged. To register, please call the Any Town Municipal Building at (123) 456-7890 or visit the office at 21 North Main Street, Any Town, PA 00000.

###

# APPENDIX 5 — SAMPLE INVITATION/FLIER

(FRONT OF FLIER)

## CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

### A Participatory Workshop on Community Visioning and Revitalization

Any Town Community Center, Any Town , PA  
September 5, 2006

What do you want Any Town to look like in the next five, 10, or even 15 years? Our town, like others in Pennsylvania, is changing. Change can mean increased economic and social opportunities; and it can also mean sprawl, the loss of farm land, and changes in the quality of life. Our community has the power to control change, but first it needs to know what it wants and what it doesn't want, and have a strategy for achieving those goals. A community vision is a process in which residents have the opportunity to inventory their community's resources, and develop shared goals of what they want their community to look like in the future. This workshop will outline the steps involved in creating a community vision, and will highlight the tools that we can use to make our community what we envision it to be.

#### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Anyone who is interested in the future of their community, including township and borough officials, tourism promotion associations, real estate agents and brokers, historical society members, business owners and merchants, school board members, community leaders, zoning or planning commission members and community residents. This workshop will provide you with an opportunity to share your concerns with workshop speakers and attendees in an informal atmosphere. In addition, valuable information and potential solutions to assist in the revitalization of the local economy will be presented by acknowledged experts. Join us for this unique opportunity. Your presence will make all the difference.

#### WORKSHOP FOCUS

The goal of the evening workshop is to identify and explain the tools and techniques communities can use to chart their own future. Speakers will highlight methods for building local heritage, both social and physical, into an overall community development program. There will also be time set aside for small groups to discuss strategies for developing a community vision. The issues to be addressed include: fatalism vs. local control: how to develop a sense of place; why downtown revitalization is more than removing the parking meters: the Main Street approach; using tourism as an economic development tool; strategies for marketing your region's historic resources; funding for downtown projects; and tips on getting neighboring municipalities to participate in regional projects.

***SPONSORED BY CITIZENS FOR A BETTER ANY TOWN***

(BACK OF FLIER)

## MEETING DETAILS

**WHEN / WHERE:** Any Town Community Center, Tuesday, September 5, 2006.

**COST / REGISTRATION:** There is no registration fee for this workshop. It is free and open to the public. However, limited seating capacity requires registration of all attendees. To register, please complete the form provided below and return it to the Any Town Municipal Building by August 29, 2006. For more information, call (123) 456-7890.

**DISABILITIES NOTE:** If you have a disability requiring special assistance or accommodation, please call (123) 456-7890 at least three days before the workshop to discuss your needs.

**COSPONSORS:** The workshop is being cosponsored by Citizens for a Better Any Town · Any Town Area Chamber of Commerce · Big Manufacturing Company Inc. · State Representative Mary Jones · Any Town Area School District.

## MEETING AGENDA

- 6 p.m. Registration, Coffee and Donuts
- 6:30 Introductory Remarks: State Representative Mary Jones
- 6:45 Shaping Your Community's Future: Developing a Regional Vision
- 7:15 Small Group Discussions
  - The Needs
  - The Opportunities
  - The Community's Perspective
- 8:00 Break
- 8:15 Small Group Discussions
  - The Strategy, Who Will Do What?
- 8:45 p.m. Concluding Remarks
- 9 p.m. Meeting Adjourns



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## REGISTRATION FORM

To register for the workshop, please fill out the registration information below and return the form to the Any Town Municipal Building by August 29, 2006. There is no fee for this evening workshop.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return registration form to: Any Town Municipal Building, 21 North Main Street,  
Any Town, PA 00000.**

# APPENDIX 6 — SAMPLE WORKSHOP AGENDA

## CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION SEPTEMBER 5, 2006 ANY TOWN, PA

### *WORKSHOP AGENDA*

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 6 p.m. | Registration, Coffee and Donuts  |
| 6:30   | Welcome: Why are We Here?<br>State Representative Mary Jones                         |
| 6:45   | Shaping Your Community's Future: Developing a Community Vision<br>Mr. Special Guest  |
| 7:15   | Small Group Discussions<br>The Needs, The Opportunities, The Community's Perspective |
| 8 p.m. | Break  |
| 8:15   | Small Group Discussions<br>The Strategy — Who Will Do What?                          |
| 8:45   | Closing Remarks<br>Mr. I. Will Wrapup<br>Any Town Borough Council Member             |
| 9 p.m. | Meeting Adjourns   |

# APPENDIX 7 — SAMPLE WORKSHEETS

## WORKSHEET #1

Change can be good and bad, depending on how it is managed. To manage change effectively, citizens need to agree on what their town is and where they want it to go. An important component of defining who we are is an assessment and inventory of the region in which we live. Rate each issue listed below from 1 to 5 (1 being Very Important and 5 being Not Very Important) for its degree of importance to your town. Add any items to the list at the end of this sheet. Allow 10-15 minutes for this activity. After you are finished, please compare your list with other members in your group.

### How Important is this Issue?

Rate the following issues from 1 to 5: 1 being very important and 5 being not very important.

- |   |       |                    |
|---|-------|--------------------|
| Controlling population migration into the region                      | _____ | (Rate from 1 to 5) |
| Retaining youth in the region   | _____ |                    |
| Providing services to area senior citizens                            | _____ |                    |
| Attracting young professionals to the region                          | _____ |                    |
| Aggressive programs to prevent teenage pregnancies                    | _____ |                    |
| Affordable housing in the region                                      | _____ |                    |
| Zoning to maintain property values                                    | _____ |                    |
| Environmental protection enforcement                                  | _____ |                    |
| Expansion of the public sewage system to encourage development        | _____ |                    |
| Funding for basic education   | _____ |                    |
| Continuing education opportunities for adults                         | _____ |                    |
| Alternatives for high school dropouts and other youth-at-risk         | _____ |                    |
| Increasing the number of students going on to college or trade school | _____ |                    |
| Recruitment of manufacturing firms to the region                      | _____ |                    |
| Creation of service sector jobs                                       | _____ |                    |
| Employment opportunities for teenagers                                | _____ |                    |
| Economic diversity through tourism                                    | _____ |                    |
| Expansion of defense-related industries                               | _____ |                    |
| Recruitment of health care professionals to the region                | _____ |                    |
| Expansion of hospital outreach services                               | _____ |                    |
| Establishment of low-income health care clinics                       | _____ |                    |
| Increase farm participation in the Ag-land protection program         | _____ |                    |
| Encouragement of more small-scale farming production                  | _____ |                    |
| Increase fire and police coverage                                     | _____ |                    |
| Drug prevention programs  | _____ |                    |
| Regionalization of municipal services                                 | _____ |                    |
| Construction or redesign of Interstate Hwy. interchanges              | _____ |                    |
| Upgrade highways to accommodate more traffic                          | _____ |                    |
| Revitalization of downtowns   | _____ |                    |
| Development of outlet mall  | _____ |                    |
| Preservation and reuse of historic resources                          | _____ |                    |
| Regional approach to planning and zoning                              | _____ |                    |
| Cultural and arts opportunities                                       | _____ |                    |
| Expansion of recreational opportunities for all ages                  | _____ |                    |
| Other issues: (List and rate any other issues not shown above)        |       |                    |

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## WORKSHEET #2

List three places you like to take out-of-town visitors. Be as specific as possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

List three places you avoid taking out-of-town visitors. Be as specific as possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Name three sites you consider "public places," or places where people can freely meet to discuss community issues.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Name three natural and man-made features that make your community special and unique. Natural features include mountains, streams, and vegetation. Man-made features include streetscapes, architecture, and farmland. Be as specific as possible.

### Natural Features

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Man-made Features

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Over the last 10 to 15 years, what three changes to the community have been caused by internal and external forces? Examples of external forces are federal/state policies and global competition. Internal forces are housing demands and changes in demographics.

### Changes Caused by External Forces

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Changes Caused by Internal Forces

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Some areas develop rapidly while others have remained the same since the 1950s. Using your knowledge of the area, list three places in your community that are growing (new houses, strip malls, etc.) and three places that have remained relatively the same for the past 15 to 20 years. Please be as specific as possible.

### Three places undergoing rapid development :

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Three places that have remained relatively the same:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Should there be areas in your community that are off-limits to development? If so, please list three of these places. Be as specific as possible.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Communities can shape their future. They can decide where change should occur and at what rate. In the next 10 to 15 years, what areas in your community should be developed? List three areas you think are appropriate for development and the type of development which should occur on these sites. Be as specific as possible.

1. Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Type \_\_\_\_\_

2. Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Type \_\_\_\_\_

3. Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Type \_\_\_\_\_

### WORKSHEET #3

Who is doing what? In every community, businesses and organizations are making and implementing plans that will affect the community's future. Often these groups work independently of each other and know little about other activities taking place in the community. Part of the inventory process is to determine who is doing what in your community. Below is a list of groups that can be found in most communities. For each group, please list one or two of their major accomplishments in the last five years. Next, indicate what type of activities they have planned for the future. And finally, assess how involved each of these groups are in the community by writing high, moderate, or low. Don't worry if you are unsure of the types of activities of each of these groups. Fill-in as much information as you can.

Who is doing what?	Major Accomplishments in the last 5 years	Activities Planned in the next 3 to 5 years	Level of Community Involvement (High, Moderate, Low)
Township			
Township			
Township			
Borough			
Borough			
Area School District			
County Government (within your region)			
State Government (within your region)			
Federal Government (within your region)			
Chamber of Commerce			
Large employer(s)			
County Conservation District			
Redevelopment authorities			
Community-based organizations			
(such as the United Way, YMCA, Rotary Club)			
Electric/gas/telephone utilities			
County travel promotion agency			
Youth Organizations (such as the Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, Baseball League)			
Religious Organizations			
Other			
Other			



# NOTES

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# NOTES

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**The Center for Rural Pennsylvania**

200 North Third St., Suite 600

Harrisburg, PA 17101

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fax (717) 772-3587

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1P1205 – 500