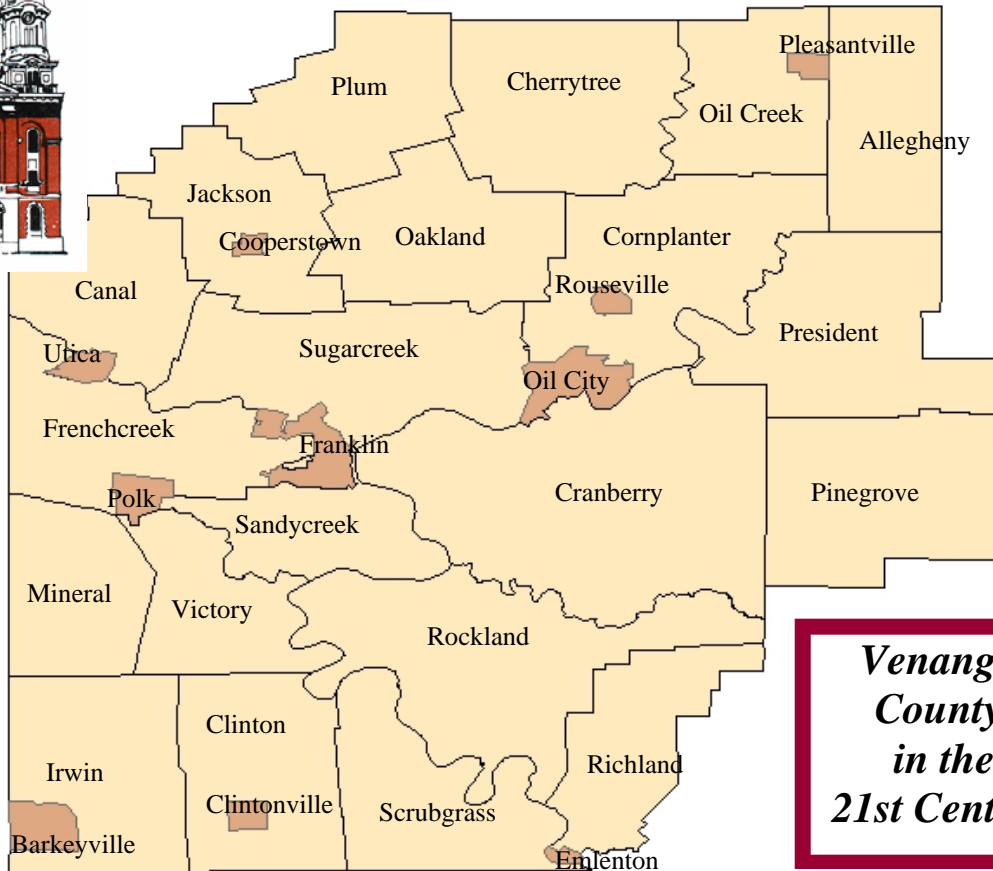


**Venango County
2004 Comprehensive Development Plan
Executive Summary (Vol. I)
Adopted 1/5/05**



**Venango County Regional Planning Commission
1168 Liberty Street, P.O. Box 831
Franklin, PA 16323
Phone: 814-432-9689**

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Venango County 2004 Comprehensive Development Plan

Credits:

Venango County Commissioners:

Susan Smith, Chairperson
Larry Horn, Vice Chairperson
Gary Hutchison,

Venango County Planning Commission:

Warren Thomas, Chairperson
Susan Hileman, Vice Chairperson
Martha H. Breene, Secretary/Treasurer
Dan Brockett
Mary Ann Caton
Andrew Restauri
Marc Rickard
Ann Redegear
George Thompson, Solicitor

Venango County Planning Commission – staff:

Fred Wilder, Executive Director
Debra M. Frawley, Administrative Assistant
Gary Dovey, Oil Region Alliance Planner, (former VCPC acting director)

Venango County Comprehensive Development Plan Steering Committee:

Jan Beichner Company: B & B Glass Center
Jack Crawford, Kapp Alloy & Wire Co
Rick Beith Company: Beith Associates
Fred Drovdic Company: Sutter & Associates
Vic Bowser, Clarion Univ. of PA, Venango Campus
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Allan Penksa Company: Venango Regional Airport
Jayne Romero
Dick Sutter Company: Sutter & Associates
Wade VanLandingham
Marilyn Blank, Oil Heritage Region, Inc.
Ned Goucher
Bob Skrada, NW Regional Planning & Development
Otho C. Bell, Venango Regional Airport
Dan Brockett, Venango Co. Cooperative Extension
Joseph Griswold
Tracy Jamieson
Steve Kosak, Kosak & Associates
Jeff Langworthy
Neil McElwee
James Miller, Jim's Market

Venango County Comprehensive Development Plan Steering Committee:

Terry Ray, Cranberry Township
Ron Shoup, Oil City Chamber of Commerce
Christine Sporer, City of Oil City
Warren Thomas
Marc Rickard, Venango Conservation District
Ann Rudegeair, Two Mile Run County Park
George Thompson, Wilson & Thompson, L.L.C.
Bill Valdesalice, Sugarcreek Borough
Wade VanLandingham
Mary Ann Caton
Susan R. Hileman

Plan Consultant:

Olsen & Associates, L.L. C.
126 Main Street
Butler, PA 16001
(724) 282-4786 Fax: (724) 282-7619
Contact: Jeff Pierce

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY VENANGO COUNTY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Plans tend to be visions of individuals or groups desiring to achieve a set of goals and objectives. This planning document is intended to provide a basic understanding of the shared goals and objectives of the residents, government officials and agencies, business entities and other organizations comprising this community we call Venango County. It provides a series of policies recommended for implementation to achieve those goals and objectives. Finally it provides recommendations for implementation of those policies.

In order to formulate those recommendations, it is necessary to gather accurate information regarding existing conditions affecting the aspects of community life; past experiences; public perceptions of our County's strengths and weaknesses; and the major factors impacting the quality of life. To accomplish this, the Venango County Planning Commission requested the assistance of a broad range of individuals and organizations throughout the County. To list all of the individuals and groups who participated in this process would probably result in omissions, but all who contributed are deserving of the community's thanks.

The primary goal of *the Venango County Comprehensive Plan* has been to gather information and to formulate policy recommendations that will be useful to governmental bodies, business entities, non-profit organizations and individuals in making short and long range decisions which impact collectively upon our Venango County Community.

The investigation of the major aspects of community life within Venango County has required the collection of a substantial body of information, ranging from demographic information to citizen perceptions, which is contained in the second volume of this Planning Document entitled "Background Studies".

This planning document establishes basic planning goals and objectives for Venango County based upon a recommended ten year implementation schedule. *The Comprehensive Plan* is composed of a series of Volumes organized as follows:

- Volume I.....Executive Summary.
- Volume II.....Background Studies (A Statistical and Historical Profile of Venango County)
- Volume III...Existing Conditions.
- Volume IV....Population and Housing.
- Volume V.....Land Use.
- Volume VI....The Environment.
- Volume VII...Transportation.
- Volume VIII...Economic Development.
- Volume IX.....Community Facilities and Services.

A decision was made to provide as much information as possible in a graphic format in order to enhance public understanding of natural conditions, demographic data and conceptual ideas. Whenever possible maps, graphs, charts, drawings and photographs have been used in place of text or statistical tables. (*See Volumes II and III*).

For any “Plan” to be accepted or implemented it must first be understood, therefore the communication involved in the planning process must be a dialogue. In order to maximize that dialogue an intensive public participation program was undertaken which involved as broad a representation of interests of our Venango County Community as possible. This public participation process included Countywide “Needs Assessment” meetings; the distribution of attitude and perception surveys; the utilization of specific organizations and individuals in fields of their expertise; public presentations and media participation.

An additional goal of this plan is to provide policies that will stimulate development activities in Venango County that incorporate best planning and management practices and to promote development activities that are of high quality and have positive economic, environmental and community impacts

WHAT IS A COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

It is a statement, in words, maps, graphs and pictures, of policies for guiding development activities in our County. The plan suggests the function of County and Municipal Governments in the future in areas such as land use, environmental protection, economic development, community facilities, transportation, etc.

The plan establishes goals or targets for these activities as they relate to the conditions of our physical environment; and recommends policies for people to follow who will occupy and use the land. These statements of goals identify what is to be accomplished and the kinds of services and facilities that the citizens of Venango County will need in the future.

The plan provides the general framework for development and sets forth policy for handling recommended changes. This framework attempts to keep what is good and sound in our existing communities, while providing for the gradual elimination of errors of the past and avoiding the repetition of these mistakes looking towards the future.

The plan serves as a guide to public officials for making decisions related to development activities and serves as a statement of public policy to guide private decisions. The County plan also serves as a framework for inter-municipal concerns and provides a basis for more detailed and specific proposals of a City, Township or Borough plan.

The Venango County Comprehensive Plan is not fixed or rigid. It is subject to periodic study and change as conditions change. There is a recommended timeline for implementing the plan. This plan considers issues of county-wide concern and multi-municipal importance. This plan does not attempt to address every detail and issue of our time. It has been deliberately limited to identify only those issues identified by citizens and local officials as major concerns at this particular period in our history.

Each day people make decisions that change the nature of our community. A new home is built, a store relocates, a road is built - all of these are development activities. Properly guided, all of these individual decisions can produce progressive, sound development and enhance the quality of life for each of us. Unplanned and unregulated development activity is costly, environmentally destructive and economically damaging. The citizens of Venango County must minimize the negative effects of unplanned development. We cannot support development which outdistances our ability to provide basic municipal services. Traffic congestion, malfunctioning sewage systems, wildcat waste dumps, higher property taxes, and other public policy problems are exacerbated by unplanned and unregulated development.

PLAN GOALS

The Venango County Comprehensive Plan Goals developed after the initial public participation activities are:

To sustain the highest quality of rural, suburban and urban life for the residents of Venango County.

To provide policies, plans and proposals to municipalities for the physical, economic and social development of their communities while protecting the natural, historic and built environments.

To promote conditions providing for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Venango County.

To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain safe, affordable housing.

To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain meaningful employment.

To promote the preservation of the agricultural areas of Venango County in an economically sound manner.

To provide a framework for cooperation within Venango County and the region.

DEFINING A “SHARED VISION”

Over the past several decades Venango County, like other places in the Commonwealth, has seen its population decrease in its cities and grow in its rural areas. Because changes will continue to occur in Venango County, it is extremely important that growth be directed in a way which preserves those qualities that make our communities desirable places to live. To this end, the Venango County Planning Commission has worked to prepare a countywide comprehensive plan built upon a foundation of consensus and shared vision.

A number of countywide public participation events including a “Needs Assessment” meetings, community surveys, municipal planning meetings, and meetings with various interest groups, have revealed the following issues as having importance in Venango County as it prepares to enter the twenty-first century:

- A need to develop a cooperative coordinated and intergovernmental approach to planning in Venango County;
- The need to increase public understanding of and participation in local government.
- The loss of population and jobs;
- The need to improve public water and sewer systems;
- The need to improve broadband and cellular communications services;
- The lack of coordinated growth management plans and policies;
- The need to enhance and diversify the local economy;
- A substantial level of substandard housing;
- A need to preserve, conserve – protect and restore the county’s natural, historic and cultural resources;
- A need to provide for a diversity of passive and active recreational opportunities, parklands and natural areas for all county residents;
- Improvement to Routes 8, 257, 62 and 322;
- Improvement in the delivery of public services;
- Improvement in the delivery of human services, including education;
- A need to conserve energy and provide a variety of reliable and affordable energy sources;
- A need to protect county water resources

These issues provide the basis for the goals and objectives of *The Venango County Comprehensive Plan*. The relationship of these goals to the information received through the various public participation vehicles is as follows:

1. To sustain the highest quality of rural, suburban and urban life for the residents of Venango County.

This goal was first identified at the initial needs assessment meeting conducted during the initial stages of the planning process. Protecting the quality of life of Venango County was the number one priority of all sectors of the community participating in the Community Survey. The specific policy objectives and implementation

recommendations established to achieve this goal relate primarily to municipal and county government actions.

Among the possible solutions to problems associated with achieving this goal were creating methods, plans and opportunities for jobs, promoting development along arterial and collector roads, inter-municipal cooperation, public/private partnerships and competent planning efforts involving the general public.

2. To provide policies, plans and proposals to municipalities for the physical, economic and social development of their communities while protecting the natural, historic and built environments.

This goal reflects citizens concerns that municipal governments establish policies which balance the need for managed growth in a community with the desire to protect those qualities of the community most valued by its residents. The specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations established to achieve this goal focus upon the need for county/municipal cooperation.

Citizens stressed local planning and land use regulation as a tool to achieve this goal. The inclusion of innovative development concepts in local regulations and minimizing the impact of development activities received a great deal of citizen support. The importance of preserving the significant natural, cultural and historic sites received significant support. Citizens also indicated a desire for public school facilities to be more widely used.

Also citizens identified the need for infrastructure and capital improvements planning, a need for better education of the population on growth issues and improving public safety personnel and resources as needing attention.

3. To promote conditions providing for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Venango County.

Health care, jobs, public safety, education, recreation and environmental well-being were all concerns identified by a significant percentage of citizens during the public participation process. These services and functions are provided by all levels of government as well as by non-profit or volunteer organizations and the private sector. The specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations necessary to achieve this goal relate to those specific providers.

Transportation issues, development regulations, community facilities and intergovernmental issues were all identified as matters requiring attention. Citizens felt that in order to achieve this goal county government had to assume the lion's share of the responsibility.

4. To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain safe, affordable housing.

Housing conditions, affordability, and real estate taxes were an overwhelming concern identified both at public meetings and in the surveys. In addition a significant proportion of residents voiced concerns about building safety, flooding, and handicapped accessibility. The specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations established to achieve this goal relate to activities of municipal and county governments.

Growth management concerns, historic preservation, and intergovernmental cooperation were also issues associated with this goal. Citizens seemed to believe that providing incentives rather than subsidies was the most desirable manner in which to achieve this goal.

5. To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain meaningful employment.

Economic development activities identified during the public participation process primarily related to “good paying” jobs. The nature of the specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations developed to achieve this goal require action on the part of county government and functional public-private partnerships.

Education, training and infrastructure improvements were all felt to be necessary in order to achieve this goal. Promoting diversification of the economy, encouraging industrial development compatible with community character and developing adequate sites for economic development activities were all ranked as important by citizens.

6. To promote the preservation of the rural and scenic areas of Venango County in an economically sound manner.

This goal was identified by a vast majority of citizens regardless of their affiliation with agriculture as extremely important. The specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations established to achieve this goal are directed primarily to county government, with some action by municipalities.

Citizens felt that development of rural and scenic lands was a major issue in the county which needs to be addressed. Additionally enhancing the economic viability of the family farm was identified as a significant concern. Involving farmers in the development of local regulations, protecting water resources, funding farmland preservation programs, and educating non-farmers about agricultural issues were all thought to be tools which could be used to achieve this goal. “The concept of ‘generally consistent’ refers primarily to land use plans and policies when used in regulatory reviews.”

7. To provide a framework for cooperation within Venango County and the region.

During the public participation process a significant percentage of the citizens identified the need for inter-municipal and inter-county cooperation in dealing with the kinds of issues which must be dealt with in the twenty-first century. The specific policy objectives and implementation recommendations identified to achieve this goal relate primarily to establishing an organizational structure to begin the process of communicating, sharing and cooperating.

Many citizens did not know what functions were provided by what level of government. Respondents to the surveys as well as participants in the Needs Assessment meetings believed that municipal and county governments needed to devote more effort to educating citizens about their respective roles and responsibilities. Many respondents also saw a need for cooperation among the various interest groups, governmental and educational institutions in the county particularly in terms of sharing information and resources. A significant number of citizens believed that it was important for the organizations, institutions and governmental bodies in the county to speak with one voice on matters of county-wide significance.

These seven plan goals will provide the framework for the specific policy recommendations contained in the plan. *The Venango County Comprehensive Plan* attempts to translate those policy recommendations into an IMPLEMENTATION Plan. Each of these goals is further defined by a number of specific objectives contained in the Policy Implementation Section of this document. The rationale utilized to establish each of the plan objectives is contained in the various "Plans and Policies" Volumes of this document.

The key to the success of this plan will be the continuous education and participation of the public. This public participation and consensus building process requires a large investment of time and resources, but it is necessary to achieve the level of public support required to implement the elements of the plan. An annual progress report will be prepared by the Planning Commission and presented publicly at a meeting of each of the Councils of Governments.

In the past, county comprehensive plans have been completed and approved by county governing officials, and then distributed to the municipalities, developers, social agencies, state and federal agencies and then distributed to the citizenry. More often than not, previous plans did not establish plans and policies to be accepted and followed by municipal governing bodies. The county plan was a merely resource to be used in the review of applications such as subdivisions, site plans, permit applications, and regional/county studies and plans from other county agencies. *However Act 247, as amended by Act 170 of 1988, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Section 301.4 required that "Municipal Comprehensive Plan shall be generally consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan."*

This requirement gives the county comprehensive plan a greater degree of legitimacy, creating the legal nexus to municipal comprehensive plans.

LEGAL STATUS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Planning Process, as defined by the Municipalities Planning Code, requires that the comprehensive plan, consisting of maps, charts and textual matter, shall include, at least the following basic elements:

1. A statement of objectives of the county concerning its future development, including but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development, that may also serve as a statement of community development objectives.
2. A plan for land use, which may include provisions for the amount, intensity, character and timing of land use proposed for residence, industry, business, agriculture, major traffic and transit facilities, utilities, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, preservation of prime agricultural lands, flood plains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses.
3. A plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and those of individuals and families anticipated to reside in the county, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels.
4. A plan for the movement of people and goods, which may include expressways, highways, local street systems, parking facilities, pedestrian and bikeway systems, public transit routes, terminals, airfields, port facilities, railroad facilities and other similar facilities or uses.
5. A plan for community facilities and utilities, which may include public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police stations, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and waste treatment, solid waste management, storm drainage and flood facilities, and other similar facilities or uses.
6. A statement of the interrelationships among the various plan components, which may include an estimate of environmental, energy conservation, fiscal, economic development and social consequences on the county.
7. A discussion of short - and long-range plan implementation strategies, which may include implications for capital improvements programming, new or updated development regulations, and identification of public funds potentially available.

8. A statement indicating the relationship of existing and proposed development of the county to existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous counties, to the objectives and plans for development in the county of which it is a part and to regional trends.

9. The comprehensive plan may include a plan for the reliable supply of water, considering current and future water resources availability, uses and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources. Any such plan shall be consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by the Ohio River Basin Commission.

10. To promote energy conservation and the effective utilization of renewable energy sources, the comprehensive plan may include an energy conservation plan element which systematically analyzes the impact of each other component and element of the comprehensive plan on the present and future use of energy in the county, details specific measures contained in the other plan elements designed to reduce energy consumption and proposes other measures that the county may take to reduce energy consumption and may promote the effective utilization of renewable energy sources.

The governing body (Board of County Commissioners) shall have the power to adopt and amend the comprehensive plan as a whole or in part. In reviewing the proposed comprehensive plan, the governing body shall consider the review comments of contiguous counties, municipalities and school districts within the county as well as public comments and recommendations of the planning agency.

The governing body shall hold at least **two public hearings** pursuant to public notice. If, after the public hearings held upon the proposed plan or amendment to the plan, the proposed plan or proposed amendment thereto is substantially revised, the governing body shall hold another public hearing, pursuant to public notice, before proceeding to vote on the plan or amendment thereto.

The legal status of the comprehensive plan requires that any subsequent proposed action of the governing body, its departments, agencies, appointed authorities and municipalities with-in the county shall be submitted to the planning agency for its recommendations when the proposed action relates to:

1. The location, opening, vacation, extension, widening, narrowing or enlargement of any street, public ground, pier head or watercourse.
2. The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structure located in the county.
3. The adoption, amendment, or repeal of an official map, subdivision and land development ordinance, zoning ordinance, or provisions for planned residential development or any capital improvements program.

4. The construction, extension or abandonment of any water line, sewer line or sewage treatment facility.

5. Following the adoption of a comprehensive plan by the county, any proposed action of any school district located within the county, related to the above four items, shall be submitted to the county planning agency within 45 days prior to the execution of such proposed action by the governing body of the school district.

It is recommended that this plan be reviewed annually by the Venango County Planning Commission and updated as necessary. A formal update of the plan should occur every five to ten years. The annual review should include a report from the Planning Commission to the Board of Commissioners on the level of progress achieved in implementing the Plan Recommendations. In addition, Volume II of the plan (Background Studies) should be updated annually to reflect current statistics, new or newly proposed infrastructure, and current mapping.

This plan is goal-oriented and is intended to be basic tool in assisting municipal and county officials in their decision-making functions. It is meant to be a flexible document, and should be amended as new technologies and/or planning techniques become professionally accepted.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations contained in this document are based upon the following four premises:

1. The municipalities comprising Venango County are legally responsible for planning and regulation of land use in their respective communities according to Act 247, as amended by Act 170 (The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code).

2. The Venango County Planning Commission is an advisory agency, directly responsible to the Venango County Board of Commissioners. The Planning Commission, under the authority granted by the County Commissioners, is solely responsible for preparing the plan

3. Act 247, as amended by Act 170, requires that Municipal Comprehensive Plans be generally consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. In order to accomplish this, THE VENANGO COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN reflects, as much as possible, existing municipal planning documents.

4. The Plan must under go a Countywide review in an attempt to develop a consensus on the policy recommendations contained in the Plan, in order for the plan to be effective.

The Venango County Comprehensive Plan offers recommended policies and actions for managing growth, preserving the quality of life, enhancing economic development and protecting the natural environment in one of the Commonwealth's least developing areas. The growth of any county or community can be a positive, progressive experience or it can be a disaster. The key element in achieving positive results is to build a consensus among the citizenry, business and industry, environmental interests and government or quasi-governmental agencies regarding the developmental future of Venango County.

In order for this Plan to be effective it should be evaluated annually in terms of progress being made to implement the recommendations contained in the Plan. The Plan should undergo a thorough update every five years.

IMPLEMENTATION

The numerous policy recommendations contained in this plan must be put into effect in a systematic manner in order to achieve the "Goals and Objectives" of the plan. This section will establish a priority for implementation of these policy recommendations and identify the entity or entities which should be responsible for such implementation. Three categories of prioritization will be identified, these are:

Immediate - Policies which should be implemented within two (2) years after the adoption of the plan.

Short Range - Policies which should be implemented within five (5) years after the adoption of the plan.

Long Range - Policies which should be implemented within ten (10) years after the adoption of the plan.

The entities which are identified as being responsible for implementation include Venango County Government; Venango County Municipal Government; Venango County School Districts; Non-Profit Organizations, including civic groups, environmental groups, agricultural groups, etc. and Business and Professional Organizations including the Chambers of Commerce.

In organizing this section, each identified policy recommendation will be cross-referenced to the specific Goal and/or Objective it relates to, with its category of prioritization and the identification of the implementing body, as exemplified by the following outline:

GOAL NO.

Objective

Immediate Priority

Policy Recommendation No. 1 - Implementing entities.

Policy Recommendation No. 2 - Implementing entities.

Short Range Priority

Policy Recommendation No. 1 - Implementing entities.

Policy Recommendation No. 2 - Implementing entities.

Long Range Priority

Policy Recommendation No. 1 - Implementing entities.

Policy Recommendation No. 2 - Implementing entities.

In some instances more than one implementing entity is identified, when this shared responsibility is identified, the entity listed first should assume the lead role in coordinating the implementation of the specific policy recommendation.

GOAL No. 1 - To sustain the highest quality of rural, suburban and urban life for the residents of Venango County.

1. To provide for a planned mixture of residential, agricultural, commercial, recreational and industrial land uses throughout the county.

Immediate Priority

Establish a Regional Planning organization that provides services to all Venango County Municipalities, and enables the municipalities to actively participate in County Government - *Venango County Planning Commission*

Enact Municipal and Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans which are compatible with the County Comprehensive Plan. - *Municipal Governments.*

Provide professional planning services and assistance to municipalities at a reasonable cost. - *Planning Commission.*

Short Range Priority

Enact Municipal land use/land development Ordinances in all Venango County Municipalities. - *Municipal Governments.*

Insure compatibility of land use/land development districts and regulations at municipal boundaries. - *Municipal Governments.*

Establish development options and incentives within the context of local land use regulations to ensure that private development is consistent with local planning policies. - *Municipal Governments*.

Prepare and enact a county-wide recreation plan. – *Planning Commission, Parks Authority and Oil Region Alliance*.

Long Range Priority

Encourage the growth and effectiveness of existing multi-municipal efforts and establish Joint Municipal Planning efforts where feasible and appropriate. - *Municipal Governments*.

Prepare and enact a countywide greenway plan – *Planning Commission, Parks Authority, Conservation District and Oil Region Alliance*.

2. To preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the rural character of Venango County by focusing commercial and residential development in or near the established villages or Downtowns.

Immediate Priority

Work with the municipalities to establish designated growth areas throughout Venango County. Each municipality should designate the location and type of development activities it desires to promote. The Planning Commission should assist municipalities in preparing detailed mapping of designated growth areas. These designated growth areas should be located where the infrastructure is readily available to support the type of development desired by the municipalities. - *Municipal Governments with the assistance of the Venango Regional Planning Commission*.

Establish designated growth areas throughout Venango County, around existing population centers, utilizing the principles of density-based zoning. - *Municipal Governments*.

Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing structures, in villages and downtowns – *Municipal Governments*.

Limit development in rural areas to cluster-type development in identified Rural Centers by utilizing innovative and flexible development regulations such as Conservation Subdivision, Planned Residential Developments, Traditional Neighborhood Developments and/or density bonuses. - *Municipal Governments*.

Support agricultural and forest management education programs which promote best management practices and educate non-farmers about farm and forestry practices and lifestyles. - *Conservation District*

Short Range Priority

Establish Resource Protection Areas which identify land areas worthy of significant local protection such as wetlands, floodplains, areas of steep slopes, scenic vistas, prime agricultural lands, historic and cultural resource in local zoning and land use regulations. - *Planning Commission and Conservation District.*

Recognize the importance of Agricultural Security Areas and establish compatible land use regulations at municipal boundaries to further protect larger agricultural regions. - *Municipal Governments.*

Long Range Priority

Establish a reliable source of funding for the County Agricultural Preservation Program. - *County Government,*

Explore the use of Transfer of Development Rights programs to provide additional income for farmers as well as directing growth to nonagricultural areas. - *Municipal Governments.*

3. To promote alternatives to residential and commercial strip development along major highways, such as Routes 8, 62, 257 and 322 and to encourage scenic roadways on various state and local roads in rural areas

Immediate Priority

In order to encourage better design in these corridors, limit driveway access on Routes 8, 62, 257 and 322, through municipal land use regulations, in order to prevent dangerous strip development and encourage better design in these corridors. New driveways should have a minimum of four hundred (400) feet of sight distance (based upon speed limits). Where multiple non-residential uses occur, shared driveway access and service roads should be promoted. – *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

In order to prevent strip development and encourage better design, limit driveway access onto local collector by means of local land use regulations (i.e. shared driveways, service roads, etc.). New driveways should have a minimum of three hundred (300) feet of

sight distance (based upon speed limits). - *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Establish development standards which require vegetative buffering along arterial and collector streets. - *Municipal Governments.*

Enact development regulations which provide incentives to private developers to cluster development along arterial and collector streets. - *County and Municipal Governments.*

Long Range Priority

Designate significant land areas fronting on arterial and collector roads as Scenic Areas within Resource Protection Areas. - *Municipal Governments.*

4. To promote higher density development where roads and utilities are capable of sustaining service to such development.

Short Range Priority

Amend existing zoning ordinances to provide for density bonuses for innovative development plans such Conservation Subdivisions, Traditional Neighborhood Development or Planned Residential Developments in areas where infrastructure exists to sustain such densities. - *Municipal Governments.*

Long Range Priority

Develop a Countywide Sewage Facilities Plan which establishes future areas to be served by public sewage facilities and limits sewer expansion to these areas. - *Planning Commission.*

5. To maintain and strengthen the agricultural and forestry economy.

Immediate Priority

Amend existing zoning ordinances to establish exclusive agricultural zoning districts which limit non-agricultural development activities. - *Municipal Governments.*

Modify existing zoning ordinances to permit farm-based business and related commercial activities as a source of supplemental income in all agricultural zoning districts. - *Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Expand the acquisition of conservation easements and purchase of development rights through the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Board. - *Planning Commission*.

Work with municipalities to establish designated growth areas around existing centers of population coupled with zoning density incentives – in order to discourage development activities in productive agricultural areas. – *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments*.

Long Range Priority

Explore the feasibility of a Countywide Transfer of Development Rights Program in cooperation with municipalities, where developers purchase the development rights of a farm and use those rights as a density bonus within a designated growth management area. Rural zoning districts should be the sending areas and urban or suburban growth management areas should be the receiving areas. -*Planning Commission*.

Explore the potential for additional preferential tax assessments for active and productive farms. -*Planning Commission*.

Explore the establishment of a reliable ongoing source of funding for the County to expand its purchase of development rights.-*Planning Commission*.

6. To encourage economic growth by industries and businesses related to the natural, economic and educational resources of Venango County.

Immediate Priority

The County should make an ongoing commitment to actively participate in economic development activities in order to assure that future development activities are consistent with its growth management policies and goals. - *County Commissioners*.

Prepare a “Prime Sites” Inventory of locations where economic development is desired. – *Oil Region Alliance, Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission*.

Ensure that municipal land use/land development Ordinances provide sufficient land area for commercial and industrial uses, and contain more detailed design criteria for such uses. - *Municipal Governments*.

Support the findings of the Oil Heritage Region Management Action Plan. – *All applicable entities.*

Short Range Priority

Develop a comprehensive needs based training program in cooperation with business, schools and colleges. - *VERA*

Encourage the inclusion of agriculture and forestry education units in public school curriculum. – *VERA*

Expand the services of the Business Information Clearinghouse to identify existing local businesses and industries; available sites for expansion of existing or new business; and data bases needed by business and industry. - *Oil Region Alliance, Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission.*

Long Range Priority

Participate in a regional marketing effort of available industrial and office sites in cooperation with Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission. - *Oil Region Alliance, FICDA.*

7. To identify opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation in the delivery of public services.

Short Range Priority

Explore the creation of Environmental Advisory Councils. - *Conservation District and Municipal Governments.*

8. To promote public/private partnerships in identifying and solving problems.

Immediate Priority

Encourage greater use of the personnel and resources located at Northwest Regional Planning Commission. - *All entities.*

Ensure greater use of inter-municipal and intergovernmental bodies and their resources. - *All entities.*

Establish a task force composed of representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors to explore means and methods of reversing the population loss that Venango County has experienced over the past 25 years. – *County Commissioners*

Short Range Priority

Establish a Venango County Educational Forum composed of the school districts, municipal governments, county government, and business organizations to share information. - *All entities.*

Establish public forums for discussions about future directions by involving local school districts, municipal governments, county government, social service providers, business organizations, etc. – *Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission.*

9. To promote inclusion of all ethnic, religious, racial or cultural groups that contribute to life in Venango County

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should create a volunteer task force to deal with these issues of ethnic, religious, racial or cultural background. – *County Commissioners*

GOAL No 2 - To provide policies, plans and proposals to municipalities for the physical, economic and social development of their communities while protecting the natural, historic and built environments.

1. To encourage all municipalities in Venango County to adopt local or multi-municipal land use plans, and, if recommended in those plans, to adopt local land use ordinances.

Immediate Priority

Provide professional planning assistance to municipal governments to undertake comprehensive planning and draft and administer local land use ordinances. - *Planning Commission.*

2. To promote the form of development called “Conservation Subdivisions” throughout the county. “[Conservation Subdivision is a form of subdivision design that preserves 40% or more of the total land area of a parent tract as permanently undeveloped land].

Immediate Priority

Draft model regulations for use by municipalities which permit “Conservation Subdivisions” in designated zoning districts as an encouraged option preferable to traditional checkerboard or highway strip development. - *Planning Commission.*

3. To promote, through the use of public policy, the protection and preservation of the county’s natural, cultural and historic resources.

Immediate Priority

Draft model land use regulations for use by municipalities which provide publicly acceptable methods for protecting identified natural, cultural and historic resources. - *Planning Commission*.

4. To encourage municipalities to consider standardization of land use district designations, and to adopt compatible standards and designations especially at municipal boundary lines.

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language which standardizes land use district designations for municipalities. - *Planning Commission*.

Short Range Priority

Review all current municipal zoning ordinances for compatible design standards, permitted uses and district designations at municipal boundary lines. - *Planning Commission*.

5. To encourage municipalities to avoid future rezoning based primarily on economic reasons.

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language which establishes standards for review of all land use/land development requests based upon consistency with municipal and county planning documents in conformance with the recently enacted amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code. - *Planning Commission*

6. To encourage municipalities to adopt regulations providing incentives for “Planned Residential Developments”, “Traditional Neighborhood Development”, mixed use land use districts and “Conservation Subdivisions”.

Immediate Priority

Provide municipal planning and governing bodies with various models of incentives and disincentives which could be used to encourage private developers to utilize more innovative designs for subdivision development. - *County Government*.

7. To encourage municipalities to explore inter-municipal planning, land use/land development regulations, codes enforcement, and other municipal functions.

Immediate Priority

Provide financial and other incentives for municipalities to utilize the services of the Venango County Regional Planning Commission and Councils of Governments for these functions. - *County Commissioners*.

8. To encourage municipalities to require basic community impact and environmental impact reviews for all major development projects. A major development project is defined as one containing twenty (20) or more residential units, any non-residential use containing more than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet of gross floor area.

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language and a five or six page form for use by municipalities requiring traffic, financial, environmental and community impact – reviews for major development projects. Such reviews would require applicants to provide all documents that would be required to be submitted to any Federal, State or Regional permitting agency. A sample form is included in the appendices to this Plan. - *Planning Commission.*

9. To encourage municipalities to exclude environmentally sensitive lands from gross and net area calculations for zoning density. [Environmentally sensitive lands include jurisdictional wetlands, 100 year floodplain, and slopes in excess of 25%].

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language for use by municipalities which excludes environmentally sensitive lands from land use/land development density calculations. - *Planning Commission.*

Short Range Priority

Establish an accurate Geographic Information System which identifies the location of environmentally sensitive lands and is easily accessed by municipalities. - *County Government.*

10. To encourage the municipalities to maintain accurate records of nonconforming, special exception and conditional uses, lots and structures in order to appropriately regulate such uses, lots and structures.

Short Range Priority

Establish a computerized data base of the development history of every parcel of land in the county and assure that the data base is easily accessed by municipalities. - *County Government.*

Provide municipalities with “Permit Tracking Software” and GIS Software as well as to establish computer hardware and software standards for use by the County and its municipalities to insure ease of electronic communications and data transfer. - *County Government.*

11. To encourage municipalities to develop central sewage and water systems in areas designated for higher density development or where on-lot sewage systems are malfunctioning. Limit the number of privately owned central sewage facilities in major new developments using stream outfalls and require that central sewage and water systems operate in compliance with applicable Federal or State Regulations.

Short Range Priority

Develop, in cooperation with the municipalities, a County-wide Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan which identifies areas for future expansion of sewage facilities and administers on-lot sewage enforcement regulations. “Such a plan should be administered by the participating municipal governments and maintain existing municipal ownership of treatment facilities.” - *Planning Commission*.

12. To encourage municipalities to incorporate natural features and historic preservation protection standards into municipal land use ordinances. Municipalities should develop a Venango County Natural Areas Inventory and update the Venango County Historic Preservation Plan.

Short Range Priority

Draft model “Natural Features” and “Historic Sites” protection Regulations for use by municipalities in their local land use ordinances. - *Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance*.

13. To encourage, through a variety of incentives, the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic structures in the county.

Immediate Priority

Update the “Venango County Historical Site Survey of 1980” and add implementation provisions to the plan. - *Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance*.

14. To encourage, through the creation of additional historic districts, the preservation of our historic/cultural heritage, without undue burden to the existing business and residential uses located in such districts.

Immediate Priority

Identify potential locations of additional local, state or national historic districts in the County as part of the update of the “Venango County Historic Preservation Plan” and encourage their formal establishment. - *County Government*.

15. To encourage education of the general population regarding the historic built environment, particularly as related to adaptive use of old buildings, both

commercial and residential, as well as the possibilities of compatible new construction within historic districts.

Short Range Priority

As part of the update of the “Venango County Historical Site Survey of 1980” develop and distribute educational and informative material which identifies methods for adaptive reuse of old buildings, as well as methods to assure compatible new construction within historic districts. -*Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance.*

16. To encourage greater participation of historical, cultural, business and environmental organizations in the development of municipal regulations.

Immediate Priority

Develop a computerized mailing list of all organizations which have any interest or concern with the development or amendment of municipal regulations, keep these interested parties informed and directly request their participation in these regulatory matters. -*Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance.*

17. To encourage municipalities to participate with the county in planning watershed-wide storm water management, water quality and quantity, and wellhead and aquifer protection.

Immediate Priority

Establish and maintain direct municipal representation on all advisory or policy making bodies established by the county and involved with these planning and/or regulatory efforts. - *Planning Commission and Conservation District.*

18. To encourage municipalities to formulate and implement capital improvements plans and programs which cover a minimum ten year period. These programs should include provisions for project/activity costs, methods of financing, time schedules and justification of need.

Immediate Priority

Provide educational material and training sessions in cooperation with various state agencies to assist municipalities in developing capital improvements plans. - *Planning Commission.*

19. To encourage municipalities to prohibit new development in defined floodways, and to severely limit new development in 100 year floodplains. Where feasible floodplain areas should be reserved for passive recreational use and open space.

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language which regulates floodplain development for use by municipalities, including language related to watershed-wide storm water management requirements, and overlay zoning provisions. - *Planning Commission and Conservation District.*

20. To encourage municipalities to regularly review and revise sewage facility plans, comprehensive plans, and capital improvements plans.

Short Range Priority

Assist Municipalities in utilizing computer hardware and software which flags these documents and notifies the municipality of a review deadline. - *Planning Commission.*

21. To encourage municipalities and school districts to explore ways to maximize the use of their facilities and resources to meet community needs.

Short Range Priority

Utilize the VERA to identify municipal and school facilities which can be used to meet additional community needs and publicize the availability of such facilities - *Municipalities and School Districts.*

22. To encourage county and municipal governments to maintain public safety facilities, resources and personnel at the highest degree of readiness.

Immediate Priority

Establish minimum professional standards for personnel involved in public safety and emergency management activities. – *Emergency Services and Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Assess all existing public safety facilities and resources for adequacy and include required improvements in capital improvements budgets. - *Emergency Services and Municipal Governments.*

Establish budget line items for regular annual training of public safety and emergency services personnel. - *Emergency Services and Municipal Governments.*

23. To encourage municipalities to take advantage of available training sessions, seminars and roundtables on issues affecting local government.

Immediate Priority

Provide convenient locations and opportunities for training of locally elected and appointed officials and inform them of what opportunities are available to them. - *Planning Commission*.

GOAL No. 3 - To promote conditions providing for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Venango County.

1. To adopt clearly written, effective ordinances, based on effective public participation, in order to foster understanding and acceptance by the public.

Immediate Priority

Develop a brochure for use by the county and its municipalities identifying required public participation activities as well as actions to increase public participation in the development or amendment of ordinances. - *Planning Commission*.

Short Range Priority

Establish a central file of ordinances which can be used by the county and its municipalities. - *Planning Commission*.

2. To promote central water and sewer facilities in designated growth areas in order to protect ground and surface water supplies.

Short Range Priority

Develop a countywide “Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan” in cooperation with the municipalities. - *Planning Commission*.

Long Range Priority

Prepare a countywide water supply, wellhead and aquifer protection plan. – *Planning Commission and Conservation District*.

3. To promote local ordinances and regulations which insure that development sustains the natural, historic or cultural environment.

Short Range Priority

Establish an ordinance review procedure which assures that all local ordinances are supplied to environmental, historic, cultural and business organizations prior to scheduled public meetings or hearings. - *Planning Commission*

4. To undertake watershed wide storm water management planning and regulation.

Immediate Priority

Prepare a “French Creek Storm Water Management Plan” and its implementing ordinances. - *Municipal Governments in cooperation with the Planning Commission and Conservation District.*

Long Range Priority

Commit resources to develop Stormwater Management Plans for all of the watersheds in the county. -*County Commissioners.*

5. To manage planned developments along major highways such as Routes 8, 257, 62 and 322.

Short Range Priority

Work with municipalities to amend local land use regulations to encourage development design, which limits road access and promotes cluster development projects fronting these major transportation corridors. - *Planning Commission*

Prepare a “Corridor Design Manual” which emphasizes parallel access roads, underground utilities and sign regulations for areas designated for preservation, transition or growth. – *Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance.*

6. To systematically identify traffic hazards and problems and address these traffic issues cooperatively within a regional framework.

Immediate Priority

Prioritize recommended safety improvement projects based upon available accident information data. - *Planning Commission, PennDot and Emergency Services.*

Identify problem areas and other hazardous locations on the basis of interviews, PennDot records, municipal experience and knowledge of construction or design deficiencies. - *Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Continue participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Activities sponsored by the Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission. - *Planning Commission*

Long Range Priority

Work with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to improve Route 8, Interstate 80, Routes 62, 257, 322 and other state roads. - *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

7. To study the feasibility of an expanded regularly scheduled public transportation system for the county.

Short Range Priority

Undertake a systematic public transportation feasibility plan that assesses the need and viability for additional fixed route public transportation. - *Planning Commission and VCOEO.*

Prepare model ordinance language to include consideration of access facilities for public transportation and pedestrians for major development projects. . A major development project is defined as one containing twenty (20) or more residential units, or any non-residential use containing more than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet of gross floor area. - *Planning Commission.*

8. To study the need for additional municipal police services and recommend delivery systems where applicable.

Short Range Priority

Undertake systematic needs analysis and cost benefit analysis for creating additional municipal police forces or regional police services. - *Municipalities.*

9. To enhance the existing professional and volunteer emergency management system in the county, including public works personnel, fire, ambulance, emergency medical technician, hazardous materials response, and 911 emergency dispatch services.

Immediate Priority

Provide budget line items for regular training and education of emergency service providers. – *County Commissioners and Municipal Governments.*

10. To eliminate illegal waste disposal practices, through aggressive enforcement of existing regulations.

Immediate Priority

Apprehend and prosecute violators of the County’s waste disposal regulations, particularly illegal dumping. –*Parks Authority.*

11. To develop an effective waste management and recycling system in the county.

Immediate Priority

Undertake a feasibility study regarding the desirability of centralizing the County's recycling programs, including the possibility of countywide curbside pickup utilizing private haulers or alternative methods. - *Planning Commission and Parks Authority*

Short Range Priority

Undertake a feasibility study to determine the need for septage treatment facilities in the county for use by private haulers. - *Planning Commission*

12. To encourage municipal and county governments to establish regular ongoing training for employees and to establish standards of professionalism for such employees. The county and its municipalities should establish mechanisms for sharing highly specialized management, technical and enforcement personnel.

Immediate Priority

Identify specialized management, technical and enforcement personnel who can be shared among the various levels of local government. - *Planning Commission, VERA, Oil Region Alliance and Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Establish minimum written standards for professional and managerial employees and establish training programs to assist employees in meeting these standards. - *County Commissioners and Municipal Governments.*

Long Range Priority

Identify education and training needs for local government employees. Identify potential providers of such education and training. *County Departments, VERA, Oil Region Alliance and Municipal Governments.*

Incrementally implement a program of annual training of local government employees. *County Commissioners and Municipal Governments.*

13. To encourage county participation in environmental planning activities in the region.

Short Range Priority

Utilize Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission to implement environmental programs and projects of a regional nature, such as waste management. - *Planning Commission, Parks Authority and Conservation District.*

14. To encourage the study of regional approaches to Public Safety, Transportation and Economic Development issues.

Short Range Priority

Utilize Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission and the Oil Region Alliance to undertake regional planning initiatives. - *Planning Commission*

15. To explore the creation of a Venango County Library System and establish formulas to provide consistent levels of public funding for such a system.

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should facilitate the initiation of discussions among the various local libraries in the county aimed at exploring the creation a locally designed and implemented Venango County Library System. *Public Library Boards.*

Establish a funding formula based upon population and usage in order to provide consistent levels of public funding for a Venango County Library System. - *County Commissioners and Municipal Governments.*

Short Range Priority

Electronically link the County Library System to municipal and county government data bases. - *Public Library Boards and County MIS Department.*

Establish a County Library “Worldwide Web” Page which interconnects the Venango County Library System to the Internet. - *Public Library Boards.*

GOAL No. 4 - To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain safe, affordable, housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing that annually costs no more than thirty-five (35) percent of the median household income as defined in the most recent United States Census Information.

1. To encourage a variety of housing choices among the types of housing permitted by local regulations.

Immediate Priority

Draft ordinance language for use by municipalities which establishes permitted locations for all types of housing in all municipalities. - *Planning Commission*

Short Term Priority

Improve the “Venango County Affordable Housing Trust Fund” to provide financial assistance to low and moderate income persons to become homeowners. - *County Commissioners and Venango County Housing Authority.*

2. To promote municipal regulations incorporating a variety of housing choices available to the residents of Venango County.

Immediate Priority

Draft ordinance language for use by municipalities to establish incentives for developers of major residential projects to provide a percentage of owner occupied affordable housing in their development. - *Planning Commission*

3. To identify specifically designated growth areas for higher density development where infrastructure can be extended and better utilized.

Immediate Priority

Amend zoning maps (where applicable) and establish design standards to provide for higher density development in municipally identified Growth Areas. - *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

4. To designate specific areas for low density rural housing, inhibiting the impact of strip development along local roads.

Immediate Priority

Amend zoning maps (where applicable) to reflect identified low density rural housing locations. - *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

5. To provide density bonus incentives to private developers who negotiate affordable housing agreements with municipalities as part of the development approval process.

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language to provide a variety of types of density bonus incentives. - *Planning Commission*

6. To promote affordable housing in the regulations of municipalities which permit “Planned Residential Developments (PRD) or Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND).”

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language to provide affordable housing incentives in PRD’s and TND’s. - *Planning Commission*

7. To encourage rental housing projects to provide up to twenty (20) percent of the units in the project that meet affordability criteria (35% of the annual median gross income in the municipality for all housing expenses).

Short Range Priority

Develop a variety of regulatory and financial incentives available to private developers which would assist in creating affordable rental housing without subsidies. - *Planning Commission*

8. To promote the preservation and adaptive reuse of properties of historic or cultural significance as an integral part of municipal land use regulations.

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language which requires all major development projects to evaluate impacts on historic or culturally significant properties and includes measures to mitigate such impacts. - *Planning Commission*

Short Range Priority

Support the implementation of the Oil Heritage Region’s Management Action Plan to more fully utilize cultural resources in the County such as museums, historic sites, etc. as an economic development resource. - *Planning Commission and Oil Region Alliance*

9. To encourage municipalities to implement the recently adopted statewide building codes, fire codes, and fair housing codes.

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language, for use by municipalities, based on local needs and conditions. - *Planning Commission*

10. To evaluate county and municipal land use regulations for their impact on housing affordability and handicapped accessibility.

Short Range Priority

Hire an independent nongovernmental consultant to examine all local land use regulations and make recommendations to amend them. - *Planning Commission*

11. To encourage the continuation and expansion of county/municipal cooperation between Venango County and its municipalities.

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should take the lead role in continuing and expanding the areas of county/municipal cooperation. - *County Commissioners*

GOAL No. 5 - To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain meaningful employment.

1. To promote the availability of human workers which are responsive to changing competitive conditions.

Immediate Priority

Establish a “Workforce Development” Task Force under the auspices of the Venango County Economic Development Agencies and composed of business leaders, educators and government job training agency heads, to identify future human resource needs and develop programs to meet those needs – *VERA, Workforce Investment Board and Pa. Careerlink.*

2. To provide means and methods for the retention and expansion of existing employers.

Immediate Priority

Encourage greater local use of the economic development programs, including low-interest loans, export assistance, technical assistance, etc. - *Oil Region Alliance and Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission.*

Establish an inventory of buildings and sites available for use by expanding business, regularly update the inventory and assure it is widely distributed. - *Oil Region Alliance, Chambers of Commerce and Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission.*

Designate specific growth areas within the Interstate 80 corridor and promote inter-municipal cooperation to plan for growth in this area that is acceptable to the participating municipalities. –

Southern Venango Council of Governments, Municipalities and the Planning Commission.

Short Range Priority

Promote the expansion of the various technology centers, including at a minimum the Business Innovations Center and the Emerging Technology Center. - *Oil Region Alliance, FICDA and VERA.*

Identify future locations for manufacturing uses on the basis of highway and railroad access, infrastructure availability and municipal land use regulations. - *Planning Commission*

Support the Implementation of a Venango Regional Airport Trade Zone to enhance the Economic Growth of the Region. – *Oil region Alliance, Venango Regional Airport, County Commissioners and affected municipalities.*

3. To identify and make known public sector improvements and facilities necessary for desired business development.

Immediate Priority

Support improvements to the runway at the Venango Regional Airport in order to accommodate regional jet aircraft. – *County Commissioners and Municipal Governments.*

Protect the area near the Venango Regional Airport from construction inconsistent with preserving current and future runway safety zones. – *Planning Commission and Municipal Governments.*

Promote Two Mile Run County Park, the various trail systems, the waterways, and numerous public and private recreation facilities as designated growth areas for recreation and tourism. – *Park Authority, Tourism Promotion Agency, Oil Region Alliance, County Commissioners*

Short Range Priority

Undertake a comprehensive infrastructure needs assessment throughout the County in order to identify areas for new facilities and the improvement of existing facilities and initiate planning for these specific infrastructure improvements. - *County Government.*

4. To identify ways of taking full advantage of existing post-secondary education facilities in the region.

Immediate Priority

Inventory and encourage shared information about programs and facilities in or near Venango County – *Planning Commission and VERA*

Short Range Priority

Promote the development of a “Technical Training System” that utilizes new and existing providers in the County. – *County Commissioners and VERA*

5. To identify, and work for the modification if necessary, of Federal, State and Local regulations which unreasonably inhibit economic growth and development.

Immediate Priority

Inventory local businesses and manufacturers regarding specific regulatory problems, recommendations to alleviate those problems, and utilize the Economic Development Agencies to coordinate lobbying efforts to modify those identified regulatory issues. - *Oil Region Alliance.*

Short Range Priority

Tourism development efforts should focus on sustainable growth - *Oil Region Alliance.*

The County should adopt an ECOTOURISM philosophy and provide assistance in the form of a Comprehensive Tourism Development Plan. – *Tourism Promotion Agencies.*

6. To develop strategies to enhance the viability of local organizations representing the business and industrial communities.

Immediate Priority

Continue to designate a primary economic development organization representing the County. *County Commissioners.*

The County should participate in regional efforts to develop tourism that focus on our history, culture, recreational opportunities and environment. - *County Commissioners*

7. To identify and utilize public and private sector resources in a coordinated manner to create jobs.

Immediate Priority

Establish an interagency task force composed of municipal officials, county agencies, economic development organizations

and educators to develop a guidebook of available resources which would be updated annually. – *Oil Region Alliance*

Explore means and methods to maximize the positive impacts of Two Mile Run County Park – *Parks Authority*

Short Range Priority

The County should ensure that tourism growth is compatible with its long range plan. – *Planning Commission, Parks Authority and Oil Region Alliance.*

8. To encourage industrial expansion of industries compatible with the natural and economic resources found in Venango County.

Immediate Priority

Participate in the development of a Regional Marketing Plan that identifies natural, cultural, economic and human resources in the region. Identify potential users of those resources and target specific marketing efforts toward those users. - *Oil Region Alliance*

Short Range Priority

Recommend expanded resource management curriculum in local technical programs in order to develop value-added training skills and education related to forestry products. – *VERA and the Venango Technology Center*

9. To provide an appropriate amount of land area in commercial and industrial zoning districts to allow for a reasonable level of economic development.

Short Range Priority

Identify suitable land areas in each municipality for commercial and industrial uses and work with those municipalities to amend zoning maps (where applicable). Such land areas should have appropriate infrastructure readily available, be free of environmentally sensitive lands and minimize impacts on adjoining uses. - *Planning Commission*

GOAL No. 6- To promote the enhancement of the agricultural and forest areas of Venango County in an economically sound manner.

1. To strengthen the agricultural and forest economies by minimizing development pressures on agricultural lands.

Immediate Priority

Draft model ordinance language which provides for a variety

of agricultural/forestry zoning districts (where appropriate) including: Exclusive Agriculture, Agricultural Preservation, Agricultural-Residential, Agricultural Transition and Rural Residential. - *Planning Commission*

Draft model ordinance language which identifies and defines appropriate farm based businesses as permitted uses in these various agricultural districts. - *Planning Commission*

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language creating effective designated growth areas around existing population centers to limit development in agricultural areas. - *Planning Commission*

Draft model development agreement language which would provide for a financial contribution to the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, by the developer, when prime agricultural lands are used for nonagricultural purposes. - *Planning Commission*

Long Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language for use by municipalities establishing effective Transfer of Development Rights programs. - *Planning Commission*

2. To support the expansion of agricultural security areas and identify all agricultural, open space or conservation easements when formulating municipal land use regulations.

Short Range Priority

Draft model ordinance language for use by municipalities which permits agricultural usage of permanently protected open space located in Planned Residential Developments, Traditional Neighborhood Development and – Conservation Subdivisions. - *Planning Commission*

Draft model ordinance language for use by municipalities which recognizes Agricultural Security Areas as Natural Resource Areas worthy of special protection. - *Planning Commission*

Insure that all lands located in an Agricultural Security Area are in some type of Agricultural Zoning District in those communities that are zoned. - *Municipal Government*.

3. To promote diversity of agricultural uses compatible with the county's environment.

Immediate Priority

Continue the "Best Management Practices" programs promoted by the Venango County Conservation District. - *Conservation District*

Short Range Priority

Establish an Agricultural and Forestry Marketing Task Force under the Conservation District which would include participation of farmers, county agencies and food processors. — *Conservation District, Cooperative Extension and Oil Region Alliance.*

4. To assure that all agricultural and forestry practices related to agriculture/forest management are consistent with applicable federal and state laws.

Immediate Priority

Review and comment upon any proposed local land use policies with potential impact upon agriculture/forest management to determine consistency with state and federal requirements. *Planning Commission and Conservation District*

5. To preserve and protect farmland and forests and the lifestyles associated with agriculture.

Immediate Priority

Adopt the policy recommendations contained in this planning document. - *All entities.*

The County Commissioners should only promote tourism development that is sensitive to the ecological, social and historic values of the county. – *County Commissioners*

6. To encourage the development of agribusiness and forestry related business at appropriate locations in the county.

Short Range Priority

Provide sites with adequate infrastructure and desirable location to develop agricultural and forestry related businesses. - *Oil Region Alliance.*

GOAL No. 7 - To provide a framework for cooperation within Venango County and the region.

1. To encourage the development of “Mission Statements” for all county departments and agencies in order to define their respective roles and responsibilities.

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should require all county agencies, departments and commissions to develop “Mission Statements” and should review and approve them. - *County Commissioners*

Long Range Priority

Develop a Venango County Human Resources Plan involving all human and social service agencies and providers in order to deal with the population changes anticipated to occur over the next 20 years. - *County Human Services Agencies.*

2. To encourage the creation of public/private partnerships when implementing many of the policy recommendations contained in this plan.

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should take a leadership role in establishing necessary public/private partnerships which include municipalities, school districts, county agencies, businesses, civic organizations and regional groups. – *County Commissioners*

3. To encourage the development of an informal organization composed of county and municipal governments, school districts, business and industrial organizations, agricultural organizations, and other civic organizations, which would meet regularly to exchange information about each organization’s goals and activities.

Immediate Priority

The Planning Commission should implement this informal organization as a part of an ongoing “Future Directions Roundtable”, and this organization should meet annually. – *Planning Commission*

4. To encourage the formation of a Venango County Regional Planning Commission composed of a representative from each Council of Governments in the county, which would explore and encourage cost-effective resource sharing.

Immediate Priority

The County Commissioners should assume a leadership role in establishing a Venango County Regional Planning Commission open to all municipalities in the County. - *County Commissioners*

5. To more effectively utilize VERA as the Venango County Educational Task Force to discuss educational issues of significance to the county and to bring such issues to the attention of the government and business communities.

Immediate Priority

The Venango County Commissioners should fully participate in this Task Force. - *County Commissioners*

6. To encourage the use of the Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission by County agencies and municipal governments.

Immediate Priority

Support the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for the Northwest Commission. – *County Commissioners*.

7. To more effectively utilize the Regional Workforce Investment Board to improve available training for displaced or under employed workers.

Long Range Priority

Improve coordination among the various participants in job training and economic development activities in order to provide workers with the education and skills necessary in the 21st Century.

CONCLUSION

Successful people and successful corporations set goals and make plans to achieve them. This plan for the County of Venango is focused on the future, encouraging people to think about what kind of community we really want and attempting to define a shared vision in terms of goals and objectives. We know tomorrow will be dramatically different from today. The question is: Will it be better? This document can help assure that it is.

We like to think of Venango County as a place of scenic beauty. We visualize the charm of our small cities, towns and villages, the lovely farmland of the, the placid beauty of French Creek or the wonders of nature our parks and forests. But have we really looked around us lately. In a growing number of places Venango County is being transformed.

Planning may seem to be a boring, bureaucratic topic, but in many ways it is the linchpin of our community. Planning shapes the rules and regulations under which development occurs. A comprehensive planning process has enormous potential to preserve, protect and vastly improve Venango County.

Economic growth is best encouraged by designating areas where development serves the public good and where it does not. Flexible regulations and streamlined permitting processes should be established to encourage development in proper areas. These “designated growth” areas should be large enough to accommodate all predicted commercial, residential and industrial development for the next thirty years, with a safety margin of 50 percent. Proposed development within these designated growth areas should be encouraged by a swift review and approval process. Development outside these boundaries, except for low density housing, rural commercial or industrial development, agriculture and forestry, should be reviewed by the appropriate municipal, county and regional agencies for the appropriateness of the proposed use for the neighborhood.

We have the opportunity to plan for a new sense of community, of a more mixed and multiple use pattern of development in response to new conditions. This plan promotes lofty goals, high objectives and specific policy recommendations to achieve a vision of what we want our county to be. People fundamentally want places which are humane and livable, a shared sense of community, and a sense of stewardship of the land.

A new vision for Venango County emerges in this document, one that redefines our community, using the best of the past and the technological and ecological advances of the present to create a more positive and secure future for everyone. Our small cities, towns and villages activate this new vision. Remember that almost everything that is built is approved under some kind of regulation. Participation in the process, establishing a shared vision, and implementing the plan can activate this common vision of our county.