

The Center for



Rural Pennsylvania

A Legislative Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

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Center for Rural Pennsylvania

**Legislative research agency of
the Pennsylvania General
Assembly (Act 16, 1987)**

Mandates

- **Administer grants to conduct research on rural conditions.**
- **Maintain a database on rural conditions and needs.**

Examples of Publications of Center-Sponsored Research

Welcome Back Downtown:

*A Guide to Revitalizing
Pennsylvania's Small Towns*



Planning for the Future: A Handbook on Community Visioning Third Edition

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Starting and Strengthening Farmers' Markets in Pennsylvania 2ND EDITION



A GUIDE TO HELP FARMERS, CONSUMERS AND
COMMUNITIES REDEVELOP THIS AGE-OLD

Developing Effective Citizen Engagement: A How-To Guide for Community Leaders



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What Is Community Visioning?

- A process and a product
- Short statement of what residents:
 - Value about their community
 - Want their community to be in the future

Creating a Community Vision

- Define community boundaries
- Inventory & analyze community resources
- Write & adopt a vision statement
- Develop an action plan
- Implement the action plan

Where to Begin?

- Establish a steering committee
 - Local individuals interested in improving the community
- Committee's Task:
 - Identify who is missing
 - Define the community's boundaries
 - Select a facilitator
 - Plan first community workshop

First Community Workshop

- Agenda
 - Explanation of visioning process
 - Trends affecting the community
 - Small group discussions
- Outcomes
 - Understanding of visioning process
 - List of top issues/concerns affecting the community
 - Date for next community workshop

WORKSHEET #1

MCKEAN COUNTY

Change can be both good and bad, it all depends on how it is managed. To manage change effectively, citizens need to agree who they are and where they want to go. An important component of defining who we are is an assessment and inventory of the region in which we live. Please rank each issue listed below (indicate number 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) for its degree of importance. Please feel free to add items to the list at the end on the other side of this sheet. Allow five minutes for this activity. Once you are finished, please compare your list with other members in your group.

	How Important is this Issue? 1 _____ 5 Not _____ Very
Increase funding for basic education	
Retaining youth in the region	
Provide more services to area senior citizens	
Attracting young professionals to the region	
Aggressive programs to prevent teenage pregnancies	
Make housing more affordable for working families	
Effective land use policies to maintain property values	
Increase environmental protection enforcement	
Expansion of the public sewage system to encourage development	
Provide safe drinking water	
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	
Educating private landowners on good forest management practices	
Open more land for oil and gas production	
More small businesses using local forest products	

After the First Workshop: Establishing Taskforces

- Assign a taskforce for each of the top issues identified at the workshop.
- Steering committee members should temporarily chair taskforce and:
 - Informally recruit other taskforce members.
 - Gather primary information on the issue

Second Community Workshop:

The Task of the Taskforces

Workshop

- After intros & explanations, break into taskforce groups
- In the taskforce groups:
 - Identify who is missing
 - Select the next meeting date
 - Begin inventory process

Inventory Process

- Understanding of how the community got to where it is at
- List of community assets and values
- List of community organizations and their activities
- List of problems and potential opportunities

Third Community Workshop: What Have We Learned?

- Each taskforce reports its findings
 - What are the resources?
 - What are the challenges/opportunities?
 - What are the priorities?
- Taskforce writes a draft vision statement

Drafting Visioning Statement & Fourth Community Workshop

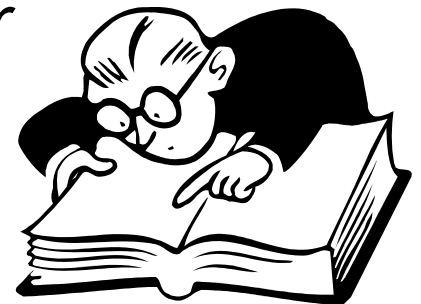
- Steering committee combines all taskforce statements into one vision statement
- Fourth Community Workshop
 - The “public” unveiling of vision statement
 - Celebrate! Have fun!

Marketing & Strategic Action Plan

- “Adopt” the vision statement
 - Attend meetings, use resolutions
 - Using statement when making community-wide decisions
- Combining taskforce priorities to develop a strategic action plan
 - Focus on small “do-able” projects first
 - Steering committee making sure the work gets done

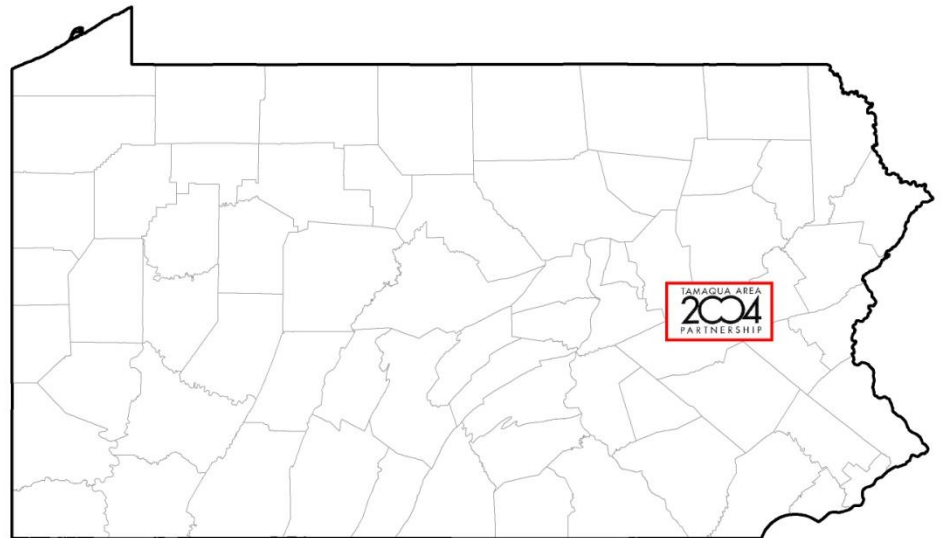
Annual Progress Report

- Celebrate your accomplishments!
- Keep a record-- give yourself a report card
- Recognize individuals & groups
- Highlight successes and difficulties
- Outline activities for next year



Tamaqua Area 2004 Case Study

- Five municipalities
one borough, four
townships
- 123 Square miles
- 17,000 residents



1994– A Bleak Winter

- Decades of population decline
- High youth out-migration
- Decline in downtown businesses
- Little coordination among municipalities
- Limited recreational opportunities
- Winter of 1994– 7.5 feet of snow



Tamaqua Area 2004-- Timeline

- Formed citizen steering committee in March, 1994
- First community workshop, June 1994
 - Historic preservation/tourism
 - Economic development
 - Downtown revitalization
 - Recreation
- Second community workshop, September 1994
 - Each taskforce identified specific short-and long-term goals
 - Drafted a vision statement
- Third community “workshop” June 1995
 - Adopted vision statement at June festival

Statement of Principles

(Vision Statement)

We all want the Tamaqua area to be a good place to live and work. Preserving and further enhancing the quality of life that this area enjoys requires citizens from all walks of life from Rush Township, Schuylkill Township, Tamaqua Borough, and West Penn Township to work together to:

- Aggressively pursue an economic development strategy
- Identify and preserve historic resources and develop a tourism effort
- Revitalize Tamaqua's downtown business corridors
- Improve and coordinate recreational opportunities for all ages

Accomplishment– First 10 Years

Recreation

- Established a regional recreational authority (Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission)
- Developed a rails-to-trail plan with Schuylkill River National Heritage Corridor
- Helped YMCA establish summer basketball league
- Assisted municipalities in submitting recreational grant applications

Historic Preservation/Tourism

- Developed & installed historic markers throughout area
- Published brochure on historic sites
- Developed trolley tour of area
- Developed Newkirk Tunnel Site
- Helped County CVB develop Molly Maguire Tour
- Assisted in completion of Train Station

Accomplishment– continued

Downtown Revitalization

- Assisted Borough in applying for DCED's Main Street Program
- Promoted Façade improvement program
- Developed greenspace along river
- Gateway program for downtown
- Completed retail marketing program for downtown
- Improved pedestrian environment

Economic Development

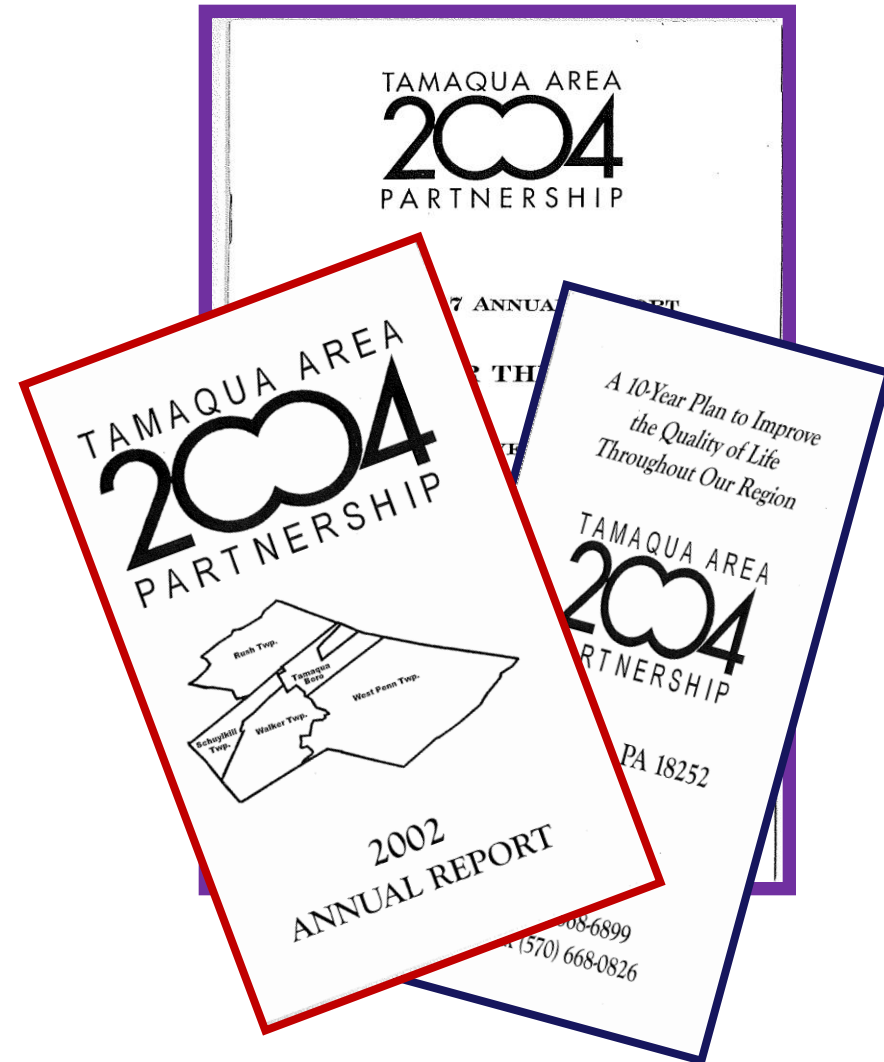
- Worked with economic development agencies to fill industrial park
- Worked with school district to improve business/education environment
- Conducted hotel/motel feasibility study
- Established community bulletin board
- Review signage ordinances

Name change–

Tamaqua Area Community Partnership

- Blueprint Communities
- Community College opens
- Keystone Opportunity Zone
- New YMCA recreational complex
- Downtown farmers' market & façade program
- Elm Street community designation
- Inter-municipal regional plan (Eastern Schuylkill Planning Region)
- LISC Sustainable Community designations
- New health clinic
- Active regional recreational program, new community park
- Return of the Countryside Exchange Team (Glynwood)
- Planning charrette– for downtown & recreational areas
- Establish historic district & HARB
- Restored old shoe factory in affordable housing
- Development of a riverwalk area

Beyond 2004



Tamaqua – A Case Study



Train Station: Before



Train Station After



Streetscape Program



Façade improvements in downtown Tamaqua have been completed on over 60 projects – both commercial and residential – within the commercial corridor.



Lessons Learned

- Local Leadership and responsibility is important
- Citizen participation is a must
- Regional perspective is important
- Wealth/poverty not important
- Visioning is not economic development
- Coordination does not mean control
- Outcomes are NOT predetermined
- Visioning is a challenging process
- Visioning should be fun!!!