

## *Executive Summary*

York County, Pennsylvania, situated along the Mason-Dixon Line in the south central part of the State, has long served as a center of industry and grown more rapidly economically than other areas in Pennsylvania. The County also offers a high quality of life with a diverse housing stock and variety of recreational offerings, which has made it a desirable location for residential development. Such trends have led to concern that the County needs to sustain its position as an economic center and avoid becoming a bedroom community to metropolitan Baltimore and Harrisburg.

In 2005, the Federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission decided to shift several thousands of jobs from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, to Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) in Harford County, Maryland. Since APG is within commuting distance of York County, the BRAC decision increased the need to plan for sustainable economic development in the County.

Prompted by this need, the York County Planning Commission (YCPC) and the York County Economic Alliance (YCEA) joined forces to develop a ten (10) year Economic Development Plan, to serve as an element of the York County Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the 2009 Plan was to assess the local and regional context, including the potential impact of BRAC, to determine types of growth and target industries suitable for the County and its unique five (5) planning regions, and delineate strategies to pursue such growth and industries. Essentially, the Plan was meant to combine strategies for both comprehensive economic development and growth management.

The Economic Development Plan is coordinated with other elements of the York County Comprehensive Plan in that the Plan builds from the general framework for growth identified in the Growth Management Plan component, which recommends that growth be directed to areas where the full array of infrastructure and services are available. The Economic Development Plan assumes that such areas are relatively more desirable for growth than areas not offering such infrastructure and services. Updates to the Economic Development Plan should therefore coordinate with updates to the Growth Management Plan component and the York County Comprehensive Plan as a whole.

To develop the original York County Economic Development Plan in 2008, YCPC and YCEA engaged Basile Baumann Prost Cole and Associates, Inc. (BBPC) in association with Whitman Requardt & Associates, LLP (WR&A). To complete the York County Economic Development Plan, the consultant team undertook a series of key tasks over a 12 month period, which included technical analyses and public outreach to understand: visions for, critical issues related to, and strategies toward achieving sustainable economic development.

These tasks resulted in the identification of a Countywide vision for economic development informed by the input of a variety of public and private stakeholders, as well as individual vision statements for each of the five (5) planning regions. The Countywide vision included a description of overarching goals for economic development, identification of where such economic growth is desired to occur, and delineation of what type of economic development is envisioned.

These overarching goals included: manage growth and development, conserve rural and scenic areas, and protect agriculture. Diversified manufacturing and industrial uses, a range of retail uses and scales, community/cultural facilities and professional services, small business development and expansion, sustainable agriculture, agritourism, businesses to support agriculture, and recruitment and retention of target industries were identified as desirable. The locations of such economic development were identified as: downtowns, villages and boroughs, existing industrial parks, commercial corridors, and existing growth areas.

The Countywide vision and goals for sustainable economic development are consistent with Pennsylvania's Keystone Principles for growth, investment and resource conservation. The ten (10) Principles, adopted by the Pennsylvania Economic Development Cabinet in 2005, include the following: 1) Redevelop first, 2) Provide efficient infrastructure, 3) Concentrate development, 4) Increase job opportunities, 5) Foster sustainable businesses, 6) Restore and enhance the environment, 7) Enhance recreational and heritage resources, 8) Expand housing opportunities, 9) Plan regionally, implement locally, and 10) Be fair.

An evaluation of current conditions was conducted in order to identify critical issues that must be addressed in order to move toward the stated Countywide vision for economic development. These critical issues included: the aging of the population, the need for a diverse and educated workforce, the need to enhance and market quality of life to attract and retain a skilled workforce, the need to balance residential growth with office, retail and industrial growth, the need to focus growth into downtowns, underused buildings and sites, and corridors rather than greenfield sites, the need to target growth to areas served by infrastructure, the need to provide a clear regional vision, the need to enhance collaboration and coordination of organizations, and the need for more efficient approvals processes.

In order to address these critical issues, as well as work toward the Countywide vision for economic development, a set of strategies was developed in five (5) topic areas: 1) workforce development, 2) growth area strategies, 3) rural area strategies, 4) downtown revitalization, and 5) incentives and economic development.

At the five (5) year mark of the original Economic Development Plan adopted in 2009, the YCPC and the YCEA staff reviewed the Plan's strategies and the progress that has been made to implement them. Through this review process, along with reflection and analysis of the current economy, some existing strategies were modified, some were deleted, and new strategies

emerged. These strategies are described in Chapter IX, Action Plan, of the updated Economic Development Plan. Strategies by topic area (without associated approaches and associated implementation details) are provided below.

### **Workforce Development Strategies:**

1. Workforce Clearinghouse
  - a. Inventory of Workforce Providers
  - b. Workforce Forums with Employers
2. Networks for a Young Workforce
3. Formation of a Public Education Advisory Group focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
4. Marketing of and Support for Quality of Life Amenities

### **Growth Area Strategies:**

1. Sample Code Language
2. Corridor Plans
3. Tracking and Monitoring Growth
4. SALDO Plan and Approval Process
5. Infrastructure Planning Considerations

### **Rural Area Strategies:**

1. Information Outreach
2. Strong Local Food System
3. Strong Agritourism Strategy
4. Sustainable Farming Strategy

### **Downtown Revitalization Strategies:**

1. Downtown Economic Development Program
2. Sample Code Language for Downtown Issues
3. Downtown Plans

### **Incentives & Economic Development Strategies:**

1. Expanded Information Outreach on Incentives
2. Education of Businesses and Communities on Target Industries
3. Renewable Energy Incentives
4. Expanded Sites Database

The implementation of these strategies and associated approaches will continue to be led by YCEA and YCPC working in cooperation with partners at the local, County, regional, and State levels. The strategies are meant to be tailored over time to respond to changing needs and conditions. The York County Economic Development Plan will therefore serve as a dynamic guide and a living and changing document to work toward the desired outcomes established in the Countywide vision for economic development. The Plan will be reviewed annually by YCPC and YCEA, and will be used by each of these entities as a planning and economic development strategy guide to formulate future policy and action.