

GROWING SMARTER—REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY BETTERMENT



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This SEDA-COG white paper is an outgrowth of the *Valley Vision 2020* planning process which SEDA-COG organized and conducted in 2007. The process engaged citizens and leaders of the SEDA-COG region in varied ways. This paper offers a first glimpse at a regional conversation that has evolved from the process.

The *Valley Vision* process is long overdue—it is SEDA-COG's first critical pronouncement on regionalism in nearly three decades—and it sets the stage for new understandings and commitments leading to community enhancement and regional development in decades to come.

This paper speaks broadly. Its intended audience is the SEDA-COG Board of Directors, especially the SEDA-COG member county governments—historically the organization's most allied partners in community and economic development. Its intended purpose is to stimulate county-level discussion on topics of urgent importance to the future of all Central Pennsylvania communities and to serve as a point of embarkation for subsequent regional planning, investment, and development.

The *Valley Vision 2020* plan now under development articulates specific strategies for regional action in five multi-county sub regions comprising the total SEDA-COG territory. This work will be forthcoming in 2008. Multi-county agreement on this SEDA-COG white paper will serve as a starting point for future regional actions keyed to implementation of *Valley Vision 2020* strategies. Action recommendations for SEDA-COG are found in the concluding section of this paper.



GROWING SMARTER—REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY BETTERMENT

Building Community Success through Regional Action

By SEDA-Council of Governments Community Resource Center

Valley Vision 2020

The Plan for Pennsylvania's Heartland

Valley Vision 2020 is SEDA-COG's¹ plan for the region. The plan was developed with grass roots input from community stakeholders in SEDA-COG's 11 counties. Planning for the future of Central Pennsylvania requires new thinking—thinking that transcends political jurisdictions and geographic boundaries—planning that focuses instead on our common interests in a prosperous and sustainable future. *Valley Vision* looks at how today's land use, transportation and economic development decisions will affect the vitality of our core communities, our ability to compete in the national and global economy, and our ability to provide quality jobs for future generations in a way that doesn't undermine the region's valued assets. It offers new perspective and suggests direction for public-private investment in the region.

Change in the 21st Century

Shaping Community Character and the Quality of Life in Central Pennsylvania

How Central Pennsylvania communities deal with change—growth, stagnation, and decline—will determine their future prospects. But where do we start? Most would agree that land use, transportation and economic development investments are the foundation of community futures and that related public-private investment has gripping impact on daily life and economic activity. But the responsibility to address change is rooted more deeply in American culture and in the quest for what is now commonly termed 'quality of life'. Community and economic development is not merely our aim—it is what we must do to achieve fulfilling lives and a better society.

In facing the future, citizens, their governments and organizations are all faced with one simple choice—to act offensively and creatively to shape change or to respond defensively to the forces of change seemingly beyond local control. What influences community decisions leading to either a proactive or a reactive stance to the future? Why are some communities content to let outside forces shape their environment, their economy, and their quality of life while others fight for maximum control? Which communities are most sought-after as places of residence and investment?

¹ SEDA Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is a regional council of 11 county governments in Central Pennsylvania. Member counties are Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Union and Snyder counties.



One thing is certain. Enlightened communities use the power of proactive thinking to achieve success through interconnected public-private policy, planning, and investment. Today it is rarely possible for localities to achieve success via stand-alone action—the proven model is regionally focused. Plan regionally. Act locally. However one verbalizes the paradigm, local autonomy in decision making is the standard set within the Commonwealth. Time and again it is clear that communities that engage their neighbors are communities that reap the benefits of success.

Back to Prosperity²

State and Regional Facts Are Revealing

Pennsylvania ranks 5th among states in its share of service jobs in education and 6th among states in its share of service jobs in healthcare. Although the region's economic makeup mirrors the state on healthcare and education, manufacturing and retail jobs still play an important part in the region's economy. Agriculture too remains vitally important to the region's economy while tourism is growing as an attraction and source of economic activity. Is it possible to link these sectors in new ways to increase the region's global economic advantage?

From a national perspective, Pennsylvania has remained stagnant in population growth, ranking 45th among states. The SEDA-COG region's current population of 670,000 residents is projected to grow by another 50,000 residents by 2020. But growth is not projected uniformly across all SEDA-COG counties. In fact, while some counties will experience significant new population growth others are projected to lose population.

If state development patterns are an indicator of things to come, the outlook for land development within the SEDA-COG region is potentially alarming. While Pennsylvania ranks 45th among states in population growth, it ranks 12th among states relevant to land consumed for new development. Across the state, land consumption linked to new development is proceeding at a record rate. And while the region's projected growth may seem insignificant viewed on a national scale, the land consumed by this and related development following current development practices could consume upwards of 200,000 additional acres of valued farm and forest lands by 2020.

Such development patterns are fiscally unsustainable and undermine other competitive advantages that the region may have. Municipalities will strain to meet the fiscal requirements of servicing new development that results from sprawling habits. But these patterns are not inevitable—they stem from local, county, and state policies that enable sprawl and promote the abandonment of core communities.

These statistics are of real concern. But the region also has enviable assets from which to build a successful future—strong educational and medical institutions, large numbers of “imported” students, authentic historic communities, affordable living conditions, and abundant natural resources. To leverage these assets the region must revive its core communities and this requires a renewed focus on core communities coupled with sound land use, land development, environmental conservation, transportation, and economic development policy making backed by community planning and action. State, county, and local policies must change to revitalize older communities and set a new economic course for the Commonwealth and the region.

² Back to Prosperity—A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania; Brookings Institute; 2003

What Does the Perfect Future Look Like?

Public Officials and Citizens Speak Out

What does the perfect future look like? How does it feel? What does it enable? How does it fulfill? Even in rural Central Pennsylvania it isn't possible to have unanimity of opinion as to what the future should be. But five *Valley Vision 2020* outreach meetings conducted with public officials and citizens throughout the SEDA-COG 11-county service area revealed substantial agreement on basic points in support of regionalism.

Astute and seasoned public officials from across Central Pennsylvania expressed near unanimous support for regional planning, something they deemed to be good, desired, and necessary. As responsible community leaders these officials spoke directly and sometimes eloquently on the subject. Regional planning provides the forum and the stimulus for interconnected and multi-dimensional thinking which is the basis for strategic action—action aimed building sustainable communities, sound institutions, and prosperous enterprises.

To glimpse the future of regionalism it is only necessary to look around the SEDA-COG region where real working examples of regional cooperation and collaboration thrive on diverse fronts, including education, public services, environmental conservation, recreation, transportation, and heritage planning to name but a few. Neighbors are joining with neighbors if for no other reason than pressing needs demand that they do. While there are lessons in these experiences there is no one size fits all approach to community betterment—regionalism is tailored to specific places, histories, resources, and circumstances.

Live, Work, Connect

Framework Themes for Regional Development

When regional development is considered from the keyword themes of *live/ work/ connect* some common agreements emerged from all *Valley Vision 2020* sub regions:

Live

- ▶ Maintain, improve, and revitalize core communities.
- ▶ Designate areas for development and preservation.
- ▶ Strengthen towns to attract a mix of housing, commerce, and jobs.

Work

- ▶ Invest in core communities.
- ▶ Focus on business retention and expansion. Create jobs to retain college graduates. Train the workforce to attract higher paying jobs.
- ▶ Link funding for municipal services to inter-municipal cooperation.

Connect

- ▶ Develop and maintain a transportation system that attracts and retains business and industry and harmonizes with the region's natural, cultural, and historic assets. Invest in the development of greenways and trails that promote active and healthy living.



- ▶ Expand broadband telecommunications infrastructure to enhance investment and employment in advanced technology enterprises.
- ▶ Invest in the development of greenways and trails that promote active and healthy living.

Creative Communities and the New Economy

Place-Making is Central to the Region's Future

Central Pennsylvania is poised for economic growth. The foundation for achieving new prosperity is being laid through a combination of sometimes isolated and sometimes interconnected efforts by community and business leaders, citizens, governments, institutions, and organizations. And the region's location and character is attractive to the manufacturing, service, and creative sectors that comprise the larger global economy.

To capitalize on this mix of opportunities the region would do well to focus new resources and attention on attracting the so-called 'creative class'—entrepreneurs and others practicing in the arts and sciences, and information and technology fields—to a settled and enterprising life within the region. Interest in this group has been piqued by leading public voices on economic competitiveness, including Richard Florida, whose writings on demographic trends and cultural and technological innovation have provoked fresh thought on how social, economic and demographic factors and creativity are driving the new world economy.

From such research we learn that successful regions exhibit similar traits. Their economies are driven by ideas, innovation, and creativity, not just the availability of raw materials and labor. Their success stems from large numbers of skilled college-educated people and thick labor markets that allow for job mobility within the region. Successful regions are also marked by successful communities—memorable places that have vibrant and distinctive neighborhoods and downtowns, plentiful amenities, and a positive, tolerant culture.

If the creative sector is a target population for attraction, Central Pennsylvania has much to offer—the region is livable and offers a distinctive sense of place. More people discover Central Pennsylvania everyday and are attracted to the region by the mix of affordable living in a distinctive environment and cultural setting. But how prepared is the region to capitalize on this trend? Outward appearances aren't always a true reflection of the underlying realities inherent in places. And in this regard, Central Pennsylvania is no exception.

The Road Ahead

Public Policy, Smart Planning, Community Design, and Development

How to achieve better communities—safe and attractive places, a mix of land uses interconnected through attractive design and scale, functional community-enhancing transportation systems, vital family-sustaining jobs, a healthy environment—isn't simple. Managing change—minimizing the negative impacts while capitalizing on the opportunities—isn't simple either. Realizing these aims will test the power and capacity of individual county and local governments and of the region's community, environmental, and economic development institutions and organizations.

The road ahead will be strewn with obstacles. But the region can prepare now to be the winner—not the victim of future change. With new focus on public policy, smart planning and community

design, Central Pennsylvania can emerge as Pennsylvania's model for sustainable growth. This agenda for community success can be advanced in regional forums and through routine information sharing across the region. New multi municipal and multi county relationships will enhance planning of all types and at all scales and yield more effective results from public-private investments.

But simply wishing this will not make it happen. Public policy and investment has lagged behind community and regional visioning and that must be addressed if future aspirations and expectations are to be met. Development commitments must extend beyond basic planning and serve the widest possible range of community needs and area values. Community and economic development tactics must give fair voice to community design, heritage and environmental conservation, multi-modal and context-sensitive transportation improvements, and active healthy living for these are the region's distinguishing traits which will enable its new economy.

Regional Challenges

Land Use

The key to influencing future land use is rooted in an understanding of the region's distinguishing assets coupled with a sense for the challenges ahead. Central Pennsylvania is a picture of historic towns and landscapes, fertile farms, scenic hills and mountains and waterways that reveals a history of land use and development patterns spread across centuries of time. It conveys a distinctive sense of place—a region of livable-scaled communities set in an ever-changing landscape experience—scenes from intimate to immense that evoke all emotions.

These patterns define the essence of Central Pennsylvania. They distinguish the region from all other places. Yet development is consuming land as never before, posing serious challenges for land use planning. New development contributes to the simultaneous loss of valued farm and rural land and the decline of the region's small cities and towns. The time has come to examine the impact of these changes on the region's prospects, for to grow wisely and well within this historic context is perhaps our most important gift to future generations.

While much can be said about what is right or wrong with various approaches to land use management one thing is clear—Pennsylvania communities have abundant choices when it comes to the methods and approaches they employ. But communities fear what they do not understand. They fear the loss of decision-making autonomy and more unfunded mandates from higher levels. In many cases they lack relevant knowledge and expertise, and the technical and administrative capacity to be fully effective.

Managing land use will test the mettle of most communities, for embedded within every land use decision are two seemingly conflicting concepts—private property rights and the common good. But not all land use decisions need to be rendered on costly battlegrounds. Citizens and their elected and appointed representatives can set the tone for local development through community planning that renders fair consideration to all views when weighing land use decisions. Extremist approaches that favor one perspective to the exclusion of the other will not serve the region's future interests well. Abdicating local responsibility for land use decisions is rash.

Regional Challenges

Transportation

Regional transportation planning has traditionally focused on 'project lists' revolving around local concerns and technical needs. But plans must also set a long-term strategic perspective that reflects local, regional and statewide priorities. Specific regional transportation challenges include:

Multimodal Planning and Public Transportation

Regional planning needs to maintain a system-wide multimodal perspective at the local, regional and statewide levels. Public transportation choices are often unable to meet travel demand for specific routes. Transit services are fragmented with different operating agencies or sponsors. And regional populations dependent on public transit are often small, resulting in inadequate funding for providing public transportation choices to accommodate demand and job access.

Transportation, Land Use and Development Process

The region will benefit measurably from improved coordination between transportation and land use planning. Counties and municipalities, in concert with state and regional transportation planners, must devise better ways to coordinate the local and county review process for proposed developments with transportation planning.

Smart Growth

Transportation planning must be integrated with local and regional smart growth initiatives such as farmland and open space conservation, planned and zoned growth management, new urbanist design in core communities, neighborhood and downtown revitalization, public transit, and trail development as a viable and alternative means of transportation.

Sprawl

Environmental concerns increase as 'sprawl' pushes out from the region's villages, towns and cities. Sprawl increases automobile dependency, long commutes and is inefficient and costly to serve with transit. Counties and communities must balance competing issues of supporting economic growth and development, while also limiting growth to preserve rural character.

Rural Economy and Freight Transportation Needs

Substandard highways and fragmented rail systems add to freight delivery costs and exact a heavy toll on rural economies. Continual reinvestment in rail and highway infrastructure is needed to sustain the region's industries and provide quality jobs.

Funding

Declining populations in some areas has reduced transportation funding for maintenance and for the preservation of existing roads and bridges. Funding distribution for these needs is even more difficult when combined with the need for new highway capacity projects like the Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation project.

Regional Challenges

Economic Development

Although the region has assets to propel prosperity, the region faces significant economic development challenges. The region's economy and its workforce are linked to manufacturing jobs that are declining nationwide. The region must assist manufacturers to enhance their national and global competitiveness while also laying the foundation for a more knowledge-based economy—one that places high value on ideas, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Infrastructure development remains a nagging concern. Older industrial and commercial structures are often concentrated in flood prone areas and areas less accessible to truck transport. The region's population density inhibits the development of infrastructure for advanced industrial and commercial development. The lack of available fully serviced industrial and business park space is an impediment to business and industrial expansion in places. And the region's underdeveloped telecommunications infrastructure limits the capacity for enterprise development in much of the region and the ability to compete more aggressively in the marketplace.

A final look at the region shows that the modular housing and wood products industries, together with their complex of supporting enterprises, are major job creators in the region, but ones notably prone to job loss whenever the overall economy falters. A strong mix of service and industrial jobs coupled with quality jobs in the creative sector—especially those linked to innovation, entrepreneurship, energy and information technology and development—will bring strength and better balance to the region's economy.

Meeting Community Needs

Regional Planning and Policy

Planning takes many forms—strategic plans for businesses, towns and regions, and plans for neighborhoods and downtowns are forward-looking schemes built on future visions, recommended actions and timeframes. Comprehensive plans establish long range direction and development policy for municipalities and counties. And specific project plans lay out the parameters and details of proposed developments. Each in their own time and place has potential purpose and relevance to community needs.

Regional planning is both a process and a product. As a process it provides stimulus and a forum for direction-setting. It connects stakeholders in future-oriented thinking. It is interconnected and multi-dimensional in scope. It is a legitimate basis for strategic decisions needed to build sustainable communities, sound institutions, and prosperous enterprises. And most importantly, it provides the opportunity for improving consistency and links among other plans that may exist.

As a product, regional planning is a powerful, undervalued, and underused tool. It supplies information which is the foundation for public policy making and strategic investment. New tools for tabulating, mapping, and disseminating planning data have enhanced the power of regional planning as a tool for decision-making and investment. Through the use of GIS, data can be mined from all available sources and combined spatially to paint new pictures of community needs and



accomplishments. Once procured, the combination of these data can be used to market community and regional assets more effectively by tailoring facts to the needs of targeted audiences.

The value and necessity of regional planning as the basis for strategic action is apparent. But why has this tool remained so little used throughout the region and the Commonwealth? What obstacles must be overcome to enable communities and counties to capitalize on the inherent benefits in regional planning? Elsewhere, places that have historically focused on regionally planning are reaping the benefits today more than ever. And these places are better positioned to compete in the new world economy—to attract the ideas, innovation and creativity that are the hallmark of successful communities.

Community Action

Regional Solutions Work

Regionalism need not intimidate local interests. Regionalism that grows from the bottom-up can be empowering to local governments and organizations alike. It can bring perspective and improved expertise and administration to situations. It can generate cost savings on everything from professional services, manpower, facilities, equipment, materials and supplies, and insurance. It is worth noting that many regional solutions are already at work in Central Pennsylvania.

Regional solutions such as the following provide useful models for new and expanding regional efforts in the 11 SEDA-COG counties:

Downtown Development

Revitalizing River Towns aims to capitalize on the unique and authentic assets of nine Middle Susquehanna Valley towns, including Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Northumberland, Sunbury, Selinsgrove, Lewisburg, Milton, and Watsontown. The project will market the region's authentic downtowns on a regional scale. It is backed by SEDA-COG, the Columbia-Montour and Susquehanna Valley Visitors Bureaus, The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, and allied business organizations serving the area.

Education

The Pennsylvania Heartland Partnership, an organization supported by SEDA-COG and the region's major employers, educational institutions, and economic development organizations, stimulates economic innovation in the region and quality of life improvements through environment-focused partnerships with area colleges and universities.

Environmental Conservation

Watershed organizations comprised of concerned citizens are working to conserve the environmental health of communities at the grass roots level. The Spring Creek Watershed Commission and the Penns Creek Watershed Association in Centre County demonstrate leadership in environmental and land use education and the implementation of best management practices for agriculture. The Catawissa Creek Restoration Association in Columbia County is remediating the historic impacts of abandoned mine lands.

Flood Control

Sunbury coordinates flood control systems with upstream communities on the North Branch Susquehanna River in connection with The Wyoming Valley Flood Control Project.

Heritage Tourism

Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Union and Snyder counties have contributed to the development of a multi-county feasibility study aimed at gaining state designation for the proposed Middle Susquehanna Heritage Area. Additional funding has been provided by the Geisinger Health System Foundation and Bucknell University. State recognition will open avenues for development funding. SEDA-COG is leading the study with assistance from Bloomsburg, Bucknell, and Susquehanna university faculty.

Housing

Williamsport uses the Lycoming County Housing Authority to develop housing and administer housing programs within the City efficiently and economically.

Neighborhood Development

Lewisburg Borough, Bucknell University, and the nonprofit Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation are advancing plans prepared with SEDA-COG's assistance to develop new connections and investment opportunities between Bucknell's campus and downtown Lewisburg. Lewisburg has initiated dialog with upstream municipalities in the Bull Run watershed to pursue mutually beneficial stormwater management solutions.

Public Safety

The Warrior Run Area Fire Department serves Watsontown, Allenwood, Dewart, McEwensville, Turbotville and Delaware, Gregg and Lewis Townships. The department provides help for fire, accident, rescue, or medical related emergencies through a 911 emergency response system serving Union and Upper Northumberland counties.

Recreation

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership together with SEDA-COG, The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy and other allied regional organizations has prepared a plan for greenway development in 10 SEDA-COG counties bordering the Susquehanna River and is working with local partners on the implementation of multi-municipal trails and on the packaging of future greenway projects and state agency funding.

Transportation

The Lower Anthracite Transit System, serving the Shamokin, Coal Township, Kulpmont, Marion Heights, and Mount Carmel areas, is funded through state, federal, Northumberland County, and municipal funds from the communities served. This public transit program is administered by Mount Carmel Borough.

Water and Sewer

The Milton Regional Sewer Authority serves Milton, West Chillisquaque and Turbot townships. The authority also operates the Pottsgrove and East Chillisquaque wastewater treatment plants.



Building Community Success

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships take various forms from simple understandings and agreements to the most imaginary, intricate, and creative urban development schemes involving governments, businesses, and organizations. Virtually anything having a legitimate public purpose is a potential public-private partnership opportunity. Cooperative and collaborative engagements involving local and county governments and the private sector are widely used throughout Central Pennsylvania. Experience shows them to be vitally important and necessary to meeting community needs and achieving new success.

Smart development could be advanced by more widespread understanding of the most successful models employed. The goal of sustainable development could be further advanced by the systematic assessment of community needs and regionally proven problem-solving approaches and arrangements. These critical insights would help counties and communities to structure partnerships and inventive solutions to meet community and economic development needs. SEDA-COG, as a council of county governments, could convene and engage local and county agents and other business and industry, community and environmental stakeholders and experts in this assessment.

Regional partnerships may evolve from grass roots initiatives. Or they may be structured more directly from an overarching view agreed to by the region's foremost planning and development entities. While partnerships can be mandated by state or federal funding agencies, the best partnerships are home-grown. They involve principal players that share mutual needs, interests, and objectives. They respond to local circumstances and preferences. New effort should be directed to the establishment of regional partnerships throughout the SEDA-COG service area.

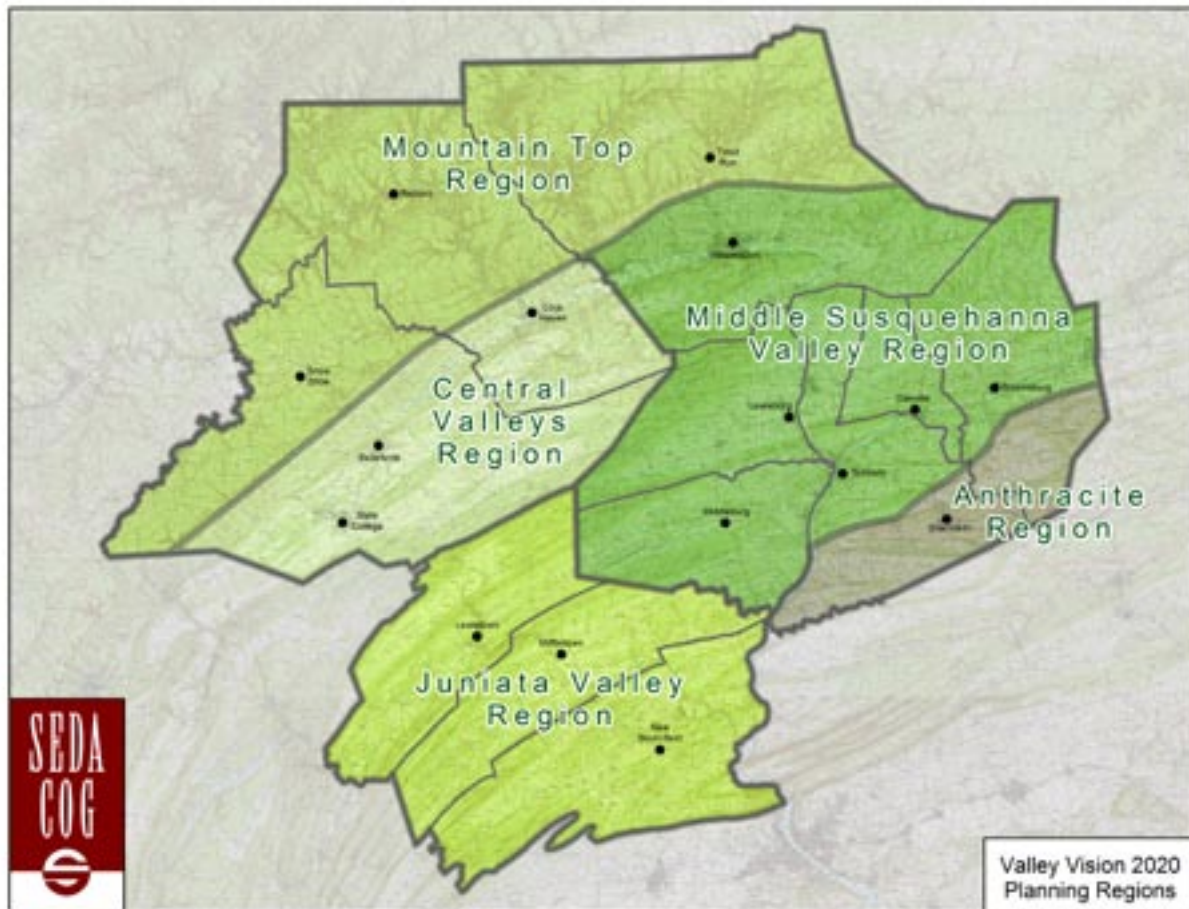
Public Policy into Action

Community Assistance

To a degree, Central Pennsylvania's individual rural counties and communities lack the operational scale and capacity to support the specialized expertise deemed essential to smart community planning, design and development. But these needs can be met through collective efforts of the region's allied governments, industry organizations, and educational institutions that possess the aggregate expertise that communities need and the operational scale to deliver wanted and specialized assistance.

To facilitate sustainable development it would be beneficial to make new community alliances and new alignments of community interests based on a combination of defining elements, e.g., political jurisdictions, central places, highway connections, physical barriers, school districts, common histories, shared experiences and associations, etc. Using such an approach, *Valley Vision 2020* planners delineated 5 sub regions³ within SEDA-COG's 11 county service area (*Illustration 1—SEDA-COG Planning Sub Regions*).

³ Named sub regions include the Anthracite, Central Valley, Juniata Valley, Middle Susquehanna Valley, and Mountaintop regions.



While imperfect, this approach nevertheless frames a new geography for further understanding and engaging the region. It creates the potential for establishing new closer-to-home territories for regional community-building. From this vantage point it is also possible to envision new approaches to partnership formation and the delivery of everyday community assistance. Fomenting all this public-private activity is no easy task—it will require new focus on regional public policy.

Public policy is the foundation for reasoned and sound community and economic development—it demands action just as community action requires public policy. But policy setting in the absence of intended action is a vacuous and deceptive exercise. Those engaged in policy formation must be truly committed to making public policy a viable tool for shaping the region’s future.

By any measure, successful communities are successful because they honor genuine commitments to an area’s stated vision and development principles. Community success requires input from broadly-based stakeholder groups. It requires dedicated citizens, public officials and citizen planners. But above all else, it requires informed citizens, a willingness to hear all views, and a commitment to fairness in public decision-making. Because planned development is both a learned trait and a desired behavior the need for training citizen planners in Central Pennsylvania has never been greater.



Regional Capacity and Expertise

County, State, and Federal Support

Policy and plans need backing with new investment at all levels of government. Across the board commitment is needed among local and county governments, the area's major health and education institutions and key community, business, industry, tourism, and environmental advocacy organizations to realize the general aims set forth in this white paper and to implement the *Valley Vision 2020* strategies. This will require new public policy making, new public-private partnerships and investment in community planning and design and development, and budget support for a higher level of related technical and administrative services.

These investments in human resources and intellectual capital will yield multiple paybacks in the years to come. As one of 10 area-wide planning and development organizations in Pennsylvania, SEDA-COG is uniquely positioned and qualified to lead Central Pennsylvania's regional planning initiative. SEDA-COG is a leader with a continuous 50-year track record of service to Central Pennsylvania. Its history of involvement in community and economic development and transportation planning has prepared the organization for this role and for moving its member counties in new directions.

SEDA-COG employs a highly trained and specialized staff. Its core values are customer-driven and entrepreneurial in scope. But the organization cannot accomplish *Valley Vision* aims alone—its success requires the active participation of others. Missions require examination. SEDA-COG's relationships with allied governments, institutions, and organizations require examination. These efforts should be initiated by the agency's Directors with the involvement of senior staff. As appropriate, the leaders and senior staff of SEDA-COG's traditionally allied partner agencies and organizations and its emerging new partners should be engaged in this task with the objective of imbuing the region with constructive, not competitive, attitude and spirit.

Accomplishing these aims requires organizational capacity building and professional staff development. And this comes at a price—a fact that cannot be ignored. The region's ability to prosper and maintain its place-based assets is in some measure proportionate to the quality and quantity of input directed to the attainment of the region's future vision and the strategies set forth in the region's *Valley Vision 2020* plan.

New funding mechanisms are required as SEDA-COG's member counties cannot be expected to cover these costs through available county revenue streams. The region must look to all available sources of financial support to move in desired new directions—giving from a consortium of regional foundations, enhanced Commonwealth programs and funding to support regional planning, and added county support proportionate to direct services received.

Recommendations for SEDA-COG Action

A Foundation for Valley Vision 2020 Action

1. Regional planning is desired and necessary. SEDA-COG should pursue all opportunities to improve the delivery of regional planning services in Central Pennsylvania.
2. Regional solutions to community betterment exist and they work. SEDA-COG should identify, catalog, and disseminate public information on model solutions from across the region.
3. Public-private partnerships are the foundation for sound investment in the region. SEDA-COG should identify allied entities within sub regional areas and facilitate the organization of new partnerships linked to the implementation of Valley Vision 2020 strategies.
4. Community assistance is a necessary ingredient in regional planning fulfillment. SEDA-COG should develop viable sub regions for coordinating land use, land development, transportation, economic development, and environmental conservation planning and investment, and related educational programs for citizens, public officials, and citizen planners.
5. Regional capacity and expertise should augment local and county expertise. SEDA-COG should establish new bonds with its member county planning agencies and develop new planning service benefits for its member counties.



This paper was authored by Tom Grbenick, Director of the SEDA-COG Community Resource Center, with assistance from the SEDA-COG Economic Development and Transportation program staff involved in the *Valley Vision 2020* planning process. To further discuss aspects of this white paper and to learn what you can do to assist with the fulfillment of its objectives contact Tom Grbenick at grbenick@seda-cog.org or go to www.seda-cog.org.

SEDA Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) is a regional multi-county development agency providing leadership, expertise, and service to communities, businesses, institutions, and residents under the guidance of a public policy board. Since its founding in 1957, SEDA-COG has worked to enhance growth opportunities in an environmentally sensitive manner while retaining the region's livable communities and largely rural character.

SEDA-COG provides direct services to its constituencies in eleven Central Pennsylvania counties and provides a link to other resources for meeting a wide range of community and economic needs. SEDA-COG advocates for the interests of its communities at the state and federal levels. The organization's strengths include a county-based policy board representing public and private interests, a high level of staff expertise, a commitment to innovation, and the flexibility to respond to new opportunities and challenges.