

## **PRIMARY OBJECTIVES FOR THE CENTRAL REGION**

The foundation of the following primary and additional objectives, action steps and recommendations for Commonwealth support were developed by the Central Region Conference participants in May of 2005. Since that time, the Steering Committee for the Regional Strategic Action Plan for the SEDA-COG region has refined, removed and added text as necessary and appropriate based on input received through sub-regional focus groups and other regional input meetings. These revisions were compiled based on a consensus-driven process within the SEDA-COG region.

*OVERARCHING THEME: Improve interagency cooperation.*

### **A. Create a regional plan identifying areas designated for development, redevelopment, conservation and preservation.**

#### *Regional Action Steps*

1. Use GIS as a basis to create an accurate inventory of regional assets and available locations. Use GIS mapping as a tool for identifying appropriate locations for development, redevelopment, conservation and natural, historic, cultural & agricultural resource preservation. Involve agencies associated with infrastructure (e.g., sewer and water) and utilities maintenance, Chambers of Commerce, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs), SEDA and other Councils of Governments (COGs), economic and industrial development organizations, county planning departments, county commissioners, and regional resource organizations. Need to develop a mechanism to keep inventory updated.
2. Establish consensus around a regional vision that identifies long term economic development priorities (what kind of economic future is desired?). Develop a plan based on this vision with all partners, e.g., Chambers of Commerce, IDCs, counties, planning commissions, municipalities and regional non-governmental organizations that consider a balanced approach to satisfying economic, environmental and social objectives. Ensure that plan adheres to the Commonwealth's 10 Keystone Principles.
3. Formalize a cooperative arrangement among the region's economic development entities to ensure a coordinated approach to assessing & relaying information relevant to economic development opportunities (large & small). Incorporate public/private partnerships, the region's Industrial Development Corporations (IDCs), SEDA and other COGs, the SEDA-COG Joint Rail Authority, county planning departments and Chambers of Commerce. Build upon existing efforts and organizations rather than creating new entities or models.
4. Create regional maps and mapping analysis, using GIS data, that respond to identified land use, transportation and economic development questions.

5. Develop an internet-based GIS mapping resource for the SEDA-COG region.
6. Explore what Geographic Information System (GIS)-based data is available (county comp plans, Natural Area Inventories (NAI), the Chesapeake Bay Resource Lands Assessment, the Nature Conservancy conservation mapping inventories, and others). Verify accuracy and how it can be used. Inventory need for additional data, and share data with region and other counties.
7. Use the plan regionally. Agree that all partners will work together, maintain shared data, and meet monthly.

## **B. Implement effective land use planning in this region.**

### *Regional Action Steps*

1. Maximize use of existing infrastructure before extending it.
2. Require consistency among ordinances, comprehensive plans, zoning, and subdivision and land development ordinances. Create multi-municipal groups to administer planning processes. Have county governments educate local governments in processes. Lobby for legislative changes (use the Pennsylvania Planning Association [PPA] and other similar organizations as lobbyists).
3. Regionalize land use planning to inform local decision-making by counties, COGs, municipalities, and multi-municipal entities. Mandate that municipal solicitors be trained in land use. Encourage input from business and industry stakeholders. Have municipal secretaries serve as points of contact/communicators with public.
4. Use media outlets and other local capacity for disseminating information and building support.
5. Provide incentives to encourage local elected officials, appointees, and planning staff to engage in continued land use education. Provide educational outreach to elementary and secondary schools (staff, students, and administrators), planning consultants, PPA, and special interest and human services groups on topics relevant to local land use planning.
6. Learn from and utilize Best Management Practices (BMP's) for land use planning.
7. Use Commonwealth's 10 Keystone Principles.

## **C. Revitalize, reinvest, maintain, restore, and improve existing communities through**

**economic development and the preservation of natural, historic, cultural, recreational and open space resources.**

*Regional Action Steps*

1. Develop a regional capital improvements plan for water, sewer, transportation, broadband & other infrastructure with a prioritized list of regionally significant projects. Link this plan to state and federal funding requirements and mechanisms. In the process, involve county planners and commissioners, COGs, and local government officials. Enlist SEDA-COG to assist in coordinating & disseminating information about this effort.
2. Create an inventory of communities' needs for revitalization/reinvestment. In the process, include county planning officials, county commissioners, local government officials, Chambers of Commerce and private sector representatives, non-profit organization representatives, SEDA-COG, and state agency regional representatives, e.g., DEP, DCED, DCNR, the PA Game Commission and the PA Fish & Boat Commission. Consider context-sensitive approaches to economic development in rural areas, e.g. recreation, tourism, and entrepreneurial activities.
3. Promote compact multi-modal development that minimizes energy use and encourages healthy lifestyles.
4. Promote the adaptive reuse of historic structures and facades.
5. Provide incentives to encourage businesses to ready & market their facilities for re-use.
6. Identify and create alternative revenue generating mechanisms for downtown and core communities, e.g. businesses that contribute to the area's overall livability, such as primary health care services, dining, and entertainment.
7. Determine the cost to municipalities for provision of services to greenfield development versus development of existing sites, e.g., brownfields. Region (or counties) might undertake responsibility for a cost study.
8. Survey the business or private sectors to identify their barriers and generate solutions to development in core communities and brownfields.
9. Improve marketing of regional tourism, as a coordinated effort among appropriate local public and private entities and state agencies, e.g. DCED, DCNR, counties, Valleys of the Susquehanna Visitors Bureaus, SEDA-COG, and downtown organizations.

**D. Develop a broad, regional educational outreach about economic development, land use, and transportation for students, general citizenry, municipalities, and legislators. Raise awareness, define avenues to get involved, and stress the need to be involved.**

*Regional Action Steps*

1. Educate municipal officials (look at Virginia's Citizens Planning Commission program to educate decision makers). Offer free or subsidized tuition to attend land use planning. Require municipal officials to attend a specific number of sessions; tailor requirements to the position.
2. Develop a regional list of Best Management Practices and case study examples from the region to use in public and municipal outreach and education.
3. Educate students about land use planning principles, how governments operate, and the correlation between community and economic development. Emphasize opportunities that enable young people to stay in the region. Begin the program-at the earliest appropriate stage. Replicate successful existing programs. Work with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to create educational material on a regional basis that meets existing PDE curriculum & testing requirements.
4. Involve counties in making local planning & zoning and decision making processes more accessible to the general public. Explore the potential of GIS to assist in this effort.
5. Create "hands-on" involvement with student interns or junior municipal councilperson.
6. Assign a regional entity to coordinate program with Local Development Districts (LDDs), Cooperative Extension, intermediate units, conservancies, and county planning associations.
7. Educate the general public. Schedule a land use planning educational component in advance of a controversial public hearing regarding a project to engender understanding of "behind the scenes" work. Tout the region's strengths, build upon its history, and celebrate the wins.
8. Get municipal entities to include a land use planning education component in their communication channels. Use technology to disseminate land use education to the public.

**E. Encourage comprehensive regionalization of services (including policing, water and sewer, marketing and tourism, waste management/ recycling, and reduced government).**

*Regional Action Steps*

1. Identify organizations to promote regionalization. Form economic partnerships (e.g. Penn State Extension, LDD). Create intergovernmental agreements to encourage county commissioners and municipal officials to work together.
2. Educate municipal officials and the public on the benefits and cost savings of regionalization.
3. Direct initiatives via organizations that coordinate or promote regionalization. Review best practices. Pilot programs, then evaluate implementation efforts. Promote small successes, always working toward building trust.

**F. Capitalize on the location of institutions and industry clusters in our core communities (which are already supported by existing infrastructure) by providing for their growth, expansion, and modernization as a strategy for strengthening the local economy.**

*Regional Action Steps*

1. Encourage all institutions (State System of Higher Education [SSHE], state-related, and private) to jointly plan with their respective communities.
2. Encourage institutions—especially higher education—to work together to coordinate their directions for the future (e.g. curriculum, concentrations) with respect to future work force training. This may require workforce development projections (role and research) tied to research of national employment trends.
3. Foster communication between institutions and their communities to build trust and confidence. Open dialogue. Develop mutual understanding. Identify needs, as well as gaps, on what can be provided to approach the Commonwealth (e.g. suggestions for infilling gaps, providing tax breaks, encouraging workforce development).
4. Support existing regional business development leadership groups (at least at the county-wide level) and collaboration among them.
5. 4. Educate institutional leadership of local, county, and regional planning goals. Encourage them to participate.

## **ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR THE CENTRAL REGION**

- G. See above (Overarching Theme).**
- H. Protect existing natural resources as the foundation for community benefit and tourism.**
- I. Reduce reliance on property taxes (implement tax reform).**
- J. Design transportation processes – multi-modal, context sensitive, and “smart” – to link with land use concerns.**
- K. Make strategic investments that are prioritized within the overall plan – say “no” to ordinances, land use planning, and proposed economic development that is not part of the plan.**
- L. Work to improve the region’s existing stock of affordable housing and create connections to the region’s employment centers.**
- M. Maximize use of existing infrastructure.**