

Schuylkill County's  
**VISION**  
Working together to Create our Future  
Strategic Plan

## **Economic Development**

### **VISION**

Schuylkill County will be recognized as a leader among counties as effectively competing on a global basis for growth in developing an economic base that offers meaningful employment, enhances quality of life and creates community pride and wealth.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **A. Creating Schuylkill County as a product**

1. Provide incentives to businesses, creating new jobs that allow Schuylkill County to be competitive for our targeted industries. Ensure that the incentives provide an acceptable total return on investment and that the recipient is contractually required to maintain the jobs for the time period required to meet the return on investment.
2. Obtain recognition by US Office of Management and Budget and the Bureau of Census as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).
3. Develop Stronger collaboration among the employers, employer associations and the education system so that every 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade student is fully aware of the economic employment opportunities in the county.
4. Create an environment that encourages and supports entrepreneurs and small businesses with capital, advice, support and receptive government regulation.
5. Develop Schuylkill County with high worker productivity and the best support from government, the private sector and citizens for expanding, creating and relocating businesses.
6. Create a business friendly tax and regulatory environment that consistently works to improve the productivity of our citizens, businesses and government.
7. Encourage people in public office to have a commitment to job creation and economic development as described in Schuylkill County's VISION.
8. Commit long term to join county resources with Pennsylvania's Agricultural Land Preservation Act to permanently preserve Schuylkill County Farmland for the future.

9. Involve business, finance, colleges and government in the development of business incubators.

10. Improve and increase retail-shopping opportunities.

## **B. Attract New Jobs**

1. Maintain a competitively funded economic development program that creates new value-added jobs through retention and expansion of existing businesses, creation of new enterprises, and relocations.

2. Target industry clusters for value added job expansion and creation of networks to improve productivity in the following areas:

- a) Agriculture
- b) Food and kindred products
- c) Tourism
- d) Mineral, coal and power
- e) Back office operations and telecommunication centers
- t) Chemical and allied products
- g) Distribution
- h) Fabricated metal products
- i) Technology based manufactured products
- j) Textiles

3. Maximize Schuylkill County's location as the hub of surrounding metro areas with 2.3 million in population.

4. Maintain continuous communications with Schuylkill Citizens about the ongoing economic development process. This will be accomplished while recognizing the absolute requirement for secrecy in dealing with prospects for job creation until that prospect is ready to make a public announcement.

5. Identify existing buildings that are candidates for renovation and market them to prospects.

6. Recruit entrepreneurs to set up new businesses in Schuylkill County.

7. Participate in the marketing program of the ten-county Penn's Northeast Region.

## Education

### VISION

Schuylkill County's education systems will be versatile, cost effective, supported by the Community, and result in life-long education in a real world context.

### STRATEGIES

#### A. K-12 Education Systems

1. Ensure that each student graduates with the education and skills needed to go to a technology school, a two-year or four-year college, or immediately into the work force. Achieve high-performance education by holding school boards responsible for setting policy and providing essential resources; administrators for providing quality leadership and efficient/effective management of resources; and teachers for quality teaching. Provide an annual report card to the community and to parents for each school that clearly demonstrates the general accountability of teachers, administrators, and boards. Expect the community and parents to support the efforts of boards, administrators, and teachers to create a quality learning environment. Provide a forum for school boards, parent organizations, and administrations to offer enhanced opportunities to work with one another.
2. Create market driven technology training and apprenticeship programs that lead to satisfying careers in Schuylkill County. These programs should be academically based, with applied skill training, and these should be an opportunity for ease of transfer between these programs and college prep programs. Teachers and parents are encouraged to understand these careers and to value these opportunities.
3. Focus the curriculum on reading, writing, math, citizenship, science, geography, history, technology and communication skills that lead to an accumulation of basic knowledge, critical thinking, and life skills.
4. Require mandatory community service with a full range of opportunities.
5. Evaluate the entire K-12 education governance and delivery system; and revise the system to ensure that student performance is maximized within the available resources.
6. Provide an opportunity for every student to attend the school closest to where he/she lives.
7. Maintain school facilities, curriculum materials, and technologies that provide opportunities for a globally competitive education.
8. Create strong partnership between the K-12 system, technical schools, colleges, Universities, and businesses.
9. Create and enforce a countywide dress code acceptable to the community.

10. Provide an opportunity for a broad range of arts and cultural experiences.
11. Create continuous opportunities for a large number of teachers and guidance counselors to serve internships and partnerships within the business community.
12. Provide all services on a regional basis that are cost effective and do not adversely affect academic performance.
13. Create countywide youth forums for high school and middle school students for participation in VISION implementation.
14. Strengthen and increase inclusion opportunities for students with special needs.
15. Focus on understanding our past and using this experience as a way to create a great future for our community.
16. Create an achievement and "other first" based environment that results in improved student self-esteem.
17. Increase the level of economic education for all citizens beginning in the K-12 System. This should include a basic understanding of the free enterprise system and how Schuylkill County fits into the competitive global economy.

## **B. Higher Education**

1. Create a comprehensive higher education system by increasing the delivery of associate, bachelor and graduate degree programs in Schuylkill County. Involve educators and employers in a system that satisfies the requirement of short term and long term employment opportunities and eliminates illiteracy. This will include a competitive training program for potential employees of new and expanding businesses.

## **C. Community Support**

1. Increase parent, business, and community support for education.
2. Provide decision-making and goal setting opportunities for all students to help with leadership development.
3. Provide opportunities for weekend, after-school, summer, part-time jobs, internships and apprenticeships for high school and college students.
4. Train Schuylkill County citizens and businesses in accessing public transportation systems.
5. Promote life skills, parenting, family development, and growth opportunities for learning.
6. Promote educational programs for children from birth to five years of age.

## **Quality of Life**

### **VISION**

Schuylkill County will have a clean, healthy environment where every citizen finds opportunities for economic and personal growth, community involvement, cultural and spiritual expression.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **A. Quality of Life in General**

1. Develop and maintain a positive attitude.
2. Maintain a very low crime rate with zero tolerance standards for spouse, child and elderly violence while maintaining high-quality emergency services.
3. Promote and market all countywide services with access in one-step regional centers.
4. Strive to provide equality of opportunity for every citizen and be recognized as a community that is open to our diverse population.
5. Encourage, support, and celebrate volunteerism.
6. Maintain a balance between our rural atmosphere and our need for economic development.
7. Emphasize the qualities and virtues of our cultural heritage that provide a great future for our community.
8. Increase marketing and utilization of our library resources and ,when required, increase government, corporate and individual support for libraries on a county-wide basis. Extend the availability of resources throughout the county through technology.
9. Encourage all community newspapers to focus on the positive.

#### **B. Youth. Families and Elderly**

1. Encourage the provision of proactive family support services that include programs such as parenting skills and mentoring children.
2. Eliminate the cycle of "learned helplessness" by requiring all able-bodied people who receive government assistance to provide community service.
3. Create intergenerational programs where youth benefit from the wisdom and the experience of the elderly, including integrated county-wide adult and child care programs.
4. Strive to provide affordable, high quality childcare.
5. Support and encourage youth-oriented programs including Scouting, YMCA, YWCA

and other similar youth activities.

6. Encourage every citizen to be self-sufficient and to plan for his/her future requirements for housing and health care.

7. Increase the religious involvement of our citizens.

8. Provide a continuum of care for the elderly that eases transitions from home-based services through assisted living to congregate settings.

## C. Health Care

1. Focus on community health assessment, providing preventive care and wellness programs that create the healthiest community in Pennsylvania.

- Include Mental Health.
- Make dental health and violence prevention priorities in concert with State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP).

2. Integrate the service of our hospitals and home/community-based health services in a program of health service collaboration.

3. Strive to attain zero tolerance of alcohol and substance abuse on a countywide basis.

## D. Arts, Culture, and Recreation

1. Enhance and promote access to a broad array of arts, cultural and recreation activities and events.

2. Provide adequate indoor and outdoor recreation in regional community centers. Place strong emphasis on youth access.

3. Develop a Performing Arts Center for our citizens to stimulate tourism.

4. Use our natural and historical resources to enhance recreational and cultural opportunities.

5. Provide an accessible community for all citizens.

## Infrastructure

### VISION

Schuylkill County will develop and maintain its infrastructure oriented to the future that sustains economic growth and quality of life.

### STRATEGIES

#### A. Comprehensive Master Plan

Create a countywide Comprehensive Plan of Land Management, which offers guidance and suggestions to municipalities to manage areas of development and to promote uniformity in zoning, development, and conservation/environment.

The Comprehensive Plan includes:

- Identify growth areas.
- Preserve prime agricultural land outside regional growth areas. Provide for planned Heritage Corridor and greenways.
- Ensure that high quality industrial and office parks are complete with full infrastructure and speculative buildings are available and ready for occupancy in strategic locations in the county.
- Promote downtown restoration and historic preservation, and provide adequate parking. Promote alternative modes of transportation.
- Provide countywide water and sewer authorities with operating responsibilities to effectively and efficiently provide water and sewage services in regional urban growth areas that supports growth in jobs. Eliminate dumping raw sewage in our streams.
- Provide the infrastructure for access to the global information highway that gives people business and government competitive advantage in the global market place.
- Ensure that the County's use of collected landfill fees is for environmental improvement projects.
- Improve and expand transportation capacity and safety on existing highways including Route 61, Route 209, Route 901, Route 309; and adequate access between I-81 and I-78.
- Maintain all existing roadways with expedited time schedules to protect our Investment. Provide quality transportation and increase individual productivity. Improve the airport instrument landing system and add jet fuel capability.
- Develop a commuter inter-county transportation system providing access to Reading, Allentown, and Harrisburg.

- Increase rail transportation.
- Maintain the relationship with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the U.S. Federal Highways Administration to ensure that Schuylkill County receives its fair share of transportation dollars.
- Restore abandoned economic sites, reclaim mining sites, and eliminate acid mine drainage into creeks and rivers.
- Promote a balance between industry and environmental concerns that encourages industrial development while maintaining regulatory environmental standards.
- Enhance air quality through control of air pollution.

## **Government**

### **VISION**

Schuylkill County will have responsive government providing effective and efficient public services that enrich the lives of its citizens.

### **STRATEGIES**

1. Consolidate and/or encourage collaboration between regional entities of all services which can be most effectively and efficiently provided at a regional or county level.
2. Encourage all government entities to endorse Schuylkill County's VISION and to adopt those strategies uniquely within their realm of responsibility for implementation. Develop open communication between government and citizens that result in Schuylkill County's citizens believing that government is responsive to their needs and increase citizen input and participation at all levels.
3. Ensure that the core functions of local government are customer-driven and market oriented and that the most effective and efficient business practices are being used at all levels of Schuylkill County Government. Encourage qualified citizens to run for public office and to campaign on the issues. Ensure the availability of appropriate training for all elected officials.
4. Collect all municipal, school, and county taxes by a county tax collector's office to ensure accountable, responsive, and least costly service.
5. Ensure that police and emergency services are operating under uniform countywide standards and are accountable for all emergency requests with appropriate monthly reporting and an opportunity for citizen review.
6. Develop collaborative relationships with surrounding counties, Metropolitan Statistical Areas and state and federal governments.
7. Create the best partnership between public and private sectors in Pennsylvania and the Northeast.

8. Expect all municipalities to hire or share professional managers.
9. Create and maintain citizenship curricula in the school systems.
10. Promote and enhance public transportation within Schuylkill County.
11. Develop, encourage, and support an aggressive code enforcement program for building appearances, landscaping, and littering.

## **Private Sector Leadership**

### **VISION**

Schuylkill County will have leaders and role models at all levels, who foster a positive living environment.

### **STRATEGIES**

- Endorse and promote every private sector organization (both profit and not-for-profit) to endorse the VISION; be an active ambassador.
- Promote our Core Values throughout the County and encourage the alignment of our actions with our Core Values: Positive Attitude, Integrity, Responsibility, Traditional Family Values, Hard Work, and Faith in God. Focus on promotion of Core Values.
- Encourage employer/employee collaboration and sense of interdependency that enables Schuylkill County businesses to compete in the global marketplace and to maximize the expansion of jobs.
- Maintain a private/public partnership with continuous communication.
- Enhance volunteerism and community service for all ages which create a better quality of life for all our citizens. Encourage corporations to share their human and financial resources as good corporate citizens.
- Recognize, appreciate, and honor those public and private organizations and individuals that demonstrate the strongest commitment to making our VISION a reality.
- Encourage the development of strong leaders of all ages and walks of life through youth leadership development programs.
- Promote and encourage diversity within our communities with the private sector.