

MCRPC 2000 ANNUAL REPORT



Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

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"Planning for Livable Communities"

Mercer County has and should maintain a diversity of community types and living conditions.

MERCER COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
2491 HIGHLAND ROAD, HERMITAGE, PA 16148 www.mcrpc.com

MCRPC 2000 Annual Report

December 20, 2000

MCRPC is pleased to present its year 2000 annual report. Between these covers are stories of the organization's service and accomplishments in the past twelve months.

Several new pages of Mercer County planning history were turned as the calendar rolled over from 1999 to 2000. Planning in Pennsylvania underwent a major legislative and executive overhaul in the interest of "growing smarter." Mercer County quickly reacted to the changes by initiating a process to determine how new land use planning tools and incentives can be used at home. The county began a major update of its 10-year solid waste plan and with it proposed new program ideas to greatly expand recycling efforts. New strides were taken in other programs as well.

The year 2000 saw the MCRPC office move to new facilities co-located with the Mercer County Regional COG. Also, it brought the retirement of Marilyn Ciprich, administrative secretary for the commission since 1962. Marilyn gave more to MCRPC than a long career of dedicated service, she provided kindness and a constant smile that is now missed.

MCRPC is proud to be part of a top-notch team of organizations, professionals, and hard-working citizens who are committed to making livable communities in Mercer County.



- MCRPC actively participated in several efforts with the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission including the KOZ Task Force, GIS Task Force, and Entrepreneurial Assistance Network.
- MCRPC in cooperation with the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission and the City of Farrell conducted a "New Opportunities for Community & Economic Development" workshop for Shenango Valley residents and businesses at Farrell High School on October 25th.
- MCRPC, on behalf of Mercer County and its complete count committee, worked with the U.S. Census Bureau to help promote the 2000 Census and provide assistance where needed in conducting the count.
- MCRPC filled numerous agency and private requests for information on population, income, employment, and other characteristics for Mercer County and its communities.
- Director Denny Puko participated in several activities of the Pennsylvania Planning Association to network with other planners, learn information useful to Mercer County, and promote better planning in the Commonwealth.
- 911 Addressing - MCRPC assigns addresses for 32 of the 48 municipalities in Mercer County and maintains & updates the street/address range database. 186 address applications were submitted and processed throughout the year 2000.
- Major Transportation Work Program Accomplishments
 - 75 Traffic counts completed for PA DOT
 - 107 HPMS roadway sites inventoried for PA DOT
 - Both the Highway & Transit portions of the Transportation Improvement Program were developed and adopted.
 - Annual Unified Planning Work Program was developed
 - PA 18 Corridor Study, Pymatuning Township initiated
 - 3 Transportation Enhancement grants awarded to Mercer County
- MCRPC also completed many project reviews and other efforts of assistance to member municipalities and agencies too numerous to mention in detail herein.



Penn-Northwest and MCRPC Share State Planning Award

The Pennsylvania Planning Association bestowed one of its 2000 outstanding planning awards to Penn-Northwest Development Corporation and Mercer County Regional Planning Commission. The award recognized Strategy 1000, a cooperative project between the two groups to plan for and facilitate development of 1000 acres of new or reuse economic development in the 10 years following the 1996 county comprehensive plan.



PPA recognized the strong partnership between planning and economic development and the emphasis on integrating economic development projects into the community around them to aid overall revitalization. To that end, Strategy 1000 helped initiate a master plan, rich in community design enhancements, for redevelopment of several Shenango Valley brownfields, a KOZ designation with both industrial and residential neighborhood properties, and other site development efforts. The PPA award was presented October 2nd at the statewide planning conference in State College. It was one of 13 awards given for outstanding plans, projects, implementation, journalism, education, and work by professional, citizen, and elected-official planners.

Other Items of Interest

- MCRPC is a major player on the Mercer County Strategic Plan advisory committee. In 2000, Director Denny Puko and Mercer County Housing Authority Director DeWitt Boosel co-chaired a committee to address housing issues and define new strategies for availability and affordability of housing in the county. Findings are expected early in 2001.
- Director Denny Puko in cooperation with Housing Authority Director DeWitt Boosel and Community Action Director Ron Errett developed a detailed program proposal, submitted to the county commissioners in May, for a Mercer County affordable housing trust fund using revenue from an increase in recording fees as authorized under state Act 137.

Mercer County Regional Planning Commission 2000 Annual Report

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Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

MCRPC Commission Members

Chairman:
Jeffrey D. Hoy – Wilmington
Vice Chairman:
Ron Faull – Liberty
Secretary:
Larry McAdams – Fredonia
Treasurer:
Clifford McCandless – Grove City

Jerry Miller – Farrell
Mark A. Petrillo – Farrell
Rita Ferringer – Hermitage
James A. Rollinson – Hermitage
James Pat White – Hermitage
George Gulla – Sharon
Patricia Miller – Sharon
Louis Rotunno – Sharon
Frank Smeraglia – Sharon
Russell Shaffer – Clark
Patricia McAdams – Fredonia
Earl A. Butterfield – Greenville
Burroughs Price – Greenville
Lee Tharp – Jackson Center
Darryl Pinney – Jamestown
Jim Carnes – Mercer
Jerry Johnson – Mercer
Janice Good – New Lebanon
Mary A. Ziegler – New Lebanon
Carol J. Paul – Sandy Lake
Robert Kaltenbaugh – Sandy Lake
Alex Kovach – Sharpsville
Bob Piccirilli – Sharpsville
Samuel A. Scott – Stoneboro
Linda Bollinger – West Middlesex
Joseph Walsh - West Middlesex
Ray Foster – Wheatland
Thomas R. Stanton - Wheatland
Jane Clark – Fairview
Mont Clark – Fairview
John Courtney – Findley
Elliott Lengel – Findley
Pamela Brown – Hempfield
Russell L. Dawes – Hempfield
Mary Gealy – Jackson
W. Jerry Vernam – Jackson
Robert Angermeier – Jefferson
Joanne Brown – Jefferson
Dave Beatty – Liberty

Frank Cochran – New Vernon
Albert W. Law – New Vernon
Richard Straub – Otter Creek
Paulette Young – Otter Creek
Richard Marshall – Perry
Fred Brenner – Pine
H. Thomas Paxton – Pine
James F. Rowe – Pymatuning
Joseph A. Selnekovic – Pymatuning
John Draskovic – Shenango
Kristen Robinson – Shenango
Michael Nashtock – South Pymatuning
Mourice G. Waltz – South Pymatuning
Larry T. Gruntz – Springfield
Judy A. Hassler – Springfield
Charles Garrett – Wilmington
Jim Morton – Wolf Creek
Mark Smith – Wolf Creek
Ethel Friede – Mercer County
Jean Hodge – Mercer County
James L. Hogan – Mercer County
Tom Jack – Mercer County
Richard A. Mackell – Mercer County
Patricia Meehan – Mercer County
Paul E. Mehalko – Mercer County
Brian Shipley – County Commissioner
Robert G. Kochems – Solicitor
Dave George – Borough’s Association
Kenneth Seamans – Supervisor’s Association

MCRPC Staff

Dennis G. Puko, Executive Director
Julie M. Widel, Assistant Director
Daniel M. Gracenin, Senior Planner
Lisa M. Holm, Planner
Jeremy P. Coxe, Planner
Margaret B. Heldorfer, Associate Planner
Donald A. Blakesley, Recycling Coordinator
Carmen L. Reichard, Grants Administrator
Evelyn Wike, Administrative Secretary
Jill Boozer, Secretary

Mercer County Commissioners

Cloyd E. Brenneman, Chairperson
Brian W. Shipley
Olivia M. Lazor

- Wheatland Borough - recently applied for \$20,000 in CRP funds to supplement the Mercer Avenue Sidewalk Improvement Project that will improve the safety of local children walking to school.
- West Middlesex Borough - received a \$25,000 - 2% loan under the Local Government Capital Project Loan Program to facilitate the purchase of a multi-purpose leaf recycling/general maintenance truck.
- Jackson Center/ Jackson Township - received \$250,000 in HOME funds to undertake a joint housing rehabilitation program.
- Wheatland Borough - received \$93,500 to buy down the mortgages of five new single-family homes constructed through a unique partnership of private and public agencies.
- Lake Township - applied for \$5,000 under the CRP and \$13,000 under the Community Conservation Partnerships Program to prepare a Master Site Plan for the proposed Jack Jones Memorial Complex (a regional park which will consolidate little league fields).
- Perry Township - applied for \$12,750 under the CRP and \$20,000 under the Community Conservation Partnerships Program to construct more adequate parking and relocate impacted play structures at the Commodore Perry Community Park.
- Wolf Creek Township - applied for \$20,000 under the Community Conservation Partnerships Program to construct a picnic pavilion and play structure at their municipal complex for the annual community picnic, family picnics and resident sponsored activities.

- West Middlesex Borough - received \$27,500 to assist with ADA renovations to their Borough building under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Clark Borough - received \$7,381 to assist with ADA renovations to their Borough building under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Mercer County Area Agency on Aging - received \$57,456 to assist with improvements to the Multi-Service Center in Farrell under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Stoneboro Borough - received \$74,600 to extend sanitary sewers to Fredonia Road under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Clark Borough - received \$7,500 to undertake a Master Site Plan for the Henderson-Taylor Community Park under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Jamestown Borough - received \$68,000 to undertake improvements of their municipal water system under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Jackson Center Borough - received \$87,650 to extend sanitary sewers along Bradley Road and \$6,830 to demolish a vacant/condemned house on Franklin Road under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Jackson Center Volunteer Fire Co. - received \$9,500 in CRP funds to replace the roof of the fire hall.
- Helping Hands - Stoneboro Borough - received \$5,000 in CRP funds to purchase a copier.
- Helping Hands - Mercer County Commissioners - received \$60,841 in Emergency Shelter funding to create a regional emergency shelter in Stoneboro.

Governor and Legislature Energize Local Planning



The year 2000 brought the greatest progress to planning in Pennsylvania since a separate state planning code was adopted in 1968. Governor Tom Ridge initiated the clamor in February by calling for Pennsylvania to “grow smarter.” He elevated land use to the top of the heap of statewide issues.

The Governor’s proposal included an unprecedented \$3.6 million in state funding to help local governments plan for growth that both sustains older communities and minimizes growth impacts in newer communities. He also urged legislators to adopt planning code changes debated since the mid-1990s that provide local governments with improved land use and planning tools.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly responded in June with passage of Acts 67 and 68. Act 67 provides a new planning option – cooperative county or multi-municipal plans. Areas that take advantage of the cooperative planning option are allowed more zoning flexibility, more favorable state funding and project/permit decisions, tax revenue sharing, and transfer of development rights. Act 68 promotes consistency of plans and zoning both between neighboring municipalities and between municipalities and the county.

More action occurred in August when the Governor, in response to a state interagency land use report, directed all state agencies to support his “Growing Smarter” plan. The report was a top-to-bottom review of how more than 100 state funding programs and permits can support rather than conflict with or negate local land-use planning. The Governor required all agencies by November 1 to develop a plan to implement sound land use at the local level.

Mercer County Acts Quickly on State Planning Changes

On the heels of major state-level changes in planning, MCRPC is already assessing the new opportunities and discussing changes to county and local plans. The effort is aided by a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA).

GSPIA is undertaking a project to evaluate if local governments will find value in cooperative planning and the incentives of new Acts 67 and 68. The Pitt group chose to work with Mercer County because of its strong history of countywide strategic planning and inter-governmental cooperation, and its successful 1996 county comprehensive plan that was endorsed by 43 of 48 municipalities.

The first step was a countywide planning retreat held October 17 at the West Middlesex Radisson. About 80 persons representing county and local government, schools, private business, and citizen interests concluded that Mercer County should pursue cooperative planning under Act 67. The two most favored optional tools were:

- Designating growth areas, future growth areas, and rural resources areas throughout the county.
- Preparing plans that would accommodate (via zoning) all land uses within multi-municipal areas without necessity that each municipality accommodate every conceivable use.

A 20-member steering committee was created to work with MCRPC and GSPIA building these cooperative plans and creating agreements that can be executed by multiple municipalities to implement the plans. The first meeting was held in December. Subsequent meetings will be held through project completion in mid 2001

MCRPC Assists Community Development Projects



MCRPC continues to serve its members community development needs via grant writing and project administration/management expertise. The majority of projects assisted fall under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Community Conservation Partnerships (old Keystone) Program, and the Community Revitalization Program (CRP). Projects assisted during 2000 included:

- Greenville Borough - undertook housing rehabilitation, code enforcement, sidewalk replacement and completed the reconstruction of State Street with \$151,036 in CDBG funds.
- Pine Township - undertook housing rehabilitation and the reconstruction of Whittaker School Road that involved a massasauga rattle snake survey with \$112,911 in CDBG funds.
- Wheatland Borough - received \$85,000 to construct Woodland Avenue and associated utilities to serve a new single-family housing project under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Mercer Borough - received \$130,545 to extend sanitary sewer to the old sanitarium site and \$25,000 to install curb ramps at numerous sites within the Borough under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- Springfield Township - received \$103,741 to assist with the extension of sanitary sewer lines to No. 5 Mine under the Mercer County CDBG Program.
- South Pymatuning Township - received \$27,500 to assist with ADA renovations to their Township building under the Mercer County CDBG Program.

MCRPC & the County Comprehensive Plan

Inspire Local Planning Activities.

Lakeview Region Comprehensive Plan

Although the eleven municipal partners of the Lakeview Region can consider themselves on the cutting edge of the latest planning legislation - Act 67 (*see Energize Planning*) with their multi-municipal comprehensive plan, the legislation has induced a few modifications to enable adoption of a fully functional plan.

The initial planning process, begun in 1998, was a great success, bringing together leaders and citizens to discuss openly and frankly their hopes and concerns for the future related to the regional area. A vision statement was created facilitated by the Center For Rural Pennsylvania, a legislative agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly whose mission is to promote and sustain the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities. The vision statement defined the end point of the plan and allowed the group to establish community objectives to support the vision. From there the group defined specific actions that would ultimately achieve the vision. As a result of the plan a permanent group called the Lakeview Roundtable Committee has been established to implement the plan.

The Roundtable began work in 2000 on their future land use plan, which will define growth and future growth areas as well as, rural preservation and areas in need of revitalization. Future land use will be defined for the region via individual municipal work sessions utilizing a typical mapping exercise. Other activities planned include creation of a natural and historic protection element and a more defined community facilities plan particularly in the area of educational facilities, medical facilities and infrastructure (sewer/water). Upon completion of these elements and execution of a multi-municipal cooperation agreement the plan will be ready for adoption in 2001.

The future looks bright for northeastern Mercer County - the plan exemplifies their "hoist up the bootstraps and do it" attitude.

The Lakeview Region includes the following municipalities: Fairview Township, Jackson Center Borough, Jackson Township, Lake Township, Mill Creek Township, New Lebanon Borough, New Vernon Township, Sandy Lake Borough, Sandy Lake Township, Stoneboro Borough, and Worth Township.

MCRPC Aids Shenango Valley Merger Study

The Shenango Valley municipalities of Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Sharpsville, and Wheatland are in the first of a two-year study of possible merger or consolidation. MCRPC is serving in an advisory role and providing technical assistance to an advisory committee of representatives from each municipality. MCRPC is also hosting a project web site.



The study will first examine if a single municipality can be created out of all five or certain combinations of the participating municipalities. It will also propose further intergovernmental cooperation initiatives that can be implemented if a merger or consolidation is not feasible. In light of the state's passage of Act 67, the study may also examine if cooperative planning and zoning arrangements including tax revenue sharing are feasible options.

With five municipalities, the magnitude of the project is unprecedented, according to Alan Kugler of the Pennsylvania Economy League Northwest Office, which is the consultant for the study. While Kugler's office spent the first year collecting and analyzing data about current finances, services, and administrations of the participating municipalities, he believes the study is about the future. "These things are barely about us," said Kugler at the first advisory committee meeting. "They are about things that will happen after us."

MCRPC Develops Partnership with University of Pittsburgh

Mercer County is an ideal laboratory for planning research, so says the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. This led

GSPIA to work with MCRPC and the county in capitalizing on opportunities in the state's new planning legislation (see *Mercer County acts quickly...*)



Earlier in 2000, a class of 12 GSPIA students prepared a detailed report entitled *Governance and Growth: Mercer County*. It offered an examination and critique of how Mercer County is dealing with growth via its strategic and comprehensive planning efforts. Students noted that value of Mercer's plans to help the county achieve balanced and sustainable growth, but also criticized the lack of participation in planning by some public groups and the lack of public awareness of planning as revealed in a countywide telephone survey. The report was insightful and contained much useful information.

The GSPIA team includes David Miller, Associate Professor and Associate Dean, Sabina Deitrick, Associate Professor, and Ray Reaves, Adjunct Professor.

Select Sites Highlight Economic Development Efforts

MCRPC annually assists economic development within the Team Mercer County approach under Penn-Northwest Development Corporation. In 2000, MCRPC played a major role in applications for Pennsylvania Select Site designations. Mercer County received 12 of 120 Select Site designations announced on September 14th.

Select Sites meet a set of criteria that identify them as most ready, marketable, and useable for certain types of economic development. Each application required a sizable volume of site data, area characteristics, demographic and economic data, and maps. MCRPC committed the efforts of all staff in March to help Penn-Northwest and a host of other organizations assemble the required information.

Subdivision Update

Since the start of the new millennium, 417 new lots were created through the County Ordinance along with an additional 66 housing lots within a mobile home park. It has been a busy year, 417 lots are up from 336 in 1999 and that doesn't include lots approved through municipalities with local ordinances. It is worth noting that subdivisions are being approved with a variety of on-lot sewage systems approved by DEP, including spray irrigation systems, single residence sewage treatment plants and sand mounds in addition to a few standard in-ground systems.

Progress continues toward updates to the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Graney, Grossman, Ray and Associates have reviewed the County Ordinance and work continues toward addressing concerns. Nationally recognized conservation subdivision consultant, Randall Arendt, Senior Conservation Advisor for Natural Lands Trust, also reviewed the Ordinance.

Many interesting and thought provoking comments have been made for the updates of the land development and subdivision regulations. Look for these to be reviewed by MCRPC early in 2001.

Major plans reviewed by MCRPC in 2000:

Woodland Professional Center – 7 lots in Pine Township

Grove City Shops – 5 lots in Pine Township

Lucas subdivision – 3 lots in Pine Township

Creekside Estates – 23 lots in Hempfield Township

Stoney Brook Estates – preliminary plan in Hempfield Township

Liberty Gait – 7 lots in Liberty Township

Forrest Brooke Mobile Home Park – 66 housing lots in Lackawannock Township and Jefferson Township

12 modification requests

Zoning Update

Zoning continues to be a valuable tool for communities across the county. MCRPC has been working with several municipalities on zoning projects that include working new provisions into existing ordinances, complete revisions to existing ordinances, and creating a new ordinance. Some key issues have provoked municipalities to rethink provisions; cellular towers and adult entertainment uses and manufactured housing are topics of discussion at municipal meetings across the county.

- Clark Borough – November 7, 2000, adopted a revised ordinance after extensive work by the community and its leaders. Highlights: a new multiple family zoning district and provisions, cellular tower provisions.
- Liberty Township – Breaking the mold for rural zoning! Work on the ordinance is complete and the community awaits adoption of a new land use tool. Highlights: The new rural opportunity district provides for commercial and industrial development based upon the separation and screening from neighbors.
- Hempfield Township – Work is nearly complete on an ordinance designed to preserve open space and enhance business opportunities. Highlights: Forward thinking land use provisions such as conservation design for subdivisions and parking standards.
- Mercer Borough – Draft ordinance was completed that promotes the goals of preservation within the historic small town community. Highlights: Updates center around mixed use, flexibility to reuse existing buildings and pedestrian or sidewalk orientation of new structures.
- City of Sharon – Draft ordinance was completed and is being made ready for community review in early 2001.

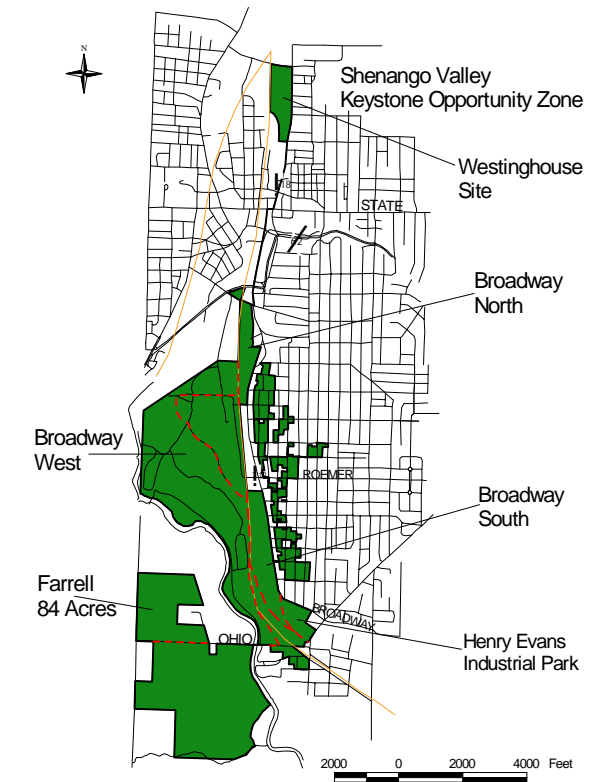
MPC Zoning Amendments reviews:

- City of Hermitage – MCRPC has reviewed several noteworthy amendments from the Hermitage. Highlights: Landscaping provisions for commercial and industrial uses and Route 18 South overlay district, which address multitudes of zoning and land use issues and development standards.
- Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough – adult entertainment use provisions and map amendments.
- Farrell – zoning map amendment changing part of a commercial zone to Industrial district.

KOZ Update

The Shenango Valley Keystone Opportunity Zone completed its second year in 2000. There were two major success stories:

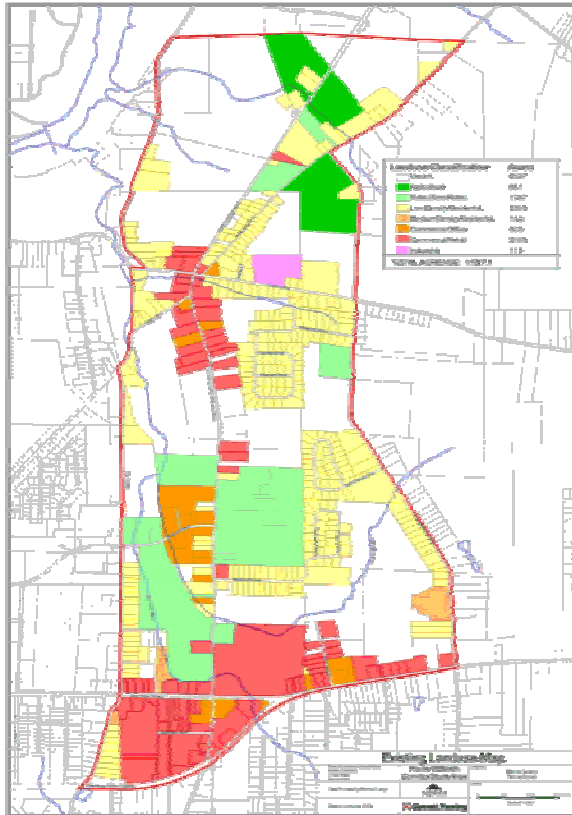
- The Mercer County Housing Authority captured a \$9 million HOPE VI grant for a public/private \$30 million reconstruction of the Steel City Terrace housing project in Farrell. The old barracks apartments will be torn down and replaced with rented and owned housing similar to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Winner Development Company purchased the former Westinghouse facility in Sharon and embarked on a \$44 million renovation and industrial reuse project to create over 800 jobs.



MCRPC led planning for the KOZ back in 1998 and now handles local management. MCRPC annually notifies over 280 property owners, over 160 rental households, and 5 leased businesses in the 891-acre KOZ. About 100 applications for KOZ tax benefits are submitted back to MCRPC each year.

KOZ expansion – In November, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed new legislation to expand the KOZ program. Twelve new zones up to 1,500 acres will be designated. Mercer County will seek additional acreage in cooperation with other northwest PA counties. MCRPC is working with Penn-Northwest Development Corporation and local taxing bodies to propose candidate properties.

MCRPC Joins Hermitage to Launch PA 18 North Plan



With PA Route 18 slated for widening to 5 lanes beginning in 2001, MCRPC and the City of Hermitage proposed a study of the widening's impact on land use and traffic in the corridor. PennDOT provided a \$64,000 grant in the first round of a \$2 million special state program to study land use impacts from major transportation projects. MCRPC hired the consulting planning and engineering firm of Gannett Fleming in Harrisburg to do the plan.

The project is analyzing several scenarios of development in the corridor, assessing the potential impacts, and presenting a plan for the most beneficial land use and development while also minimizing growing congestion on the new highway. Recommendations will include zoning classifications, land development standards, access management measures, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Initial phases of work have been completed including the first of two rounds of public input. A major public meeting was held November 8th along with meetings with business leaders, school officials, and even school students. The plan is scheduled for completion in March, 2001.

Office Moves to New Home

In February, MCRPC left behind its Sharpsville office home of over 21 years and moved to new facilities in Hermitage. The commission occupies 3,200 square feet of a 4,000 square foot addition built onto the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments office on Highland Road.

The move accomplished 3 goals:

- 1) it provided MCRPC with a modern and more spacious office;
- 2) it co-located MCRPC with an agency with which it has many dealings and partnership opportunities; and
- 3) it resulted in reduced rent due to COG's access to capital funding for building construction.



Ribbon cutting and open house ceremonies were held April 19th.

In photo left to right: David George, MCRCOG Chairman, Jeff Hoy, MCRPC Chairman, Brian Shipley, Gene Brenneman & Olivia Lazor, Mercer County Commissioners, and Jim DeCapua, MCRCOG Director.



Countywide Recycling System

Mercer County took a major step in 2000 towards achieving Governor Ridge's 35% by 2004 statewide recycling goal. The staff's County Recycling Coordinator prepared the largest grant application (\$892,260) ever submitted on behalf of the Solid Waste Authority to the state Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP).

If approved, the grant funds will be used to establish recycling depots in 10 strategic locations around the county. The 24 hour/ 7 day-a-week depots will provide the most convenient recycling service to nearly 80,000 county residents who live in non-mandated communities and who do not have curbside service. In addition to the depots, two collection trucks to service the depots and transport recyclables to end markets will be purchased with the funds.

Other recycling activities included:

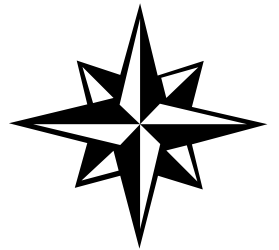
- Developed *Recycle 2000*, a 10 year project and program development plan for the expansion and improvement of recycling in Mercer County.
- Sponsored *The Illusion Maker* environmental & recycling education program in 12 elementary schools.
- Completed all equipment purchases for the 1997 902 Grant for New Castle City Rescue Mission, and closed out the grant account.
- Sponsored the Second Annual Recycling Poster Contest for students in grades K-6.
- Sponsored Fredonia's Super Saturday Clean-up Day.
- Assisted George Junior Republic in initiating a school-wide recycling program for newspaper and office paper.
- Assisted Mercer County Cooperative Extension with two composting workshops.



Mercer County Geographic Information System Project

During 2000 MCRPC embarked on project to assess the Geographic Information System needs in Mercer County. GIS is a relatively new technology that uses the computer to provide digital mapping of useful information such as parcels, land use, utilities, soils, road characteristics, and more. It has the ability to meet the needs of wants of municipalities, county agencies and private business.

The project is currently being worked on two fronts by the MCRPC. The first is a GIS task force formed by the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission. The task force will identify cost savings strategies through the sharing of data collection between NW counties. The second strategy is the identification of Mercer County needs and potential uses for GIS. MCRPC gathered this information via a survey of municipalities and agencies. The returned surveys indicate a strong desire to proceed towards a future countywide GIS. This work will continue in 2001. MCRPC will prepare a long-term plan to identify GIS costs and development strategies.



Mercer/Lawrence County Bike/Pedestrian Plan Developed



The Mercer County Metropolitan Planning Organization completed a draft bicycle/pedestrian plan for the county in cooperation with Lawrence County during the winter/spring of 2000. The work was accomplished with the help of Gannett Flemming consulting group through PA DOT funding. The major accomplishment is the development of a vision and goals/objectives that will assist local municipalities in the development of bike/ped facilities in the future. The project also completed a preliminary map showing bike/ped routes. The map identified areas of road where shoulder work will be needed in the future to accommodate bicycles, and areas of road where sufficient shoulders already exist for bicyclists. Work on this project will continue in more detail in 2001.

New 12-Year Transportation Program for Mercer County

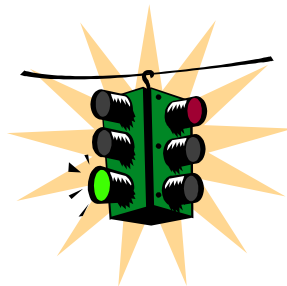
The State Transportation Commission adopted the new 2001-2012 Twelve-Year Transportation Program in August of 2000. The new program contains many of the priority projects that were identified by the local municipalities such as the PA north 18 project, I-79/PA208 interchange project, and other important bridge/highway/transit projects.

MCRPC once again acted as the coordinator of local efforts to gather public input and ensure a well-organized county effort. Municipal officials, consultants and members of the public made presentations on the importance of the high priority projects in September of 1999, highlighted by an overview of projects by Executive Director Denny Puko. During the winter and spring months of 2000 members of the MCRPC and local communities held meetings with PA DOT officials to ensure that priority projects continue to move towards completion.

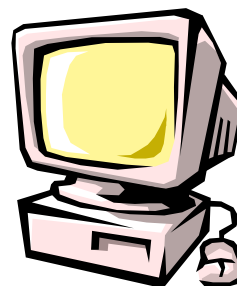
It is important to note that PA DOT has made great efforts to open up the programming process. The openness that PA DOT has shown over the last few years has made this 12-Year program a great success that will ensure the construction of Mercer County's priority projects in the next few years. The next update of the program will be in 2003.

Priority Projects:

- PA 18 North Hermitage Road
- I-79/PA208 Interchange
- Broadway Corridor
- Highland Road
- PA60/PA318 Interchange
- Lamor Road Bridge



MCRPC.COM Continues Growth



MCRPC's web site (www.mcrpc.com) was launched in July of 1999 and continues its growth into the new century. Throughout 2000, MCRPC's web site received over 2000 hits averaging approximately 6 hits per day. The web site is used for a variety of purposes including promoting planning in Mercer County and throughout the Commonwealth, making information readily and easily accessible to the Internet community and providing meeting announcements including agendas, minutes and related materials for MCRPC and committee meetings.

Along with the growth of the MCRPC web site, several new web sites emerged in 2000 relating to projects currently underway. These include the Shenango Valley Intergovernmental Study (www.mcrpc.com/svisc) and the Route 18 North Transportation & Land Use Study (www.mcrpc.com/transportation/route18n.htm). MCRPC plans to continue improving and updating the web site to make information about all facets of the Planning Commission readily available to professional colleges and the general public alike.

Solid Waste Plan Revision - Planning for the next 10 years!

In conjunction with the Mercer County Solid Waste Authority, MCRPC made great progress with the Solid Waste Plan revision throughout 2000. There are two main focuses to the plan:

- Ensuring disposal capacity for Mercer County municipal solid waste for the next 10 years.
- Increasing county recycling programs to make it accessible and convenient for all residents to recycle along with meeting the Governor's 35% recycling goal by 2003.



The Solid Waste Advisory Committee, whose role is to review the plan during preparation and make suggestions and changes deemed appropriate, met three times in 2000. The Solid Waste Authority has hired RW Beck Inc., a consulting firm out of Camp Hill, PA, to assist in the plan revision, which will be completed by March 2001.