

MCRPC Annual Report 2002 / 2003



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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 2002 / 2003 Annual Report


December 16, 2003

MCRPC is pleased to present its 2002 and 2003 annual reports. Between these covers are stories of the organization's service and accomplishments in the past 24 months.

There were several "watershed" events in the past two years. First, MCRPC celebrated its 50th Anniversary, a truly amazing milestone. Second, MCRPC embarked the county on its most ambitious ever effort to plan for the future – a county comprehensive plan update and five different multi-municipal comprehensive plans. Third, MCRPC, with the Mercer County Solid Waste Authority, implemented a "first-rate", modern recycling program available to all county residents. The annual report explains these and other accomplishments in more detail.

Hopefully, you will agree that the commission completed a lot of valuable work in 2002 and 2003. MCRPC right now has as good a staff, facilities, and technical resources as it as ever had! And we hear feedback from across the state about the strength and quality of our planning program. Yet the organization costs less to member municipalities than it did 10 years ago. The total amount of revenue from member fees was lower in 2002 and 2003 than it was 10 years earlier. And, except for the more rapidly growing municipalities, most individual municipal fees were lower in 2002 and 2003 than 10 years prior.

MCRPC continues to be proud to be part of a top-notch team of organizations, professionals, and citizen volunteers who are committed to making livable communities in Mercer County.



- MCRPC's website, www.mcrpc.com, was re-designed in 2002 and continues to grow. The website is used to provide information to member municipalities, MCRPC partner organizations and the general public on a variety of MCRPC projects.
- 911 Addressing – MCRPC assigns addresses for 32 of the 48 municipalities in Mercer County and maintains & updates the street/address range database. Approximately 190 address applications were submitted and processed throughout 2002 and another 165 addresses were assigned in 2003.
- In addition to conducting environmental reviews for the County CDBG projects, MCRPC performs environmental reviews for Pine Township, Greenville Borough, the City of Farrell and the City of Hermitage CDBG Programs on an annual basis. Throughout 2002, MCRPC assisted the City of Farrell extensively in coordinating historic resource reviews through the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission for the City's residential and commercial structures demolition program.
- Participated in task forces exploring changes in economic development and planning being done by the Northwest PA Regional Planning & Development Commission and its 8 member counties (2003).
- Assisted with the formation of the Neshannock Creek Watershed Joint Municipal Authority by Mercer Borough, Coolspring, East Lackawannock, Findley, and Springfield Townships, and Mercer County to facilitate long-range development of a regional sewer system (2003).
- Participated in statewide committee reconsidering financial allocations and targets for transportation projects.
- Helped City of Farrell hire a community and economic development director, a shared position that will work partly on MCRPC activities (2003).
- Assisted in early stages of preparation of the Shenango Watershed River Conservation Plan by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and funded by PA DCNR. (2003)
- Assisted City of Hermitage in planning for the new LindenPointe business park (2003).
- Prepared and submitted to PA DEP, PENN DOT, Governor, and area legislators a position statement opposing enhanced auto emissions inspections for Mercer County as part of a state lawsuit settlement proposal (2003).
- Assisted in meetings and preparation of Jamestown downtown revitalization plan by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (2002-2003).
- Prepared a municipal curative amendment for the Hempfield Township Zoning Ordinance to correct a flaw regarding mineral excavation uses (2002).
- Provided demographic and economic information to aid preparation of the Greenville Borough Act 47 recovery plan (2002).

Other Items of Interest

MCRPC administers the following programs for Mercer County:

Mercer County Brownfields for Housing 2001-2002:

- Mercer County designated its 2001-2002 funds for the Mercer County Housing Coalition's Homeless Shelter (\$34,000), Mercer County Housing Authority's Senior Housing Project (\$12,000) and the Community Action Partnership of Mercer County's Independence Park Project (\$39,155).

Mercer County Brownfields for Housing 2002-2003:

- Mercer County designated its 2002-2003 funds for the Southwest Gardens Economic Development Corporation's Housing Rehabilitation Project (\$20,632.59) and the Community Action Partnership of Mercer County's Rental/Housing Unit Project (\$62,312.41).

Mercer County Brownfields for Housing 2003-2004:

- Mercer County designated its 2003-2004 funds (\$97,361) for housing rehabilitation in municipalities (West Middlesex, Wheatland, Jackson Center Borough/Jackson Township and Fredonia Borough/Fairview Township) that have established programs and guidelines, but currently do not have funding available to undertake further rehabilitation.

Mercer County Affordable Housing Fund

- The Mercer County Affordable Housing Fund Board, along with MCRPC staff, solicited, reviewed, and recommended projects to the Mercer County Commissioners during 2003 for the first-ever round of Mercer County Act 137 Affordable Housing funds. The Community Action Partnership of Mercer County's Rental/Housing Unit Project (\$20,770.80) and the Community Counseling Center Group Home Project (\$32,500) were approved for funding. The Southwest Gardens Economic Development Corporation Home Construction Project (\$150,000) was approved for funding contingent upon approval of the project from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA is to provide matching funds for the project).

- MCRPC has been actively working with the City of Farrell, Mercer County Housing Authority, and developers to develop a Hope VI housing redevelopment project at Steel City Terrace in Farrell, replacing dilapidated public housing units with new single, two, and three family dwelling units. Phase II of the plan, which includes 78 units (29 of which are market-rate rentals and 15 of which are single-family homes for sale) was passed this year by the City, with the technical review for the plan done by MCRPC.

Mercer County Regional Planning Commission 2002 / 2003 Annual Report

Table of Contents

MCRPC Commission Members, Staff & County Commissioners	4
Countywide Recycling System in Place	5
MCRPC Leads Major Countywide Plan Effort	6
Mercer County MPO and Eastgate MPO Cooperative Agreement	8
Countywide Geographic Information System	8
Major Transportation Projects Moving Forward	9
New Zoning Ordinances in Jamestown & Wolf Creek / Zoning Update	10
Subdivision Update	11
Shenango Valley Consolidation Study Completed	12
County Natural Heritage Inventory Completed	12
MCRPC Assists Sharon / Farrell Weed & Seed Program	13
Three New Municipal Members Join the Commission in 2003	13
MCRPC 50 th Anniversary	14
MCRPC Assists Community Development Projects	16
Mercer County Expands KOZ	18
Census Update	19
New Staff Changes in 2002 / 2003	20
Mercer County Solid Waste Authority Activities	20
Committees are Active Backbone of the Commission	21
Other Items of Interest	22

Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

MCRPC Commission Members

Chairman:

Clifford McCandless - Grove City

Vice Chairman:

James Pat White - Hermitage

Secretary:

Thomas R. Stanton - Wheatland

Treasurer:

Mark Smith - Wolf Creek

Jerry Miller - Farrell
 Mark A. Petrillo - Farrell
 Rita Ferringer - Hermitage
 James A. Rollinson - Hermitage
 George Gulla - Sharon
 Stephen Theiss - Sharon
 Frank Smeraglia - Sharon
 Robert Tomko - Clark
 James Carucci, Sr. - Clark
 Larry McAdams - Fredonia
 Patricia McAdams - Fredonia
 Pam Auchter - Greenville
 Burroughs Price - Greenville
 Thomas Shaffer - Grove City
 Todd Sturgeon - Jackson Center
 Darryl Pinney - Jamestown
 Doug McElhane - 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
 Raymond Lucich, Jr. - West Middlesex
 Ray Foster - Wheatland
 Donald Kremm - Delaware
 Caroline Stoyer - Delaware
 Jane Clark - Fairview
 Mont Clark - Fairview
 John Courtney - Findley
 Elliott Lengel - Findley
 Pamela Brown - Hempfield
 Russell L. Dawes - Hempfield
 Mary Gealy - Jackson
 Linda L. Baun - Jackson
 Richard McCullough - Jefferson
 Bert Weston - Jefferson

Ron Faull - Liberty
 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 M. Kaller - Pymatuning
 Walter L. Weir - Pymatuning
 Charles Gilliland - Shenango
 James Eakin - Shenango
 Michael Nashtock - South Pymatuning
 Mourice G. Waltz - South Pymatuning
 Larry T. Gruntz - Springfield
 Judy A. Hassler - Springfield
 Charles Garrett - Wilmington
 Jeff Hoy - Wilmington
 Ray Penland - Wolf Creek
 Michelle Brooks - Mercer County
 Jean Hodge - Mercer County
 James L. Hogan - Mercer County
 Regina Ehrhart - Mercer County
 Jeff Fiedler - Mercer County
 Patricia Meehan - Mercer County
 Patty McCluskey - Mercer County
 Julie Widel - Mercer County
 Olivia Lazor - County Commissioner
 Robert G. Kochems - Solicitor
 Dave George - Borough's Association
 To Be Determined - Supervisor's Association

MCRPC Staff

Dennis G. Puko, Executive Director
 Daniel M. Gracenin, Assistant Director
 Chris Conti, Senior Planner
 Jeremy P. Coxe, Senior Planner
 Andrew Dash, Planner
 Margaret B. Helderfer, Associate Planner
 Carmen L. Reichard, Senior Program Administrator
 Donald A. Blakesley, Senior Program Administrator
 Jill E. Boozer, Program Administrator
 Evelyn Wike, Administrative Secretary

Mercer County Commissioners

Cloyd E. Brenneman, Chairperson
 Kenneth A. Seamans
 Olivia M. Lazor

Committees are active backbone of the Commission

MCRPC has several working committees that undertook important tasks in 2002 / 2003:

- **Zoning & subdivision review committee** – Met monthly with few exceptions to review major subdivision plans, requests for subdivision modifications, and proposed municipal zoning amendments. Committee members were:

Samuel Scott, Chrm. (Stoneboro)	Clifford McCandless (Grove City)
James Rollinson, V. Chrm. (Hermitage)	James L. Hogan (Mercer County)
Fred Brenner (Pine)	Burroughs Price (Greenville)
Chuck Garrett (Wilmington)	Ron Faull (Liberty)
Larry McAdams (Fredonia)	

- **Finance-personnel committee** – Met often in 2002 / 2003 to prepare the budget, consider staff salary changes, and conduct interviews and make recommendations for new hirings. Committee members were:

Fred Brenner, Chrm. (Pine)	Russell Dawes (Hempfield)
Jeff Hoy, Vice Chrm. (Wilmington)	Patty McAdams (Fredonia)
James Rollinson (Hermitage)	Ron Faull (Liberty)
Olivia Lazor (Co. Comm.)	Mark Smith, Ex-Officio (Wolf Creek)
Cliff McCandless, Ex-Officio (Grove City)	

- **Program review committee** – Did not meet in 2002 or 2003, but conducted project and funding reviews via mail and e-mail communications. Committee members were:

Fred Brenner (Pine)	John Courtney (Findley)
Cliff McCandless, Ex-Officio (Grove City)	Rita Ferringer (Hermitage)

- **50th Anniversary committee** – Met several times to plan events and activities for the MCRPC 50th Anniversary. Committee members were:

Jerry Johnson, Chrm. (Mercer)	Jean Hodge (Mercer County)
Patty McAdams (Fredonia)	Tom Stanton (Wheatland)
Pat White (Hermitage)	Ron Faull (Liberty)

New Staff Changes in 2002 / 2003

Planner Fred Frank resigned at the end of December 2002 and was replaced in February by Andrew Dash. A native of Akron, Ohio, Andrew is beginning his first full-time planning job after graduating with an undergraduate degree in geography from the University of Akron. He also worked as an intern for the City of Akron Department of Planning.



Jill Boozar

After nearly 4 years as Secretary for the planning commission, Jill was promoted in January 2003 to Program Administrator for the MCSWA. With the increased workload resulting from new countywide drop-off recycling program, there are now two staff (Jill & Don) dedicated full-time to recycling and solid waste projects for the MCSWA.



Andrew Dash

Mercer County Solid Waste Authority 2002 / 2003 Activities

- Mercer County was approved for a PA DEP Section 901 Planning Grant in 2002 in the amount of \$24,243. The grant is used to reimburse costs expended on updating the County's Solid Waste Management Plan, which was completed in 2001.
- Mercer County received grants totaling \$69,000 in PA DEP funding for the calendar year 2001 Section 904 Recycling Performance Grants. A total of 30 municipalities received funding in this round of applications. The County and three other municipalities applied again in 2002.
- Mercer County reported a 37.5% recycling rate in 2001. This was the highest reported rate for the County in several years. It is attributed to a vast improvement contacting commercial businesses throughout the County, an increase in the availability of recycling and public education.
- The Mercer County Solid Waste Authority sponsored its 5th annual Recycling Poster Contest in 2003. Over 1,300 posters were received from 16 different schools throughout the County.

Countywide Recycling System in Place



Mercer County took a major step in 2002 towards achieving the Governor's 35% by 2004 statewide recycling goal. The Staff's County Recycling Coordinator prepared a grant application on behalf of the Mercer County Solid Waste Authority to the State Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)

The grant funds were used to establish recycling depots in 8 locations around the county. The 24-hour/7 day-a-week depots provide the most convenient recycling service for county residents who live in non-mandated communities and do not have curbside recycling.

Since the start of the program in November 2002, 1,616,410 pounds of recyclable materials have been collected. Each site location provides separate bins for glass, cans, plastic (#1 & #2), cardboard, newspaper, and magazines.

During 2003, the program has grown so quickly that it now takes 3 drivers using 3 different trucks working Monday to Saturday to keep the bins empty. As a result of the added truck trips and travel time to Meadville (where all material is unloaded) the MCSWA will be building a drop-off facility at the Jackson Center Industrial Park just off I-79 & Rt. 62. This material consolidation and transfer facility will allow collection trucks to empty multiple times during the day, resulting in increased efficiency in collections. Funding for the \$1.3 million dollar project will come from a DEP grant awarded to Lawrence & Mercer County in 2001. The project will also include the building of an education & training center as well as offices for the MCSWA.

RECYCLING SITE LOCATIONS:

Jamestown Borough

Corner of Washington Street & Walnut Street

West Middlesex Borough

End of North Street, West of Route 18

Shenango Valley Mall

Parking lot in front of the mall-facing route 62

Wilmington Township

Township Building, 35 Auction Road

Sandy Lake Township

Township Building, Rt. 173

Greenville Wal-Mart

45 Williamson Road

Grove City Wal-Mart

1566 West Main Street Ext.

Findley Township

Township Building, 369 McClelland Road

MCRPC Leads Major Countywide Plan Effort

Following the Commonwealth's Growing Smarter initiative, Mercer County began its most ambitious ever plan to map future growth, development & community improvements. Funding was sought in 2002 and work began in 2003.

Mercer County comprehensive plan

The county plan is examining indicators on county livability – economy, income, population, housing, and others. When completed, the plan will redefine the county's future vision and strategies for long-term community vitality. Particular emphasis is being given to:

- Target growth, revitalization, & rural areas – Mapping of areas where growth is desired, where it is not desired, or where public efforts are needed to revitalize communities.
- Economic development sites – A market-based analysis and pro-formas leading to targeting and development of new sites to serve needs over 10 years.
- Transportation capital projects – A plan to identify the next generation of highway and other improvements to enhance community and economic vitality and travel safety and flow.
- Water & sewer – A plan for upgrading and expanding systems in response to a \$140 million backlog of needs.
- Greenways development – A plan to enhance availability of green and open space quality of life assets.
- Design guide – Suggested design concepts to promote, via regulation or partnership with developers, quality of both greenfield and brownfield development.

Multi-Municipal Plans

1. Greenville-Hempfield – project consultant Mackin Engineering, Pittsburgh
2. Sharpsville school district region (Clark, Sharpsville, South Pymatuning) – project consultant Waltz Consultants, Sharpsville
3. Mercer region (Coolspring, East Lackawannock, Findley, Mercer)
4. Lakeview school district region (Fairview, Jackson, Jackson Center, Lake, Mill Creek, New Lebanon, New Vernon, Sandy Lake B., Sandy Lake T., Stoneboro, Worth)
5. Grove City school district region (Grove City, Liberty, Pine, Springfield, Wolf Creek) – project consultant Graney, Grossman, Colosimo & Associates, Inc. Grove City

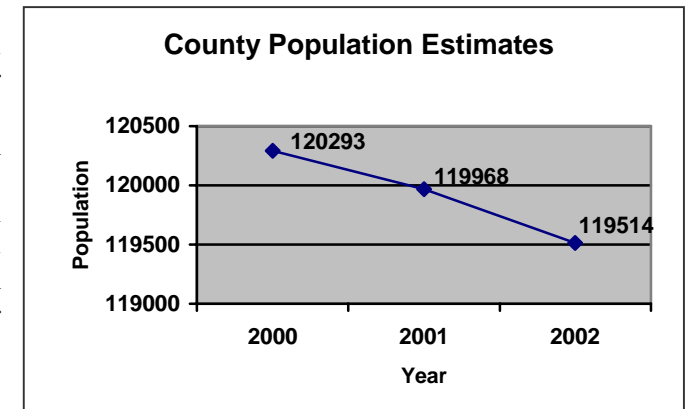
(Not included are the core Shenango Valley municipalities now studying municipal consolidation.)

Census Update

The U.S. Census Bureau has published annual population estimates since the last decennial count in 2000. The latest, the 2002 estimates, were released July 10, 2003. A summary of these estimates shows:

- Mercer County's population has steadily declined since the Census 2000, from 120,293 to 119,514. This decline of 779 residents, or 0.65%, is more than the decline of 710 that occurred in the decade between the 1990 and 2000 counts.

- The population of all three of Mercer County's cities (Farrell, Hermitage, and Sharon) declined between the 2001 and 2002 estimates. The three cities combined lost 305 residents, or 0.8% of their population, in the past year.



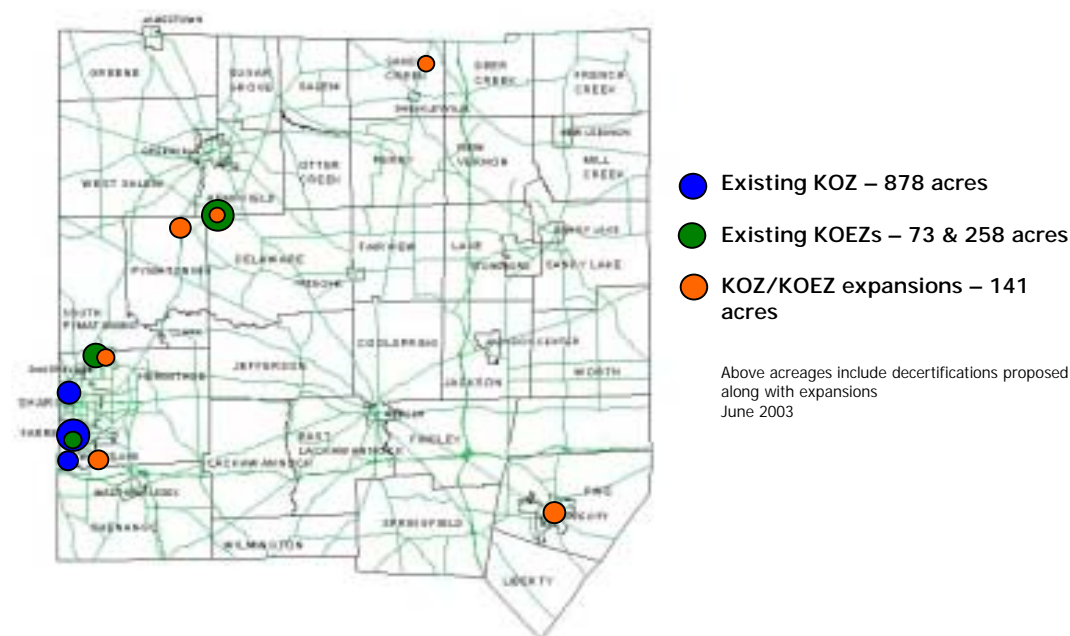
- Additionally, all of Mercer County's fourteen boroughs (Clark, Fredonia, Greenville, Grove City, Jackson Center, Jamestown, Mercer, New Lebanon, Sandy Lake, Sharpsville, Sheakleyville, Stoneboro, West Middlesex, and Wheatland) declined in population as well. These boroughs combined lost 247 residents, or 0.9% of their population, in the past year.
- The population of Mercer County's thirty-one Townships varied between the 2001 and 2002 estimates. Nineteen of the Townships experienced population growth in the past year, eleven experienced population decline, and one experienced no growth or decline. Overall, the population of Mercer County's townships grew by 98 residents, an increase of just under 0.2 percent.

Merger County Expands KOZ

Merger County sought and received approval in 2003 for expansion of the Keystone Opportunity Zone to 141 acres at 5 new sites – Cooper Commons, Grove City; Morocco Partnership, Hermitage; Reynolds Development, Pymatuning & Hempfield; Catron, Sharpville, and Bucks Fabricating, Sandy Creek. These sites, like other existing KOZs, are eligible for extensive state and local tax exemptions in order to encourage their development. MCRPC led the local expansion effort.

MCRPC also handles annual administration of the local KOZ program. Work includes annually notifying and receiving/reviewing tax exemption benefit applications from property owners, businesses, and residents throughout all KOZ areas.

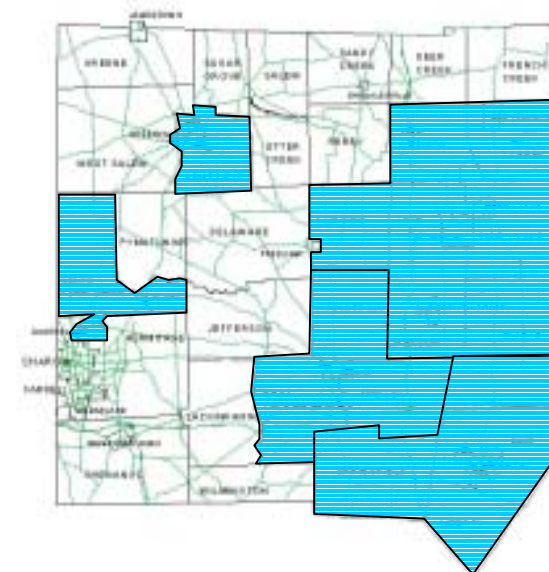
Merger County KOZ/KOEZ Sites



Multi-municipal comprehensive plans

In addition, comprehensive plans are being developed or updated for five different multi-municipal groupings (see map at below).

Multi-municipal plans will be integrated with the county plan to yield consistent strategies for development and community improvement that leaders throughout the county are willing to pursue.



MCRPC and consultants leading efforts

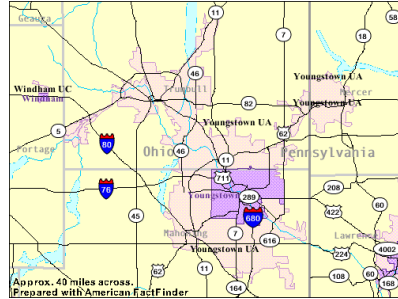
Merger County Regional Planning Commission is in charge of the county comprehensive plan project. It employed the consulting firm of Gannett Fleming (Harrisburg) teamed with sub-consultants Delta Development (Harrisburg) to perform much of the work. MCRPC is coordinating work of the multi-municipal plans, three of which have separate consultants and two of which are being prepared by MCRPC and Gannett Fleming.

The project is funded by grants from several sources including PA DCED, PENN DOT, PA DCNR, and PA DEP, plus local cash and MCRPC in-kind work.

Mercer County MPO and Eastgate MPO Cooperative Transportation

Planning Agreement

A new era of cooperation began in 2002 for the Mercer County and Eastgate (Mahoning/Trumbull) Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Due to changes in the urbanized boundary (Shenango Valley is now part of the Youngstown OH-PA urbanized area) the Mercer/Eastgate MPOs are now required to coordinate transportation planning efforts that may effect the transportation system between the two areas. The cooperative efforts affect all modes of transportation planning.



The organizations started discussions during the summer of 2002. Due to the fact the urbanized area crosses state lines, officials at the federal, state and local levels of government participated in the creation of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The agreement outlines how the MPOs will coordinate future planning efforts. The MOU was formally adopted in January of 2003.

The MPOs and local transit providers (Shenango Valley Shuttle Service, Western Reserve Transit Authority) have also been coordinating efforts developing a mechanism that will allow federal transit dollars to be split between providers in the urbanized area. An agreement on how the federal 2003 dollars will be split was agreed upon in September 2003. Additional work on how future funding will be split is currently ongoing.

Countywide Geographic Information System

The MCRPC initiated a GIS needs study, in cooperation with the consulting firm of GeoDecisions in September of 2003. The purpose of the needs study was to identify potential users and creators of GIS data. The needs study was a result of federal highway funding in the amount of \$356,666 that was received by the Mercer County MPO. This funding stream was the result of the 2000 census, which changed the local urbanized area boundary. The first steps outlined in the study would be to have aerial imagery of the County flown, and then develop informational layers (tax parcels, roadways, etc.) from the imagery.

The MCRPC, with information that was gathered from the needs study, held a meeting in December 2003 with potential partners to discuss the findings of the study. The largest issue is how the federal funding 20% match would be split between county, local and private users. It was decided that additional information was needed in order to make a final decision on moving forward with the system. Work on the development of a Countywide GIS could begin in the spring of 2004.

Greenville Borough's FY 2002 CDBG funds are to be used for Code Enforcement (\$51,327) and the reconstruction of South Second Street (\$66,363).

Greenville Borough's FY 2003 CDBG funds are to be used as follows: Reconstruction of South High Street and Sidewalk Rehabilitation (\$35,000), Code Enforcement (\$60,000), Clearance (\$8,000), and Removal of Architectural Barriers (\$18,270).

MCRPC's CDBG project administration/management is a daily process that occurs throughout the year to insure compliance with numerous applicable local, state and federal laws, regulations and standards. Preparing requests for proposals, project bidding, holding public hearings, financial management, environmental reviews and labor standards compliance are several of the multitude of administrative tasks performed to successfully bring a project to fruition.

MCRPC assisted the following municipalities/organizations in preparing applications:

HOME Program (Housing Rehabilitation)- PA Department of Community and Econ. Development

- Delaware, Jefferson, Pymatuning Townships and Clark Borough (\$500,000), Wheatland Borough (\$500,000)

Community Conservation Partnership Program (Recreation) - PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

- Munnell Run Farm Foundation-Mercer County (\$20,000), Stoneboro Borough (\$60,000)

Stream Signage Program-Resource Conservation and Development Council and Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers*

- Jackson Township (Fox Run, Yellow Creek), Jefferson Township (Daley Run, Lackawannock Creek, Shenango River), West Middlesex Borough (Shenango River)

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Waiver Request-Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection*

- Assisted Mercer County, West Middlesex and Wheatland Borough and South Pymatuning and Shenango Townships in filing a Notice of Intent and Request for Waiver pertaining to the NPDES, MS4 General Permit.

* Project has received funding, partial funding, preliminary approval or approval has been granted.

MCRPC Assists Community Development Projects

MCRPC continued to serve its members community development needs via grant writing and project administration/management expertise in 2002 and 2003.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Projects that received funding include those in the following categories:

Mercer County's FY 2002 CDBG Entitlement Program:

Mercer County's FY 2002 CDBG Entitlement Program funds are to be used as follows: Expansion of Family Development Services into Lakeview, Grove City and West Middlesex (\$20,000); Demolition (\$15,000) and a Downtown Revitalization Plan (\$18,000) in Jamestown Borough; Removal of architectural barriers at the Clark Borough Building (\$49,300); Removal of architectural barriers at Chestnut Street and the Borough Building in Wheatland (\$40,800); Transportation / Recreation Services for LMI Persons for the Mercer County COG (\$29,000); Housing Rehabilitation (\$93,599) and Removal of architectural barriers at the Mercer County Courthouse (\$50,000).

Mercer County's FY 2003 CDBG Entitlement Program:

Mercer County's FY 2003 CDBG Entitlement Program funds are to be used as follows: Water system improvements in Fredonia Borough (\$248,752); Sewer system improvements in Jamestown Borough (\$14,500); Removal of architectural barriers in Mercer Borough (\$27,650); Transportation/recreation services for LMI persons for the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments (\$10,000).

Pine Township / Greenville FY 2002 and 2003 CDBG Entitlement Programs:

Pine Township will use funds from its FY 2002 and 2003 CDBG Entitlement Program (in addition to 2000 and 2004) to extend new sanitary sewer service to twenty-two (22) homes that currently are characterized by failing on-lot septic systems. The total project cost will be approximately \$400,000.

Major Transportation Projects Moving Forward

State Transportation Commission Hearings Held

The MCRPC along with the MPO, PENN DOT, County and local officials have been working to see that the top priority projects, as outlined by the MPO, continue to move to construction. During 2002/2003 MCRPC staff participated on advisory committees that have been set up to gather public input on each of the priority projects. The MCRPC is pleased to report that each of the top priority projects have moved to the design phase.

Top priority projects:

- I-79/PA208 Interchange
- Broadway Corridor
- Highland Road
- Lamor/Pine Hollow
- PA60/PA318 Interchange

It is expected that both the I-79/PA208 and Lamor/Pine Hollow projects will complete final design by the end of 2004 with construction occurring in 2005. The MCRPC/MPO will continue to work with PENN DOT to secure funding for the remaining projects.

In addition to the movement of the priority projects the MCRPC/MPO and PENN DOT has again started the process of updating both the State's 12-Year program and the short range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The plans are updated on a semi-annual basis, and kicked off with the State Transportation Commission hearings that were held in Hermitage on September 12, 2003. Each of the plans will continue to be developed by the MCRPC/MPO during the winter and spring, and be formally adopted in July 2004.

- MCRPC completed the Broadway Corridor Study (Hermitage) with assistance from the City of Hermitage and the consulting firm of Wilbur Smith Associates, Inc..

New Zoning Ordinances in Jamestown & Wolf Creek Township

Revisions in Stoneboro & Hempfield Township

MCRPC completed significant work in new and revised zoning ordinances in 2002-03, incorporating new and creative concepts.

- **Wolf Creek Township** – the Township’s first zoning ordinance is currently in draft form, and will hope to have been revised as needed and adopted in the beginning of 2004. MCRPC prepared the ordinance working with the Township. The ordinance includes four zones, which concentrate more dense development around the I-80 / SR 173 interchange, mixed uses in the SR 173 corridor, and rural uses throughout the majority of the Township.
- **Jamestown Borough** – The Borough's first zoning ordinance is also currently in draft form, and a council meeting to discuss adoption is slated for January of 2004. MCRPC prepared the ordinance working with Borough leaders and residents.
- **Stoneboro Borough** - An ordinance revision was adopted by the Borough in 2002. It updates the ordinance to current law and zoning concepts, and to more accurately reflect the goals and objectives of the Borough and its residents.
- **Hempfield Township** – A major ordinance revision was adopted by the township in 2002. It updates the ordinance to current law and zoning concepts and includes more rural preservation and mixed use opportunities.

MCRPC also provided assistance to:

- Liberty Township – updates to their communication tower zoning provisions
- Liberty & Pine Townships - revision of Planned Development to allow a large condo-style development in the Townships
- Otter Creek Township - series of minor updates throughout the Zoning Ordinance, including new, more concise sign regulations
- Sandy Lake Borough - created new, parcel based zoning map
- Sharpsville Borough - rezoning study of areas along Main Street
- Shenango Township – creation of a new zoning district to allow office/commercial park and light industrial development
- Wilmington Township – an overhaul of their communication tower zoning provisions.

Through the course of 2002 & 2003, MCRPC and its zoning and subdivision review committee reviewed and made recommendations, in accord with the PA Municipalities Planning Code on 36 zoning amendments – 16 rezoning requests, 19 text changes, and one new zoning ordinance – involving 14 different municipalities.

MCRPC 50th Anniversary



(PA Representative Mike Gritza, Jerry Johnson, Dave George & Doug Bradley)



*Don Blakesley, MCRPC staff
Lisa Holm, Winslow Engineering
Peggy Heldorfer, MCRPC staff*



*(Reps from original member municipalities)
Bill Morocco, Farrell, Rosette Fisher, Sharon
Mike Nashtock, South Pymatuning, Dave George, West Middlesex
Dave Cusick, Wheatland, Tom Stanton, Wheatland*

MCRPC 50th Anniversary

In 2002, the commission celebrated its 50th Anniversary. The main event was a banquet held December 6 at the Rosemont in Sharon, attended by 170 guests. Other events included a summer homecoming picnic, public open house at the MCRPC office, photo contest, traveling exhibit, and declaration of October as “Planning Great Communities in Mercer County” month.



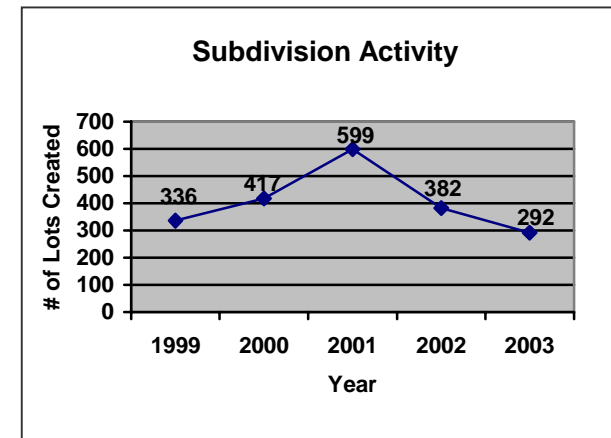
(PA Senator Bob Robbins & Michele Brooks, MCRPC Rep. for County, from Jamestown)



(Guest Speaker: Norm Krumholz)

Subdivision Update

The past two years have shown a decrease in subdivision activity. In 2002, 216 subdivisions were approved by MCRPC, creating 382 lots. In addition, 22 plans were reviewed, and 37 lots created, through municipalities with local Subdivision Ordinances that MCRPC does the technical review for. In 2003, 179 subdivisions were approved by MCRPC, which created 292 lots. In addition, 22 plans were reviewed, and 56 lots created, through municipalities with local Subdivision Ordinances that MCRPC does the technical review for. These numbers reverse the previous trend of increased subdivision activity in the County. In 1999, 336 lots were created, to 417 in 2000, to 599 in 2001.



Major Plans Reviewed by MCRPC in 2002 & 2003:

- Village Park, Final Plan Phase IV-D, Pine Township, 23 lots
- Pine Grove Mobile Home Park Expansion, Preliminary- Cool-spring Township, 51 lots
- Hermitage Senior Citizens Complex Planned Residential Development (PRD) - City of Hermitage, 60 senior apartments
- The Ledges of Pierce Bluffs Planned Residential Development (PRD)- City of Hermitage, 19 condominiums
- Summit Estates Mobile Home Park, Preliminary & Final Plan (Phase I)- West Salem Township
- Country Village Estates, Final Plan, Hempfield Township, 7 lots
- New England Estates, Final Plan- Pine Township, 37 lots
- Hemlock Mobile Home Park, Final Plan, Phase II- Wolf Creek Township, 20 lots
- The Homestead, Final Plan- Hempfield Township, 61 lots

Shenango Valley Consolidation Study Completed

The Shenango Valley Intergovernmental Study Committee completed in October 2003 nearly four years of work studying the potential consolidation of Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Sharpsville, and Wheatland. MCRPC assisted in preparing information and facilitating discussion and analysis for the committee. MCRPC also alerted the committee of declining economic and social conditions in the Valley and emphasized the importance change to address these problems.



The committee concluded that consolidation could not be recommended to the participating municipalities. It found that, in the short term, either additional tax or fee revenue would have to be raised to fund the ideal consolidated government model, or the consolidated government would have to be fiscally trimmed below a level of personnel, wages, or service as desired in the model.

The committee did recommend that the Valley municipalities pursue certain functional consolidations, like sanitary sewer systems, and look to cooperate more closely and more often.

County Natural Heritage Inventory Completed



Mercer County joined the ranks for counties with a completed Natural Heritage Inventory. The Commonwealth has been funding NHIs with the intent that all counties will have information on important biological and natural resources to aid in planning. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy prepared the report. MCRPC coordinated local input including a 30-member advisory committee that met three times in 2002 and 2003 to review and critique findings.

The inventory recognized 31 areas of significance in 35 of the county's 48 municipalities. Areas include exceptional wetlands, rare plant or animal species, and unique natural "communities." Both French Creek, nationally-recognized, and the Shenango River were identified as being exceptionally significant. Also, some biological species thought to be rare were found in abundance and, as a result, may be declassified as protected species.

MCRPC Assists Sharon / Farrell Weed & Seed Program

MCRPC actively participated in the Sharon / Farrell Weed & Seed Program throughout 2002 and 2003. Weed and Seed focuses on community-driven prevention, while it attacks the underlying roots that contribute to crime, such as unemployment, lack of a quality education and widespread poverty. It involves collaborative law enforcement between local and state crime fighting teams to eliminate drugs and violence in targeted neighborhoods. At the same time, it works to revitalize and strengthen local leadership.

MCRPC was active in the AID Team leadership meetings, several sub-committees and assisted in the planning phase of the community revitalization plan. MCRPC coordinated a windshield survey throughout the 60-block area in order to map the land use and housing conditions on the target area. This effort culminated in producing GIS based maps for use by the AID Team and the Tall team in community revitalization efforts.

Three new municipal members in 2003

Three municipalities petitioned to join MCRPC and were admitted as members in 2003:

- Delaware Township
- East Lackawannock Township
- Coolspring Township

Delaware Township desired assistance to undertake a housing rehab program. MCRPC matched Delaware with similar interests in Jefferson and Pymatuning Townships and Clark Borough and submitted in September 2003 a joint application for PA HOME funds. East Lackawannock and Coolspring Townships are both participating in the Mercer area multi-municipal plan and new Neshannock Joint Municipal Authority, both assisted by MCRPC. Also, both are looking forward to working with MCRPC to update zoning ordinances.

MCRPC membership now includes the county and 35 of the county's 48 municipalities.