

Mercer Region Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan
March 29, 2005 Public Meeting

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) Exercise Results

Meeting participants were given the opportunity to rank the discussion exercise items. Each participant was given a certain number of dots to be able to prioritize the issues. The numbers following a bulleted item are the amount of dots the issue received.

Strengths

- Access (hub of Mercer County) **3**
- Plenty of Developable Land Twps. – a lot of open space – potential for controlled growth – potential for preservation of rural character **3**
- Historic Mercer - County Seat – layout of town (square) **3**
- Good Schools **2**
- Availability of higher education locally **2**
- Interstates 79&80 – Access Roads **1**
- Access to larger metro areas (Erie, Pittsburgh, Cleveland) Airports **1**
- Recreational Opportunities (In region and nearby)
- Rural/Setting/Small Community
- Location of County Seat
- Adequate Infrastructure
- Blue-Collar Labor Force
- Low Cost of Living (esp. Housing)
- Low Crime
- Taxes are lower than many surrounding areas
- Personal attention of businesses
- Recreation

Weakness

- Adequate Sewage (capacity, treatments)/ Lack of Infrastructure **12**
- Lack of cultural opportunities for young people (Theatre, recreation) Year-round **5**
- Job Opportunities/Industrial **3**
- Mentality of what jobs need to be created still focus on heavy industry; not knowledge economy high-tech **3**
- Abandoned sites/Brownfields **1**
- Vacant store fronts (Mercer) Brownfield sites empty **1**
- Weak Economy **1**
- Youth Leaving area **1**
- Lack of Capital (\$) **1**
- Floodplain

- Railroad access
- Underutilized land
- Proximity to higher education
- Lack of cooperation with nearby universities or colleges
- Agencies for economic development
- Labor climate (unions)
- Government costs/taxes
- Lack of available sites for development (shovel ready)
- Lack of recreational facilities
- Parking in Mercer
- Non-taxable property
- Bedroom Community (aging population)
- Perception of County Government
- Lack of Political Strength – location of area in relation to capital (Harrisburg)

Opportunities

- Increased sewage/water to encourage controlled growth **5**
- Farmland preservation (Open Space) **3**
- Cooperation to bring economic Development **3**
- Condo Development **3**
- Neshannock creek watershed group – Regional approach to stormwater & sewer **2**
- Tax Sharing Possibilities **2**
- Multi-Municipal Approach to Planning **2**
- Recreation – Neshannock Creek – railways, trails **2**
- Four local colleges in area more cultural attractions to bring things/people here **1**
- Half-way between Pittsburgh and Cleveland **1**
- State Parks – attractions **1**
- Regional approach to tourism/open space
- Transportation/Other ways “around” Mercer
- Interstate access
- Tourism – Advertising
- Rural industry/Cottage industries
- Networking of tourist sites/ Longer-term tourism
- Capitalize off of lack of commute
- Possibility of Potential Merger
- Regional Operations Center
- Capitalizing on nearby tourism (outlets)
- Area available for development but no infrastructure
- Target zoning & development to proper areas. (SRs)
- Cost of Living – Housing prices, Land

Threats

- Lack of Youth Retention “Brain Drain” **3**
- Lack of Political Clout @ State & Federal Gov’t **3**
- Tunnel Vision of local leaders **3**
- Losing jobs to other states, state policies **3**
- Shenango Valley vs. Rest of County **1**
- Intergovernmental Cooperation **1**
- Fragmented Governments **1**
- Lack of Commercial Base **1**
- Sewer Plant Issues **1**
- State Government Regulation **1**
- Fear of “Donut Hole” in Mercer
- Funding for Cultural Facilities
- Tax Base (Lack Of)
- Overseas Ownership of land @I80/19 Interchange
- Development – Sprawl into rural areas
- Public conception – maintaining status quo, afraid of change
- Crime – more development = more crime
- Unfunded mandates
- Costs to upkeep infrastructure
- Recreation threatened by development or lack of funding