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# Towards a Vision for the Future: The Need for Growth Management Strategies

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# Towards A Vision For The Future: The Need For Growth Management Strategies\*

It is with great pleasure that I come to you today. The topic of growth management is particularly timely and critically important to the quality of life of the Commonwealth. I hope that my comments will help you to think about the important changes that you will be facing and how to react to them.

A look at Pennsylvania from a national perspective indeed illustrates that it is the Keystone State. Parts of it are eastern and tied into megalopolis. Indeed, the Lehigh Valley is now part of the Regional Plan of New York. Parts of it are upper-south in character, parts are thrust into the midwest, and parts are now in the economic sphere of Baltimore and Washington. (I think the fact that most surprised me while I researched this paper was that Gettysburg will be less than thirty minutes away from the new Washington Metro connection in Frederick). What all this points to is that the Commonwealth, tied as it is to different regions of the nation, is likely to be undergoing significant change in the years to come. Will Pennsylvania's agricultural lands withstand the pressures of suburbanization? Will Pennsylvania be able to grow, nurture and expand its homegrown industries? And can it do so while protecting the environment? Questions such as the above all lead to two key points: Pennsylvania will have to cope with change and will have to protect its quality of life. These are not easy tasks.

The problems/opportunities facing the Commonwealth must be first brought into focus. Indeed, much like the European Community nations which are required to create long term master plans, it may well be time for Pennsylvanians to develop a vision of its future. This need not be utopian or "pie in the sky". Rather it could be based upon trends and growth patterns that are emerging right now. As I go through these observations and predictions, I would like you to ask yourselves if they represent the type of future that you want for the state. If they do not then I would ask you to think about the changes that you would want to make to insure that Pennsylvania



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keeps its high quality of life. I suggest that, unless change happens, the following will occur:

a) Your largest cities will be the homes of a small group of the very rich and a large group of the very poor. You will not recapture the middle class in these cities until personal safety and high quality schools are insured.

Further, in most cities jobs are leaving faster than people and the dream of a single family home is still extremely strong.

b) Your suburban population will only increase with the concomitant loss of farmland. The good news is that new investment is likely. The bad news is that once your farmland is gone its lost forever.

c) Your population will be older with the need to provide increased elderly services. The good news is that Pennsylvanians are living longer and having less children. The bad news is that there are enormous social costs.

d) Your labor pool will no longer be made up predominantly of native-born, white, males. In fact, the majority of the Pennsylvania workforce of tomorrow is likely to be made up of females, non-white people and newcomers to America. Major changes in the

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social climate of the workforce will have to take place: Van pools, split shifts and daycare centers will be increasingly the order of the day.

e) Your industrial base will be increasingly export oriented and will have to meet the European Community head on: A fat firm will be an inefficient firm. The competition is no longer the firm in Ohio or Rhode Island. It is now from Portugal, Germany or Italy.

f) You will be increasingly pressured to assist manufacturing firms that are in trouble. Given increasingly scarce resources, you will have to decide when to "fish or cut bait". You may well have to hurry history along. It makes no sense to help a firm that, once aid is given, still cannot compete in Pennsylvania.

g) Your environmental clean-up laws, already amongst the toughest in the nation, are likely to become tougher: What will you do with your older facilities that are so valuable yet are full of environmental pollutants? They need to be saved yet they are rapidly decaying.

h) Your land use patterns will change. There will be more residential sprawl, more commercial malls, less industrial land, less agricultural land and a continuous sense of decline in your older downtowns.

i) You will be more automobile dependent than at present. Your train, bus and subway systems will not be able to meet the service requirements of the new settlement patterns. (And all of the above will occur without major population growth!).

j) Your infrastructure systems (roads, sewer, water, gas, electric and telephone systems) will not keep pace with spreading growth. In fact, in most communities, capital improvements planning is dead.

k) Finally, the pace of change will only increase. Issues concerning the worker, the family, the town, the industrial and commercial base, environmental quality and technological change are all before us: What we are is not what we will become.

I hope that the above does not upset you too much for it is a vision that people like ourselves have helped to create and is one that will become reality

unless we do something. I think we have to promote fundamental change and become active planners at the state level. Above all, we have to channel growth and development to locations where it belongs and under conditions that protect the Pennsylvania quality of life. In fact, I would urge all of you to consider the following:

a) Developing slow growth or no growth legislation in agricultural communities that is designed to protect your prime farmlands from conversion to industrial or commercial uses.

b) Developing policies that restrict infrastructure expansion into open areas until the build-up and developing areas approach capacity.

c) Developing linkage programs that require developers of new industrial parks or retail malls to reinvest in older industrial or commercial areas at the same time.

d) Link upscale residential building with bonus provisions such that affordable housing is created in suburbia.

e) Create the strongest possible wetland, aquifer recharge and watershed protection possible at the local level.

f) Negotiate with new firms such that the special needs of the new workforce are met. This includes daycare, van pooling, split shifts and "English as a Second Language" training.

g) Do not be afraid to shed local industry if it will not work. You must concentrate on growth areas that are tied to Pennsylvania and its universities. Above all there is need to nurture local industrial efforts.

h) Above all, we must stimulate the creation of comprehensive local zoning that is protective of the environment and community character, that provides land for growth, that allows agricultural development and that insures open space. Without it, all of the above will not work.

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*"...we have to channel growth and development to locations where it belongs and under conditions that protect the Pennsylvania quality of life."*

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In summary, the mixture that is Pennsylvania is unique among our states. Its cities, mine towns, mill towns, farm towns, its ocean and lake fronts, its valleys and mountains offer a rich pallet of dynamic colors. We need to keep these colors vivid and paint them on our canvas such that all Pennsylvanians can appreciate them for years to come.

\* Keynote address, 1991 Spring Conference, Pennsylvania Economic Development Association