

Flood Reinvestment Force Inc Economic Development
Council of Northampton PA, New Directors and
Opportunities for Change in Northampton PA, ^{report} 1972 Sept 1

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**ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL
OF NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

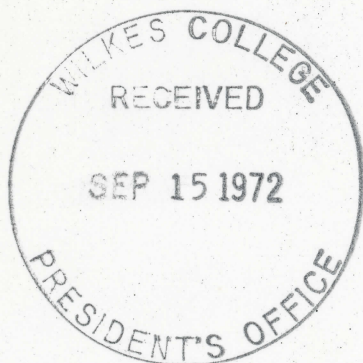


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TO: Interested Agencies and Individuals
FROM: Howard J. Grossman, Executive Director
DATE: September 11, 1972
SUBJECT: Enclosed report titled, "New Directions and Opportunities
for Change in Northeastern Pennsylvania"

Enclosed you will find a copy of the report titled, "New Directions and Opportunities for Change in Northeastern Pennsylvania," which represents a long range program for flood recovery, officially adopted by the EDCNP Board of Directors as a guide on August 10, 1972. We hope the report will be of assistance to you in your work and we would be happy to answer any questions you have concerning its contents.

Please do not hesitate to contact members of the EDCNP staff regarding the report.



NEW DIRECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE
IN NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

An Agenda for Regional Cooperative Action
Following the Tropical Storm Agnes Disaster of 1972
unanimously adopted by the EDCNP Board of Directors
at a special meeting held on August 10, 1972

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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INTRODUCTION

Tropical Storm Agnes produced unprecedented devastation in the "urban heartland" of Luzerne County, as well as destruction in parts of Schuylkill and Carbon Counties. In fact, the wet weather preceding the flood and flash-flooding in some areas left few areas of the seven-county northeast region untouched. Agriculture and tourism have been disrupted over most of the region. Furthermore, the impact of the flood is not only regional in geography; it is also regional because of the interdependence of the devastated areas--economically and socially--with the adjacent "linear city" running northward to Carbondale and with the less populous adjacent counties. Undeniably the impact is regional and requires a regional approach to its solution.

Cooperative Action

This regional approach will require cooperation among numerous citizens, local governments, authorities, legislators, nonprofit organizations and private businesses. It will require close liaison with Commonwealth and federal agencies. In an ironic sense, the flood presents the region with challenges and opportunities and resources which will never be presented again. A plan of action must be adopted which will allow the region's institutions to combine their efforts and efficiently accomplish what is needed.

Long Range and Short Range Programs

This program calls for the involvement of many organizations in the area who influence future development. It is not a complete program. In fact, it deliberately does not discuss many short-range or ongoing problems in which the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania and other agencies are involved. Although immediate programs associated with flood relief are vital, EDCNP sees a great need for longer-range planning of programs--an activity that seems to have been given minimal attention since the disaster. Many agencies and individuals including EDCNP have been working on an accelerated basis to meet short term emergency needs. This long range program is intended to serve as a framework by which northeastern Pennsylvania can implement an agenda for long-term, permanent regional action.

PREFACE

In light of the great disaster which wrought destruction, both emotional and physical, in large areas of northeastern Pennsylvania, the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania has re-examined the status of regional problems on a broad front. Ironically, the Council recognizes that many opportunities now exist, which did not exist prior to the floods--opportunities to make positive and lasting changes within the region. An agenda for regional action is needed to provide direction to the efforts of many private and public organizations who have a role in shaping the future. This report is intended as one input for discussion and consideration by the area's leadership.

The broad goals of the region, as defined by the leadership of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, provide an outline for systematically considering the development task before us. They are repeated below:

- I. Diversify the economy
 - Sub-goal: Improve employment opportunities
 - Sub-goal: Raise per capita incomes
- II. Develop Human resources
 - Sub-goal: Improve education and manpower programs
 - Sub-goal: Increase social services
- III. Improve physical environment
 - Sub-goal: Conserve and develop natural resources
 - Sub-goal: Improve community facilities
 - Sub-goal: Enhance appearance of communities
- IV. Modernize local government
- V. Improve and diversify transportation system
- VI. Increase housing quality and supply
- VII. Increase involvement in public affairs
 - Sub-goal: Encourage solution of regional problems
 - Sub-goal: Provide public information on regional progress

SUMMARY

I. Diversify the economy

1. Continue and accelerate regional economic diversification to include implementation of the recommendations found in the economic diversification report prepared by Arthur D. Little, Inc. for the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania.
2. Analyze and develop recommendations concerning the tourism potential of northeastern Pennsylvania to the year 2000, keyed to the intervening target of the 1976 Bicentennial celebration of the United States.
3. Analyze the growth in areas of northeastern Pennsylvania which were not directly affected by Tropical Storm Agnes, but which have received or might receive, considerable population increases.
4. Consider establishment of an organization similar to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation of the 1930's as a basis for guaranteeing bank loans, bond issues, and other financial paper needed in the flood recovery.

II. Develop human resources

1. Accelerate programs to meet the educational and training needs of all area residents to include the establishment of a permanent county community college in flood affected Luzerne County and the strengthening of all educational institutions in the region.
2. Establish permanent one-stop human service centers in various parts of the region.
3. Develop new programs to first assist the elderly who were adversely affected by the floods and, afterward, to organize senior citizen councils at both the area and regional levels.
4. Develop a youth leadership council at both the area and regional levels to involve youth in regional improvement.
5. Speed up efforts to improve the delivery of health services, especially in view of physical and emotional health problems associated with the flood.
6. Consider implementation of measures now proposed by the Commonwealth to encourage rapid delivery of all educational services to residents of northeastern Pennsylvania.
7. Initiate special manpower training programs to train skilled construction laborers and to provide for labor needs of more technical industries which can be attracted to the area.

III. Improve the physical environment

1. Accelerate mine flushing, culm bank removal and acid mine drainage programs to resolve mining-related problems in the region as generally outlined in the MITRE report.
2. Initiate a regional solid waste management program which would include recommendations for a multi-county approach to solid waste management.
3. Implement flood plain zoning and other flood prevention techniques within the flood areas and eventually all areas of the region.
4. Implement plans to organize a Northeastern Pennsylvania Environmental Coalition (NEPEC) and an affiliated Northeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the national Nature Conservancy to insure the preservation of open space and unique natural and historical areas.
5. Accelerate efforts to organize a Resource Conservation and Development project, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a multi-county effort to speed up conservation of natural resources (including flood control measures).

IV. Modernize local government

1. Establish a central clearinghouse for all federal and State programs to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of these programs to county and municipal governments.
2. Establish a regional capital programming system to plan for upgrading or construction of needed public facilities in an efficient, orderly basis.
3. Expand the grant project development capability at the regional level to enable all governments and private sector interests in the region to maximize benefits from federal and State governmental resources.
4. Encourage modernization of local government through home rule via self-examination by all units of government as to potential structural changes, optional plans of government, and home rule charters.
5. Establish a regional comprehensive planning program (covering economic, social, physical and governmental improvements) to provide guidelines on a five-, and ten-year basis to the year 2000.
6. Examine the fiscal problems facing governments and consider potential for computerized assessments, alternative revenue sources, redistribution of services and functions by level of government, tax sharing and other innovative techniques.
7. Encourage the replacement of obsolete municipal buildings, wherever possible, with regional governmental buildings, serving several contiguous municipalities.
8. Encourage the provision of governmental services through intergovernmental agreements, purchase-of-service contracts, and transfer of services

to the level of government best able to perform the services efficiently.

9. Utilize the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 as a basis for meeting government responsibilities throughout the region. This act provides for training of municipal officials and innovative approaches to governmental improvement.

V. Improve and diversify transportation system

1. Establish a regional system plan and development program for all types of transportation, including administrative structure, airport needs and bus and rail requirements.

VI. Increase housing quality and supply

1. Implement the New Community concept for northeastern Pennsylvania in one or more locations.

2. Speed the redevelopment of residential areas where and when a recurrence of the recent flood damage can be insured and--where this is not possible--provide for new planned residential development.

VII. Increase involvement in public affairs

1. Establish a "Goals for Northeastern Pennsylvania" project to reach a consensus on problems and solutions to the year 2000.

2. Establish a single Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in northeastern Pennsylvania.

3. Use the Neighborhood Assistance Act to provide a means for private firms to assist in meeting the needs of the region, including the specific problems of the Wyoming Valley as a result of the floods, through tax credits for contributed products and services.

4. Establish a program for the flood areas which would bring together all elements to accomplish many of the above recommendations. Such an effort might be similar to the "Hartford Process" launched in Hartford, Connecticut recently.

I. DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY

I-1. Economic Diversification Through Promotion of "Investment Package"

Northeastern Pennsylvania has long been engaged in efforts to diversify its economic base; i.e., to overcome its former dependence on Anthracite mining. While this program has been a great success story for the former Anthracite counties, we now find ourselves with an unusually high dependence on manufacturing-- especially in the low-technology, low-skill, and low-paying manufacturing categories of apparel, shoes, and tobacco. Industrial development groups have great interest in further diversifying into more technical, higher wage industries. But up to now there has been no guide as to the economic activities most suited to northeastern Pennsylvania.

However, the Arthur D. Little report, through a grant from the Economic Development Administration, and recently completed for EDCNP, offers such a guide. It contains a list of 20 selected manufacturing categories and a similar number of service industries suited to the area's assets. This guide assumes greater importance now because of the recent floods, as a means of attracting investment in high-technology, growth industries, including service industries, and as a blueprint for accomplishing the greater economic diversification needed by the area.

The prospects are enhanced because of the delivery system now in existence;

1. A number of sizeable, new industrial parks now being planned or developed, located outside the flood plain;
2. The industrial development organizations and their know-how;
3. The new availability of EDA funding for industrial park "packages" in Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties (which may be extended to other counties), plus the ARC and other State and Federal monies for infrastructure in the parks;
4. The low-interest PIDA and SBA loans and the eligibility of Luzerne and Schuylkill Counties for large EDA loans; and
5. Enhanced prospects of public-private cooperation in these endeavors and enhanced prospects for region-wide cooperation to accomplish what is needed.

Not entirely unrelated to the above because of its relevance to the new industrial parks is the completed, but not-yet-released U.S. Department of Agriculture study of the region's food distribution system. The latter has gained new emphasis with the partial destruction of the wholesale district of Wilkes-Barre by fire during the flood.

I-2. Tourism Development and the Bicentennial

Any long-range program for Northeastern Pennsylvania must include a total examination of the tourist and travel industry of the region. The travel industry should be recognized as key basis of economic expansion for the region. The Bicentennial celebration of the United States in 1976 can be a target not only for a re-examination of the role that the tourist and travel industry plays in the region, but as a target for many of the other programs delineated in this long-range program. The historic role which the region has played in the history of Pennsylvania and the nation should be stressed in this evaluation. A total examination of the tourism industry to the year 2000, including new and perhaps as yet undiscovered mechanisms for capturing larger pieces of the travel industry, should be an important part of the region's recovery and expansion program.

I-3. Analysis and Planning for Growth Impact Areas

One of the byproducts of the recent floods has been the spillover effect on areas which did not receive flooding but did receive considerable increases of population either of a temporary nature or, more significantly, of a more permanent nature, depending on decisions by affected residents who may decide not to return home. Impact on governmental services and economic development must be measured at the regional, county and municipal levels. School districts, from at least a short-term, if not a long-term basis are being vitally affected by this redistribution. The short-term and long-term impacts of redistribution of the demand for services must be examined. Recommendations are needed as to courses of action for the public and private sectors within the region. Local governments and school districts should be surveyed as to the impact and, where necessary, special plans developed to accommodate changes.

I-4. Reconstruction Financing

The use of the 1930's model of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation has been suggested. The RFC was a federal agency designed to stimulate recovery through lending money to railroads, banks, insurance companies, agricultural credit agencies, industrial and commercial enterprises, local governments, etc. It proved of incalculable value in supporting key points of the nation's economy whose collapse would have been catastrophic. In the present situation, the model could be used to back municipal and corporate securities with the full faith and credit of the State or Federal government. Thus, those governments and corporations ineligible for adequate financial aid through SBA and other sources would have their credit insured, preventing their interest costs from skyrocketing due to their adversity.

Other financing mechanisms are worth consideration, including establishment of community development corporations (one has been proposed for the Susquehanna Economic Development Association area), quick passage of measures to broaden the authority and increase the funds available to Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA), establishing an organization similar to New York's Urban Development Corporation to stimulate urban renewal and housing, etc.

II. DEVELOP HUMAN RESOURCES

II-1. Educational Institutions

One of the best indices of a region's economic viability and liability is the quality of its educational system. Tropical Storm Agnes has temporarily dealt a severe blow to the physical plant of a large segment of northeastern Pennsylvania's educational system. The current situation is serious because of questionable eligibility of the private and parochial schools for disaster grants-in-aid. This may mean that many of the elementary, secondary schools and colleges in the region may not be rebuilt; or it may take a considerable time to rehabilitate them. Furthermore, many of these schools probably should not be rebuilt in their existing locations for a wide variety of reasons (changes in population; unsuitable locations because of traffic congestion, congested development patterns; etc.)

In view of this, it would be helpful to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of school building programs to ascertain their present validity in the wake of the flood.

Concepts which should be considered include the possibility of creating "educational parks," sharing of faculty, sharing of facilities, and the development of innovative ways to package state and federal loan and grant-in-aid programs. Such an evaluation should explore possibilities of expediting such priority projects as: the development of the Luzerne County Community College complex, the rehabilitation and expansion of Wilkes and King's Colleges' facilities, and means of assisting the Wyoming Seminary and the other private and parochial school systems in northeastern Pennsylvania to provide for needed services. Shifts in pupil load, the impact on facilities, and means of adjusting to the changed situation should be considered. Education can play a vital role in long-term recovery efforts through regular programs and special manpower training.

II-2. One-Stop Service Centers

Since many social agency buildings and facilities were damaged or destroyed by the flood, the creation of a central service complex which would house a multitude of social agencies should be investigated. The concept of the one-stop service center, necessitated by the flood to eliminate numerous visitations to various agencies situated in different locations, should be continued. The creation of a one-stop center would house many social agencies, thus reducing confusion on the part of the consumer, minimizing operating costs and encouraging cooperation among agencies. Several such centers could be established in a variety of neighborhoods to serve the people in need of services.

II-3. Senior Citizen Programs

Perhaps the group of people most severely affected by the floods was the elderly. It is obvious that unique problems exist for people of age 65 years and older. Through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW), efforts must be made to expand existing services and create new ones for this portion of our population. The DPW, in fact, is making application for special funding for the elderly. One method of special assistance is the area-wide system model. Through this model the elderly are looked upon as a group, regardless of the municipality in which they live. Programs are planned and designed to render direct services to meet special needs of their portion of our population. Programs such as housing, employment, cultural and social involvement, transportation and health services should be expanded. The resources of senior citizens should be marshalled and utilized as a force to help in both the recovery and long range programs. A volunteer regional senior citizen action corps could be established to accomplish this task.

II-4. Youth Action Council

EDCNP has for the past several years been engaged in a Youth Leadership Development Program. The prime purpose of this program is to retard outmigration of our potential leaders. It is believed this program has successfully aided in accomplishing this goal and should be continued. It is even more critical now in light of the "Agnes" floods.

As an additional step to retain our young people in the region, the establishment of a regional youth council would be a key instrument for mobilizing action programs for improving community development. This council would be a sounding board for not only youth programs in the region, but other major projects in northeastern Pennsylvania.

The youth council would meet periodically and suggest programs which would be directed at making the area more desirable as a place for them to live and work and help solve regional problems. If the region is to rebuild and become an even better place to live, the young people of the region must be retained and utilized in leadership capacities.

II-5. Flood-Related and Longer-Term Health Programs

The disaster caused destruction to many vital health facilities and services, in addition to producing serious emotional and physical health problems. As the Health and Hospital Planning Council (HHPC) of Northeastern Pennsylvania has shown in its studies there is a great need for programs to improve the organization and management of health care systems and to provide greater and more equitable access. These improvements can be made by use of Federal, State and private funds through the planning and direction of agencies such as HHPC; its affiliate, Health Care Management Corporation and the Regional Medical Program.

II-6. Regional Cooperation in Provision of Educational Services

A cooperative regional approach to meet the needs of higher education in northeastern Pennsylvania has been developing in the last three years through the formation of an Advisory Committee for Higher Education both in the four-year and two-year colleges and other schools serving post high school needs. This cooperative regional approach is being encouraged by the Commonwealth at all levels of education. These efforts should be continued concurrently with measures to increase the delivery of educational manpower and training services geared toward long-term economic recovery.

II-7. Manpower Training

At present, the region is primarily interested in retaining and rebuilding existing business and industry. On a longer range basis, attention should be directed to recruiting new industry to northeastern Pennsylvania. As an incentive to move to the region, in addition to PIDA loans, tax advantages and the normal infrastructure arrangements, free training can be made available. The concept here is to offer a trained work force when the business is ready to start operation. This training would be completed prior to the operation of the business. This can be accomplished by using Economic Development Administration Title IV manpower monies, Department of Labor monies and Department of Community Affairs monies. Existing vocational educational schools as well as the expertise of these schools can be used.

In cooperation with the unions in the region, EDA Title IV and Department of Public Welfare monies can be used to train building trade mechanics to provide the manpower to rebuild the area affected by the flood.

III. IMPROVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

III-1. Regional Mine Flushing Program and Related Environmental Projects

Subsidence has long threatened intensively used land areas of Northeastern Pennsylvania (residential, commercial, industrial and public areas). The subsidence problem and the mine drainage problem were also affected to an unknown degree by the flood. The MITRE Corporation in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Interior and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, has been investigating feasible methods to cope with the mine-related problems of northeastern Pennsylvania.

MITRE has advocated several innovative flushing methods which can utilize the refuse in the region's culm banks to stabilize subsurface conditions, producing additional land for urban uses. MITRE has also developed several other economic development proposals which should be actively pursued in the region. Some of these "candidate programs" include: a reassessment of the Anthracite industry and its market; the possibility of developing a solid waste disposal industry; a bring conversion industry producing alkaline materials to neutralize acid mine drainage; and an acid mine drainage materials recovery program.

The threats to mined areas during and after the flood add weight to the need for immediate action on their problems in both affected and unaffected areas of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

III-2. Regional Solid Waste Management Plan

In recent years many of the local units of government in northeastern Pennsylvania have been encouraged to enter into solid waste management programs since most of their land fill sites have been declared to be inadequately operated or unsuitable by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources.

The recent floods have intensified the solid waste problem in northeastern Pennsylvania. Many of the local municipalities' sanitary land fill sites have been completely filled 10 to 20 years sooner than expected. The flood also vividly pointed out the need for more intergovernmental cooperation of local governments to provide this service.

The Council believes a multi-county solid waste management program will be essential to cope with this problem in the future. Funds for such a program may be obtainable from the Environmental Protection Agency and/or the Economic Development Administration. The latter agency might be particularly amenable to funding the project if it involved the creation of employment through a waste recovery industry.

III-3. Flood Plain Zoning and Insurance Programs

The "National Flood Insurance Act of 1968" was incorporated in the Housing and Urban Development Act of the same year. Very few communities in northeastern Pennsylvania and even fewer homeowners (only two in Wilkes-Barre) have taken advantage of this flood insurance.

For a homeowner or business to be eligible, the state, area, or subdivision in which he resides must: (1) provide official evidence of their positive interest in securing flood insurance coverage under the program, and (2) give satisfactory assurance that adequate land use and control measures will be adopted for the state, area, or subdivision which are consistent with stipulated comprehensive criteria for land management, including enforcement measures.

To be eligible, a community must submit the following to the federal insurance administrator: a statement recognizing that there is a need for the program in the local area; a citation and summary of its legal authority to regulate land use; copies of maps showing flood prone areas; and a statement that adequate land use and control measures will be enacted which meet the adopted standards of the Act. These land use policies include adoption of zoning laws, building codes, and other land use measures which are designed to reduce flood damage in the flood prone areas of a community.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, and local and regional planning bodies have urged the enactment of local ordinances. Unfortunately, very few governments took the required action. In the wake of the flood and the ensuing rebuilding of northeastern Pennsylvania, it is imperative that state and area agencies initiate a regional public education and technical assistance program to help the municipalities in our region qualify for this insurance. This, so that the homeowners in flood prone areas may avail themselves of the benefit of this Act.

The EDCNP, in cooperation with the local county planning commissions, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the Pennsylvania Office of State Planning and Development should undertake a study which will designate the 20 - 50 - and 100 -year flood plains in northeastern Pennsylvania beginning with flood-affected areas. Every structure in the 20-year flood plain which is now either completely destroyed or which would cost more to repair than it would be worth after its repair should be acquired by the appropriate agency of local, county or State government and be put into open space. Every owner of a residential structure or private business which can be repaired might be required to enter into a lease agreement with the appropriate unit government, which, in essence, would give the local municipality the first right of refusal when the present owner dies or when the property is sold.

Furthermore, if any person is allowed to remain on the 20-year flood plain, the owner should be required to secure flood insurance and take measures to flood proof his house or business as a prerequisite to receiving any federal or state financial assistance.

III-3. The people who are relocated by these actions should be temporarily housed in the emergency mobile home parks which are being created and in federally subsidized "235" and "236" housing projects. Intermediate and long term relocation plans should permit the voluntary relocation of these persons (from destroyed homes and high risk areas) to one of the "new community" sites determined in the regional new community report or in other economic growth centers in the region (especially those near existing and proposed industrial parks and shopping centers).

Furthermore, individuals and firms on the 50 year flood plain should also be required to "flood proof" their buildings. Local elected officials should be encouraged to adopt housing and building codes and other ordinances which would minimize future flood damage in these areas.

III-4. Organization to Preserve Unique National and Historical Areas and Open Space

Planning is in the advanced stages for formation of two related groups to aid in preserving open space and unique natural and historic areas. These two groups are the Northeastern Pennsylvania Environmental Coalition--an umbrella group for coordination of the activities of HELP, LU-LAC and other organizations--and an affiliated Northeastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, a national organization.

These groups will seek through education programs and action programs to preserve unique land areas for our own and future generations in Northeastern Pennsylvania. During the next several months and years, while development patterns are altered, the work of these groups will be critical in order to prevent development of the type of areas they seek to preserve.

III-5. Resource Conservation and Development District

For several months, EDCNP--working with the Soil Conservation Service, the seven county soil and water conservation districts (S&WCD) other agricultural and conservation groups, and the boards of county commissioners--has been advocating the formation of a seven-county Resource Conservation and Development District (RC&D).

RC&D projects--which now number about 100 nationwide--are multi-county organizations funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962 to speed up conservation (including flood prevention) of natural resources. The Soil Conservation Service would provide a staff, and has especially earmarked monies which can be utilized for certain conservation projects, such as flood control dams which are not fundable under regular programs. The S&WCD's of Monroe, Carbon and Schuylkill counties and the Commissioners of Monroe and Carbon have approved formation of the proposed seven-county project; Monroe county has urged prompt action by all counties.

IV. MODERNIZE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

IV-1. Centralized Coordination of Federal & State Grant Programs

The influx of federal and state funds from agency personnel unfamiliar with area needs creates a problem of administration. Although such funds are welcomed to rebuild the flood-affected areas, no overall plan is available to determine priorities for funds, the suitability of renovation vs. new construction, etc. In the absence of such a plan, there is a need for centralized coordination of federal and state programs through an agency(ies) with an overview of area needs and with knowledge of how programs can be packaged.

In a state as large as Pennsylvania and a nation as large as the United States, the sub-state planning development districts, especially those designated as clearinghouses under the Project Notification and Review System, can be the bridge between these agencies and the smaller county and municipal units. This type of coordination is already taking place through the Appalachian and Economic Development Administration programs.

However, in view of the floods, development districts can play an even more significant role by being designated by the State and/or the Federal Regional Council (which will eventually take over the coordinating role now performed by Office of Emergency Preparedness) as the regional clearinghouse for the delivery of all federal and State programs.

IV-2. Regional Capital Programming

Northeastern Pennsylvania suffered from obsolete and inadequate public facilities prior to the disaster. The destruction of facilities caused by the flood, the concurrent damage to the tax base, and the limited federal funds available require planning for greatest efficiency. Decisions as to types of facilities, their location and their aiming are critical. A regional perspective on such planning could increase efficiency in the public sector. Regional capital programming should encompass at least the next six years with annual updating. It should cover all major new public facilities to be constructed.

IV-3. Program Development

The flood has brought to light the lack of expertise available to advise the many local governments on a broad variety of problems. There is great need to establish a long-range technical assistance program for local governments in the region. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration are sources for special grant funding in the area. Specialists in the area of business development, manpower training, (transportation, engineering, grant assistance and especially flood plain zoning), planning, zoning, and other fields can be added at the county and regional level to provide the broad range of technical assistance needed by the public and private sectors. This program to help develop and fund needed area programs should be tied to efforts to reorganize local governments and to strengthen the county as the logical unit for delivering many types of services, including technical assistance to local governments.

IV-4. Regional Comprehensive Planning

In recent years there has been increasing nationwide recognition of the interdependence among counties and local governments and the resultant need for developing plans on a regional (multi-county) basis. In Northeastern Pennsylvania, the State and federal government have required preparation of Appalachian Investment Plans, Overall Economic Development Plans, transportation plans, outdoor recreation plans, and other inputs on a regional basis. Because of the inadequacy of these piecemeal plans in serving regional, state or national needs, comprehensive (physical, social and economic) plans should be prepared as guidelines for public and private investments and other decisions.

This regional plan is especially crucial now in the wake of the flood of '72 since many public and private investments will be made that will have a direct bearing on the region's quality of life and economic well being for years to come. The Project Notification and Review System which requires determination of regional relevance of federal expenditures, must be augmented by this regional planning process.

Such a comprehensive planning program would be funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It would include a compilation and correlation of local and county plans and a review of their relationship to proposed state and federal goals and objectives, the development of regional land use strategies, a regional economic base study and the development of mechanisms to implement the regional goals and objectives outlined in these reports.

IV-5. Regional Tax Assessment and Collection Programs

The region has been slow to adopt modern technologies for property tax reassessments, assessment records, and tax billing procedures. Some counties, in fact, lack complete tax maps and other records necessary to identify those properties that are untaxed and those which are illegally untaxed. Indications are that tax mapping and reassessment programs could increase the tax rolls by several million dollars in at least one county. Ongoing computer-assisted assessments can obviate the need for complete and expensive reassessments at mandated intervals. Also computers can be used to facilitate billing and collections and to make them more efficient. A central computer facility can serve a county or an entire region and all its municipalities.

Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive program to design a regional system -- based on that used in Montgomery and other counties -- to bring about improved assessment, records, and billing procedures. Federal funds could probably be obtained for portions of the design and implementation of such a system. This would be especially timely for Luzerne county because of real property damage and its impact on current assessments and the tax base.

IV-6. Regional Municipal Buildings

Prior to the recent floods, the staff had forwarded a recommendation to the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, Secretary William Wilcox, concerning the need for a new grant-in-aid program at the State level to help local governments modernize or renovate municipal buildings which have become run down or dilapidated.

The floods have caused damage to a variety of municipal buildings in the region, and there now exists even greater demands for improvement and modernization of these buildings.

Before deciding on expenditure of capital funds for municipal buildings, it would seem logical to consider construction of combined regional facilities to house administrative quarters for local governments in northeastern Pennsylvania. Such consolidation conceivably could be a step toward cooperation in a wide variety of services and the provision of more efficient and better services to the residents of the region. Consolidating municipal buildings is but one example of unification which should be considered as part of a long range program of recovery for northeastern Pennsylvania. This type of capital programming and financing may require new federal and/or State grant-in-aid programs to finance not only municipal buildings but fire stations and other types of facilities and services, as well. Also, the unification aspect should be pursued by all local governments because of the scarcity of funds at all levels of government and the opportunity which now exists to consolidate certain services.

IV-7. Home Rule and Cooperation

Local governments within the region, particularly those hit by the floods, now have a great opportunity to examine the best means for delivering services to their residents. Several local governments could move as a unit to develop the necessary programs by which services could be provided more efficiently and expertly on a area wide basis. Such services as health, fire protection, police protection, planning, building and zoning codes and enforcement, purchasing and others could be unified through cooperation at county or "multi-municipality" levels.

County home rule which is possible in 1972 for the first time should be the ultimate objective. This would permit certain services to be offered on a professionalized, efficient and equitable basis to all municipalities in a county who do not "opt out" of a county home rule plan. Areas wishing different services could be segmented into special service districts under such a plan. It would also help to equalize tax bases and rates and thereby reduce the current fiscal zoning and competition for industry among communities within the same county. In the interim, while such plans are being made and implemented, councils of government at the county level could help to initiate specific programs and services (e.g., joint purchasing) and to engender a spirit of cooperation. If these steps are not taken home rule at the municipal level, multi-municipality (sub-county) councils of government, and many types of intergovernmental cooperation should be pursued.

IV-8. Regional Personnel Service Center and Programs to Increase Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act offers assistance in the government modernization process. Under the IPA, EDCNP has been designated as the Regional Personnel Service Center for Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Center will offer technical assistance, training programs, assistance with grant programs which emphasize government improvement, and arrangement for both government and private expertise to help solve municipal problems of the region. The Act should be utilized to aid in the recovery program. However, professionalization of the delivery of services and governmental administration is a long-range program and must also be geared to year 2000 needs across the region.

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V. IMPROVE AND DIVERSIFY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

V-1. Regional System

The recent disaster destroyed a number of bridges, resulting in disruption of the transportation system for at least 3 years in the Wilkes-Barre area. It has made the area more aware of benefits possible from mass transit. Rail transportation, already tenuous, has been set back in the area by the flood. The opportunity now exists to consider a transportation authority for urbanized portions of the region. (particularly Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties), to revitalize the mass transit system and to improve secondary and local roads within the region. The possibility of subsidized service on a long-term basis should be explored as one possibility. In essence there is a need for a systems approach to analyzing and planning for transportation needs (of people and goods) in the present and future decades. This should include an evaluation of the region's relationship to transportation plans for the Northeast and the Keystone Corridors, and should, in fact, be tied into all major studies, plans, and programs being considered by the U. S. Department of Transportation and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

VI. INCREASE HOUSING QUALITY AND SUPPLY

VI-1. New Community Option for the Voluntary Relocation of Persons in Flood Affected and High Risk Areas

One viable option available to those people affected by the flood is to relocate in one of the sites proposed as a "new community" in northeastern Pennsylvania. Although there are strong cultural and community ties with the existing urban settlements in the Wyoming Valley area, some people may prefer the alternative of starting again in a location in the region outside the flood plain.

One alternative which might be made available is to build a new community in the region. A new community might serve to help keep people, businesses and industries in northeastern Pennsylvania, to provide greater efficiency of public investments and to provide for greater esthetic quality through planned development. There are several pieces of existing legislation which may be utilized to help bring this about. These include:

- The U.S. Housing and Urban Development Act of 1970 as amended (91-609)

- The Pennsylvania Environmental Improvement Compact Act (Act 29, 1972)

Proposed legislation which should be advanced include:

- The Pennsylvania Land Development Agency Act (SB 939)

- The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency Act (SB 1407)

- The U.S. Housing and Urban Development Act of 1972 (HR 9688)

If the new community alternative is selected, all the programs inherent in the above mentioned acts could be packaged with other basic federal and State acts to provide the necessary "front-end" costs for provision of the public facilities and infrastructure of the new community. These facilities and infrastructure are necessary not only to make the community feasible for private investors and local governments but also to provide an attraction for those who may want to locate in or return to northeastern Pennsylvania. A more timely consideration is that it would offer a nearby location for persons or firms whose homes and business may require relocation to areas outside the 100-year flood plain.

It is conceivable that a "New Town-In-Town" could be built in Wilkes-Barre, or a new community within the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Urbanized Area, and/or one of the other sites noted in the EDCNP's soon-to-be-released report on New Communities in northeastern Pennsylvania.

These joint actions could include: the creation of a regional public land development agency; the issuance of "community growth" municipal bonds to allow citizens to invest in low-denomination bonds and gain "equity" in any new community begun in the region; and other innovative actions in which the goals and objectives of the private and public sectors of the region can be augmented, including the use of such programs as those authorized under the following acts:

-the neighborhood Assistance Act (Pa. Act 292, 1967)
-the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Act (P.L. 1609, 1956)
-the Pennsylvania Community Facilities Act (Act 13, 1968)
-the Neighborhood Facilities Act (P.L. 89-117)
-the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (P.L. 90-351)
-The Highway Safety Act (P.L. 89-564)
-the Urban Mass Transportation Act (P.L. 88-365)
-the Airport and Airways Development Act (P.L. 91-258)

VI-2. Redevelopment of Existing Residential Areas and New Planned Residential Developments

It goes without saying that ruined residential areas must be rebuilt. This should be done after steps are taken to insure no recurrence of their recent fate. This will require large sums of federal and State urban renewal aid, and large amounts of private capital. Another necessity will be to increase the supply of both skilled manpower and other resources needed for their rebuilding.

Where protective measures cannot provide reasonable assurance against a recurrence of the flood or the vast uninsured property damage, it may be necessary to selectively develop other land areas in or near the urbanized areas for replacement housing. If this cannot be implemented quickly through a new community, it should be done through construction of significant planned residential developments (PRD's) which will be constructed with a view to the amenities and services deserved by northeastern Pennsylvanians.

VII. INCREASE INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VII-1. Goals for Northeastern Pennsylvania

A recent report prepared for the U.S. Department of Interior (the MITRE report, 1970), pointed out the lack of a consensus among the area's leadership on the goals and direction of the region. A "Goals for Northeastern Pennsylvania" project should be undertaken to involve all public and private interests in the region in reaching a consensus on regional problems and solutions to the year 2000. On a broad front of activity the project could be a pulse-taking process by which the views of all parties within the region concerned with the development can be considered as an input into a set of concrete goals. Committees would be established to mobilize the area's professional expertise, the goals of the average citizen, and other resources and processes with the objective of developing a consensus. The initial emphasis would be placed on goals for those areas affected by the floods. When finalized, this regional project would be a basic instrument to implement a long range improvement program for the entire region. A "Goals for Dallas" was launched in Dallas, Texas, several years ago and has received national recognition and awards.

VII-2. Implementation of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA)

Over the last several months, there has been much effort devoted to developing support for a single SMSA, to include at least the present Scranton and Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton metropolitan areas. Area Congressmen, Flood and McDade, have supported a thirteen-county SMSA and efforts are underway to convince the Office of Management and the Budget that this region supports this type of unification and is, in fact, a unified social and economic area.

The recent disaster and the regional cooperation it has engendered have added support for unification of the two market areas into a single Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Unification could strengthen regional cooperation and economic recovery. The final number of counties included will depend on federal criteria and decisions by the Office of Management and the Budget. All major organizations and leaders should commit themselves by resolution or other means, to implementation of a single SMSA.

VII-3. Neighborhood Assistance Program

The Neighborhood Assistance Program offers many funding possibilities for the flood stricken areas and for the region in general. The Neighborhood Assistance Act offers a program by which tax credits are granted to business firms that participate financially, indirectly or directly, in activities which improve impoverished areas or which contribute to non-profit neighborhood organizations for specific programs that will have a beneficial and measurable impact on impoverished areas. In light of the flood, the entire State has been designated as an impoverished

area under the Act making all its territory eligible to participate in the benefits of the Act.

Basically, the Act allows Pennsylvania business firms to contribute to a worthwhile program and receive State corporate net income tax rebates. For the firm, rebate is in addition to the ordinary Internal Revenue Service tax write-off normally received. Although there is only \$8 million in the program, this money can be used as a community's local share to match other federal programs. Using a 90-10 matching arrangement, this \$8 million can be converted to \$80 million.

VII-4. Mobilization of Leadership via the "Hartford Process"

Hartford Connecticut has become known in recent months for its "Hartford Process", a method whereby that community's leadership from all elements of the community was mobilized to establish goals and to implement them through a consortium approach. The flood-ravaged areas, especially Luzerne County or the Wyoming Valley, could lend themselves to such a process. If such a program is as successful in the flood-stricken areas as it appears to have been in Hartford, its applicability could become region-wide. In Luzerne County, this procedure could also aid in providing support for reducing the governmental and political fragmentation which now exists.

Below are some of the major strategies suggested for consideration:

1. Create an open space and flood control network (dams, levees, etc.) along the main stem of the Susquehanna River and its major tributaries through public acquisition, scenic easements, flood control easements, and through subdivision regulations and zoning. This should be done in cooperation with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the various County Planning Commissions. Funds are available for these programs through Housing and Urban Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and various conservation foundations.

2. Undertake a comprehensive geological and soil survey to ascertain the location and the extent of possible subsidence and of poor soils for building and the most suitable areas to encourage residential and industrial growth. The MITRE Report contains some information on subsidence areas and proposed programs to solve that problem. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources also has considerable data on the Susquehanna Valley's water table, geology, etc.

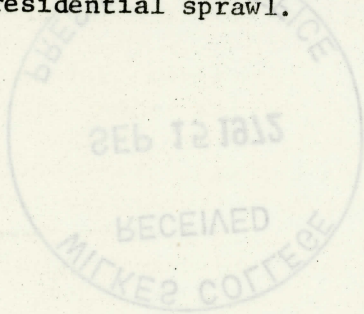
3. Encourage a "limited growth" policy in the Wyoming Valley and other areas in the flood plain. Cluster as much of the envisioned growth around those public institutions and/or commercial and industrial areas which are shown to warrant continued growth in light of restudy of the flood plain. However, considerable effort should be made to maintain many of the existing institutions in order to maintain a link with the past heritage and the vital service centers which will enable the citizens to rebuild.

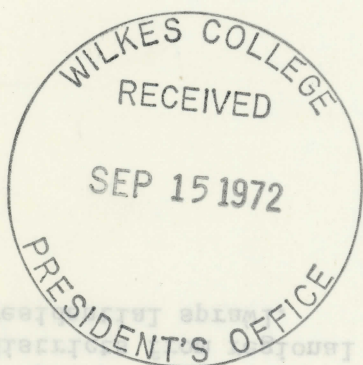
The sizeable urban centers of Greater Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton, Pittston, Nanticoke, Scranton, Carbondale, Pottsville, Stroudsburg, etc. should be strengthened while the smaller urban settlements on their fringes might be maintained at their present level of population or only expanded at a measured pace in order to allow concentration of services and activity around these larger growth nodes which are large enough to serve as a focus for growth in the respective counties. These actions are dependent upon the creation of a broader tax base and sharing of revenues tied to the needed modernization of local government in north-eastern Pennsylvania.

4. Re-evaluate existing and proposed water and sewer plans and develop future major urban settlements in close proximity to the major central business districts (CBD) and highway interchanges in the region.

The growth settlement strategy outlined above will tend to confine urban sprawl and serve to provide "green belts" of open space and recreational opportunities along the river, its tributaries, and along its ridges.

Furthermore, strong actions by local governments should be taken to prevent sudden and disorderly competition to the major central business districts from regional shopping centers and uncontrolled suburban residential sprawl.





...prohibiting centers and uncontrolled expansion
to prevent further and undesirable competition to the major central business
districts' action actions by local governments should be taken

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...opportunities along the river, the riverfront, and along
...and areas to provide "green belts" of open space and
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...the smaller urban settlements on their fringes
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the strategic urban centers of Greater Milford-Belle, Milford, Lytleton

