

## 2001 Annual Report Executive Summary

### Fayette Enterprise Community

The Fayette Enterprise Community (FEC) is made up of six census tracts throughout Fayette County, Pennsylvania totaling 84.37 square miles. Data from the 2000 Census are not yet available, but the latest statistics show the population of the entire FEC is 27,216 with an average poverty rate of 27%. The FEC also includes three developable sites totaling 1,499.34 acres. Currently, the FEC Strategic Plan includes 95 benchmarks totaling more than \$140 million dollars. To date \$82,387,160 has been received from various federal, state, local and private sources for benchmark activities. Each of the benchmarks falls into one of the seven categories that make up the FEC Strategic Plan. Those categories are: Agriculture, Community Development, Economic Development, Education, Housing, Social Conditions, and Transportation.

**AGRICULTURE:** The agricultural benchmarks began to make significant advancements in the beginning of 2001. Benchmark #6, to provide a stable market facility for both farmer producers and consumers that promotes locally grown agricultural food and fiber materials and increases farm income, started out the year by continuing work on a business plan. This business plan would market home grown and cooked meal services to senior centers, nursing homes, and other possible food distributors identified in the market study. Work on this benchmark is ongoing. Benchmark #8, to provide a stable market facility for both farmer producers and the consumer public that promotes increased farm income, was approved to receive \$3,000 in year three FEC funds to conduct a feasibility study to determine the advantages of establishing a localized soybean processing facility. This facility would enhance the transference of nutrients to consumers since no time would be lost in shipping and would improve soybean returns for local farmers by cutting down on transportation costs. The completion of this study is key to the completion of this benchmark. The newly added benchmark #93, Development of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Center, is moving forward with land acquisition and funding from the Fayette County Commissioners in the amount of \$25,000.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** The most significant accomplishments in community development for the FEC over the past year were in the area of infrastructure improvement. The City of Uniontown received \$800,000 in Community Grant funds for work on sewer line replacements and sidewalk and road upgrades (Benchmark #13). Last year also saw progress on Benchmark #15, expansion of the city sewer system capacity and completing the separation of storm water from sanitary sewer lines. The Greater Uniontown Joint Sewage Authority and officials from North and South Union Townships met to review Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requirements that must be met prior to upgrading their system from 6M to 8M gallons per day. The \$22.6 million upgrade package would include repair or replacement of systems in both townships and the separation of the combined sewer system in Uniontown, which is now 40% complete. Fayette County also received \$50,000 from DCED for Phase Four of the county land-use planning effort, which includes the Mon-Fayette Expressway, and economic development under Benchmark #12. Redstone and Luzerne Sewage Authorities, renamed Colonial Joint Sewage Authority, are discussing plant expansion and a service agreement for a 150,000 gallon per day increase in capacity with approximately 530 households in the FEC being added to the system. Menallen Township received Community Development Block Grant funds in the amount of \$126,992 to help fund this work in addition to upgrading roads, parks, and homes. This progress on Benchmark #16 was needed in preparation for construction of the new state prison in Luzerne Township, scheduled to open in mid-2002. Work continues on Benchmark #17 with The City of Connellsville and the DEP conducting investigations into sewer problems in sections of the city. Connellsville and Bullskin Townships received \$1 million in grants and \$1.5 million in low cost loans from PENNVEST, which Connellsville will use among other things to defray the \$300,000 cost of

improvements in those areas. Design work for installation of a relief sewer in the city's south side is scheduled for completion in October with DEP permit approval. The Arch Street project is 75% complete with only concrete work on sidewalks and curbs and paving of the roadway yet to be completed. Phase II of the project will include the extension of the sewer line to Church Place and Cottage Avenue, approximately .08 miles from the FEC. The Dunbar Boro/Township \$7.2 million project is 73% complete and the sewage treatment plant 85% complete. Dunbar Boro will be responsible for 55%, or \$2,367,365, of the cost of this project. Representative Peter J. Daley helped the City of Connellsville secure a \$30,000 grant to update the land use planning section of the county comprehensive plan (Benchmark #12). Another significant accomplishment for this year was the establishment of a microloan fund for low-income residents of the FEC at a local credit union (Benchmark #21). Frick Tri-County Credit Union obtained permission from the National Credit Union Association (NCUA) to provide loans for purchase of appliances and used-automobiles for low-income residents who would not otherwise have access to credit. Uniontown Public Library (Benchmark #20) completed the task of putting a rare, historical collection on microfilm and upgraded the Public Access Computer network with the purchase of six new computers and two additional workstations and a printer. Workstations were added to the adult library as well as one in the children's lab. In addition, the electronic collection database has been added to the statewide library catalog known as ACCESSPA. Much of this work was accomplished with a grant from the FEC matched by funds from The Eberly Foundation. New Benchmark #83 to build a new Township Building in Menallen Township received a \$50,000 grant in FEC money and also received notification from the USDA Community Facilities program of their eligibility of funding. Bore testing has been completed on the building site, already owned by the Township. Improvements being made in Menallen will allow the township to expand on its services available to the public, making it more community friendly and oriented.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** The past year included significant progress in development of Fayette County business parks (Benchmark #22). The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority has been proactive in marketing the land deeded to them by the Fayette County Commissioners. Null Land Inc. purchased 32 of the 270 acres or \$625,000 with plans to develop automotive dealerships, luxury townhouses, and an office building. Phase I infrastructure work is scheduled for early 2002. McMillen Engineering, a local firm selected to design a portion of the park and monitor future construction, elected to relocate their business from Hopwood to one of the 14 available parcels in the park. A second tenant, the Team PA CareerLink office, announced their intention to relocate in another available lot. This activity generated considerable optimism and energy throughout the county. At The Fay-Penn University Technology Park site infrastructure work was completed and an agreement was made with the North Fayette Municipal Authority for water main line extension into the park. Fay-Penn received a \$250,000 grant from the Pennsylvania DCED to develop the 150-acre site in the Keystone Opportunity Zone (Benchmark #23) to stimulate economic growth by accommodating 12 business expansions or relocations and creating 500 new jobs. On a similar note, South Union Township passed a resolution to extend the KOZ tax abatement period from 10 years to 12 to allow time for necessary upgrades needed to make the zones more attractive to potential new businesses. Fay-Penn also requested approval to add an additional 40.65 acres to the University Technology Park KOZ, which is land owned by Penn State University that currently is already exempt from taxation. Fay-Penn will make a \$6 million dollar investment in developing this site. With the help of the Governor's Action Team, Fay-Penn attracted Nu-Relm, a software design firm that relocated from Austin, Texas, to the FEC in downtown Uniontown. NuRelm received a state opportunity fund grant, a \$50,000 Customized Job Training grant, and \$100,000 Small Business First Loan. NuRelm plans to create 115 new jobs over the next 3 years. Finally, Springhill Township contracted for a land use study of the KOZ-designated property located in their township. All of this economic development activity, while not just in the FEC, demonstrates the momentum building toward a more positive future for the residents of Fayette County. In other activity, Fay-Penn upgraded the small business library utilized as part of their Small Business Development Center services (Benchmark #92 and producing an image video (Benchmark #30) and a quality of life

brochure about the region (Benchmark #31). All the promotional efforts wouldn't matter unless things were being done to foster economic opportunity and/or business growth and development. The Republic Incubator, (Benchmark #33) being managed by Fayette County Community Action Agency, has attracted tenants to the newly renovated incubator site in Redstone Township. As the incubator prepares individuals for economic independence and sustainability, successful endeavors will have a greater impact beyond the doors of the incubator. Finally, development of tourism and service-based businesses in the county proceeded with progress on Benchmark #89, the Kiosk Project, and #90, the Signage Program. Both are designed to increase domestic tourism travel expenditures in the county by 15 percent a year by building greater public awareness of the tourism and recreational attractions in Fayette County. The Kiosk Project received \$75,00 from a PennDOT program and the Signage Program secured \$30,00 from Pathfinder and \$3,000 from the Fay-Penn Tourism Fund to support activities in this area.

EDUCATION: Benchmark #34 activities are ongoing with 80 students graduating in the GED program, several receiving achievement awards for outstanding performance. A Youth-Employment Training Program for the 17-21 age group who meet income guidelines provided students with training in the fields of construction along with the opportunity to obtain a GED or enhance their academic skills in other ways. The East End Community Center, Benchmark #40, received \$148,062 from the Fayette County Housing Authority to provide program activities in the areas of YMCA youth sports and summer camp and after-school sessions in conjunction with the Fayette County Drug & Alcohol Commission. Construction of a new facility for the East End Community Center is moving forward with land acquisition and site development activities financed by local fundraising and grant funds. The FEC provided a support letter for Young Inspirations to provide after-school activities in the Uniontown Area School District. This successful U.S. Department of Education grant for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers is for \$1.8 million for three years to provide after-school enrichment activities designed to improve academic performance and promote personal growth for students in two middle schools and the Uniontown High School. The Rural Online Computer Connection, Benchmark #41, which provides community centers and public housing sites with computers and computer training, opened its 16th center in Uniontown and is undertaking a project helping small businesses get into e-commerce via a \$134,000 USDA grant. In addition, ROCC received \$15,000 from the Verizon Foundation for the Safe Haven program, which is a proactive after-school program fostered by the Fayette County Drug & Alcohol Commission for children in grades K-12. In conjunction with Computers for Learning Program, the Fayette Enterprise Community provided 5 computers for St. John's School in Uniontown and 5 computers for Redstone Middle School in the Brownsville School District. By applying to the Farm Service Agency, the Fayette Enterprise Community was also awarded 5 laptops that were given to the Uniontown Area School District to be utilized in FEC schools. Benchmark #42, implementation of a multi-faceted K-12 career development curriculum, saw more than 1800-8th grade students attend the 5th annual Career Connections Career Fair. Students were required to research at least 3 professions they are interested in pursuing and complete required classroom activities before and after the fair. This year saw the creation of REACH, Reaching Educational Achievement, a business/education collaborative effort building on the philosophy of the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE). While this initiative is still in the infancy stage, the enthusiasm and spirit of cooperative achieved in the past six months promises achievement of positive change that will benefit students and the local economic development efforts. Uniontown School District received \$2.2 million in a QZAB loan for planning construction projects needed to replace aging buildings in the FEC. In addition, the Link to Learn program provided Uniontown School District with \$112,000 and Brownsville School District with \$99,137 to provide more labs, customized software and other programs that benefit children and parents in those school districts. All of these efforts demonstrate the leadership being provided by members of the Fayette County community to address local needs despite tremendous obstacles. New Benchmark #94 for a Wild Animal Orphanage and Education Center is moving forward with Sunday tours and programs that feature close-range viewing of lions, tigers, cougars, and bobcats. Dr. William Sheperd, a local veterinarian who has been providing a home of last resort for animals

rescued by the PA Game Commission, expanded the facility and added an educational program for local school children and adults to promote respect and protection of these wild and exotic animals. Funding is a major concern for Dr. Sheperd and is critical for the future of the shelter. In an attempt to assist in this matter, Nancy Brewer and Janice Stroud from the USDA visited the shelter with the FEC coordinator. Current funding sources are being reviewed to ensure the continuation of this benchmark.

**HOUSING:** Benchmarks in the housing category focus on increasing the number of affordable new homes (Benchmarks #45 and 46). The FEC Coordinator supported an application that resulted in the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority receiving \$400,000 for a Homebuyer Development Program intended to develop affordable homeownership opportunities. A second area of support resulted in a successful grant application for Threshold Housing for Housing Preservation funds. Both of these programs will benefit low-income residents. Concurrent with these efforts is the need for demolishing structures that are not habitable and create deteriorated neighborhoods. The county is currently utilizing CDBG monies to carry out this demolition work in accordance with Benchmarks #47 and 48, intended to stabilize neighborhood deterioration and expand low-interest loan programs. Part of the rehabilitation effort is Benchmark #50, to provide energy efficient rehabilitation to housing units in the EC and provide energy education for homeowners. The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority has taken steps to acquire a 10,000 square foot building to house its weatherization division. This facility will provide substantially more space for its state energy conservation program and other services, which include installation of insulation, furnace checks, replacing broken glass, weather and air stripping and management of utility company and federal crisis programs for low-income homeowners and renters. This facility is planned for completion in October at a cost of \$161,250. Benchmark #85, funding a \$40,00 revolving account for Habitat for Humanity, will help provide homeownership opportunities for persons with incomes 50% of median income or below within the FEC who currently have no private market. This program adds the advantage of teaching the homeowner basic skills needed to maintain the home after it is completed. This program also provides an opportunity for AmeriCorps volunteers and students from high schools, colleges, and universities in the area to fulfill community service requirements.

**SOCIAL CONDITIONS:** Redstone Township supervisors acquired \$30,000 in state DCNR funds to construct two pavilions at the Redstone Park (Benchmark #59). In addition to \$29,000 in FEC funds, the Township engineer provided the design work and volunteer labor will be used to complete this project. In July of 2001, the City of Connellsville was notified that it would be the recipient of a \$10,000 DCED grant for the ongoing East Park renovations, benchmark #59. The city had applied for and received a \$225,000 state Keystone Grant that is currently the anchor for the refurbishing work. The city has committed \$129,000 to the project via CDBG funds and through Community Revitalization monies and private corporation monies the gap has dwindled. An additional \$56,000 was needed to fulfill the city's obligation, until the FEC awarded the project year three monies totalling \$30,000. The gap is now at \$26,000. Other funds have also been received from Allegheny Power, Pennsylvania American Water, and capital improvement funds from the city, and funds from State Senator Richard Kasunic's office. Benchmark #53 covers rehabilitation of the State Theatre and Union Trust Building. Maintaining the cultural heritage of the area and providing cultural programs is an important part of building a better future for residents of the county. Grassroots fundraising is accomplished with a once-a-year progressive dinner that moves from house to house and culminates at the State Theatre with entertainment and a silent auction of items donated by area businesses and individuals. This event historically provides \$15-20,000 towards rehabilitation costs and local foundations and individuals contribute generously to the effort. Benchmark #67 was completed over the past year when Communities That Care, the non-profit managing this program, hired a community mobilizer to plan, coordinate, and promote comprehensive risk-focused prevention efforts and the social development strategy. Health care is a critical element of social conditions, especially for the low-income population. Wesley Health Center (Benchmark #55.) conducted a breast and cervical cancer screening program in partnership with Seton Hill College through

funding from the Susan B. Komen Foundation. This initiative was carried out by college students in the physician's assistant program and provided free cancer screenings to 25 women who may not otherwise have had this early detection screening performed. The Center was also the recipient of funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development for a grant written by Father Frank Lesniowski, pastor from Saint Rita's Parish in Connellsville. A Community Development grant for \$5000 provided funding for salaries and fringe benefits for Center staff. Wesley received \$15,000 in year 2 FEC monies. Emergency services were addressed in Benchmark #56 with the purchase of portable defibrillators for use in areas with limited ambulance and health care facilities. This benchmark is now complete and personnel in FEC communities are being trained to use the equipment. In the latest group of additions to the FEC benchmarks is a new task under Benchmark #57, to improve emergency management services to areas by reducing response time. Improving Fire Departments in FEC designated communities is an important contribution to meeting emergency services needs. While Connellsville is experiencing a lack in this area due to the dissolution of its partnership with Fayette EMS, a fourth firefighter was hired, the first paid fireman hired in over 20 years. Fayette County is fortunate to have the City Mission providing services to the homeless in the county under Benchmark #62, that provides for developing a business plan for homeless programs that put 17-20 homeless back into the community and provide shelter programs for those not currently served. A \$199,125 grant from the state DCED will be used for land acquisition and construction of a facility for homeless teens. This facility will provide transitional housing for 14 youth ages 12-17. City Mission already services over 500 homeless adults and families, but determined that a separate facility was need to meet the needs of homeless youth on their own. This initiative will include programs to assist these youth in transitioning back home or onto better living conditions. Improving the quality of the child day care system and developing two new day care facilities in the Enterprise Community (Benchmark #64) saw Childcare Information Services of Fayette County (CCIS) providing services to low and middle income families needing financial assistance for childcare costs. Currently they service over 700 children and have funding to expand services to another 100 children. CCIS advertises locally as well as distributing information to the local CareerLink centers and all schools in the county. The community foundation created under Benchmark #65 awarded \$38,000 in grants the first year of operation to various non-profits with projects aimed at creating a better quality of life in Fayette County. The Foundation board continues efforts to increase the amount of funding available for grants and in publicizing the grantmaking program.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Meeting transportation needs continues to be a critical issue in the FEC. At the local level, Fayette Area Coordinated Transportation (Benchmarks #71 and 72) continues to meet diverse transportation needs with both fixed route and customized services. New service was created to meet the needs of local businesses and students and two routes were altered, affecting residents in Connellsville and Uniontown. Finding a suitable site for a centrally located transportation hub became a major issue after plans for locating the facility at the Connellsville Airport were rejected. Funding for land development in the amount of \$1.5 million was secured and \$225,000 earmarked for that purpose, but now money will be needed for site acquisition. On a regional level, the Southwest Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) partnered with transportation agencies throughout the region on a Heinz Endowment grant to produce the Strategic Transit Visioning Study that includes major transportation projects, including the Mon-Fayette Expressway. This study is scheduled to be completed in mid-2002. By far the largest transportation initiative strictly within the county is Benchmark #74, development of the Connellsville Airport. Fayette County Commissioners continue to provide funding of \$2 million earmarked for the proposed runway extension and support in the form of selecting a new Airport Board Member who shares their goals and vision for the airport. Funding has also been secured through Federal sources, \$1.5 million through the efforts of Senator Rick Santorum and CDBG funds in the amount of \$180,000. The latter funding along with the state match of \$10,000 will be used for an airport-wide environmental assessment. Private local support was generously provided by Uniontown philanthropist Robert E. Eberly provided the needed matching funds. The authority anticipates it will need three years to obtain funds for the airport runway extension. \$42.5 million is needed for five phases

of development from 7/01 to 6/04. Airports are a major asset in attracting both large and small businesses to the area and local economic development agencies support the time and effort being devoted to this project. New Benchmark #95 is the development of a visitor-friendly National Road. The National Road is a national historic site with the potential for attracting many visitors to the area. Unfortunately, much work needs to be done before the road is ready for visitors. The National Road Heritage Park and Partners want to develop tourism around the history and heritage of the National Road Corridor as community and economic development. With funding in the amount of \$361,250 from private donors, a private foundation, the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Planning Commission, this project is well on its way to a successful conclusion.