

COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

■ TODAY'S CONDITIONS

Community facilities provide basic services to ensure the health, safety, welfare and enrichment of residents. The number, type and adequacy of the facilities influence the quality and general livability of communities. Additionally, these facilities increase the County's ability to retain and attract new residents and businesses.

Few facilities are under the ownership or direct control of Allegheny County. Most are owned and operated by local municipalities, authorities, nonprofit organizations or private corporations (see Map 4H.1). It is important, however, to discuss these facilities in the County Comprehensive Plan in order to encourage cooperation among municipalities and organizations whenever possible. This will lead to a more equitable provision of these services and facilities, which contributes to a higher quality of life for all Allegheny County citizens.

ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

Botanical Gardens

The Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is one of the nation's oldest and largest Victorian 'glass houses'.



Photo credit: Kevin Smay

Silvered domes of glass enclose 13 garden rooms brimming with thousands of exotic plants and flowers. The 2.5-acre botanical garden is filled with lush landscaping, ponds and fountains. In 2006, Phipps completed the largest expansion project in its 113-year history. The new Phipps Welcome Center is the first 'green' certified visitor's center in a public garden in the nation.

In 1998 the County began working with the Horticultural Society of Western Pennsylvania on the creation of a Botanical Garden in Settler's Cabin Park. This garden will transform a former brownfield site into a regional attraction and is expected to be open in 2009 or 2010.



Source: Horticultural Society of Western Pennsylvania

Convention Center

One of Allegheny County's most important civic buildings was completed in 2003. The David L. Lawrence Convention Center is a landmark building overlooking the Allegheny River in downtown Pittsburgh. Its striking architecture resulted from an international design competition. It is the nation's first certified 'green' convention center and the world's largest 'green' building. The Center capitalized on its environmentally smart structure by utilizing natural daylight and natural ventilation to light and heat the building, and incorporating a water reclamation system that reduces potable water use. The Convention Center also provides visual connections to the Allegheny River as well as physical connections through a planned marina and riverwalk.



Museums, Theaters and Galleries

The Pittsburgh Cultural District in Downtown Pittsburgh is a center for the performing arts. The Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, Pittsburgh Dance Council, Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Public Theater and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra are all based here. Heinz Hall for the Performing Arts, the Benedum Center, Byham Theater, Harris Theater, O'Reilly Theater and numerous art galleries are also located within the District. The Cultural District is the home of the Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), one of the Pittsburgh School District's magnet schools. In 2008 the Cultural District will be home to the new August Wilson Center for African American Culture.

The Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh is home to the Carnegie cultural complex, which consists of the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and Carnegie Music Hall.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

The North Side of Pittsburgh has become a tourist destination revolving around major sports venues. The Carnegie Science Center is located on the North Shore. Special features include a WWII submarine, an OMNIMAX® theater and a world-class planetarium. UPMC SportsWorks, a permanent exhibit located adjacent to the Science Center, explores the science of sports. It is the largest science and sport exhibition in the world.

RiverQuest is also located on the North Shore. RiverQuest is a nonprofit educational organization that operates a river learning center for students, teachers and the community of Southwestern Pennsylvania. All of RiverQuest's programs are adventure-based, discovery programs that engage students, young and senior, in hands-on learning while exploring Pittsburgh's Three Rivers.

The Andy Warhol Museum, the Pittsburgh Children's Museum and the Mattress Factory, which exhibits contemporary art, are located on the North Side of Pittsburgh.

Throughout the country the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild has been a model for building healthier urban communities through culture and enterprise.

Also located on the North Side is the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG). Founded in 1968 by Bill Strickland, it began in a rowhouse as an informal arts program and exhibition hall for inner-city minority youth. The program was so successful that by 1987 it had moved to a new 62,000 square foot vocational training and arts center. In addition to classrooms and exhibit space, the MCG has a high quality audio and video recording studio and performance hall, in which world-renown musicians perform and record.

The Senator John Heinz History Center is located in the Strip District neighborhood in the City of Pittsburgh. The History Center is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute and is the largest history museum in Pennsylvania. The History Center also operates the Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Museum of Rural Life, as noted in the Historic and Cultural Resource Plan.

Professional Sports Facilities

Pittsburgh has three major league professional sport teams.

Heinz Field is a state-of-the-art, 65,000-seat football stadium that is home to the National Football League Pittsburgh Steelers and the University of Pittsburgh Panthers. The venue also hosts other events such as high school football and soccer playoffs, festivals, and concerts.

PNC Park is the home of the Pittsburgh Pirates Major League Baseball team. This classically-styled, 38,000-seat facility offers a dramatic view of Pittsburgh's downtown skyline. It is easily accessed from Downtown by pedestrians

via the Roberto Clemente Bridge, which is closed to vehicular traffic before and after games.



Photo credit: Kevin Smay

Mellon Arena has been home to the Pittsburgh Penguins National Hockey League team and is located in the Hill District. The “Igloo” also hosts a variety of other events. An agreement announced in March 2007 between the Penguins, the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania will allow for a new arena. The new arena will also be located in the Hill District and is scheduled to be open at the start of the 2009-10 NHL season.



Photo credit: Pittsburgh Zoo

Zoos

The 77-acre Pittsburgh Zoo has thousands of animals in naturalistic habitats. Actively involved in wildlife conservation and species survival, the zoo exhibits dozens of threatened or endangered species. It is one of only six zoos in the country to house a major aquarium, a state-of-the-art facility with salt and fresh water aquatic exhibits.

The National Aviary is the Nation’s only indoor nonprofit bird park, where over 600 birds from around the world are displayed in naturalistic exhibits and walk-through habitats.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Schools

There are 43 public school districts in Allegheny County. As of 2006, there were 195 private and non-public primary and secondary schools in Allegheny County.

There are four regional technical training schools in the County: A.W. Beattie in the north, Forbes Road in Monroeville, Steel Center in the south and Parkway West in the western suburbs. Penn Hills, McKeesport and the Pittsburgh Public Schools operate their own vocational training programs.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), which is funded by federal, state, county and private grants, serves the needs of 42 suburban school districts and five technical schools in Allegheny County. AIU coordinates programs for infants,



young children, students and adults; and operates the PA Learners Online (PALO) Cyber Charter School, eleven family centers, and three schools for exceptional children.

The Pittsburgh-Mt. Oliver Intermediate Unit provides similar services and operates the Pittsburgh Area Vocational-Technical School.

Colleges and Universities

There are 35 post-secondary educational institutions in Allegheny County. The two most nationally prominent institutions are:

- Carnegie-Mellon University, a private research university with nearly 10,000 students
- University of Pittsburgh, a state-related public university with over 27,000 students.

The County is home to many other colleges and universities, including:

- Carlow College
- Chatham College
- Duquesne University
- LaRoche College
- Penn State – Greater Allegheny Branch
- Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- Point Park University
- Robert Morris University

CCAC is the nation's third largest provider of health care graduates.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

The Community College of Allegheny County has four campuses and seven centers within the County. CCAC has nearly 70,000 enrolled students, making it the largest provider of educational services and the largest workforce training provider in western Pennsylvania.

Libraries

The residents of Allegheny County are served by 43 independent public libraries (some with branches) plus the Carnegie Library and its 18 branches. The libraries are federated into a system under the umbrella of the Allegheny County Library Association, which also operates a bookmobile that visits nine communities. A senior service bookmobile, designed with the physical capability of older adults in mind, visits 44 senior citizen centers, assisted living facilities and residential facilities throughout the County on a monthly basis.



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Municipal Buildings

Most, but not all, of Allegheny County's 130 municipalities have a municipal building that is the center of local government. Some municipal buildings are primarily single-use facilities with offices for a municipal official such as the municipal secretary, and a public meeting room. Others are multi-purpose facilities that may include a community center, library, day care and senior services, for example. Local police and fire operations are sometimes housed with the municipal offices.

Community Centers

There are over one hundred County-supported community centers scattered throughout Allegheny County. Various community organizations have entered into agreements with the County to operate the facilities and provide a range of services to qualified residents. Each center is different but may offer a library, community rooms and recreation facilities.

In 2006, Allegheny County completed construction on six new community centers. Four additional community centers are in the design and planning stages of development.

Family Support Centers – There are many family support centers whose purpose is to nurture, protect and strengthen families. Family support centers are community-based and are governed by participants. They provide parents and neighborhoods with the resources and support they need to raise healthy and happy children. Of the 33 family support centers in Allegheny County, 27 receive funding from the County's Department of Human Services. Each of the centers primarily serve families with children (birth to five years old) and provide a core of services including childcare programs, Head Start, after-school and weekend activities, a food pantry and a variety of educational programs. Six locations have Knowledge Connection Centers, which are library and resource centers for children.

Senior Centers – Over 60 Senior Centers are located throughout the County. The centers are managed by nonprofit and municipal agencies that are funded, in part, by the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Senior Center activities are geared to the social, intellectual, cultural, economic, emotional, and physical needs and interests of adults 60 years of age or older. A shared lunch program is also available Monday through Friday at the centers.

Technology Centers – Low-income, adult residents can access computers and technology at four locations.

There are many other community resources available throughout the County. They are funded and operated by a variety of public and private organizations and nonprofits including the YMCA and YWCA, religious institutions, and foundations.

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Medical Services

The County is served by three major hospital networks with a combined total of 35 major facilities and branch medical facilities. The hospitals serve the County, the region, and the nation. Services offered range from general care to transplantation and rehabilitation.



Source: City of Pittsburgh

The most prominent among the networks is the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), a leading American health care provider and institution for medical research. It consistently ranks in *US News and World Report's* "Honor Roll" of "America's Best Hospitals". UPMC currently operates 19 hospitals in western Pennsylvania, all of varying sizes and specialties. Not only is UPMC the County's largest employer, they are Pennsylvania's second largest employer behind Wal-Mart.

UPMC Presbyterian is UPMC's flagship hospital and is located in the Oakland neighborhood of Pittsburgh. The emergency department has a Level I Trauma Center. Specialties include organ transplantation, cardiology, trauma and neurosurgery. The University of Pittsburgh's School of Medicine partners with UPMC Presbyterian for research and graduate programs.

UPMC Shadyside is another one of UPMC's main hospitals and home to the Hillman Cancer Center, a state-of-the-art facility that is one of the largest and most advanced cancer research and patient care facilities in the nation.

UPMC has a number of specialty hospitals, including Magee-Women's Hospital of PMC. Located in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh, Magee is one of the



original six National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health as designated by the U.S. Department of Health.

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, another specialty hospital of UPMC, is located in Oakland. It is the only hospital in western Pennsylvania devoted solely to the care of infants, children and young adults. Children's Hospital is one of only two hospitals in the state to have a Level I Pediatric Trauma Center. A new Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh campus, located in the Lawrenceville neighborhood of Pittsburgh, is expected to open in mid-2009. The campus will include a ten-story research center.

Other major hospitals in the County include Allegheny-West Penn, Ohio Valley, St. Clair and Kindred.

Elder Care

Allegheny County has a large population of older residents. In order to care for them, there are various agencies and facilities operating within the County, a few of which are listed below.

The County operates the John J. Kane Regional Centers, which provide residential skilled nursing care and rehabilitation for short-term and long-term needs. The four centers can accommodate approximately 1,100 residents.

UPMC operates a number of retirement and long-term care facilities in Allegheny County. There are countless other independent living, assisted living, and nursing and rehabilitative facilities scattered throughout the County. Adult day services are provided by several agencies.

Emergency Services

The Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services provides training, investigation services and emergency management response to disasters, catastrophes and municipal needs. It also operates the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center in Pittsburgh, which provides emergency communications services for all but five municipalities that utilize centers outside of the County.

There are 66 emergency medical service responders in operation in the County. Helicopter emergency air transport services are provided by LifeFlight, operating out of Allegheny General Hospital, and STAT MedEvac, operating out of the Allegheny County Airport.

The Allegheny County Emergency Management Division has five Hazardous Materials Response (Hazmat) units in strategic locations throughout Allegheny County.

Fire Service

There are 246 fire stations serving Allegheny County. Thirty-nine of the stations are staffed by paid firefighters, 204 are staffed by volunteers, and three have a combination of paid and volunteer staff.

The Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services operates the Allegheny County Fire Academy in North Park. The Fire Academy delivers a wide variety of services to the fire fighting community:

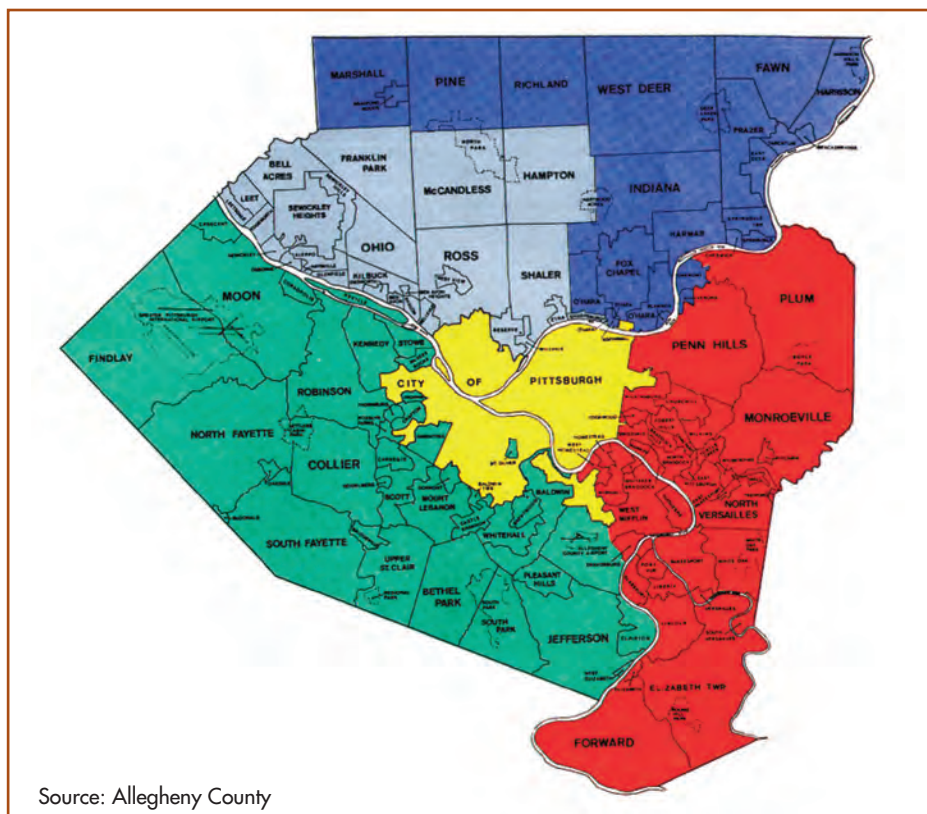
- Industrial training to meet OSHA standards
- Hazmat training to meet various standards and regulations
- On-site fire department station training
- Outreach State Fire Academy training programs
- Certification testing
- Public education



Photo credit: McCormick Taylor

Police Service

There are 126 municipal police departments in the County. The City of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Police has five police zones, each with a station and a special deployment division. The Pennsylvania State Police, the Allegheny County Police and the Allegheny County Sheriff's Office also provide policing functions in the County.



Source: Allegheny County

Figure 4H.1 – Allegheny County Hazardous Material Units Response Areas

The Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services operates the Allegheny County Police Academy. The Police Academy provides training for new officers and personnel in accordance with the Municipal Police Officers Training Academy (Act 120), as well as mandatory in-service training for active duty police officers. The Police Academy also provides continuing education classes for officers throughout the year.

Hazard Vulnerability

Through the efforts of the Allegheny County Emergency Management Division, five Hazmat units have been placed in strategic locations throughout the County (Figure 4H.1 illustrates the team boundaries):

- The Blue Team (N.E.A.R.A.) serves the Northeast and Northwest areas
- The Red Team (East Borough Response Organization) serves the eastern areas

- The Green Team (Specialized Intervention Team) serves the entire Southern and Western portions of the county south of the Ohio and west of the Monongahela
- The Silver Team (North Hills Response Team) serves 25 municipalities north of the Ohio and Allegheny Rivers
- The City of Pittsburgh Gold Team responds to emergencies within Pittsburgh and to any other area in the County, upon request of Allegheny County Emergency Management

The teams are dispatched through the Allegheny County Emergency Management Division and Enhanced 9-1-1 Centers.

The teams are equipped with encapsulated suits, the latest in monitoring equipment and fire frequency radios that enable communications to every fire

department in the County. All five Hazardous Materials Teams are fully certified by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Additionally, in response to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, *Allegheny County developed the Allegheny County Hazard Vulnerability Assessment and Mitigation Plan* in 2004. Endorsed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the plan:

- Identifies hazards that are most likely to impact Allegheny County
- Defines hazards in terms of their previous events, likelihood of occurrence, physical characteristics, and potential severity
- Identifies the effects of a natural or manmade hazard event
- Presents goals and objectives to guide mitigation activities
- Identifies and evaluates alternative actions to achieve the goals and objectives
- Prioritizes the actions



As of March 2007, 84 municipalities had passed resolutions to adopt the *Hazard Vulnerability Assessment and Mitigation Plan*. The resolution enables the municipality to authorize its government staff to carry out the actions detailed in the plan.

■ ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

This section examines issues that affect the provision of community facilities and services.

KEY CHALLENGES

In developing the Community Facilities Plan, these key challenges were identified:

- Need for increased intergovernmental cooperation to eliminate cost-ineffective duplication of services and facilities
- Providing adequate police and fire services
- Lack of equal resources in all school districts

The following provides an understanding of these issues.

NEED FOR INCREASED INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION TO ELIMINATE COST-INEFFECTIVE DUPLICATION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Each of Allegheny County's 130 municipalities has traditionally been responsible for providing its citizens with basic public services and facilities. As municipalities experience growth or decline, and demands for services and facilities change, meeting the needs of citizens has become more and more challenging for many municipalities.

Over time, the combination of 130 municipalities and tradition of municipal self-sufficiency has produced much duplication of services and facilities. Greater intergovernmental cooperation is needed so that services and facilities can be provided more efficiently and economically. The eight COGs, or Councils of Government, are an example of the benefits of intergovernmental cooperation. Through the COGs, member municipalities participate in money-saving joint purchasing programs and other joint services.

Long-range land use planning, multi-municipal comprehensive plans, capital improvement plans, and municipal budgets are other tools that can help municipal decision-makers identify opportunities and strategies for increased intergovernmental cooperation.

PROVIDING ADEQUATE POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES

Police stations throughout Pennsylvania compete for the same funds. As demand outpaces available funds, many municipalities in Allegheny County are finding it increasingly difficult to provide adequate police services. Some local stations are beginning to rely more heavily on State and County protection, especially if they are unable to provide 24-hour service.

Consolidation of police forces could achieve an economy of scale that would reduce municipal expenses. According to the *Regional Police Services in Pennsylvania* manual, consolidation requires the abolishment of political subdivision boundaries for police services, and the unification of existing police departments into one regional police department.

The distinctive characteristic of this method of policing is that the operation of the police department is outside the direct control of any one single municipality. The consolidated police department is responsible to a policy board or police commission consisting of primarily elected officials from each participating municipality. The board appoints the chief, evaluates the chief's performance, sets policies and adopts a budget. The service areas would be bigger than one municipality, but a well-operated department will provide the same high quality of service generally associated with community police forces.

As development or redevelopment occurs, fire protection may become strained. As with the police services, fire departments compete for limited funds. Growing areas are often in need of new infrastructure systems to sustain development as well. In addition, the County's older communities are faced with antiquated water supply systems prone to distribution and main supply breaks. Most of the county's fire departments are volunteer, which also raises the concern of adequate manpower. These conditions can tax a fire department's ability to provide sufficient service. These issues raise the need for coordination between fire departments to ensure adequate equipment, staffing and other resources.

LACK OF EQUAL RESOURCES IN ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

While Allegheny County has a number of excellent school districts, there are many others that are struggling and/or low-performing. The Upper St. Clair School District tops the list of the best-performing of the state's public school districts, according to research conducted by the *Pittsburgh Business Times* in 2007. The *Times* uses a formula to rank nearly 500 districts based on three years of Pennsylvania System of Student Assessment test scores. Four County school districts were ranked in the State's top ten:

1. Upper St. Clair
3. Mount Lebanon
4. Hampton Township
9. North Allegheny

Four other County school districts were ranked in the bottom ten in the state:

496. Wilkesburg Borough
495. Clairton City
493. Duquesne City
492. Sto-Rox

Many school districts are financially distressed because of declining enrollments and lack of resources. Maintenance has also been deferred and many districts have buildings that no longer serve their needs today. Several have consolidated elementary schools or relocated grades to other facilities to reduce the number of facilities needed.

Many of the County's public school districts are cutting staff, benefits, programs and activities in order to trim annual budgets. With steadily declining participation in technical education programs, some districts are deciding whether they can continue to offer career training. Other districts are cutting arts and other enrichment programs as well.

Consolidation of small, rural school districts across the state could help trim annual budgets and per-pupil spending, according to a Standard & Poor's report released in June 2007. The report was prepared for the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee of Pennsylvania's General Assembly to estimate how much could be saved by consolidating school districts. The study found that smaller school districts tend to spend more money per student than medium to large districts and so mergers would result in significant savings.

Of the 88 school districts evaluated in the study, seven are in Allegheny County.

In the early 1970s, many school districts in the County were forced to merge as part of a massive reorganization of the state's education model. Today, as was the case then, local school district officials and residents have not been receptive to school consolidation. School districts surrounding struggling districts are especially unwilling to absorb these schools. Any merger of school districts needs specific legislation signed by the Governor and is a lengthy and contentious process.

As an alternative to consolidation, some districts are well poised to save money by sharing services with other districts.

According to the Mon Valley Economic Development Strategy there are issues other than funding facing many school districts in Allegheny County. These include high school drop-out rates that are higher than the state averages, low performance on standardized testing and lack of general career guidance. Another huge issue is that low performing school districts are often an impediment to attracting businesses and residents to an area. Many people are unwilling to locate to a community that does not have quality schools for their children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL OF THE PLAN

Essential community facilities and public services are cost effective, adequate and accessible to all County citizens.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The objectives of the Community Facilities Plan are to:

- A. Encourage multi-municipal cooperation in the provision of municipal services.
- B. Provide efficient emergency response services.
- C. Support and promote high quality educational opportunities for all County citizens.



- D. Support and promote equal access to the public library system throughout the County.
- E. Promote coordination among hospitals to ensure the quality of health care.
- F. Encourage the development of public and private adult day care centers, senior centers, licensed personal care facilities and any other age-related facilities to care for the County's aging population.
- G. Provide equal access to public facilities.

The following provides an understanding of the objectives.

A. Encourage Multi-Municipal Cooperation in the Provision of Municipal Services

With so many municipalities, governance in Allegheny County is fragmented. In metropolitan areas across the country, it has been shown how fragmented local government impedes cooperation, hurts economic competitiveness, worsens unbalanced growth patterns, contributes to the pattern of segregation and leads to higher costs for services through operational inefficiencies. Fragmented governments can also be considered a public safety issue. When municipalities do share or consolidate services and facilities, a stronger public safety net is in place.

Using public investments to improve community facilities and promote regional equity is a key strategy in making a region successful.

In 2006, Allegheny County established a committee, chaired by the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark Nordenberg, to identify ways to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of government in the County. *Allegheny Places* further encourages local governments to work together to improve the equity, vitality and dynamism of the County through the sharing of municipal services.

B. Provide Efficient Emergency Response Services

Historically, emergency response services in the County have been provided at the municipal level, and service areas have generally corresponded to municipal boundaries. To ensure that emergency response services are the most efficient, adequate, and cost-effective, future service areas need to be based not on political boundaries, but on boundaries determined by physical features such as road systems, rivers and topography that affect the ability of emergency responders to reach destinations quickly.

Police

Municipal leaders need to measure the cost of providing an individual police service against a more affordable service delivery by way of regionalized services, or contracting with an adjacent municipality. Municipalities can investigate shared police protection services through their COG, which provides a means for municipalities to work together in collaboration with the County. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development has published a manual titled *Regional Police Services in Pennsylvania* as a resource for local municipalities interested in alternative ways to provide policing services.

The issue needs much more thought and study, but one option that municipalities and COGs could investigate is having eight main police departments for each COG region, plus a department for the City of Pittsburgh.

Fire

Many municipalities have more than one fire house, since they were originally established to serve larger populations. The population of Allegheny County is much smaller than it used to be and, in many instances, the amount of services that were needed in the past is not necessary today. Where possible, fire departments should consider coordination of local houses in order to more effectively manage costs, share equipment and staff, and achieve more efficient ways of providing service.

EMS

Community-based emergency medical service providers, such as fire companies and ambulance corps, must compete with a variety of other private operators seeking support from residents. Municipalities should work together to consider which new or growing Places may need additional or modernized EMS stations.

Hazard Mitigation

The County's aging infrastructure, underground natural gas and oil transmission lines, and many creeks and rivers vulnerable to flooding are all of major concern to public safety personnel. The County's Hazard Mitigation Plan, released in 2004, provides a guide to assist the County and municipalities in dealing with various natural and manmade disasters. The County will continue to work with the COG directors to get the municipalities that have not yet done so to adopt the plan. The plan, once adopted and operational, should be reviewed annually and used by participating municipalities to test its effectiveness and identify response gaps, and updated as needed.

C. Support and Promote High Quality Educational Opportunities for all County Citizens

The quality of schools has a strong influence on the health of communities in terms of attracting business and residents. It is evident that school districts in Allegheny County do not provide the same quality of opportunities for students. Furthermore, all high school graduates need opportunities for advanced education in order to compete in the workplace. In today's economy, driven by high productivity and increasingly skilled processes, an unskilled workforce is no resource at all. It is only a 'potential' resource, and that potential can only be realized through workforce education and skills development. A large 'unskilled' population is a detriment to the County's economic growth and to a high standard of living.

The County supports the work of the Mon Valley Economic Development Strategy and the recommendation of that study, which highlights the

need for an expanding 'hub' model for education and workforce development. This model is geared toward providing students in previously low performance schools the vocational and technical skills they need to be qualified for high paying jobs that need a skilled workforce.

According to the Strategy, while the majority of America's high school graduates are being packed-up to go off to college (with a good chance of failing on the four-year degree path and incurring considerable debt along the way), a large volume of good paying technical jobs requiring only a postsecondary education are going unfilled. Throughout the 1990s, industries in information technology, precision manufacturing, electronics production, building construction (indeed, virtually all industries employing technical workers) – workers who used math and science principles in their work – faced workforce shortages. Economic trends point to a need for a more highly occupationally skilled workforce at a time when vocational education and training is experiencing enrollment decline. Multiple research reports show that workers in the future will need higher levels of skills, particularly in mathematics, science, and reading comprehension, as well as new decision-making and teamwork skills.

The Strategy calls for action in steering public opinion to better value technical careers and to raise awareness of the substantial family-sustaining wages available through alternative skill development pathways.

D. Support and Promote Equal Access to the Public Library System throughout the County

The County and the County Library Administrator have provided leadership and encouraged the coordination of services among the 46 independent public libraries, and will continue to do so. Their efforts have focused on the following strategic initiatives:

- Providing public library services to educationally disadvantaged communities through the establishment of Knowledge Connections in public housing communities, and the rescheduling of stops made by the Allegheny County Bookmobiles
- Initiating intermunicipal public library development



■ Electronically linking municipal libraries to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

In an effort to expand library services beyond their walls, public, university and corporate libraries have been linked together by providing high speed access between personal computers and businesses, schools, municipal facilities, community centers and other locations. This service, known as eiNetwork, allows residents to access the online collection of all eiNetwork public libraries in Allegheny County. There are about 3.5 million items listed in the catalog, and they include books, videos, DVDs, CDs, CD-ROMs, eBooks, audiotapes, magazines and more. Additionally, access to library websites will allow linkages to research and data not otherwise available to residents. The eiNetwork is a collaboration of the Allegheny County Library Association and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

The County's growing number of Technology Centers provides low-income, adult residents with access to computers and the internet.

E. Promote Coordination among Hospitals to Ensure the Quality of Health Care

In 2006, the County's Health and Human Services Department began use of a data-sharing technology that will enable the sharing of data to better coordinate care services in Allegheny County. Use of the technology has wide application. Regional organizations can share health care data among health care organizations using a wide array of information technologies. The technology also gives residents receiving services the ability to look for information themselves.

As new health care facilities are planned, efforts must be taken to ensure that they will provide equitable access for all residents. New or expanded health care services should be located in Places with easy access via transit, automobile and walking. The Allegheny County Human Services Department could be charged with the mission to advocate and encourage equitable access to medical service for underserved County residents.

F. Encourage the Development of Public and Private Facilities to Care for the County's Aging Population

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services provides services to elderly residents through their Area Agency on Aging. The County will continue to operate and maintain publicly offered centers, as well as work with private companies to continue to offer the highest and best quality services for the County's senior population. See the Housing Element (Chapter 4, Section D) for more information on elder housing.

G. Provide Equal Access to Public Facilities

One objective for *Allegheny Places* is for people with disabilities from all cultural backgrounds to have equal access to the options and choices that are available to people without disabilities.

Organizations throughout the County provide a range of public facilities for residents. A user fee for service on a sliding scale could be developed to permit for fairness and access to residents at all income levels, and as a means to augment funds to operate the facility. (If a facility receives money from the state lottery, it cannot charge fees.) New facilities should be located along public transit routes to enable access to those who do not own or operate an automobile. Such facilities are ideally located in mixed-use communities with accommodations for pedestrians.

Municipalities that need new or updated facilities are encouraged to either create or construct multi-purpose or multi-municipal facilities that have a one-stop shop environment for all types of municipal and service needs, in a central location and on a transit corridor. When feasible and where the need exists, municipalities should provide these facilities with their neighbors.

All facilities should be brought into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design.