

(Continued from Page A1)

day evening.

Wheeler had the opportunity to view the county from the air on Thursday, and compare its beauty and its grandeur to a quilt.

"But this quilt with its history, its farmland, its human settlements is tattered and frayed in some places and in other places are holes and stains," said Wheeler.

Wheeler was invited to the county to discuss the topic "Will We Live in Accidental Cities or Successful Communities?" Wheeler has made several visits to the county and sees the rapid development and growth of this area mirrored through-

out the country. A boom in citizens' concern accompanies that growth and with good reason.

"First you must realize the importance of Lancaster County's assets. There have been many changes in the past three or four years. Along with the county's beauty, productivity, growth and economic development you must also recognize it's vulnerability," said Wheeler.

"More and more people will want to share the good life that you have found. That is inevitable. The way you handle that growth is the most critical issue in order to protect your cultural and natural assets which are at risk of being lost," warned Wheeler.

Wheeler pointed out that the vitality of the county and those characteristics which make this area distinctive can be lost if there is unplanned growth. He defined successful communities as those which have livability. That livability is dependent upon the definition of special places which are those places which bring meaning to our lives.

"Special places are not grand parks like Yellowstone or Grand Canyon. Special places are those areas which are distinctive to your community alone. They are those places which bring meaning to our lives. How can we save our special places? You must recognize these as assets and make plans to protect them to secure their future so they do not become part of the homogenized countryside."

Wheeler recognized the difficulty of pooling the desires of more than 60 independent jurisdictions within the county to formulate a comprehensive plan for healthy growth. He warned that frustration can lead to simplistic solutions. In Orange County, California, according to Wheeler, the citizens are preparing to vote on ordinances which will stop all development unless the developer can prove it will result in no further deterioration of their community.

"My prediction is that development will come to a halt, but it is their only viable solution at this point. I believe there is a better solution here," said Wheeler.

Agriculture, tourism and industry are

the components of the county's economy. However, without the quality of life as most know of it today, Wheeler warned, that tourism and industry would not be here.

"I don't have to tell you that the tourists will not come if Lancaster County is paved over. And industry will not come if the quality of life is not here. Siting specialists look first for a site which will satisfy the employees' desire for quality of life," said Wheeler.

What makes a successful community and how can concerned citizens work towards that goal?

First, observations must be made to note the assets which make that community distinctive. Second, envision that community or what would be left of it without those assets. What will increased population impose on the life of that community? Once that negative vision is formed the work begins to prevent that from happening.

A successful community can only be accomplished through the work of local hometown heroes, leaders who will spearhead projects and unwaveringly see it through. But individuals cannot do it alone. The community needs what Wheeler calls quality-of life lobbyists who are willing to act on their concerns.

"We can't afford not to do something! We cannot give into the alledged inevitable sprawl. I emphasize the need for hometown heroes to draw on the resource of concerned citizens here the county," stated Wheeler.

Wheeler encouraged groups to communicate and for everyone to think in broader terms or development and planning, not only as it pertains to a single township. He urged citizens to start at the local government level, to attend township meetings and to make government officials responsive to the desires of its constituency.

Wheeler's visit to the county was sponsored in part by the county Agricultural Preserve Board, the Friends of Agricultural Land Preservation and the Lancaster Alliance for New Directions.

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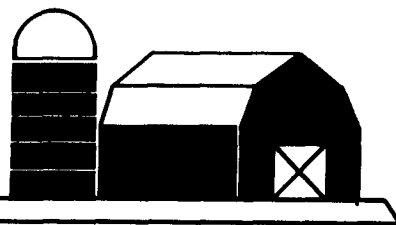
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