

Committee Hopes To Shed 'Image' Problem

For over five years, the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania (EDCNP) has had underway an "Image Program." Over the years, this program had developed various aspects but was not a unified activity.

It was felt that after five years it was time to look at the program objectively to see what had been accomplished and whether it was serving its purposes.

In order to do this an Ad Hoc Committee was set up consisting of individuals who had not been involved with the program previously. The purpose of the committee was to see what aspects of the program might have had impact on the community and to determine whether or not it should be continued in whole or in part. Actually, every member of the committee was familiar with at least some aspects of the program, and it became quite evident that

the program was accomplishing most of its goals. Consequently, it was determined that it should be reactivated and reorganized.

A plan was evolved which would bring all elements of the program under a single steering committee. The members of that steering committee would be the co-chairpersons of the six separate program committees. The steering committee

would be co-chaired by Roy E. Morgan and Jack Roth.

It was also felt that it was desirable to have a designation for the program that would fairly accurately reflect its purpose and thrust. Consequently, it was decided to identify it as the Area Awareness and Action (AAA) Program of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Chairpersons are, William Dawson and William Bachman, media; Jesse Pierson and Karen Devey, Pocono Northeast Community Awards; Thomas Shelburne, Sr., regional marketing strategy, David Tressler and Richard Laux, visitation; Nancy Shukaitis and Philip Walter, government challenge play; John McCole and Jack Bates, private sector coordination.

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Are Industrial Parks Obsolete?

Most American communities are poorly equipped to undertake successful economic development projects, says a Pennsylvania State University professor and economic development consultant.

"Very often the expertise is available," said Peter B. Meyer, associate professor of economic planning. "You have people who are quite skilled in finance in most areas, for example. It's a matter of focusing the expertise and recognizing the new tools of economic planning."

Instead, many areas continue to rely on an old tool—the industrial park, according to Dr. Meyer.

"I understand that there are approximately 16,000 industrial parks in the United States with vacancies," he said. "In 1982 around 150 new plants with 250 or more employees opened. Yes, we've overbuilt industrial parks. We followed the leader a bit too long."

Dr. Meyer, who directs the Local Economic Development Assistance project at Penn State, works to show cities and counties the range of economic development strategies available to them.

"One of the best resources an area has is its existing firms" he said. "Virtually all those firms have some growth potential."

One of the new economic tools involves showing companies how to expand. "Say a firm has a product and it is acutely the proverbial better mouse trap. But the fellow who makes it knows little about marketing and has never tried to sell the product nationwide. He could have a business that is 10 times as big."

"What would happen if good marketing assistance was provided to that firm? It's a lot easier than selling your area to another firm looking for a new place to open a plant when you know you are competing with hundreds of other areas."

Another often overlooked tool is helping local people to start a business. "Many times a person with a good product or service idea doesn't have a good idea of how to put together a good business plan—something that shows the steps to take and when to expect to break even. If you don't know how to do that, you're not going to be able to borrow money. Get some advice for that person and you might have a new small firm for your town."

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