

VENANGO COUNTY THREE YEAR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Three Year Community Development Plan (CDP) submitted with this FFY 2007 application contains only minor updates from the previous year, with the majority of these changes contained in the short-term or one-year plan. This CDP was initially prepared by a consulting firm and was designed to assist the County in making meaningful and appropriate annual project selections under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Venango County Regional Planning Commission (VCRPC) now updates the 3 year plan based upon input from the non entitlement communities and from general comprehensive plan information. The CDP accomplishes this goal by determining the needs of the County and its communities, and particularly, the needs of the County's low to moderate income (LMI) households and persons. These needs are then incorporated into specific objectives, categorized as either short-term (one-year) or long-term (years two and three). These objectives assist the County in determining annual project selections, keeping in mind that all activities proposed in the CDP meet the needs of low and moderate-income persons as identified by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Section 8 income limits.

BACKGROUND

Venango County, located in the heart of Northwestern Pennsylvania, is the birthplace of the modern oil industry. The Oil Region Heritage Park is a memorial to those wild and woolly boomtown days. In the nineteenth century, the population of the County's communities would soar in good economic times and crash as the region's prosperity, measured in barrels of crude oil, dried up. To some extent, these population fluctuations of the 1800's continue to this day. According to the most recent census results, Venango County's 2000 population totaled 57,565 citizens, or a decrease of 1,816 persons (3.1%) from 1990 figures. These 2000 census figures also indicate that there has been a 7,763-person decrease in County population since its most recent high-water mark of 65,328 in 1950. This 11.9% loss is indicative of a severe local long-term population decline. Over the last 50 years, the only population increase occurred between 1970 and 1980 when the number of residents rose from 62,353 to 64,444. Indications are that the Venango County population continues to decline.

This long-term population decline is not attributable to natural decrease, i.e. where more deaths than births occur in a community. Rather, natural

decline has only recently become a factor. Instead, the decline of Venango County's population has been fueled by an out-migration of local residents. While a number of factors have influenced this population flight, the primary one has been to seek a better economic situation elsewhere. The population loss experienced by Venango County is similar to that found throughout Northwest Pennsylvania and other "Rust Belt" communities. Large numbers of people, especially young adults, left for the "Sun Belt" regions of the Western or Southern U.S. in search of jobs and other opportunities.

**VENANGO COUNTY POPULATION
1930-2000**
(From U.S. Census Data)

| Year | Population | Change | % Change |
|---------------------|------------|---------|----------|
| 1930 | 63,276 | NA | NA |
| 1940 | 63,958 | 682 | 1.1 |
| 1950 | 65,328 | 1,370 | 2.1 |
| 1960 | 65,295 | (33) | (0.1) |
| 1970 | 62,353 | (2,942) | (1.5) |
| 1980 | 64,444 | 1,091 | 1.8 |
| 1990 | 59,381 | (5,063) | (7.9) |
| 2000 | 57,565 | (1,816) | (3.1) |
| 2005 Est. | 55,928 | (1,637) | |
| 1930-2000 Change | | (5,711) | (9.0) |

The County is composed of two 3rd class cities, nine boroughs, and 20 townships. The population core of the community is centered in the cities of Franklin and Oil City and the municipalities that surround them: Sugarcreek Borough, Sandycreek, Cranberry and Cornplanter Townships. Combined, these central Venango County communities have a population of 36,154 residents, or 62.8% of the County's total population. In the remaining 25 municipalities, residents are primarily found in the small boroughs and settlements and scattered along the County's roadways.

This Three Year Plan considers only those municipalities, which are non-entitlement communities, those with populations under 4,000 persons. Therefore, the entitlement communities of the cities of Oil City and Franklin, Cranberry Township, and Sugarcreek Borough are excluded. According to most recent census data, these four municipalities have a combined population of

31,061, with 25,504 persons then residing within the remainder or non-entitlement communities of the County. The following table details the population changes within the non-entitlement communities over the past fifty years. The next table then details population changes within all County municipalities over the same time period. Figures in both tables are based on U.S. Census data.

**VENANGO COUNTY
27 NON-ENTITLEMENT COMMUNITIES
POPULATION 1950-2000**
(From U.S. Census data)

| Year | Number | Change | % Change |
|-----------|--------|--------|----------|
| 1950 | 24,703 | NA | NA |
| 1960 | 25,384 | 681 | 2.8 |
| 1970 | 25,962 | 578 | 2.3 |
| 1980 | 28,590 | 2,628 | 10.1 |
| 1990 | 27,315 | -1,275 | (4.5) |
| 2000 | 26,504 | -811 | (3.0) |
| 1950-2000 | | +1,801 | 7.3 |

**INCIDENCE OF CONCENTRATION OF
LOW AND MODERATE INCOME PERSONS**

In Venango County, low-moderate income persons are those with incomes of equal to or less than \$28,350 to \$53,450, depending on family size, according to HUD's most recent Section 8 income limits released in March 2006.

**VENANGO COUNTY SECTION 8
VERY LOW AND LOW-MODERATE INCOME LIMITS**

Source: HUD, March, 2006

| Household Size | Very Low Income | Low/Moderate Income |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 Person | \$17,700 | \$28,350 |
| 2 Person | \$20,250 | \$32,400 |
| 3 Person | \$22,750 | \$36,450 |
| 4 Person | \$25,300 | \$40,500 |
| 5 Person | \$27,300 | \$43,750 |
| 6 Person | \$29,350 | \$47,000 |
| 7 Person | \$31,350 | \$50,200 |
| 8+ Person | \$33,400 | \$53,450 |

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in conjunction with the Census Bureau releases statistics every ten years on the incidence of low-to-moderate income (LMI) persons in all communities based upon the decennial census results. The count was completed in April 2000, with income data based upon the individuals 1999 levels. According to HUD's figures, in the County's twenty-seven non-entitlement communities, 9,707 of the 25,455 LMI universe have incomes of 80% or less of the local median. This represents 38.13% of the communities' populations, or an increase of roughly 4% over the 1990 LMI statistics. With the present economic conditions of the area, it is felt that these statistics underestimate the current realities.

According to HUD statistics, four of Venango County's municipalities have LMI rates at 51% or more. These include President Township (51.93%), Clintonville Borough (58.96%), Rouseville Borough (54.8%), and Utica Borough (63.86%). In 1990, no municipality had an LMI rate above the Section 8 threshold. Interestingly, only two of the County's sixteen Census Tracts, 2003 and 2007, have LMI rates above 51%. These would be 56.2% and 60.5% respectively. These tracts are located in Franklin and Oil City. Finally, at the block group level, nine have national objective LMI rates. Most are in Franklin and Oil City. Only Block Group 3, Census Tract 2011, is outside of the urban area. It is comprised predominately of President Township. With three boroughs with LMI rates above 51% it should follow that many rural block groups would also have high incidences of LMI. However, this is not the case as the population of each of these three boroughs is so small that they are just a part of a more prosperous overall block group.

AGE OF RESIDENTS/ELDERLY POPULATIONS

Pennsylvania is a graying state, with a median age of 38.0 years in the year 2000, the fourth highest in the nation. The State's elderly population (65+) represents 15.6% of the total population. Venango County's age groupings are even older, with a median age of 40.2 years, and 16.8% of its residents 65 year of age or older. This means that more than one in six Venango County citizens are mature adults. Of the four entitlement communities, only Cranberry Township has a smaller percentage than the County of persons over 65 years. Still, its 16.2% figure is greater than the State's. There are ten Venango municipalities that have more than 17% of their population at 65 years of age or older. Three of these, Emlenton Borough, Cornplanter Township, and President Township, have senior populations of 20% or more.

The preponderance of elderly residents is significant. The retirement income of most individuals is considerably less than that of their working

counterparts. Typically, persons 65 or older who are either fully or partially retired, have incomes 60-70% of what they enjoyed during their working years. Additionally, in the northern areas of the country, there is a trend for its retired citizens to migrate South for the more amenable climate. Many of those in Venango County who have the means often take this option. However, those who do not have such resources are forced to remain in the community. This is not to say that all elderly citizens abandon their home communities, but it is just another indication of the economic drain on the region.

POVERTY

Another indicator that the 2000 LMI statistics are understated is the 2000 Census poverty data. This data shows that in 1999, 13.5% of all Venango County individuals and 10.4% of all Venango County families were below the poverty level (which is at a lower income level than the HUD Section 8 Income Limits). These rates are well above the corresponding State rates that show 1999 poverty rates of 11.0% of all persons and 7.8% of all families.

The Country's robust economy of the 1990's should have assisted in reducing local poverty rates. However, this did not occur in the magnitude expected. The County still had substantially higher poverty rates than the State for both individuals and families. There was one bright spot during this decade, the non-entitlement communities experienced dramatic improvements in both poverty rates, which the individual rate dropping from 12.0% in 1989 to 10.8% in 1999, or 0.2% less than the State-side norm. The family change was even greater, from 10.8% in 1989 to just 7.5% in 1999. While this was a great improvement for Venango County, there were still over 500 families and 2,800 individuals living in impoverished conditions in these non-entitlement communities in 1999. And with the economic downturn of 2002-03 and continued fragile business conditions in the County, these improved conditions may be short lived.

POVERTY STATUS

From U.S. Census

| 1979 | % Persons Below Poverty | % Families Below Poverty |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pennsylvania | 10.5% | 7.8% |
| Venango County | 8.7% | 6.7% |
| Venango Non-Entitlements | 8.0% | NA |

| 1980 | % Persons Below Poverty | % Families Below Poverty |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pennsylvania | 11.1% | 8.2% |
| Venango County | 14.5% | 12.2% |
| Venango Non-Entitlements | 12.0% | 10.8% |

| 1999 | % Persons Below Poverty | % Families Below Poverty |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Pennsylvania | 11.0% | 7.8% |
| Venango County | 13.4% | 10.4% |
| Venango Non-Entitlements | 10.8% | 7.5% |

MINORITY PERSONS

According to 2000 Census data, Venango County has 1,357 minority residents which represents 2.4% of the County's total population and is nearly twice as many in both absolute and percentage-wise from 1990. Fifty-eight percent of 432, of the County's minority population reside in the entitlement communities of the cities of Franklin and Oil City, Sugarcreek Borough, and Cranberry Township. Three significant concentrations of minority residents exist in non-entitlement communities, including 39 minority residents in Polk Borough (which may be attributed to Polk Center, a home for the mentally impaired), 237 minority residents in Sandycreek Township (which may be attributable to the presence of a juvenile detention center), and 32 minority residents in Cornplanter Township. A map is attached to this Plan depicting the LMI and minority concentrations based on the following table.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Housing

According the 1980 Census, there were 24,358 housing units in Venango County. The 1990 Census count put housing units at 26,961, an increase of 2,603 units. The 2000 Census data shows that there was only a slight (or 57 unit) increase during the 1990-2000 period. While overall from 1980 to 2000, the County gained 2,546 housing units, or just over 10%, during this same period the County population dropped nearly 11%. This is a clear demonstration of the state and national trends of decreasing family/household size. The following table illustrates the increase in housing units Countywide and in the 27 non-entitlement communities.

Venango County Housing Units 1980-2000

From U.S. Census Data

| | Venango County Total | | Non- Entitlement Total | |
|------|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| | Housing Units | Change% | Housing Units | Change % |
| 1980 | 24,358 | N/A | 10,156 | N/A |
| 1990 | 26,961 | 2,603/10.7% | 12,977 | 2,721/26.8% |
| 2000 | 26,904 | (57) (.2%) | 13,048 | 171/1.3% |

Venango County Occupied Housing Units 1980-2000

| | Venango County Total | | Non- Entitlement Total | |
|------|-------------------------|----------|------------------------------|----------|
| | Housing Units | Change % | Housing Units | Change % |
| 1980 | 22,408 | N/A | 9,571 | N/A |
| 1990 | | | | |
| 2000 | 22,747 | 339/1.5% | 10,019 | 445/4.6% |

Of the 26,904 total housing units in Venango County in 2000, 84.5 % (22,747) were occupied and 15.5% (4,157) were vacant. Venango County's occupancy rate was quite a bit lower than the state's of 91%. Venango County's high vacancy rate can be attributed to a large number of seasonal, recreational, and occasional use homes. It is the occasional conversion of these "seasonal" homes to year-round occupancy that often creates problems. Unfortunately, many times these seasonal dwellings were constructed many, many years ago and are presently in a deteriorated state. Many are not properly insulated, wired, plumbed and in other ways not up to current building practices and standard codes. However, it is these very qualities that make "seasonal" properties appear inexpensive and therefore affordable to persons of modest means. In reality, these so-called affordable properties are the most costly to heat and maintain. These factors decrease the overall quality of local housing stock.

Another factor to consider in determining the quality or condition of the County's housing stock is the age of the homes themselves. Generally, the older the home the greater the tendency for deterioration. In 1990, 41% of Venango County's houses were built prior to 1940, compared to the State rate of 35.1%. According to the 2000 Census, this figure dropped somewhat to 39.0% of the County's dwelling units. The State's number also dropped to 30.3%. These

figures should not be construed to mean that the State lost many older homes. Pennsylvania still has the largest number of older homes in the nation, but a large number of newly constructed units have significantly increased the total number of dwelling units within the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, the building boom of the 1990's did not occur in Venango County.

Seasonal use homes tend to be younger than those of year-round use mainly because the ability to own a seasonal home is a trend that only recently (post World War II) became affordable to the middle class. In 1990, only 32.6% of all vacant houses (of which seasonal houses comprise 55.8%) were built before 1939.

AGE OF HOUSING – 2000

From US Census data

| Year Built | Percentage |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1990-March, 2000 | 7.1 |
| 1980-1989 | 9.0 |
| 1970-1979 | 15.2 |
| 1960-1979 | 9.6 |
| 1940-1959 | 20.0 |
| Before 1940 | 39.0 |

The 1990 Census of Housing indicates that the median home value (MHV) of owner occupied housing units within the County was \$38,600. This amount placed Venango County 63rd out of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. The County's MHV of owner occupied units is only 55% of the State's MHV of \$69,700. The range of median value of owner occupied homes is significant as it gives a glimpse of overall housing conditions. The lower the median value, the poorer condition of the County's housing. By the 2000 Census, the local median home values in Venango County rose to \$55,900 a real (inflation adjusted) increase of over \$5,000 or 10% gain. Pennsylvania's MHV in 2000 was \$97,000, with a similar value gain of nearly \$5,200. However, the typical Pennsylvania home experienced just a 5.6% increase in real value.

Median housing values for individual Venango County municipalities range from a low of \$33,100 (Utica Borough) to a high of \$75,900 (Sandycreek Township), placing all Venango County municipalities well below the statewide median.

HOUSING VALUE – 2000

From US Census Data

| | % Less Than \$50,000 | % Between \$50,000 and \$150,000 | % Over \$150,000 | Median Value |
|--------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pennsylvania | 15.1 | 61.7 | 23.2 | \$97,000 |
| Venango | 42.8 | 53.8 | 3.4 | \$55,900 |

As the previous table shows, in 2000 virtually all Venango County houses are in either the "below \$50,000" category and the "\$50,000 to \$150,000" range, with approximately just 419 homes in the "\$150,000 and above" level. No homeowner in 2000 valued their home at \$1,000,000 or greater in Venango County. Statewide, well over 4,400 homes were so categorized.

All the data presented on housing, including the number, tenure/vacancy, age, and value, indicate the probability that there is housing stock in Venango County that is in poor condition. Beyond these specific housing statistics that demonstrate a need for housing rehabilitation are other factors including the incidence of LMI, poverty, age and income of County residents. The incidence of LMI, poverty, and age (see Economic Development Needs) emphasize that many County residents have limited means to invest in their homes and, unfortunately, these are usually the very homes that are most in need of attention.

Much of the housing work in Venango County has occurred within the cities of Franklin and Oil City, Sugarcreek Borough and Cranberry Township. These four communities have the staff and resources to locally address at least some of their housing deficiencies. In 1991, Pleasantville Borough and Cornplanter Township began housing rehabilitation programs administered by the County. Since that time, the County has expanded such activities to the communities of Barkeyville, Cooperstown, Utica, Pinegrove, Victory, Scrubgrass, Plum, Clinton, Frenchcreek, Cherrytree, and Rockland. The goal of this program has been two-fold, to upgrade the housing stock for current and future occupancy and for the improvement of the recipient's quality of life. To facilitate this effort, the County conducted a Fair Housing Analysis in FFY 1995. In addition, the County also applied for and received 1993 and 1995 HOME/HC&D funding, and 1996 HOME and local funding to rehabilitate the homes of LMI households. Current County initiatives include the development of Affordable Housing units on the upper stories of commercial structures in the Route 8/62 corridor. An Affordable Housing Trust Board is established to oversee and make

recommendations to the County Commissioners for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

COUNTYWIDE COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Sewer

Sanitary sewer facilities are a concern to Venango County. The majority of soils in Venango County are ill suited for on-site sewage disposal. Malfunctioning systems have led to localized degradation of surface water and shallow groundwater resources.

These problems frequently occur in rural and suburban areas of Venango County. Obviously, the malfunctioning systems in widely scattered rural locations cannot effectively be addressed by a community sewer system. However, in many of the County's municipalities there are areas where numerous suburban developments have grown around the County's older urban areas. In those instances, an existing sewer system is usually within close proximity to the problem areas.

Another pervasive problem relates to the age and condition of many of the existing sewer systems that service the County's smaller communities. Emlenton Borough is a community plagued by its failing older sewage system. A recent community survey placed their LMI level at 68.7%. Since FFY 1993, the County has allocated considerable funds to the Borough to assist with the updating of their facilities. Initial activities included the repair and replacement of some sewage lines, a new roof over the sludge drying beds, and a new chemical chlorination system. For the past few years, the County has been assisting the Borough in the eventual replacement of the entire line along River Avenue as well as the installation of several new manholes. In FFY's 1994 and 1996, the County assisted Polk Borough with initial efforts to improve their sewer system as their community survey at that time indicated LMI incidence of 51.55%. Throughout the 1990's and through 2004, the County has assisted several municipalities with their efforts to improve their sanitary sewer systems, many of which are in significant need of repair due to their age and subsequent deterioration of lines and related treatment plant equipment. In addition to the communities previously mentioned, these activities also involved Clintonville Borough, Rouseville Borough, Cornplanter Township, Frenchcreek Township, and Pleasantville Borough.

For FFY 2006, it is proposed that a portion of the County's entitlement be used for sewer system improvements in the Boroughs of Polk and Emlenton and Scrubgrass Township. The Emlenton project will be a continuation of those activities begun in the late 1990's. The Emlenton system is over 100 years old,

with the River Avenue line serving as a main interceptor for the entire system. With the age, size and subsequent deterioration of the lines, infiltration is prevalent and impedes the flow throughout the system. The manholes to this system are also quite old and extremely small, making access to them difficult as well as hazardous. With 2006 funding, Emlenton Borough will continue the sewer line replacement along River Avenue and also install four new manholes in the project area. The Polk Borough system suffers many of the same problems with the small and deteriorated lines. The County proposes to use 2006 monies to assist in Phase II sewer system improvement that include telemetrizing, cleaning, and slip lining of the lines along Main Street. Scrubgrass Township has an ambitious project proposed that would construct a new treatment plant at the I-80 Exit 42 Interchange. This interchange is a designated growth area in Venango County and the project would retain and create job opportunities. The Venango County Commissioners decided to target some 2006 CDBG funds to assist in moving the project forward. The 2006 funds are targeted toward construction of the 8" PVC gravity sewer line.

New Construction, replacement and/or upgrading costs are beyond the financial capacity of these communities. It is believed that in many instances, these small communities have a majority of residents that are classified as low to moderate income, with this assumption usually confirmed by an income survey.

Water

Water facilities are also of major concern in Venango County. In addition to contamination from malfunctioning septic systems, individual water sources have frequently become contaminated from gas drilling and coal mining activities. As with sanitary sewer systems, most of the pollutant is evident in rural and suburban areas where community water systems have not been a feasible option.

As with sewer systems, the age and condition of water systems servicing many small areas in the County also present serious problems. Deterioration of these systems is costly to remedy and most communities cannot obtain the needed funding to address these problems. Replacement of undersized water lines is beyond the financial means of most municipalities. Since the inception of the CDBG program to the present, the County has continued to allocate portions of its annual allocation to water system improvements, with some of the more recent activities summarized below.

A portion of the County's FFY 2000 CDBG funds were directed toward water system improvements, with Barkeyville Borough, Clintonville Borough, and Conrplanter township benefiting from this funding. Barkeyville Borough used these monies to purchase equipment to be installed at its new water treatment

plant. Clintonville used these funds to initiate the first of several stages to completely overhaul its treatment facility. Cornplanter Township used its funds to update a formerly privately owned water distribution system serving a portion of its residents.

Both Rouseville Borough and Cornplanter Township used a portion of the County's FFY 2002 and 2003 funds to improve their water systems. Cornplanter used this funding to complete the final stages of improvements to the water distribution system serving the Clapp Farm area of the Township. These improvements were necessary to insure a safe and adequate supply of water to meet both residential and fire fighting concerns. Once the line replacement was completed, FFY 2003 funds were used to install pit style meters at each service connection and for rehabilitation of the discharge end of a culvert where the newly installed water line crosses.

FFY 2002 funds were used for water line replacement along Third Street in Rouseville Borough. The project included the replacement of undersized steel and asbestos water mains with 6-inch water mains. This project was of particular concern since this line is the main water distribution leg of the water system grid. The old mains were losing water and the asbestos mains presented a health and safety risk. In 2003, the Borough received additional funding for water system improvements and used the monies to install dual check back flow preventers on each service connection which includes all households within the Borough as well as approximately 20 families within the village of McClintockville in Cornplanter Township. This upgrade brought the connections into compliance with both Federal and State regulations as well as addressed health and safety issues that effect the entire water system.

In FFY 2000, 2001 and 2003, the Clintonville Sewer and Water Authority received CDBG funding for various improvements to its water treatment facility. These activities will benefit all residents of Clintonville Borough as well as 31 households in Clinton Township.

In FFY 2004, a portion of the County's CDBG entitlement was targeted for improvements to the Pleasantville Borough and Barkeyville Borough's water systems. Monies in Pleasantville will be used for the replacement of undersized and deteriorated lines (both water and sewer) serving the School Street area of the Borough. Barkeyville Borough used their funds for the installation of a new water supply well and water well supply pumping at the new water treatment plant.

With FFY 2006 funds, the County proposes to assist Rouseville Borough with improvements to their water system on Diamond Street and Second Avenue.

Other Facilities

In addition to the traditional facilities of a community, there are often special resources that provide services to certain segments of the population. Venango County has paid considerable attention to facilities for the elderly. In Oil City, with assistance of CDBG funds, a community effort resulted in a centrally located senior center, in a building exclusively dedicated for that use. This center continues to be the most active one in the County and is used by many residents of the townships and boroughs outside of Oil City as well. In addition, and again with assistance from CDBG, the former County nursing home for the elderly was converted to a personal care facility, with completion in 1993.

Another needed public improvement is the rehabilitation of local streets, curbs, sidewalks, and storm sewers. Like much of the infrastructure in the County's older established municipalities, these facilities are aged and deteriorated. The deteriorated sidewalks present potential hazards to the elderly and impede handicapped access.

One of the most successful Federal programs in rural Pennsylvania is Head Start. It provided a needed service for families that cannot afford traditional day care services. Additionally, the educational boost these children receive is tremendous. In recent years, the program in Clintonville and surrounding communities has been temporarily housed in the Borough Building. However, the need for more space and the current facility's inability to meet Federal and Head Start regulations requires that new space be acquired. The Borough recognizes the importance of this program's presence within the community and has donated a site, complete with water and sewer tap-ins, for the construction of a new facility meeting all applicable requirements. The County allocated a portion of its FFY 2004 and 2005 funds to this project. Since the initial request, the Borough has secured other local funds and the building's construction should come to fruition in 2006. CDBG assistance with these activities is essential to ensure that the Head Start program remains operational within the southern portion of the County. The Borough will retain ownership of the new facility and will implement a 25-year lease with Head Start.

Handicapped Access

Much of the development in Venango County was completed prior to any concern to provide for the needs of the handicapped population. In 1990, the County completed a handicapped self-evaluation that detailed several deficiencies within various County owned and/or operated facilities. These barriers began to be removed with CDBG assistance from FFY's 1991, 1992,

1993, and 1994. The County recognizes the need to remove architectural barriers from public and municipal buildings and facilities as an ongoing priority for projects. In this vein, the County in conjunction with the other entitlement municipalities, assisted the Venango Area Riding for the Handicapped Association (VARHA) provide riding facilities for handicapped persons. FFY 1998 funds were used to provide improved handicapped accessibility to the Venango County Courthouse and the Venango County Museum of Arts, Science and Industry. Funds from the County's FFY 1999 program were used to provide handicapped access to the Cornplanter Fire Hall. FFY 2001 CDBG monies assisted with handicapped accessibility renovations at the Emlenton Borough community building. Additionally, portions of the County's FFY 2003 entitlement monies are committed to accessibility concerns at Two Mile Run County Park. The County wishes to continue to use CDBG funds toward the removal of handicapped impediments within the County.

Streets

Local streets are a vital aspect of the infrastructure needs of a community, with several streets critical to efficient traffic flow within a particular area. Some of the more heavily traveled streets are in need of pavement restoration and lie in neighborhoods with significant concentrations of LMI households. Various municipalities, through our public review/comment efforts, continue to target such improvements as vitally needed. Since 1993, portions of the County's annual entitlements have been used for street and/or walkway improvements within Rouseville Borough, Clintonville Borough, Utica Borough, Sandycreek Township, Emlenton Borough, Richland Township, and Polk Borough.

PUBLIC SERVICE NEEDS

The social service needs of Venango County are provided by County, multi-county, State agencies, as well as numerous local private, non-profit organizations. For the most part, these facilities adequately address the needs of the residents.

Recreation can generally be divided into two categories that include the traditional recreational activities for residents and those which are tourist based.

Local recreational facilities are principally located in the smaller, more densely populated areas, such as the boroughs and villages. These parks are normally used by all of the area's residents and tend to need either rehabilitative work or the installation of new equipment. However, a typical small community's tight budget does not often make this feasible. Examples of this would be the community parks located in the Boroughs of Pleasantville, Clintonville, and Emlenton. These local parks provide daily recreational opportunities to their

residents and CDBG assistance from FFY's 1988 and 2001 have been used for such upgrades to existing facilities.

The cornerstone of local recreation is Two Mile Run County Park, located in the center of the County, north of Route 8 between Franklin and Oil City. This 2,700-acre park was first conceived about 30 years ago and has been supported by the County Commissioners since that time. Recreational opportunities abound in all seasons at this park, with offerings of cross-country skiing, year-round hiking, water sports, and field games. Used by more than 100,000 visitors annually, this park provides an inexpensive and enjoyable recreational focal point for all county residents. The County has used portions of its annual CDBG allocation from several individual grant years for numerous improvements to this facility. These would include FFY's 1985, 1986, 1989, and 2003.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Although the County is essentially rural, agriculture has not played the key role in its development that might be expected. However, the County's natural resources have always played a vital role in its economic history. Timber, oil, gas, coal, and sand and gravel have been, and continue to be, important. While oil and coal remain important to the economy, they are no longer the major job generators and are now on a long-term decline.

Generally, Venango County has been classified as a manufacturing area. As such, it is not surprising to see that it has suffered from the same problems that have beset the industrial Northeast and the State of Pennsylvania. Traditionally, 6,000 to 7,000 jobs in Venango County were manufacturing related. From 1976 to 1986, 3,678 manufacturing jobs were lost in the County and have never been recovered. The economic distress within Venango County is evident by its continued high unemployment rate. The 2000 average unemployment rate for the County was 5.7%, compared to 4.01% for Pennsylvania and 4.0% nationally.

When one considers the changing population characteristics, especially those reflecting age (1970 – 11% of total population was 65 years of age or older; in 1980 the rate rose to 12.5%, by 1990 to 15%, and in 2000 at 16.8%) and the trend of recent and continued unemployment, it is apparent that there is a relationship between the two. Simply stated, it appears that greater economic opportunities must be presented. If this does not happen, there will be a continuing pattern of aging in the County as the younger residents continue to migrate to other areas to seek employment.

To demonstrate the effect the loss of manufacturing jobs has had, a comparison of 1980 and 1990 Census figures on median family income (MFI) is

helpful. In 1980, the U.S. Census reports a 1979 County MFI of \$19,531 which equates to 97.7% of the State's figure. By 1990, Venango County's 1989 MFI was only 77.9% of the State's (Venango- \$27,161; State - \$34,856). Further, when inflation is taken into consideration and the 1979 dollars are multiplied by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the 10-year span of 1979 to 1989, so that 1979 dollars equal 1989 dollars, a startling result is shown. If the 1979 MFI were adjusted to 1989 dollars, the MFI would equal \$32,733 for Venango County and \$33,512 for the State. In essence, the real wages of Venango County families fell 20.5% from 1979 to 1989.

The 1990's saw a rebound in real wages for the County. The typical family realized a nearly \$3,000 real increase, or 8.0% in purchasing power. Still, overall, the normal 1999 Venango County family trails its 1979 counterpart in economic terms by a sizeable margin. The 1979 County family had roughly the same income as any other in the Commonwealth. Today, while somewhat improved from ten years ago, they still have just \$4 for every \$5 of their equals in the rest of the State.

**MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME (MFI)
1979 – 1989**

From 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census, STF-3 Files

| | 1979 MFI | 1979 MFI* | 1989 MFI | 1989 MFI* | 1999 MFI | % Change 1979-1999 |
|---------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------|
| PA | \$19,995 | \$45,884 | \$34,856 | \$46,831 | \$49,184 | 7.2 |
| Venango | \$19,531 | \$44,819 | \$27,161 | \$36,492 | \$39,492 | -12.1 |

* The CPI multiplies 1979 amounts for the two decades, which was 2.295; 1989 amounts, are multiplied by the CPI for the one-decade, which was 1.344.

Currently, there are some ambitious efforts taking place in the County in an attempt to promote economic growth. These efforts may help reverse downward trends, but they must be coordinated among the varied factions of the County. An example of these various factions working together involved a local manufacturing concern, Franklin Steel. Through aggressive economic development strategies and coordination of efforts from the former employees and the public and private sectors, the facility has reopened and now has over 170 employees.

Several local economic development and tourism promotion agencies merged in 2005 to form the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism. The ORA is the lead economic development agency for Venango

County. The 2006 economic development action plan specifies activities, goals and performance measures in the following categories:

- New Industry Recruitment
- International Trade
- Local Industry Development (Retention and Expansion)
- Community Development and Revitalization
- Facilities Management/Development
- Government/Legislative Activities\

The Venango County Commissioners have committed financial resources for the 2006 marketing efforts of the Alliance.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been formulated to address the needs identified in this CDB, with an emphasis on those objectives most likely to benefit low to moderate-income households. It is understood that not all needs can be addressed with FFY 2006 funds. Therefore the following objectives include activities to be undertaken with 2006 monies as well as future projects:

- To identify the existing water and sewage systems, especially those in rural areas, in need of repair and/or upgrading and review them based upon benefit to low-moderate income households.
- To consider the extension of sewer and waterlines, where adequate treatment and capacity are present, and when extensions will benefit low-moderate income households.
- To continue projects which will provide needed special services to the low-moderate and very low-income residents of the County with an emphasis on maintaining or securing facilities to promote the overall well being of children and their families.
- To assist low/moderate income communities with the upgrading and rehabilitation of their community parks, and with the provision and/or upgrading of community centers to continue providing low-moderate income citizens with local recreational opportunities.
- To support projects, which will remove architectural barriers to the handicapped at public buildings, facilities, or recreation, centers.

- To consider projects and programs aimed at economic strengthening and development through the creation and/or retention of jobs for low-moderate income citizens.
- To continue housing rehabilitation activities in areas where no other such assistance is available to very low and low-moderate income families.
- To continue projects which will provide needed special services to the low-moderate and very low-income residents of the County and those projects aimed at benefiting the elderly through the provision of special services or the upgrading of facilities for the elderly.
- To continue to assist communities with other types of public improvements aimed at benefiting primarily low-moderate income persons and the County's substantial population of elderly persons. Such projects would include sidewalk replacement and curbing installation.
- To continue to update planning and grant procurement strategies to secure additional resources to supplement County and CDBG dollars to complete needed projects.

SHORT TERM PLAN (1 – YEAR – FFY 2006)

The following plan identifies activities that are designed to meet some of the County's immediate community development needs. Several factors were taken into consideration in establishing this Plan. Of primary concern was local municipal input. Local officials as well as various agencies and organizations throughout the County were informed in writing of the availability of CDBG funds and invited to submit eligible project proposals to address their specific community needs. Their responses afforded the County the opportunity to assess each proposal's impact on community development needs within Venango County. Other factors taken into consideration in the formulation of this Plan included the percentage of each activity's benefit to low-moderate income residents, project readiness, each project's consistency with the Three-Year Plan and County Comprehensive Plan, and each project sponsor's prior utilization, if any, for CDBG funds. No project sponsor's requested funding for handicapped accessibility activities. However, had they done so this proposal would have been prioritized accordingly.

The Short Term Plan recommends the following activities:

- Polk Borough Sewer System Improvements
- Rouseville Borough Water System Improvements
- Emlenton Borough Sewer System Improvements
- Scrubgrass Township Sewer System Installation

LONG TERM PLAN (FFY 2007-2008)

The following Plan identifies activities designed to address the County's community development needs on a long-term basis. Critical to this Plan development was the identification of certain housing, facilities, services, and economic needs as so cited in our needs analysis. During the second and third years of this Plan, funding priority will be given to communities that have received little or no prior CDBG funding assistance. Funding will be continued in the following areas:

- Infrastructure projects for the removal of health and safety hazards, the improvement of water and sewer facilities, and to enhance economic development.
- Projects that will remove or reduce accessibility barriers for the elderly and handicapped.

CRITERIA

The principal criteria considered in the selection of the previously listed projects were:

- Compliance with DCED's CDBG Guidelines
- Qualifications under the National Objectives Test – principally benefit low-moderate income residents
- Previous CDBG assistance received by project sponsor
- Project dependence on CDBG funds
- Community's financial resources and tax effort to date
- Relationship and consistency of project with the County's Comprehensive Plan
- Financial commitment of the municipality
- Project economic potential
- Municipal economic distress factors
- Project readiness

SOURCES

Graney, Grossman, Colosimo & Associates
1970 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Statistics
1980 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Statistics
1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Statistics
2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing Statistics
Venango County Housing Plan
Venango County Land Use Plan
Venango County Water and Sewage Study
Pennsylvania Department of Labor, Industry, Bureau of Employment Security
Venango County Regional Planning Commission
Municipal Responses to the 2006 CDBG Proposal Process
Venango County Officials
HUM LMI Statistics/Section 8 Income Limits
Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism