

growing together

Are regional approaches getting any traction?
And why should we care?

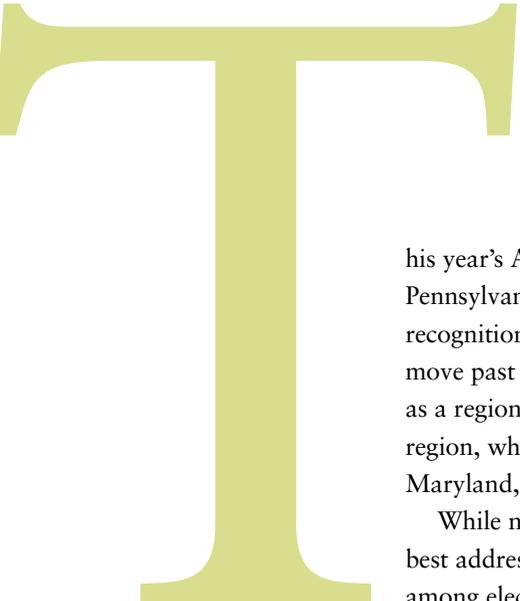


CLAUDE WORTHINGTON BENEDUM FOUNDATION
2005 ANNUAL REPORT

About the Foundation

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation is an independent foundation established in 1944 by Michael and Sarah Benedum, natives respectively of Bridgeport and Blacksville, West Virginia. The Foundation's policy is to allocate no less than five percent of the market value of its assets each year in support of its charitable activities, including the grants program.

The Foundation's assets at year-end 2005 totaled \$382,699,176. Since its inception in 1944, the Foundation has made over 6,700 grants totaling almost \$295,000,000.

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his year's Annual Report features a “virtual roundtable” among Southwestern Pennsylvania leaders on the issue of regional cooperation. There has been growing recognition that in order for the region with Pittsburgh at its core to prosper, we must move past traditional parochialism, and act on the realization that we are competing as a region with other regions around the world. To do so effectively, the Pittsburgh region, which includes portions of West Virginia and Ohio, and perhaps western Maryland, must address issues that are regional in scale with regional approaches.

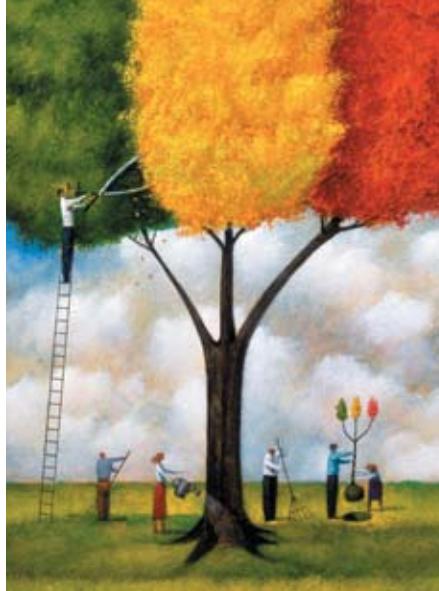
While no one is suggesting that this is an easy transition, or that all issues are best addressed on a regional scale, it is clear that conversations are occurring today among elected officials, policy makers, and business and civic leaders—around topics such as a regional water authority and city–county consolidation—that would have been impossible just a few years ago.

Leaders and organizations are beginning to cooperate effectively to address issues that are regional in scope. Some examples of such cooperation appear in the comments in the featured story in this Report, while others are set forth in several vignettes, which appear as sidebars. It is important to note from these examples that “regionalism” is best thought of not as a single geographic location, but instead as any area in which the people and institutions share a problem—or an opportunity—that can be addressed most effectively through collaborative effort.

The Benedum Foundation hopes that these examples will encourage elected officials and other leaders in Southwestern Pennsylvania, in adjoining states, and across state lines, to be open to the tremendous potential of regional approaches to regional problems and opportunities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William P. Getty".

William P. Getty, President



A Virtual Roundtable

We conducted individual interviews with nine distinguished professionals in Southwestern Pennsylvania, each a recognized leader in business, government, or the nonprofit arena, to learn their views on regional approaches to problems and opportunities. We posed the same questions to each of them, asking for observations and perspectives on how attitudes have changed; which barriers have disappeared and which remain; what cooperative efforts have been most successful; where regional approaches would have the greatest impact; and what we could do right now to help foster this kind of collaboration.

A representative sampling of their replies is presented here in a conversational format. We think of it as a “virtual roundtable,” and we thank the participants who made it possible. They have been extremely generous in giving their time, and in sharing their opinions, experience and expertise with us ... and with you. They are:

Bracken Burns

Washington County Commissioner

Commissioner Burns was first elected to his current position in 1996, after serving in the public and nonprofit sectors for more than two decades. Active in a wide range of community service organizations, he is a founding member of the Washington-Greene Addictive Disease Council and founder of the Washington County Theatre Guild. He is chairman of both the Southwestern Pennsylvania Corporation and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

Court Gould

Executive Director, Sustainable Pittsburgh

With 20 years of experience in public policy and nonprofit management, Mr. Gould's special expertise is long-term planning and development designed to integrate economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality, and to provide sustainable solutions for communities and businesses. He is chairman of the Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership, and recently participated as a German Marshall Fund delegate in the study of regional economies in Europe.

Charles “Chuck” Gregory

Deputy President, Television Operations of America

President, Sony Technology Center–Pittsburgh

Sony Electronics, Inc.

Responsible for television manufacturing operations nationwide and in Mexico, and instrumental in the start-up of Sony's operations in Southwestern Pennsylvania, Mr. Gregory, a Pittsburgh native, has worked extensively throughout the United States, Mexico, Europe, and Asia during his career. He is active in charities and professional groups at the local and national levels, and his board memberships include the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

In addition to the nine participants in our “virtual roundtable,” we wish to thank the following regional leaders who also contributed to this Annual Report:

John Bozic
Pittsburgh Gateways
Corporation

Christopher Briem
University of Pittsburgh

Billy Coffindaffer
Morgantown Vision 2020

James Estep
West Virginia
High Technology
Consortium Foundation

Christina Gabriel
The Heinz Endowments

**The Honorable
Ron Justice**
Mayor, Morgantown

Michael Krajovic
Fay-Penn Economic
Development Council

**The Honorable
Brooks McCabe**
West Virginia Senate

Barbara McNees
Greater Pittsburgh
Chamber of Commerce

Harold Miller
Consultant

Mary Jo Morandini
Beaver County Transit
Authority

**The Honorable
Robert H. Plymale**
West Virginia Senate

Pam Snyder
Greene County
Board of Commissioners

William Thomasmeyer
The Technology Collaborative

Kurt Thurmaier
Northern Illinois University

Melissa Hart

Three-term U.S. Representative, 4th District of Pennsylvania
Congresswoman Hart was the first female Republican to represent Pennsylvania in the U.S. House of Representatives. While serving a district that includes communities in six counties, she was active in targeting and obtaining funds for the economic development of local brownfield sites. In addition, she worked directly with municipal and county officials to help access federal funding for local projects, especially water and sewage infrastructure. She is on the boards of several colleges, universities, and arts organizations. Prior to taking office in Congress in 2001, she had served in the Pennsylvania Senate for ten years.

Nancy Kukovich

*President & Chief Professional Officer
United Way of Westmoreland County*
Before assuming her current position in January 2000, Ms. Kukovich had been headquartered in Harrisburg, where she most recently served as president & CPO of the United Way of Pennsylvania, and formerly as deputy director of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania. Regional and statewide board memberships include the Pennsylvania Partnership for Children and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Partnerships on Aging.

Terry Miller

Director, University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics (IOP)
The IOP’s fundamental mission is to provide policy makers with a setting for the constructive discussion of difficult policy questions. As its director, Ms. Miller develops and implements continuing education programs for elected officials, foundation executives, and community/civic leaders on critical public policy issues affecting the region. She also serves as a consultant to The Pittsburgh Foundation and the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

Dan Onorato

Chief Executive of Allegheny County
Sworn into office on January 2, 2004, Allegheny County Chief Executive Onorato’s first accomplishments included elimination of the county’s \$31 million structural deficit. He has secured nearly \$300 million in state funding for economic development projects, and his top three priorities are developing shovel-ready land in the Pittsburgh International Airport corridor, reclaiming and redeveloping brownfield sites, and encouraging the growth of university research and development.

Richard Stafford

*Distinguished Service Professor of Public Policy
The Heinz School of Carnegie Mellon University*
Currently active in research, education, business, and consulting, Mr. Stafford has dedicated most of his career to public service. He is a retired CEO of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, and had previously served in cabinet level and chief of staff positions for Governor Dick Thornburgh. Extensive consulting in the public policy arena has included work for the Institute of Politics at Harvard, and the U.S. Department of Justice.

Sunil Wadhvani

*Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder
iGATE Corporation (formerly Mastech)*
Mr. Wadhvani directs a global business with 6,000 employees, providing information technology and outsourcing services for more than 200 major clients on four continents. Under his leadership, the firm has been frequently listed by respected business journals as one of the nation’s fastest growing companies. A published author, Mr. Wadhvani also serves on the boards of Carnegie Mellon University and the Allegheny Conference on Community Development.



<< The world is a competitive place.
We live in a global economy,
and the time for action was yesterday.
The clock is running and the longer
we delay, the further we'll be left behind.

CHUCK GREGORY

GROWING TOGETHER

Are regional approaches getting any traction in Southwestern Pennsylvania? And why should we care?

In speaking with nine of the region's most thoughtful and articulate leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, it becomes quickly apparent that the major challenges and opportunities facing Southwestern Pennsylvania demand regional solutions. Issues like water quality and sewage treatment, highways and mass transit, economic development and accessible health care transcend municipal borders and county lines. They're regional in nature and the costs involved can be astronomical. It's estimated, for example, that the cost of repairing the sewage system in Southwestern Pennsylvania approaches \$10 billion. And on top of that is a projected \$22 billion gap over the next 25 years between transportation improvement and maintenance requests and the state and federal funding available. These are huge problems with astonishing price tags, but the opportunities they provide are enormous.

The unanimous opinion of all participants in our virtual roundtable is that the most logical and sensible way to tackle these kinds of challenges is by approaching them as a region. That means working together, working for the common good, and understanding that what's good for each of the ten counties of Southwestern Pennsylvania is good for everyone who lives in them.

Wadhvani >> It's a competitive world, and to get our rightful share of job opportunities in the future, we have to be working even closer together and moving even faster forward.

Kukovich >> Our real competition is with other regions, but we can't seem to get to that. We have a sort of competitiveness that just doesn't work to our advantage. We're arguing among ourselves about whether everybody's getting their fair share, while other regions are moving forward, growing businesses and populations. And there's less arguing when the shares are getting bigger. We seem to be arguing over declining shares of a smaller pie. It's just self-defeating behavior. We simply need to say, 'This is our region, and we love it. Let's see how we can grow it together.'

Onorato >> We're competing with all other regions of the U.S. and other regions of the world, too. The sooner we realize that if we can expand companies or relocate companies to Southwestern Pennsylvania—regardless of which county—we win as a region. If a company expands in Westmoreland or Beaver, there's going to be a high percentage of employment

Government consolidation: time to rethink 1906 policies

According to a report by the Brookings Institution, Pennsylvania is “drowning in government.” In the Greater Pittsburgh area, the noted Washington think tank counts 418 general-purpose governing bodies—about 18 governments per 100,000 people—almost three times the national average of 6.1. And that doesn’t include many more special-purpose authorities in the region. The result, the report says, “complicates coordination, exacerbates unbalanced growth patterns, increases the costs of government,

and undercuts the region’s competitiveness.”

Why is government consolidation so difficult in the Commonwealth? Historians cite the 1906 annexation by the City of Pittsburgh of nearby Allegheny City to form its North Side neighborhood. The resulting hostility made national news and caused lawmakers to amend the State constitution making further annexations nearly impossible. Legislation to facilitate consolidation has been introduced in Harrisburg over the years, but has failed to pass.

According to university professors Kurt Thurmaier and Suzanne Leland, co-editors of *Case Studies of City-County Consolidation*, leaders of small communities often end up competing against each other instead

of combining their energy and resources to win funding, industry, and jobs for the region.

The editors suggest that successful campaigns to consolidate governments must stress the many community-enrichment benefits—not just potential cost savings. Civic leaders should study the case of Kansas City, where community leaders at all levels emphasized the importance of creating a single regional economic development policy. Voters there approved a consolidation plan by 60 percent.

Perhaps by following a similar path, Pennsylvania can relinquish one pundit’s designation as the country’s “most fragmented state.”

coming from Allegheny county. If a company expands in Allegheny County, it’s the same thing. When US Airways had 12,000 employees in the area, 5,000 of them lived in Beaver County, and when Sony opened in Westmoreland County, a vast majority of their employees lived in Monroeville [Allegheny County].

We need to expand business in the region. We should almost drop the imaginary lines around the counties and just look at the ten counties as Southwestern Pennsylvania; that’s our goal. Make Southwestern Pennsylvania move again economically, and we’ll all win.

Miller >> Long-standing political and economic barriers need to fall away, and leaders from both the private and public sectors need to cross over these old lines to build new and productive alliances. I think that has to happen, whether it’s building enough roads to get everyone to and from work, or keeping the region competitive in a global economy, or protecting our green spaces and our natural resources, or providing safe and affordable housing.

Gould >> Regionalism is certainly critical for the future, and it doesn’t have to be predicated on boundary change. We can allow our communities to keep lots of their autonomy, but still achieve real success by doing things in a regional way. And that could provide significant fiscal relief.

Hart >> Federal funding is much more likely when projects are regional; that’s a certainty. The federal government always favors a regional approach when it comes to helping communities deal with infrastructure issues. It’s much harder for a one-town system to get assistance than it is for a regional one.

Stafford >> I think, without question, there’s a definite trend toward regionalism. On an individual basis, each of us has become a regionalist in our behavior whether we think about it or not. Because we’re used to regional shopping or having a job outside of the community where we live, we’re starting to see that it’s in our own best interest to have a successful region. And that means we need to be thinking and addressing whatever makes our systems more efficient and effective.

PATCHING SOME POTHoles ON THE COOPERATION HIGHWAY

There may be a strong case for regional cooperation, but getting a true consensus among all decision makers—and a firm commitment for subsequent action—seems to be one of the greatest challenges of all. Although some of the most traditional barriers are fading away, others remain stubbornly entrenched. Nonetheless, there is some progress being made, and attitudes are clearly changing. Much of that change has been fairly recent.

Miller >> For the past ten years, the Institute of Politics at the University of Pittsburgh has been holding retreats for elected officials from across the region. And what I've become aware of in the last two years in particular is a true sense of camaraderie. The energy in the room has changed. Policy makers are starting to get the sense that we really are all in this together, and they're seeing the importance of reaching across the aisle, across geographic and political lines.

Stafford >> One of the biggest things that happened to acquaint everybody was the Regional Renaissance Referendum in 1997. Even though it went down in flaming defeat, it was really pivotal in changing attitudes. It engaged people at a regional level, and, for the very first time, the entire region actually joined in a meaningful public policy discussion. Everybody had an opinion and got to express it.

Wadhvani >> Our key leaders have started seeing that the whole concept of regionalism is really critical to the progress of any region in the country, so attitudes are changing very positively. Most business and civic leaders now agree and feel strongly that we must have a regional approach to everything we do.

Burns >> I think that we have turned the corner, and that finally there are folks in the region who realize that it takes a little more than lip service to be regional. I'm guardedly optimistic, but I really think that this time we're going to get it right.

>> My sense is that regional leaders and policy makers are awakening to the understanding that our economies, our work force, environment, land use, transportation, and even our public health and emergency response systems are inextricably linked.

TERRY MILLER

Kukovich >> We're certainly talking a lot about regionalism, and maybe talking is the first step. But if we don't get some traction pretty soon, we'll still be just talking five years from now.

Miller >> One of the barriers is that a lot of times people use the word 'regionalism' in a title of something, even though everybody who's sitting at the table is from Allegheny County. They're saying it's a regional initiative, but folks from around the region will say, 'Don't say it's regional if you haven't invited us to come and be at the table.'

Gregory >> Many times people in Westmoreland and other counties feel like they're not included because so many major regional discussions and decisions are made in Allegheny County. So if you're in Westmoreland or Armstrong or another surrounding county, you sometimes feel like a second-class citizen.

Miller >> I think one of the greatest barriers we have is that when people hear the word ‘regionalism’ they think of it as an on/off switch, all or nothing. And they’re either for it or against it. They’re afraid that regionalism will mean an end to the local police department, snow removal, trash pickup, and the much beloved local high school football team. The idea of losing community and municipal identity strikes fear into their hearts. And a lot of people bring that kind of fear to the table.

We have to do a better job of explaining the nuances of regional cooperation and the degrees of gradations that are possible. There are some things we can do cooperatively to improve our efficiencies and effectiveness. But it’s not a cookie cutter, one-size-fits-all kind of thing. Each project has to be analyzed and looked at in terms of how we can bring the most benefit to the region, and how we can do that cooperatively. There’s very little risk of losing local community identity.

Kukovich >> In Southwestern Pennsylvania, we love our hometowns! And we love the small-town nature of our communities. That was cited as our number one strength in a needs assessment we just did in Westmoreland County. Interestingly enough, that very same characteristic—the small-town nature of our communities—was also seen as the major barrier preventing us from getting together on critical issues.

Gregory >> It’s pretty hard to break down those walls of being very, very paternalistic toward your county and your community. It’s just been that way forever. We have people who want to change it, and we have people thinking in a regional manner, but I think we still have a long way to go.

Onorato >> I think the biggest change—and the evidence of that change—is that five years ago it would probably have been unheard of for an elected official in my position to even talk about consolidation and sharing services as aggressively as I do, because it was perceived as a negative politically. Now it’s a real topic, a legitimate debate, and I think finances are driving it.

Gould >> Local governments around our region are feeling on a day-to-day basis that there are fewer resources, less disposable time, less municipal budget money, and more unfunded mandates coming down from the state than ever before. These constraints are inducing many to become open to thinking about regionalism and new ways to share costs.

Another phenomenon creating at least a willingness to discuss regionalism and intergovernmental cooperation is the reality of globalization. The fast-changing global economy increasingly raises a question as to what is our competitive niche in a world where competition is no longer between cities but between regions—regions that are well planned and function well and promote themselves.

Metro government options in West Virginia

How can tiny Fairmont, West Virginia (population 18,000) become the State's largest city overnight?

By merging with surrounding Marion County to form a single metro government with a population of 56,000. Such a merger, currently under study, would make the new entity instantly eligible for federal entitlement funding of up to \$1 million per year. And if the prospective merger takes place before December 31, 2009, Fairmont/Marion

would likely attract the attention of any business using U.S. Census data to identify potential sites for new facilities.

The 2010 Census is the drop-dead deadline according to State Senator Brooks McCabe, who sponsored the legislation allowing city-county and county-county mergers. If local governments fail to consolidate by then, none of the State's cities are expected to top 50,000—the threshold for the annual grants of \$1 million.

With the 2006 legislation, West Virginians have found a way to manipulate U.S. Census data without relocating anyone. They can move boundaries instead and change the structure of local government to

match the expectations of potential employers.

Legally, it takes only 18 months to process consolidation paperwork, but time is short. "Everything needs to be in place by December 2009," Senator McCabe says. "If we miss that deadline, we won't have another Census until 2020, and we'll have lost ten years. With federal dollars declining, states can't make up the lost federal dollars. We have to find answers to rebuild our coming shortfalls. This is a creative way for local governments to be proactive. I only hope we do it in time."

Hart >> I've seen the county commissioners all over Southwestern Pennsylvania become much more cooperative when it comes to supporting each other's projects, from infrastructure to office and industrial parks—developments that may not occur in their jurisdiction, but would affect their jurisdiction in a positive way. More and more elected officials on all levels are cooperating to develop the region, and I think at least one traditional barrier—"I'm only interested in my jurisdiction"—is starting to fall. But it needs to fall even more among our borough, township, and city officials.

Wadhvani >> I think the people who haven't quite gotten it yet are the political leaders in local municipalities, and I think our biggest impediment is fragmentation—too many municipalities, fire departments, economic development organizations, and so on. It's tough to pull these different pieces together, but I think more and more people are recognizing that we have to take a common approach. As Ben Franklin once said, albeit in another context, 'We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.'



<< The ‘missing piece’ that stops our region from getting its act together is a regional vision around which the primary sectors — academia, government, business, and nonprofit — all agree and sing from the same sheet of music.

COURT GOULD

**PUTTING SOME POINTS ON THE BOARD:
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE SUCCESS**

When asked for concrete examples of successful cooperative efforts within the region, our roundtable created quite a list. Four organizations were cited several times:

- The Allegheny Conference on Community Development, an organization that has mobilized the region’s private-sector leadership for more than 50 years;
- The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), the transportation-planning and regional-planning organization that serves the ten counties;
- The Tri-County Partnership, a collaboration of Allegheny, Beaver, and Washington Counties, designed to promote industrial development and job creation around the Pittsburgh International Airport corridor; and,
- The Greater Pittsburgh Nonprofit Partnership, a new alliance encouraging collaborative efforts and enabling nonprofits to identify critical community issues, develop common planning strategies, and implement solutions together.

Other examples ran the gamut to include cooperative regional projects that are either ongoing or already completed, and exciting new initiatives just getting under way.

Burns >> I’m very optimistic that some of the efforts now in their infancy seem to be headed in the right direction.

One of these is what I call ‘the water project.’ It’s a truly representative task force developed through the Institute of Politics (IOP), and they’re on a very fast track to do a very large job for the region—looking at all of our water-related issues, from flooding to water supply, to water quality, and sewage.

There are more than 850 entities in the region dealing with water and sewage. They’re all doing the same job without benefit of communication or cross-membership, and they have no relation to what really ties them together, a geographic reality called the watershed. When we talk water, we really need to talk watershed and to recognize that today’s flood water is tomorrow’s drinking water, which is the next day’s sewage problem. It’s all so terribly related.

Miller >> The IOP Environment Committee, with endorsement from SPC, is investigating water resource management in the region to see if we’re working as efficiently and effectively as we can, and to determine if there are better fiscal, structural, administrative, and functional options in water management. We put together a regional task force board, with representation from 11 counties, and, through a research initiative, we’ll be gathering new data over the next year that will build on previous studies. We’re not reinventing the wheel, but what we’re hoping to do is create some policy outcome. Recommendations could range from the status quo to a regional water authority. But in between those two points will be many other options to consider. We’ll present the information and let the public and the policy makers decide.

Partnership to bring ideas to market

The Rahall Transportation Institute (RTI) and the Pittsburgh Gateways Corporation intend to make West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania a hub of transportation expertise through their joint sponsorship of the National Center for Bridge, Highway and Transportation Technologies.

The regional collaboration combines the talents of two regional organizations. RTI is headquartered at Marshall University, in Huntington, West Virginia where it's an incubator of new businesses focusing on building transportation-

related jobs, commercializing new transportation technology, and developing spin-off companies in the transportation field.

Likewise, the Pittsburgh Gateways Corporation is known as a "business accelerator"—typically partnering with academic and research institutions to help them commercialize ideas and generate new business growth. Since its inception in 1998, Pittsburgh Gateways has been instrumental in the success of numerous business ventures.

The National Center, a subsidiary of Pittsburgh Gateways, and RTI have four shared initiatives: 1) commercialize transportation technology generated by its academic and industry partners; 2) develop policies and regulations to accelerate the process of technology commercialization;

3) collaborate on an RTI transportation project to improve the secure and rapid transport of military and domestic cargo; and 4) develop and disseminate effective strategies to create public and private partnerships—helping to alleviate the many funding challenges our cities and states face as they rebuild or expand our nation's transportation infrastructure.

Bob Meeder, president of Pittsburgh Gateways, says the regional effort offers the National Center the capacity to "generate some significant results in America's resurgent attention to the nation's critical transportation infrastructure needs." And that bodes well for West Virginians and Pennsylvanians alike.

Kukovich >> I'm really excited about the work that the United Way is doing on 211, a health and human services information referral hotline (telephone and computer accessible) that will be statewide by this time next year. We're moving quickly away from defining information referral as a county resident going to a county phone number to get county information. The notion of using county lines to define how we look at our human services systems is really irrelevant. If you look at where people actually go for services, it really doesn't have much to do with county borders anymore.

>> A major challenge for businesses is the growing cost of health care, and we have one of the most progressive groups in the country looking into that. The Regional Healthcare Initiative is a combination of healthcare, business, and civic leaders who want to improve the quality of care and reduce its cost.

SUNIL WADHWANI

Hart >> I can give you two examples of cooperative efforts in transportation. When we were trying to get the federal designation for I-376, which runs through Allegheny, Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties, many of the local and county

officials were initially worried that they'd have to focus a significant amount of their development money on upgrading the road in order to get the designation. Then they realized that the federal designation would help each and every one of them in their growth and development efforts, so they all came together to support a cooperative approach.

Likewise, in the northern portion of Allegheny County, the townships have all decided to support the same priority projects for transportation funding on the state level—the Route 19 corridor. It may not be the most important artery in each of the townships, but it's extremely important for the region, and they're all lending support.

Wadhwani >> When we were losing air service because of cutbacks by US Airways a few years ago, a lot of business, civic, and political leaders came together to form the Regional Air Service Partnership, because it's so important for our region and the companies here to be connected to key cities around the U.S. The Partnership convinced a number of airlines to expand their service here, and made the case for carriers like Southwest and Jet Blue to set up service in Pittsburgh. Thanks to everyone pulling together, we've been able to retain direct connections from Pittsburgh to 29 of the top 30 U.S. destinations.

And when the Defense Department was looking to cut bases around the country, they targeted the Air Force Reserve's 911th Military Airlift Wing, and that would have eliminated about 1,700 jobs. Once again, our civic, business, and political leaders

BomBots to the rescue

To neutralize improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in war zones, the U.S. government needed a small, portable, and inexpensive unmanned vehicle to complement the \$100,000 robots currently in use. An Air Force research lab developed an early prototype of this BomBot™ by modifying a remote-controlled, 4 x 4 hobbyist monster truck and adding a small color camera. To move ahead, however, they needed someone to further engineer and manufacture production units, and someone to develop a better handheld controller.

Enter Innovative Response Technologies (IRT) in Fairmont, West Virginia and the National Center for Defense Robotics (NCDR) in Pittsburgh. IRT won a \$9.6 million contract to engineer the chassis improvements required to reach speeds up to 35 miles per hour—new transmission, clutch, wheels, and springs—and then manufacture units. Meanwhile, the NCDR funded research at Philadelphia's Nomadio, Inc. to create a robust, digital, two-way controller to meet the military's stringent specifications for extended ranges and jam-proofing. The teams lost no time. The controller was developed and tested within nine months, and, in January 2006, IRT began full production in West Virginia. The first BomBots, costing about

\$5,000 each, went into combat in May—only 105 days later.

The BomBot is the product of two successful economic development organizations. The West Virginia High Technology Consortium (WVHTC) Foundation, which wholly owns IRT, is a business incubator dedicated to growing industries in the state and region. The NCDR is an initiative of The Technology Collaborative, which supports growth in Pennsylvania's robotics, cyber-security, and digital technology industries.

For Jim Estep, WVHTC Foundation president and CEO, the BomBot has special significance. "My son Adam, who is serving in Iraq, lost a friend in an IED blast. For me, this is personal."

came together, came up with a wonderful plan, and we were one of a very few regions in the entire country able to convince the DOD to reverse its position. They're keeping the 911th—and they're expanding it!

Miller >> We have a lot of lessons to learn from the emergency response folks. The Region 13 Antiterrorism Task Force was formed some years ago, actually before 9/11, as a federal pilot program to unify training and pool resources to improve emergency response and readiness in Southwestern Pennsylvania. They've done a really good job at organizing our efforts and have become a national model.

Onorato >> In Allegheny County, we've been eliminating duplication of services and consolidating major functions for decades. We've consolidated the health department and human services; we run the airport and the Port Authority; and, most recently, we consolidated the 911 function.

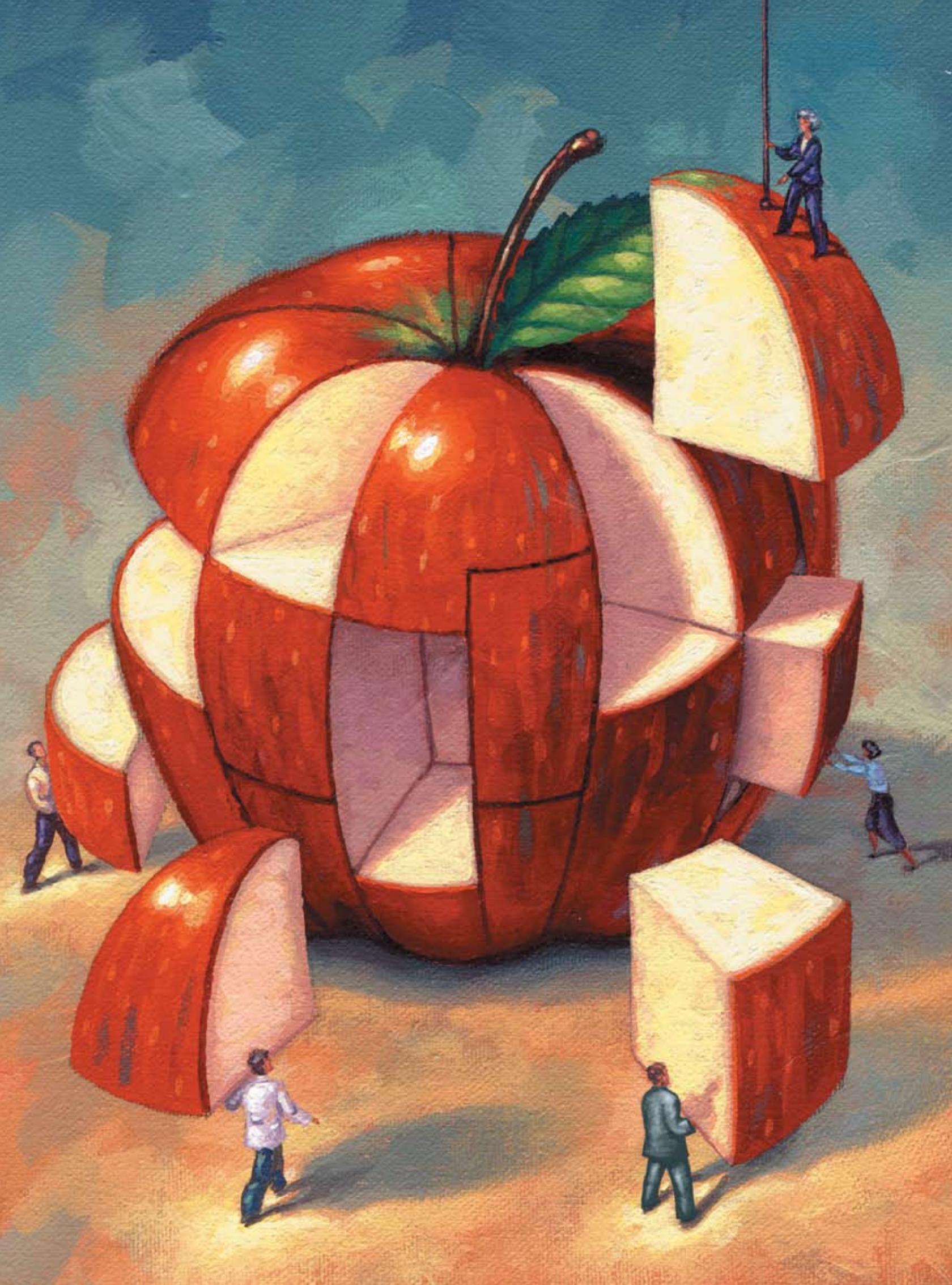
In January 2004, when I was sworn in, there were six 911 centers in the county. We now have only one. The consolidation was driven by the cost of the regional centers, which municipalities had been paying out of their operating budgets. When they collapsed their centers into the county's 911 system, it meant a multi-million dollar savings. Our taxpayers win because there's a lot less public money being spent, and, because of our more efficient state-of-the-art equipment, everybody in the area wins.

Gould >> We're doing a much better job in land use planning since the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code was amended in 2000 to provide new incentives and opportunities for multi-municipal planning. There are a number of multi-municipal comprehensive land use plans around Greensburg and Hempfield Township, and five municipalities in Greene County have a comprehensive land use plan through the Jefferson Morgan Council of Government. The Twin Rivers Council of Government in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties has 13 municipalities that have put together a comprehensive land use plan—the largest in the state. And that's only a sampling of these kinds of initiatives in our region.

PICKING YOUR SHOTS: WHERE DOES REGIONALISM MAKE THE MOST SENSE?

Although regional approaches aren't a panacea for every problem and challenge facing the communities of Southwestern Pennsylvania, there are a substantial number of critical issues crying out for real cooperation among all ten counties that comprise the region. Our roundtable had no difficulty in identifying quite a few.

With more than 550 municipalities in the region, mergers and consolidations were popular topics. Transportation was also a hot button, as well it might be, considering that the region has no less than 32 separate transit authorities, and that 200,000 of our residents cross county lines to go to work every day. Shortfalls in public education and the lack of a true regional vision were mentioned by several. And nearly



<< We each have a piece of the puzzle, and now — for the very first time — we're putting all the pieces on the table and trying to put the puzzle together.

BRACKEN BURNS

everyone pointed to the water issues: more than 800 entities in the region with some responsibility for water and sewage management; and an estimated 16 billion gallons of untreated sewage/rainwater flowing into the region's streams and rivers every year.

Mergers & Consolidations

Wadhvani >> Little townships and boroughs with their own fire departments, water departments, and so forth create a huge amount of redundancy, inefficiency, and high cost. That means a high tax structure, and that's one of the big impediments in getting companies to relocate to this region. Consolidating local governments or merging a lot of their functions would increase efficiency and reduce costs. And it's lower cost of government that attracts the companies that create new jobs.

Burns >> Pennsylvania has the second highest number of municipalities of all states in the nation—2,566 of them, at last count—and 551 of them are in our ten-county region! About 30% of these have fewer than 1,000 residents; 80% have fewer than 5,000. And I think most of us would agree that this is the bare minimum size needed to support municipal services.

A Constitutional Convention in 1968 facilitated the merger/consolidation process, and from 1974 to 1998 there were nine municipal mergers. But during the same period, 13 new municipalities were formed! Clearly, this isn't working real well!

Gregory >> Someone has to set an example, and what better example than Allegheny County and Pittsburgh showing the way? We've already had some service-area mergers between the county and the city, but it needs to go further. For overall benefit to the taxpayers in terms of delivery of services, the city and county need to consolidate. It's been done in other areas; there are examples out there. I don't look at it as an easy task, but it would be the best example for the region.

Onorato >> From a governing point of view, I'm a believer in what Louisville did when they merged the city and the county and left the municipalities alone. In our case, we'd leave the school districts alone as well. We'd give municipalities the option to consolidate if they wanted to, but the county and the city are the two big governments where we duplicate—in areas like economic development, parks and recreation, purchasing, public works, public safety, and a lot more. Those kinds of functions could all be put under one roof, and the city would go from 300,000 people to 1.3 million. That's a full-blown merger of the city and county, but you could have functional mergers in the short term, merging park services, for example, or economic development, or purchasing.

There are lots of models out there, like Louisville, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, and Charlotte. They're all different because every situation is unique, but the endgame was that the county and city came together some way and with some plan. We could easily do that here, too, and make it work, without losing the autonomy of our school districts or our municipalities.

Burns >> People don't really want their municipalities done away with, but they do want their taxes lowered. They want more efficient government; they want the water problem solved, and they want a bus to pick them up.

Consolidation seems such an intractable problem, and such a politically sensitive issue, that I'm thinking it might be more logical, more practical, and more possible to leave the municipalities as they are, but take away the functions that by definition can't be handled on a municipal level—like water management and transportation—and move those to another level. We could create a regional arm of government or a regional authority to manage the issues that beg for a more global solution.

Water Management

Miller >> I think the need for regional cooperation on water quality, flood control and sewerage management is particularly compelling because water policy issues are unavoidably regional. Municipalities can decide where, how much to fund, and how to operate their parks, but they can't do that with their streams. Water sources cross municipal boundaries.

Hart >> The serious flooding problems we had after Hurricanes Frances and Ivan showed that we can't solve that or prevent that in the future by having a little flood control project here and there. It has to be looked at regionally. I was able to

put some language into a bill that will get the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to look at our region and tell us what's going to work as far as a flood control plan and ways to at least alleviate the possibilities of flooding. This can only be solved regionally, and we know it doesn't work any other way.

Stafford >> We've already done a lot of thinking about water issues. What we are trying to do here is guarantee that the water asset—so important to each of us individually, both to our health and our jobs—is maintained as a competitive asset in the world marketplace. That's the objective.

I think there has to be one single authority to either synchronize or replace the 800-some. There's a number of ways to approach it, but you start with the end in mind. We want to keep our water as clean as possible, to manage it in a way that makes our economy succeed, and to make more productive the individual efforts within that economy.

Burns >> The water problem is so clearly regional that it's almost silly for some local municipality's water authority or sewage authority to pretend that they can come to grips with it, because they are clearly, clearly greatly impacted by the folks on either side of the stream, downstream and upstream from them. Unless we are solving this problem jointly, we haven't made it go away, and we're taking turns victimizing each other. We each have a piece of the puzzle, and now—for the very first time—we're putting all the pieces on the table and trying to put the puzzle together. That's what the Regional Water Task Force is all about.

The road doesn't end at the county line

Which Pennsylvania transit system had the largest percentage increase in total ridership in 2005? Beaver County Transit Authority had that honor according to the State's Department of Transportation. What's more, over the past four years, BCTA ridership has increased more than 33 percent despite a population drop of 16 percent, virtually no marketing budget, and a fare increase of 50 cents.

General Manager Mary Jo Morandini credits the system's success to regional cooperation and innovation, including simplified schedules, fares, and routes. Real-time street signs show expected arrivals and departures using electronic locators on each bus. And the authority reaches beyond county lines, taking passengers daily to Pittsburgh International Airport and downtown Pittsburgh, and—on certain Sundays—to Steelers football games.

BCTA is an active member of the Transit Operators Committee, a regional planning body sponsored by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission. Each month,

committee members from ten counties trade ideas, recommend the allocation of federal and state funds, and monitor transportation projects in the area.

The resulting cooperative ventures include shared training, resources, and routes. Regular service to Pittsburgh is now available from the city of Butler and the counties of Lawrence, Westmoreland, Fayette, and Washington. But there's room for improvement, says Ms. Morandini: "Advance planning is the key, and there's still lots of work to do."

Transportation

Miller >> Transit plays an important role in economic and land use development, and decisions about land use and transportation policies are made within each county and municipality. Decisions are made locally, but travel itself and travel demands go beyond those borders. So I think that the transportation issue is something that we have to look at from a regional perspective.

Gregory >> We hire people from all over the region, but there's no public transportation, or very little, that crosses county lines. In our area, you almost have to have a car, and that sometimes makes it difficult to attract a widely diverse group of employees.

Miller >> I think, in the past, regional public transportation studies have focused on transit corridors and transit technology, and not so much on land use and lifestyle issues.

Hart >> The solutions ought to be based on where people live, irrespective of municipal or county boundaries.

Kukovich >> I'm excited about the conversations that are occurring now among the transit organizations in our region. They're planning together, and I think they, more than anyone else, understand that the road doesn't end at the county line. You have to move people back and forth across county lines and do it easily.

Gould >> A truly profound vision for transportation planning programming was recently released by the Port Authority of Allegheny County and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission in collaboration with all the other transit agencies around the region. The Regional Transit Vision, also called the 20/20 Vision document, lays out a vision for how this region could serve all of its population centers with public transportation, but it's predicated on a land use growth management scenario that re-intensifies development in existing population centers as opposed to continuing the sprawl.

So, interestingly, the conversation about how do you serve the region with public transportation backs its way into a realization that we need to steer growth and development, which further backs its way into the concept that we need to have regional agreement on the future and what it takes to be a prosperous region.

Public Education

Wadhvani >> Businesses need a good, well-educated workforce. Unfortunately, public schools in this region have to improve. In the Pittsburgh region, at least half of all 18-year-olds are unable to read and/or do math at the level where they should be. That's shocking. If we're talking about growing jobs in the region for the long term, we need a workforce that's educated. Our high school graduates have to be proficient in basics like math and reading. It's a huge challenge.

Crossroads of talent

When the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL), with facilities in Oklahoma, Oregon, Alaska, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, needed to recruit engineering talent and increase research opportunities in Morgantown, they approached three regional universities for help.

Soon a dynamic collaboration was formed that included NETL, Carnegie Mellon University, University of Pittsburgh, and West Virginia University. Working closely with the universities and regional industry leaders, NETL's in-house laboratories are making major research

advances while creating new learning opportunities for faculty, postgraduates, and undergraduate students. Now the consortium is helping to license the technologies resulting from the Laboratory's research. NETL, chartered in 1910 by the U.S. Bureau of Mines as the Pittsburgh Experiment Station, is the only government-owned laboratory dedicated to fossil energy research. Its work will gain significance as coal, and cleaner, more efficient, and alternative uses of coal, become more important to the country. Its impact on the community may be equally important as it attracts skilled workers and enhances its reputation as a major research center.

The Laboratory's recognition of regional university talent is not an

isolated case. Southwestern Pennsylvania is home to 29 colleges and universities, and northern West Virginia has at least a dozen more. The resulting pool of expertise and educated labor is attracting the attention of potential employers.

When Internet giant Google realized that CMU candidates wouldn't relocate to California, Google came to Pittsburgh instead. Likewise, when the global software designer Parametric Technology Corporation chose Uniontown, Pennsylvania for their new facility, they credited the engineering programs at nearby WVU, California University of Pennsylvania, Pitt, and CMU. One vice president said it best: "You have great university towns in the area. This is a crossroads of talent."

Gregory >> We're not serving our kids in many of our school districts, and all you have to do is look at the benchmarking. Some of the districts do a very good job, but in others we're lagging behind, and the test scores show it. We see it in the workplace when we bring in people with a high school education who can't do fundamental mathematics or have difficulty with basic reading skills. It requires us to do some additional education or work with some of the community colleges to bring these people up to some level where they can be productive.

Kukovich >> We need every young person in the entire region to grow up healthy and literate. Education is huge. I think something like one-third of our children can't meet proficiency standards, and that's across the region; it's not from any one school district. If we're going to grow businesses here, we need an educated, regional workforce.

Hart >> I think part of the problem is that the state has done so little to encourage mergers and to discourage de-consolidations among school districts. It's ridiculous that we have no requirement for a minimum number of students in a district. The reality is that many older communities in the region have historically had a high school, but also historically they have had three times the population that they have today. What too often happens is that a significant amount of a district's funds are spent on administration and not enough of the money gets to the classrooms and to the students, where it needs to be.

The state needs to provide incentives to smaller communities whose school districts can merge with others. I know that a number of school districts are actively discussing mergers right now. But I think those discussions would go a lot faster if there were an incentive.

Wadhvani >> Just something like a simple public commitment would go a long way to improving things, and I'll give you one example. Somewhere in the mid-'90s, the authorities in Boston's public schools combined with business and civic leaders in signing a document called the Boston Compact. Basically, it was a commitment to improve educational outcomes over a ten-year period, and over those ten years the improvement was huge. It took strong leadership in the district to make that happen, but it started with a public commitment.

>> As a prerequisite to regionalism, we need to create a new regional vision. We need to determine what our region's competitive edge in the global economy is going to be, and how we will aim toward that through our investments and our structures for managing water and housing and transportation, air quality, and schools, and more.

COURT GOULD

Morgantown's shared vision of prosperity

Fifteen years ago, Morgantown's city council couldn't find funds to buy a new can of oxygen for its firefighters. The city was broke, relations with West Virginia University were strained, and decision makers fiercely protected their turf—to the detriment of everyone. But in 2006, it was a different story as the West Virginia city became a big winner—named the 29th Smartest Place to Live by *Kiplinger's*, 5th Best Place for Business and Careers (among small metro areas) by *Forbes*,

and 12th Hottest Small City by *Inc.* magazine.

Ron Justice, the 5-term mayor and 16-term city councilman, remembers the day the fire department left empty-handed. He says the road to prosperity began by slowly transforming Morgantown's biggest institution, West Virginia University, from adversary to active planning participant. "We had to look beyond our borders and build trust with WVU. We needed to involve the university in our visioning process."

The Vision 2000 project, chaired by Dr. Billy Coffindaffer of WVU, began with roundtable discussions involving some 300 area participants. Soon, small groups sharing common interests identified strategies to benefit the community.

And then the talk turned to action as the groups set off to realize their vision. At every step, the public was invited to participate.

"Trust is key," says Mayor Justice. "Years ago, elected officials couldn't move forward because they weren't sure who could be trusted to follow through on their promises. Through the Vision 2000 project, we got to know each other personally and eventually relinquished individual ownership of projects. Instead, we learned to share credit for our successes."

The mayor says the Morgantown area growth is a direct result: "Trust—it's easy to say and tough to do, but it makes prosperity possible."

A Regional Vision

Burns >> I believe we have a real need for regional visioning, and by that I mean a vehicle whereby we as a region can look at problems and solve problems and propose solutions. We have no regional forum. At no point do we come together as a region with anything resembling a mandate to list, debate, or resolve regional issues. We're working with a governmental system that's a couple of hundred years old, and we simply have to get into the current century if we're going to survive.

There are communities having our lunch on a regular basis simply because they are more adept, more organized, more unified, more flexible, and have a greater vision than we could ever dream of having with our thousands of municipalities and no forum in which to decide and plan and act.

Kukovich >> In our Westmoreland County needs assessment, people said they generally trust and like their elected officials, CEOs, and government and civic leaders, but they don't believe they share a vision about what needs to happen here, and they don't think there are any mechanisms to bring them together.

Gould >> A 'missing piece' that impedes our region's really getting its act together is a regional vision around which the primary sectors—academia, government, business, and nonprofit—all agree and sing from the same sheet of music.

Aggressive metropolitan areas around the country and internationally, recognizing the fast pace of globalization, have acknowledged that they need to have a regional vision

that then becomes the focal point for programming public investments in infrastructure, for example, and integrating those investments with land use planning so as to realize the regional vision. That's a pattern all around the world right now. Southwestern Pennsylvania has awakened to this need and is poised to raise the bar on public involvement in the process.

WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING RIGHT NOW TO MOVE OUR REGION FORWARD?

Rick Stafford would undoubtedly say that if we really want to make substantive changes in our region and make those changes for the better, we've got an "engineering challenge" on our hands. "It's not a trivial matter," he says, "and one of the problems is we don't have enough 'political engineers' around to successfully do that engineering. It requires a lot of community building, a lot of conversation, a lot of strategy, and a lot of tactics that will lead from the existing condition to one that is better."

"In my experience, one of the really big challenges is that people see these solutions, but they don't know how to get there," he says. "They know they need the bridge, but they don't know how to build it."

Our roundtable participants have a menu of suggestions for all potential "bridge builders" in Southwestern Pennsylvania. If we really want to design a better future for our region, they offer a number of things we should consider.



<< Long-standing political and economic barriers need to fall away, and leaders from both the private and public sectors need to cross over these old lines and build new and productive alliances.

TERRY MILLER

Burns >> The priorities I've already identified—water, transportation, and regional visioning—are all three out of the starting gate, and I'm frankly quite excited about what is going on in the region right now and what I anticipate will be going on over the next six months to a year or five years.

Miller >> A regional visioning process needs to be done in a reasonable amount of time. It needs to have very clear short-term and long-term goals and an implementation strategy for each of them. And the process must absolutely be inclusive, with people from all of our Southwestern Pennsylvania counties involved.

Wadhvani >> We have to push even harder for a very close Pittsburgh–Allegheny County partnership. That's important not only for the elimination of redundancies and efficiency improvements, but also for the symbolic value so that all other local municipalities and counties can see the benefits of working closely together.

Onorato >> I think we have a shot at getting this done in a reasonable time frame. We need to work with Harrisburg, and we need a referendum so the public can vote, but I think the timing is right. I think it's all on the table.

>> This is the point in time when there are a number of truly regional efforts on the table. We have the undivided attention of most of the regional leaders looking at this and working at it. Simply stated, we have to get it right this time. And if we don't, I don't know that we'll have this moment in time again.

BRACKEN BURNS

Gould >> We need a regional conversation about tax-based revenue sharing; and we need to develop criteria to evaluate all spending decisions for public infrastructure and economic development with equitable development a key factor. The criteria should get to the heart of the region's long-range plan, as delineated by the SPC. It should be in step with the regional transit vision document, and should reflect Governor Rendell's recently released Keystone Principles for Smart Growth and Economic Development. What I'm really advocating is the next logical step in accountability for public spending. That is making a connection between what we say we want for the region and where we're investing our public dollars.

Wadhvani >> We need to do a much better job of marketing and promoting ourselves as a 'knowledge city.' We've got these incredible universities, these great healthcare organizations, and financial services. There's a huge amount of

Greene plans with both Pittsburgh and Morgantown in mind

Political territory typically stops at the state line, but Pam Snyder, chairman of the Greene County Board of Commissioners, can't stop there because the line is so close to home. The area she represents is bordered on two sides by West Virginia, but that's a bonus. "When West Virginia thrives, Greene County will thrive. And when Pittsburgh thrives, Greene will, too," she says.

Greene County, tucked into Pennsylvania's southwest corner, is only six miles north of booming

Morgantown, West Virginia (with an impressive job growth rate of 14.7% over five years). Anticipating demand for Greene's rural lifestyle, county officials have created a detailed land use and growth management plan to help its 26 municipalities lay sound foundations to grow gracefully and preserve the essence of their communities. "Good land use is a quality of life issue. We're investing now to prepare for growth," says the commissioner.

A Comprehensive Plan is required of every Pennsylvania county. Greene County hopes to attract residents from West Virginia and Pennsylvania by thoughtfully creating new housing communities and recreational outlets such as parks, trails, and greenways

for the entire county. Construction has begun on an extensive aquatics center at the current site of the Waynesburg central pool, near the county fairgrounds. The EverGreene Technology Park has fiber optics connections to the Pittsburgh Supercomputing Center, and a new 115-acre retail complex is in the works.

Commissioner Snyder sees government cooperation as the key, saying, "Infrastructure development is the primary planning issue.

To build infrastructure cost-effectively, those of us in office need to reach out to each other across municipal lines, across county lines, and across state lines." Greene County is doing just that.

intellectual capital here, but, unfortunately, people outside this region seem to have that old Smoky City, Steel City kind of image.

Gregory >> We have great advantages in the region: the cost of living, a fine environment for raising a family, entertainment and cultural options, great universities and medical facilities. Sure, the weather's terrible from January through March, but we can't do anything about that! What we can do is emphasize our strengths and correct our weaknesses.

We need to keep people in the area; that should be one of our top priorities. We need to create jobs so we can keep our young people here. Talented young people in the region will help generate new ways of thinking and a new spirit as we move forward.

Stafford >> We need to focus on state politics to benefit all regions in the Commonwealth. We need the ability at the local level to make rational choices for ourselves. The state should give us more local flexibility so that groups of counties and municipalities can make decisions to cooperate. Very few people think in terms of state policy as something that could help us, but that connection is extraordinarily important.

The regional movement should be about what's more efficient and effective. Would we be more efficient and effective and provide a better climate for individual behavior in the

economy if we had one regional public transit system instead of ten individual transit systems, one in each county? And shouldn't the state be providing the incentive?

Miller >> We need to create the political will for real cooperation. Nothing will get done if our policy makers aren't at the table addressing the pressing issues that face our region and moving toward consensus on an effective regional strategy. And equally important is creating a civic will and a regional citizenry. We have to include our grass roots community leaders and make certain they're part of the conversation. And we have to engage the public.

It's a new day in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and with a new day comes an opportunity to try new things. People may not be eager, but perhaps they're willing. And if we can engage them in a thoughtful, inclusive manner and make sure that all voices are heard in a balanced and fair way, I think that what can happen here could be remarkable. We just might find a lot of truth in an old adage, and the only limit may really be the sky!

