

Time to move off dead center

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Folks wondering what it might take to move York County off of dead center when it comes to economic development, quality education and financial stability for all residents need look no farther, for the moment, than to the 3-year-old report by David Rusk.

Notice the statement is couched with a "might."

Officials and the public attending this week's Metro-York Community Dialogue sponsored by YorkCounts have heard most of it before: the problems the city faces with an eroding tax base, a troubled school district and the need for the county to literally jump in and be part of the solution to the city's problems.

Been there. Heard that. But there's this apparent feeling of ennui, coupled with a troubling disinclination to move off square one.

Yes, there has been talk about the county providing significantly more financial aid to the city -- a community each day moving closer to having to deal with distressed city status and the restrictions that entails.

Then there's the Keystone state's inherent fragmentation of municipal jurisdictions and responsibilities that is a plague on any development initiative in York and other south-central counties.

Townships, boroughs, villages and cities, a myriad of school districts all vying for dollars from residents groaning under a nearly unbearable tax load.

Problems enough? York County and the city have the Rusk report; they know the challenges. But will they make the choice to meet them head on?

The Metro-York Community Dialogue should be an ongoing discussion and is an excellent forum. But more should be done.

Such a venue should be charged by county, city, township and borough officialdom with coming up with clear goals and issue frequent reports of its own on how municipalities are dealing with such challenges.

The Rusk report is a tool that for too long has sat on the shelf, only to be taken down for infrequent discussion, only to be shelved again.

It's time for unequalled cooperation between municipalities -- on a grand scale. In 2007, dead center is the wrong place to be.