



NEWS RELEASE

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YorkCounts announces Metro-York recommendations for improving community

York, Pa., Nov. 15, 2007 – **YorkCounts**, York County's community-wide quality-of-life coalition, today presented eight forward-thinking recommendations for improving municipal prosperity and education, with the aim of a better, stronger heart of York County. Known as the Metro-York recommendations, the ideas are the outcome of YorkCounts' ambitious Metro-York project.

The Recommendations

The recommendations related to municipal prosperity are to:

1. Establish a consolidated Metro-York police department;
2. Engage in additional meaningful regional planning, ideally incorporating all of the municipalities in the heart of York County;
3. Reform taxation through a local tax study commission;
4. Study ideas for modernizing York County's form of government.

The recommendations related to education are to:

1. Establish a permanent and well-funded Metro-York Schools Consortium to research, develop and implement new public school models and make all schools in York County truly world-class;
2. Attack the root problem – a school district can't succeed when poverty and its related problems are concentrated the way they are in the York City schools – with new academic programming that appeals to parents throughout York County and an education-based incentive for middle-class parents to return to the city with their children;
3. Invest \$3 million per year in each of the next ten years in "intensive care" for at-risk students: intense, targeted programming to at-risk students, as they enter grade school to keep them focused and/or in middle and high school to keep them from thinking that dropping out is an option;
4. Use the soon-to-be-established Office of Workforce Development as a catalyst to strengthen relationships between employers and the Metro-York workforce.

"These recommendations are the product of a broad-based, citizen-driven community collaboration," said YorkCounts Board Chair Larry Miller. "Be the first to say, 'Count me in!'"

"Many of these approaches are working in other communities – places similar to York County," noted Metro-York co-chair Eric Menzer. "One idea, for regional police, already has traction and made the front pages in September. Let's have as much momentum for the rest of the recommendations. What's in it for you? Good jobs, good schools, safe neighborhoods – the kind of prosperity that everyone in York County wants."

Metro-York Background

YorkCounts launched Metro-York in 2006 to address core concerns in the heart of the county, including a concentration of poverty, rising crime, tax burdens and inequities, a lack of job opportunities and challenges within our schools. Primary obstacles to success were identified as the “small box” divisions between school and governmental entities that make for inflexible systems, so the recommendations urge a breaking down of these divisions, although YorkCounts does not propose merging municipalities or school districts.

Metro-York co-chairs Menzer and Bill Simpson joined Miller and other participants to present the recommendations this morning during a press conference at the York Jewish Community Center, where they emphasized the importance of thinking beyond borders.

“Our communities have outgrown the borders that supposedly contain them,” Menzer said, noting that the Spring Garden Township-York Township border runs right through the York JCC’s property, but the neighborhoods on each side have common concerns. For people within the Metro-York geography – York City, North York and West York boroughs and Manchester, Spring Garden, Springettsbury, West Manchester and York townships – chances for a better quality of life are interdependent, Menzer said.

Members of the community participated in Metro-York in 2006 and 2007 through three committees. A strong, credible cross-section of elected officials, municipal administrators, business and nonprofit leaders and retired Yorkers took part. These panels listened to testimony and analysis from experts and leaders, then met numerous times to discuss and debate key concerns and formulate proposals. The results were presented to the YorkCounts Board, which adopted the recommendations.

Public Opinion

Today represented the first chance for many to see the Metro-York recommendations, but the public at large has weighed in on the underlying issues before, and these concepts appear to enjoy popular support.

Miller, Menzer and Simpson noted the results of a poll of 403 York Countians conducted at the beginning of the Metro-York process by the Marttila Group. According to the survey, 89 percent of the residents of older suburbs, 91 percent of those in newer suburbs, 89 percent of urban dwellers and 89 percent of rural residents said that “smaller communities should work together to create regional police forces.” At least 89 percent of each sub-group also wanted governments to “work together on planning and development issues.”

Next Steps

YorkCounts will be a driving force in advancing these ideas in the coming months and years, Simpson said. “We’ve identified champions for each and every recommendation. And we want more community input. This is a beginning, not an end, to the process of making York County a better, stronger place to live,” Simpson said.

The full text of the recommendations, background documents on each, additional information on the 2006 poll, lists of Metro-York participants, a hi-res YorkCounts logo and more can be found at yorkcounts.org/metro.

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YorkCounts is a community-based coalition working to assess, sustain and enhance York County's quality of life – building alliances, introducing partners, spotlighting issues and facilitating conversations on education, economic development, health and safety, diversity and more. Partners include Better York, the United Way of York County, Wellspan Health, York College of Pennsylvania, the York County Chamber of Commerce, the York County Commissioners and the York County Community Foundation.

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Count me in