

COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE YEARS 2006 THROUGH 2011

Preface

The mission of the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, Inc., is to improve the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley by building a community in which all people have access to economic opportunity, the ability to pursue that opportunity, and a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley was created in 1965 to work with and for the low-income residents of the Lehigh Valley in order to overcome poverty. A national program, community action was designed to offer "maximum feasible participation" to all whose lives would be touched by its activities. CACLV's mission statement, adopted in June, 1993, reflects the understandings of the Board of Directors and the staff that CACLV will work in full partnership with participants in the programs of the agency, melding service provision with education and advocacy.

CACLV's strategies for the coming years will continue to be focused on community development and, as a natural consequence, on the enrichment of the lives of the individuals who comprise the community. This imperative arose as a result of CACLV's recognition of the decline of urban life, a trend which presents enormous challenges for those who would eradicate poverty. This decline is characterized by the flight to the suburbs, the overcrowding of inner-city neighborhoods, the seeming inability to deal with racial and ethnic diversity, and society's apparent abdication of communal responsibility. The economic despair of the cities and their inhabitants exacerbates urban problems by creating an atmosphere conducive to anti-social and self-destructive behaviors.

We recognize that people in crisis cannot move toward the vision of individual achievement so long as their immediate need, whether it be hunger, homelessness, or other dire predicament, is unresolved. Offering solutions for urgent situations and speaking on behalf of participants, as necessary, will be just the beginning of our efforts in working with each individual and family. Ultimately, CACLV's goal is that each person is able to be his/her own advocate.

The CACLV vision of the future offers a community in which everyone has affordable, clean, safe housing; utilities; food; affordable medical care; , and employment with livable wages. The need for a safety net for individuals and families is a persistent reality recognized in CACLV's strategies and work plans. Having created two community economic development corporations and a commercial lending institution as subsidiaries, CACLV will enable individuals, families, and neighborhoods to prosper.

As a non-profit corporation, CACLV values responsible stewardship of the funds entrusted to us and the resources available to us. As an employer, the agency mirrors the concerns for the community in its desire for a better quality of life for everyone in the CACLV family and will continue to explore ways to provide a model for progressive employment standards.

The agency's annual work plans will set measurable, results-oriented objectives so that CACLV will be able to demonstrate that people's lives have improved because of the agency's efforts. The plan which follows is built on a framework provided by the mission statement. The quality of life issues which are delineated in this document will drive the policies and programs of CACLV for the next five years.

- I. All people of the Lehigh Valley have access to economic opportunity.
 - A. Lehigh Valley's neighborhoods are productive places in which to live and work.
 1. CACLV will assess local needs through regular, ongoing, and systematic contacts with residents, businesses, and government.
 2. CACLV will explore and facilitate innovative approaches to improve local economic conditions that sustain and/or improve the quality of life, lead to full employment, encourage local ownership of businesses, provide safe, affordable residential options, remove blight, and make the Lehigh Valley a prosperous, commercially viable place to live and work.
 3. CACLV will advocate for innovative public and private programs to enhance local economic conditions.
 4. The agency will advocate for patterns of regional economic growth that facilitate equity in the efficiency and cost of services among municipalities and educational opportunity among school districts, minimize suburban sprawl, preserve the environment and foster the revitalization of older, urbanized municipalities.
 - B. All residents of the Lehigh Valley are able to have access to capital, to find job satisfaction, and to be fully employed at work that provides sufficient income.
 1. CACLV will create businesses or assist entrepreneurs in the establishment of businesses within downtown neighborhoods, provide technical assistance to establish and expand neighborhood-owned businesses, and encourage the employment of neighborhood residents.
 2. CACLV will assess the skills and interests of people living in low-income neighborhoods and provide and/or advocate for services including vocational goal-setting, training, and assistance in finding employment.
 3. CACLV will advocate for improvements within the existing job market so that people who are fully employed will earn livable wages and fair benefits.
- II. All people of the Lehigh Valley have the ability to pursue that opportunity.
 - A. All residents of the Lehigh Valley are able to identify personal goals and implement strategies to achieve those goals.
 1. CACLV will assist with goal-setting, and help participants to establish a plan to achieve these goals.
 2. CACLV will provide opportunities for training in skills for living and working, including opportunities for children and youth.
 3. CACLV will provide education to consumers about finances and credit, major purchases, shopping for food and clothing, nutrition, diet, housing, energy, and other consumer choices and will intervene or advocate on their behalf as needed.

- B. All residents of the Lehigh Valley have access to affordable, safe, sanitary, and appropriate housing.
 - 1. CACLV will provide for individuals and families in crisis through shelter and/or transitional housing, case management services, and assistance in the search for permanent housing.
 - 2. CACLV will advocate for the development and retention of affordable housing, including rental housing, in the Lehigh Valley and encourage owner-occupied housing.
 - 3. CACLV will assist households in heating and utility payment crises and work with households to develop goal plans leading to energy self-sufficiency.
 - C. All residents of the Lehigh Valley are adequately nourished.
 - 1. CACLV will advocate for innovative solutions and community problem-solving which contribute to food security.
 - 2. CACLV will continue to be the cornerstone for the emergency food distribution network of the Lehigh Valley.
 - 3. CACLV will offer opportunities for the emergency food distribution network to conserve resources as well as opportunities for the food industry to reduce waste.
 - D. All residents of the Lehigh Valley have access to adequate health care.
 - 1. CACLV will advocate for health care which is available to everyone regardless of ability to pay for it, offers the same quality of care to everyone, and focuses on prevention.
 - 2. CACLV will provide opportunities for health-related services.
- III. All people have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.
- A. Lehigh Valley's neighborhoods are viable place in which to live and work.
 - 1. CACLV will encourage the development of resident groups and will work with them to solve problems, such as drug trafficking and crime and urban blight.
 - 2. CACLV and neighborhood residents will monitor the quality of municipal services available in the neighborhoods and will work together to correct deficiencies and solve problems.
 - 3. CACLV will encourage residents to celebrate diversity and strive to eliminate barriers of hatred and suspicion.
 - B. All residents of the Lehigh Valley choose to participate in the decisions of the community.
 - 1. CACLV will work with neighborhood leaders in order to sustain a constituency supporting change and growth.

2. CACLV will encourage citizens to attend government and community meetings, to speak out on issues, and to use their rights as citizens effectively.
- C. Lehigh Valley's neighborhoods are wholesome places in which to live and work.
1. CACLV will advocate for public and private strategies which make urban neighborhoods the centers of social and artistic activities.
 2. CACLV and neighborhood groups will work together to provide wholesome recreational opportunities in the neighborhoods.
- D. All residents of the Lehigh Valley choose to participate in the social, artistic, religious, and educational life of the community.
1. CACLV will encourage individuals and families to develop their own leisure-time abilities and interests.
 2. CACLV will encourage individuals and families to set and meet their own continuing educational goals.
- IV. CACLV will be operated for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.
- A. All staff members will have access to training, professional development, and a voice in agency decision-making.
 - B. Fiscal policies and procedures will be sound and prudent.
 - C. An active, informed Board of Directors will oversee the management of the agency.
 - D. Fiscal stability will be maintained through consistent annual fundraising and grant writing and a long-term planned giving program.
 - E. Personnel policies will be progressive and uniformly administered; salaries, wages, and benefits will be consistent with, or better than, market rates.
 - F. A strong system of data collection and dissemination, coupled with a continuing pursuit for technological innovation, will be maintained.
 - G. CACLV will provide a welcoming atmosphere, training, and appreciation for volunteers at all sites.
 - H. Program decisions and agency policies will be strengthened by consistent, progressive, and thoroughgoing planning and monitoring and evaluation.