

## SUMMARY OF OPEN DISCUSSION

On September 22, 2023, leaders from education, industry, and government met at MI in Gratz to discuss the future of Northern Dauphin County and potential uses for a track of land recently purchased by the Upper Dauphin Area School District (UDASD). The meeting opened with a presentation by UDASD Superintendent Mr. Jared Shade about some of the gaps that are keeping educational entities within the area from flourishing. Mr. Matthew Desoto, CEO of MI Windows and Doors, then provided an industry perspective on education and the future of the area.

Below is a summary of the open discussion held during the meeting.

- There was discussion about the need for not just a partnership, but a structured partnership that uses a model to provide the greatest chance of success.
  - Entities are operating in silos, but need to come together to define the problem.
  - Solutions to the problem may have to occur in tiers or steps.
- The question of whether education is really the issue or if other issues are what is keeping the area from flourishing was posed since many former students from local districts have become quite successful.
- The key is to make the area and local schools appealing to those looking for employment and a place to live. There needs to be better marketing strategies to claim and sell the benefits that local schools and communities have in place.
- The question of whether enrollment has hit the high-water mark was discussed. The answer is believed to be that enrollments will continue to decline given no changes to the current model.
- Dauphin County as a whole is doing quite well from a population gain standpoint, but Northern Dauphin County stands out as the outlier with population decline.
- A discussion of the housing market, the impact of the Amish population, and type of housing was held.
  - The belief is that it is not just housing, but having things that are close such as recreational opportunities, restaurants and other amenities, effective transportation, and things to do for students and families that are impacting the growth of the area, or lack thereof.
  - Even where recreation exists, the support structure (restaurants, etc.) are lacking in the area.
  - A question about whether the builders and developers have been asked why they do not invest in the Northern Dauphin County area was posed? Noone has asked them this.
  - The linkage between athletic opportunities performing at a high level and the appeal of the school district was made.
  - The importance of early childhood education was discussed along with the need for childcare as barriers for many families.
    - There may be grants available for early childhood education program development.
    - There may be programs where parents train to work in the field as their children attend the program.
- The type of jobs that will be used within the future economy moving forward were discussed.
  - It was noted that every job has a skill associated with it and that those skills may shift as a result of technological advances.
  - Taking the grunt out of the job may occur, but jobs will still exist. The person's role may change.

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### NEXT STEPS

- Planning Committee to be formed and will meet regularly to create the plan for moving forward.
  - Entities represented at the meeting today will be invited to take part.
  - Plan will be in phases.
- School representatives were asked to go back and share ideas with their boards.
- Land development for building trades homes will be occurring in the near future.

### PLAN COMPONENTS

- Problems identified and proposed solutions
- Timeline and phase components
- Financial plan for all proposed solutions (build costs, operational costs, breakeven plan, and funding model used)
- Identify what support is needed from communities
- Identify grants that can be used as part of the funding models
- Opportunities for stakeholder feedback

### INITIAL PRIORITIES

- Development of UDASD property:
  - Early childhood education program explored and established
  - Discussions with library about hosting the new Elizabethville facility.
  - Explore a workforce development technical center including programs.
  - Examine the feasibility of Northern Dauphin Christian School being hosted when their lease expires in two years.
- Create a phased plan for moving forward with developing the housing, educational, career, amenity, and recreational opportunities needed to entice families to make Northern Dauphin County their home.
- Explore additional opportunities for cooperative efforts within the Northern Dauphin County area including the potential for streamlining high schools.

