

# LANCASTER Keeping Current

AN ELECTRONIC PUBLICATION OF THE HOURGLASS FOUNDATION

## Lancaster County Smart Growth Issues

March 30, 2004

**FYI**

**PENNSYLVANIA NOT A HIGH BUSINESS TAX STATE** -A new [report](#) by the global accounting firm Ernst and Young (E&Y) Prepared for [The Council On State Taxation](#), concludes that business taxes in Pennsylvania are not high relative to other states. E&Y estimated all state and local taxes paid by business in every one of the 50 states and reached some interesting conclusions:

- Based on four different measures, Pennsylvania's business tax ranking ranges from 21st to 33rd with the average ranking being 28<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states.
- Business taxes have gone up less in Pennsylvania than most states in the last several years. Depending on the measure used, Pennsylvania had the fourth or fifth *lowest* rate of growth of business taxes rate of growth of business taxes over the 2000-2003 period.

**STRENGTHENING THE WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN PENNSYLVANIA** - [The Education Policy and Leadership Center](#) recently released a new report that recommends ways to improve the effectiveness of school boards and increase the number of citizens who are motivated and prepared to serve on boards. "[Strengthening the Work of School Boards in Pennsylvania](#)" makes recommendations for how state policymakers, school boards and superintendents, and voters and community leaders can achieve these goals. The report calls for changes in Pennsylvania laws to more clearly define the respective roles of school boards and superintendents. The report also recommends mandatory orientation for new board members, mandatory professional development for all school directors, and a change to six-year terms for school board members. It also outlines recruitment strategies to develop a cadre of citizens prepared to run for and serve as effective board members. A model Code of Conduct and model Governance-Management Compact are included for consideration by school boards.

**HARD LESSONS: MICHIGAN'S SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION BOON** - [The Michigan Land Use Institute](#) (MLUI) presents this report on new school construction in Michigan. [Hard Lessons](#) asks whether building bigger, newer schools is always best for students and communities. The report concludes that new school construction is raising tax, economic, and community stability issues with long-term consequences. While this report focuses on the state of Michigan, the same issues are being faced here in Pennsylvania. Among its findings:

- Building new facilities to combat overcrowding can accelerate development that prices young families out of the market, which can lead to declining enrollment.
- The broader the public's involvement in school construction decisions, the more effectively a school board develops long-term, less costly solutions.
- Our preliminary research suggests that keeping an existing school open increases home values in surrounding neighborhoods and helps stabilize the area and its business activity, while closing them slows the rise of home values.
- Since state law exempts schools from local planning and zoning, location decisions are often made without considering local government master plans and frequently place new schools in farmland areas that should be preserved. Standards for school development could improve cooperation between school boards and local governments.

### Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, April 6, 2004**  
**4:00-6:00 p.m. - Regional Transportation Summit**  
 Transportation challenges don't know County borders – many are regional in nature. That's why The Lancaster Chamber and Harrisburg Regional Chamber are teaming up for this summit at the Whitaker Center for the Arts. To register, email <mailto:cpattison@hbrc.org>

**Thursday, April 8, 2004**  
**12:30-1:30 p.m. – How to Transform A City-** Envision Lancaster County Brown Bag Lunch to hear a Smart City rebroadcast discussion with guests John Norquist, 4-term Mayor of Milwaukee and David Beach, Exec. Director of EcoCity Cleveland. Seating is limited. For reservations email Gael Rapp [rappg@co.lancaster.pa.us](mailto:rappg@co.lancaster.pa.us)

**Thursday, April 29, 2004**  
**8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. – Regional Economics: Planning for Community and Economic Development** – This course will provide the participant with an understanding of the increasingly important relationship between regional economic development and local community revitalization. It will also explore why, in the age of the knowledge-based economy, both community and economic development must be addressed for a town or a region to be competitive. *Sponsored by the Lancaster County Planning Commission and the Workforce Investment Board of Lancaster County.* Four Seasons Golf Course. For more information contact Toby Vargas, Lancaster County Planning Commission (717) 299-8333.

**Enabling informed decision-making for Lancaster County**  
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