

*Williamsport/Lycoming  
Chamber of Commerce  
2011 – 2013  
Strategic Plan*



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## Executive Summary

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In the history of Lycoming County it is doubtful that, with the exception of the lumber era, any other time has been as rich in economic opportunity on such a widespread scale as the past two years and the next five to ten years. The development of the Marcellus Shale has offered our region and organization an opportunity to bring true economic prosperity to Lycoming County. But, with this opportunity comes responsibilities. We must not allow ourselves to become overly focused on the natural gas industry that we neglect the other members of our business community. We cannot allow Lycoming County to become a “one industry town”. We must also be cognizant of the impact development may have upon the wonderful quality of life we enjoy here as a result of the natural beauty of our home. We can be successful in securing economic strength without suffering major consequences of growth if we work hard, meet challenges head on and take advantage of opportunities.

We are the only county-wide private organization dedicated entirely to the economic well-being of the business community and the people those businesses employ. Ours is an important job with many challenges, but one that can be achieved with great results. The Chamber is blessed with a strong corps of committed members and volunteers as well as a professional staff all intent upon securing a bright future for Lycoming County. However, economic development and job creation success requires a “team effort”. The Chamber does not exist in a vacuum. Virtually everything we do is based upon partnerships. Partnerships with government officials at all levels are important if we are to create an environment for economic growth. We must continue to work with other organizations as well; organizations that believe as we do – that the free enterprise system is the lynchpin to job creation and prosperity and it is the private sector that creates jobs and growth. As with our past Strategic Plan, much of what we plan to do will rely on these partnerships.

We consider every aspect of this Plan important; otherwise it would not be in the Plan. However, we do have certain priorities. And, while much of the Plan is interconnected, there are several items we believe are of the utmost importance to our organization and the community. Not listed below but always an absolute priority for the organization is maintaining a funding stream that affords us the opportunity to provide the services we do to our members and the community at large. Our programmatic priorities over the life of this Strategic Plan may change, but as of its adoption they are:

1. The orderly and successful development of the natural gas industry as an integral and important part of our local economy.
2. Maintaining a balance between the successful development of the natural gas industry with the need to have a diversified local economy.
3. The “branding” of our community in its traditional core values is important to maintain our identity as the Birthplace of Little League Baseball, our small town persona and our unique north central Pennsylvania culture and traditions.
4. Housing has become an important issue. We need new single family housing as well as multiple housing units across a broad range price scale.

5. Transportation funding must be improved in a way that not only meets the Commonwealth's infrastructure needs, but is also accomplished fairly with all users paying a portion of the cost. In addition, we believe that how the Commonwealth maintains its system of transportation is almost as important as how it pays for it.

The priorities listed above cross several action items listed throughout this Plan and will, over the course of the three year life of the Plan, most likely will be covered in more than one Annual Plan of Action.

The Strategic Plan outlined in this document represents our goals and objectives for the next three years, the actual specifics of the programs and activities that will be implemented to accomplish all that the Strategic Plan sets forth will be contained in the annual *Plans of Action* that will be developed over the next three years. Each individual *Plan of Action* will become an integral part of the longer term Strategic Plan. In addition, the Strategic Plan will be evaluated on an annual basis to accommodate changing conditions and needs.

**Process:** The Strategic Plan was developed over the course of several months and started with a comprehensive membership survey. Nearly 30 percent of our members responded and the results were evaluated by staff, the Executive Committee and discussed with the Board of Directors of the Chamber and Industrial Properties Corporation. No idea was too small or too large; all were evaluated. Prior to the session, the Boards reviewed numerous documents including the findings of the two Economic Development Summits held in late 2009 and cosponsored by the Chamber/IPC, Lycoming County and the City of Williamsport.

The Board of Directors did not change the organization's mission, vision, and value statements. These will continue to play an important part in the implementation of this Strategic Plan and everything we do will be judged against the principles set down in these important statements.

We believe this Plan addresses the needs of our organization and the community. We urge you to share in its vision and help us meet these goals by actively participating in accomplishing them.

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## Focus

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While the Plan contains new items, revised items and eliminates some contained in our past Strategic Plan, the focus of this Plan really has not changed. The focus of this Plan and our organization continues to be the strengthening of our community through an improved business climate, the optimization of our assets and the economic well being all of who call Lycoming County home. Working with and through our members as well as the community at large, this Strategic Plan strives to raise the standard of living through an aggressive effort to improve the quantity and quality of our jobs, ensure our citizens are given the opportunity to be prepared for those jobs and to make it possible for every community, business, and individual to assist in making and enjoying our collective future.

One of the recurring themes of this Plan is “partnering”. The Chamber and its affiliated organizations taking the lead role will accomplish many of the action items outlined. Others will be accomplished with the Chamber facilitating their accomplishment and, in some instances; the Chamber will take a support role.

This Plan emphasizes that the Chamber and its affiliated organizations continue to work on a countywide basis to foster economic growth and job creation. We strongly believe that the communities of Lycoming County must work together in both the good times and bad if we are to thrive and grow. The Chamber will continue to promote and practice partnerships with those who wish to move Lycoming County forward because if we allow ourselves to be drawn into a parochial attitude that pits one part of the County against another, in the long run, all of our wonderful towns will suffer.

While the Strategies and Action Items are prioritized, all are considered important. If they were not, they would not have been included. We will commit our resources to accomplishing each of them.

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## **The Mission, Vision and Values**

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### ***Mission Statement***

To preserve, protect, and defend the free enterprise system through promoting a good business climate and quality of life for the businesses and people of Lycoming County.

### ***Vision Statement***

To be a region of superior economic prosperity while sustaining our excellent quality of life.

### ***Values Statement***

The Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce is committed to excellent service, integrity, diversity and equal opportunity for all.

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# The Strategies

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## *Strategy I*

### **Economic Development**

The Chamber will work towards retaining and increasing the number and quality of employment opportunities in Lycoming County and create an aggressive commerce-friendly environment that includes developing and marketing our assets, developing our workforce, and increasing and improving our tourism and visitors' programs.

## *Strategy II*

### **Community Development**

The Chamber will foster an enhanced quality of life and pride in our community through existing and new alliances to support economic growth throughout Lycoming County.

## *Strategy III*

### **Membership Development**

We will support and expand our membership by providing valued-added benefits and services that are responsive to the needs of our existing members and attractive to prospective members as well as creating new avenues and opportunities for members to stay in touch and interact more often with the Chamber, its affiliates and staff.

## *Strategy IV*

### **Organizational Development**

To be successful, we must have a strong organization. Therefore, we will assure and retain high quality staff, appropriate staffing levels, and stable financial resources for its normal operating activities and organizational structure to meet the mission of the Chamber.

## ***Strategy I: Economic Development***

*The Chamber will work towards retaining and increasing the number and quality of employment opportunities in Lycoming County and create an aggressive commerce-friendly environment that includes developing and marketing our assets, developing our workforce, and increasing and improving our tourism and visitors' programs.*

### ***Objectives/Action Items:***

- 1. Re-charter the purpose of the IPC Land & Buildings Committee and continue to identify land that the IPC would consider purchasing or take control through other means to meet short-term, mid-range, and long-range development plans and create a new mechanism to work more closely with developers and brokers.**

***Time Line:*** Current then ongoing

***Responsibility:*** IPC Land and Buildings Committee, IPC Board of Directors and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Updated inventory of available land and buildings. The purchase or option of land appropriate for economic development.

***Resource Considerations:*** Low cost, predictable funding for land acquisition.

- 2. Develop strategies to help our communities improve their attractiveness to all types of development.**

***Time Line:*** December 2011

***Responsibility:*** IPC Marketing Committee and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Programs designed and implemented to make our region more business and community oriented.

***Resource Considerations:*** \$250,000 to \$350,000 for Economic Development marketing over the next three years to market our region to all types of industries as well as additional funds for the purchase of land and/or options.

- 3. Working with our partners, ensure that the economic development opportunity presented by the Marcellus Shale play is taken full advantage of by our region including the recruitment of businesses that are heavy gas users while minimizing any negative impact that comes from growth.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** The Business Energy Roundtable, the IPC/Chamber Boards, the Lycoming County Community Gas Exploration Task Force, Government Officials.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Ongoing job creation through the gas industry, continued location of new companies to Lycoming County including back office operations.

*Resource Considerations:* Marketing dollars as described in item two.

**4. Recognize tourism as an integral part of economic development and promote its growth through the development of additional destinations and attractions.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Visitors Bureau, IPC, Chamber and Staff (Lycoming County Commissioners).

*Critical Success Factors:* Tourism related programs developed and implemented aimed at increasing the understanding of the importance of tourism and visitors to our region and the positive impact it has on the local economy.

*Resource Considerations:* Maintenance and expansion of current tourism funding.

**5. Identify and take full advantage of revenue sources through government agencies and programs to promote economic development including planning and conducting a new economic development fundraising campaign.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Joint IPC/Chamber Committee and Staff (All levels of government and foundations).

*Critical Success Factors:* Inventory of all government and private resources that fund economic development and development related programs.

*Resource Considerations:* Staff time

**6. Work proactively with Williamsport City Council and other local governments to develop a better understanding of the Chamber and its affiliated organizations.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing.

*Responsibility:* Chamber Staff, Organization Volunteers.

*Critical Success Factors:* An improved working relationship with Williamsport City Council and a better understanding by members of Council as to the work of the Chamber and its affiliated organizations.

*Resource Considerations:* Staff time for preparation and meetings.

## ***Strategy II: Community Development***

*Foster an enhanced quality of life and local pride through existing and new alliances to support economic development growth.*

### ***Objectives/Action Items:***

- 1. Work with the County Commissioners and Planning Commission to continually monitor and, when appropriate, make changes to the County Comprehensive Plan.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** County Commissioners, Planning Commission, Chamber.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Continued improvement in reality and perception of our community as being business friendly and progressive especially with Site Selectors and developers.

- 2. Enhance and promote education, entertainment, cultural resources, transportation, and environment to support growth and pride in our community.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Organization-wide including Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Development and implementation of a multifaceted campaign that targets our traditional assets and values such as Little League Baseball, our small town persona and our unique north central Pennsylvania culture and traditions.

***Resource Considerations:*** To be determined by any special programs established and dollar consideration needs to be determined.

- 3. Enhance working relationships with governmental agencies.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Government Affairs Committee, Chamber Board and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Strong communications with governmental agencies.

***Resource Considerations:*** No additional required.

- 4. Inventory potential partners and determine the feasibility of future relationships.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** All Committees and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** A database of new community volunteers committed to leading the region into the future.

***Resource Considerations:*** Volunteer database may be required (\$3000 to \$4000)

5. **Support and/or provide leadership to those activities that help assure sound community development.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Community Development Volunteers and Staff.

*Critical Success Factors:* Increased Chamber involvement in Community Development initiatives.

*Resource Considerations:* TBD

6. **Identify and develop new leaders to support Community Development efforts.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Leadership Lycoming and Williamsport/Lycoming Young Professionals.

*Critical Success Factors:* Increased involvement of new volunteers in the Chamber and throughout the community.

*Resource Considerations:* No additional resource needs anticipated.

7. **Promote a better understanding in the community at large of the positive impact of the Chamber's projects/programs/issues of the Chamber and its affiliated organizations.**

*Time Line:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Chamber Staff and Organization Volunteers.

*Critical Success Factors:* Improved understanding among residents and businesses of the positive impact of the Chamber and the positive accomplishments throughout Lycoming County.

*Resource Considerations:* Staff time and costs of special programs.

8. **Work with other community based business groups such as the Jersey Shore and Montoursville Chambers, downtown business associations, neighborhood business groups, the Newberry Community Partnership and the Williamsport and Regional Main Street Programs to foster cooperative programs to create and/or maintain strong, vibrant small business clusters and attractive downtown and neighborhood business districts.**

*Timeline:* February 2011 then ongoing

*Responsibility:* Staff and Volunteers.

*Critical Success Factors:* Improved working relationships with all communities and their business organizations and an increase in Chamber Membership.

9. **Working with developers and contractors to investigate and promote the construction of new housing throughout Lycoming County.**

*Timeline:* Ongoing

*Responsibility:* Staff and Volunteers.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Development of new single family housing units through private development including the conversion or elimination of blighted housing stock throughout Lycoming County.

**10. Increase and improve our presence on the web and expand our audience through the use of “social media” such as LinkedIn and Facebook.**

***Time Line:*** June 2011

***Responsibility:*** Chamber Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Pages established on at least one social networking site for the Chamber, number of visitors to the site.

***Resource Considerations:*** Minimal dollar expenditure – charge for advertising is a consideration for income generation.

## ***Strategy III: Membership Development***

We will support and expand our membership by providing value-added benefits and services that are responsive to our existing members and are attractive to prospective members as well as creating new avenues and opportunities for members to stay in touch and interact more often with the chamber, its affiliates and staff.

### ***Objectives/Action Items:***

- 1. To provide the services and benefits necessary to support our members to grow and prosper.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Membership Development & Retention Committee and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Average the implementation of at least one new value added benefit each year.

***Resource Considerations:*** Cost of new brochures/flyers and marketing materials.

- 2. Create new opportunities for membership to meet with Chamber staff and leadership to learn about the Chamber and the work we are doing.**

***Time Line:*** March 2011 then ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Chamber staff and volunteer leadership

***Critical Success:*** Creation of a new breakfast or lunch program that is conducted on a regular basis where Chamber members and guests can be updated on Chamber programs and activities as well as critical community issues.

***Resource Considerations:*** Staff and volunteer time. Program will be designed to cover its costs.

- 3. Communicate to our members and the community at large the value of the Chamber of Commerce.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Membership Development & Retention Committee and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Improved community wide recognition of the Chamber, its affiliates, and the positive impact the organization has on the community.

***Resource Considerations:*** None anticipated.

- 4. Market to the members what the organization provides for its members.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Membership Development & Retention Committee and Staff.

**Critical Success Factors:** An increase in the perceived value of membership and an increase in participation in our benefits programs. Staff trained on all aspects of SBA Partner for member referrals.

**Resource Considerations:** TBD by program developed.

**5. Provide opportunities for member involvement at all levels of the organization.**

**Time Line:** Ongoing

**Responsibility:** All Committees and all Staff.

**Critical Success Factors:** An increase in the number of members involved on committees and attendance at programs and activities.

**Resource Considerations:** No additional resource requirements anticipated.

**6. Review the dues structure of the organization.**

**Time Line:** June 2011

**Responsibility:** Special Dues Structure Task Force.

**Critical Success Factors:** A report outlining the fairness of our dues structure and a recommendation to restructure the dues levels and create new categories if necessary.

**Resource Considerations:** No additional resources anticipated.

**7. Recognize and acknowledge our members and their contribution to our organization.**

**Time Line:** Ongoing

**Responsibility:** Membership Development & Retention Committee, Board of Directors and Staff.

**Critical Success Factors:** Improved member recognition program.

**Resource Considerations:** TBD

**8. Conduct a membership survey**

**Time Line:** March 2013

**Responsibility:** Chamber Staff and Membership Volunteers.

**Critical Success Factors:** Return of 25% of surveys distributed.

**Resource Considerations:** Staff time and supplies and postage if mailed.

**9. Develop and advocate positions on key legislative and regulatory issues facing the Lycoming County business community**

**Time Line:** April 2011

**Responsibility:** Staff and member volunteers.

**Critical Success Factors:** Participation of at least 10 members on a newly formed government affairs committee committed to working with government officials to promote a strong business climate.

**Resource Consideration:** Minimal expenses anticipated.

## ***Strategy IV: Organizational Development***

*To be successful, we must have a strong organization. Therefore, we will assure and retain high quality staff, appropriate staffing levels, and stable financial resources for the normal operating activities, and organizational structure to meet the mission and vision of the Chamber.*

### ***Objectives/Action Items:***

- 1. Develop and implement a long-term financial plan supported by annual income, reserves and an operating plan that will lead to positive cash flow on an annual basis, organizational growth and stability.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** Financial Task Force and Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Minimum of a balanced budget and maintain our Reserve Funds at levels necessary for sound management practices.

***Resource Considerations:*** Income/expense considerations.

- 2. Provide the staff training necessary to assure the optimization of organizational competency and individual job satisfaction.**

***Time Line:*** Ongoing

***Responsibility:*** President/CEO and Executive Committee.

***Critical Success Factors:*** A well-trained, results-oriented staff.

***Resource Considerations:*** Availability of training funds.

- 3. Routinely evaluate and adjust the overall organizational structure as it relates to the mission and vision of the organization.**

***Time Line:*** Annually

***Responsibility:*** President/CEO and Board of Directors.

***Critical Success Factors:*** Continued effective and efficient organization.

***Resource Considerations:*** None anticipated.

- 4. Annually review and update the Strategic Plan.**

***Time Line:*** Annually

***Responsibility:*** Board of Directors and Senior Management Staff.

***Critical Success Factors:*** New, innovative approaches to programs, benefits and activities.

***Resource Considerations:*** Budget, volunteers and business community acceptance.

- 5. Review the structure and make up of the Chamber Board of Directors and its role in the organization vs. the role of the Executive Committee as well as reviewing terms of office for officers and write new job descriptions for volunteer positions at all levels of our various organizations.**

*Time Line:* September 2011

*Responsibility:* Executive Committee and Board.

*Critical Success Factors:* A better understanding of the role of the Board vs. the Executive Committee and improved volunteer activism.