Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, is a place which many people across the country, and even the state, have never heard of. Chambersburg is the heart of Franklin County, although the borough itself makes up only about 6.58 square miles of the 774 square miles that is Franklin County. The greater Chambersburg area is a place with many farms and open fields, along with mountains. However, in recent years, population is on the rise, as well as growth in commercial businesses. People are moving to Chambersburg, which in 2005 had a population of approximately 17,961\textsuperscript{1}, for many reasons, such as, the economy, environment, and the low cost of living.

“Franklin County offers a very affordable cost of living, a good education system, and numerous civic and fraternal organizations dedicated to community involvement. Both the scenic natural beauty and the clean environment provide excellent recreational opportunities close to home. Additionally, the county has a crime rate substantially below the statewide average,”\textsuperscript{2}

Chambersburg has been developing throughout the last several years, so it will be interesting to see what it is like in ten and even five years from now.

One of the main reasons that Chambersburg is becoming a popular place to live, is because of it’s lower cost of living. “A recent ACCRA cost of living composite index number for Chambersburg is 93.5. The average of all places is 100, so the cost of living is less than the average.”\textsuperscript{3} In 2005, Chambersburg had the lowest unemployment rate in Pennsylvania, which stayed around four percent throughout the year. A reason for this being so low is that Chambersburg allows job seekers with opportunities through posting jobs in Franklin County with NationJob, and Careerlink of Franklin County, as well as many other employment

\textsuperscript{1}Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce
\textsuperscript{2}Franklin County Area Development Corporation
\textsuperscript{3}Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce
services. As far as taxes goes, the borough of Chambersburg has a real estate property tax, which is based on assessment values. There are also earned income and net profits taxes, which is one half of one percent of earned income from each resident, if the employer does not withhold it. This tax must be paid quarterly. Finally, anyone who works in the borough of Chambersburg must pay $52.00 every year for emergency and municipal services tax.

The Chambersburg Area School District includes the borough of Chambersburg, along with Greene, Guilford, Hamilton, Letterkenny, and Lurgan townships. The Chambersburg School District enrolled approximately 8,070 students for the 2004-2005 school year in its’ seventeen elementary schools, middle school, junior high school, and high school. The school district, like the rest of the town, seems to resist change. They postponed buying a large area of land a few years ago, when they should have started building new schools. This resistance to change led to overcrowding in many of the schools, especially at the elementary level. Some of the schools are so old that they do not even have a cafeteria for the students to eat their lunch. The school district is now going through a variety of changes. The changes will be a drastic for Chambersburg, because a few of the elementary schools were built over seventy years ago. They now have a new superintendent for the first time in over thirty years and are now, “in the process of consolidating some of the elementary schools into new facilities and as the area grows, is planning for new secondary school options.” The Senior High School follows a curriculum

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4 Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce.
5 Borough of Chambersburg, Inc.
6 Borough of Chambersburg, Inc.
7 Franklin County Area Development Corporation.
8 Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce.
titled “Educational Pathways” which, “is a program of career exploration and instruction. The purpose of this program is to provide a fully integrated K through 12 curriculum-based program for all students. Educational Pathways fosters student motivation, career awareness, and career exploration, with a focus on lifelong learning and decision-making.” This curriculum must be working, because, approximately sixty-five percent of the graduates coming out of the Chambersburg School District continue their education.

The borough of Chambersburg has a borough council, which is comprised of a mayor, along with five elected officials, one for each of the five wards. Chambersburg has a number of authorities and boards, which include: municipal authority, Chambersburg Transit Authority, Recreation Board, Zoning Hearing Board, Board of Health, Building Code Board of Appeals, Fire Code Board of Appeals, Civil Service Commission, Shade Tree Commission, Electrician’s Examining Board, Plumber’s Examination Board, Vacancy Board, Parking Traffic and Street Committee, Planning and Zoning Committee, Housing Commission, Downtown Parking Committee, and finally, the Sister City Committee. These Authorities and Boards are made up of “volunteer citizen appointees.”

Chambersburg has local land use regulations, which are zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations. There are eleven zoning districts in Chambersburg. These districts are: Environmental District, Low-Density Residential District, Moderate-Density District, Distributed Commercial- Neighborhood Business, Distributed Commercial-Highway, Central Core Area, Medium Manufacturing District, Heavy Manufacturing District, Professional Office District,

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9Chambersburg Area Senior High School website.
10Franklin County Area Development Corporation.
11Borough of Chambersburg, Inc.
Health Care Service District, and Health Institution District. Chambersburg also has some subdivision improvements that they require in order to ensure a good living environment for its residents. The subdivision improvements include the following: Pedestrian Easements, Drainage Pipes, Water Retention and Retention Facilities, Basins and Ditches, Water and Sewage Systems, Public Parks and Playgrounds, Open Space, Electrical & Telephone Poles, and gas pipelines.  

Overall, people are moving to Chambersburg, because it seems to be a good place for families and raising children. Chambersburg has a relatively low crime rate, which is shown in the attached chart. There is also public education, which seems to be doing well if sixty-five percent of graduates are continuing their education. A positive environmental issue is that “the water that Chambersburg produces greatly exceeds all EPA and DEP standards.”

Franklin County is an overwhelmingly conservative area. In the 2004 Presidential election George W. Bush received 40,764 votes, approximately 71% of the votes in Franklin County. John Kerry received only 16,127 votes, which turns out to be only about 28% of the Franklin County votes. Conservatives are generally reactionary, because they have an opposition to change. So, the older residents of Chambersburg are most likely reactionary fundamentalists. This is shown by their resistance to change throughout the education system, and the economic structure of the town in general, but the newer generation seems to be taking over and turning Chambersburg into another consumer driven town.

Although Chambersburg is a large farming area, with fifty percent of its land devoted to

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12 Shippensburg University, “Planning Basics.”
13 Franklin County Development Corporation.
14 Borough of Chambersburg, Inc.
15 Washington Post.
agriculture, there are other industries, such as manufacturing and distribution industries, throughout greater Chambersburg. Chambers-5 Business Park is where many of the area’s top industries are located. These industries include: Ventura Foods, Target Distribution, Olympic Steel, Vogele America, Kmart Regional Specialty Center, and Ozburn-Hessey Logistics. At the top of the list are Letterkenny Army Depot and Summit Health, which are third and fourth in employment, after education and government. “Prior to 1995, manufacturing was the leading industrial sector in Franklin County. Though is remains solidly among the top three, the steady growth of the service and retail sectors has surpassed manufacturing.” 16 This is Barber’s concern throughout Jihad vs. McWorld. Even smaller towns and cities, such as Chambersburg, are becoming consumer driven. Chambersburg has been a small town resisting change for a long period of time, but has finally begun to give in to our consumer driven world.

Democracy is not a class of civilizations, but it is built into a single civilization with traditions and globalization. 17 To have a healthy democracy, there must be participation of the people. For democracy to be successful, there should also be evidence of growth over time. There are many factors other than participation that may affect the health of a democracy. The community must be looked at in whole, including the school system, the future plans for the community, the environment and economy, and age of the residents. The health of democracy in Chambersburg seems to be getting better, because the community is making changes to ensure the best possible conditions for its residents.

The participatory theory is based on the value of democracy and being a part of it. This

16 Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce.
17 Barber, “Jihad vs. McWorld.”
theory is a good theory for the town of Chambersburg, because the older population of the town have a lot of their own opinions and show strong voter turnout at the polls. This theory is critical at this moment for this town because a lot of changes are taking place. The public and the people who are going to be living there in the future need to voice their opinions. The younger generation in the town does not show as much interest in the politics of all the changes, but they need to start participating, because it is up to them whether or not democracy in Chambersburg is a healthy one. Chambersburg relates more to what John Dewey believes. Chambersburg still has a strong sense of community and its form of democracy is starting to thrive.

Chambersburg has the feeling of a community because they still have age old traditions. From living there all twenty-two years of my life, I know and have taken part in many of them. The town itself has an ice festival downtown each year, as well as Chambersfest and the Cornfestival. Also, the high school has had a tradition called Color Day for over fifty years. All of these traditions bring the community together, which may or may not make for a strong democracy.

John Dewey emphasizes that voters in a democracy only need to determine a general direction of policy. “As he sees matters, voters need not decide on the specifics of policy but they should determine its general direction.” 18 Dewey seems to be a believer in the power of democracy and feels as though people can educate themselves enough to make the right decisions for their community. “Dewey argues that these disabilities can be overcome if ordinary people have opportunities to educate themselves on the findings of experts and then to act responsibly.”

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18 Terchek and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” pg. 166.
Dewey feels as though to have a successful democracy, a sense of community must be kept. Dewey finishes by stating, “Evils which are uncritically and indiscriminately laid at the door of industrialism and democracy might, with greater intelligence, be referred to the dislocation and unsettlement of local communities.”

Benjamin Barber criticizes the participatory theory throughout “Strong Democracy.” Terchek and Conte state that Barber, on the other hand, feels as though, “Meaningful participation does not take place in the quiet corners of private life for Barber. Rather, he ties it to the processes of community-building and the education of citizenship.” They go on to say that through this perspective, decision making must begin with the people at the bottom instead of the top, who are the elites. Barber believes that citizens give up their freedom when they become subject to laws that they did not really participate in. He goes on to suggest that citizens become passive to representatives when you vote. He states that, “The representative principle steals from individuals the ultimate responsibility for their values, beliefs, and actions.” Barber also does not believe that community is as big of part of participation as Dewey finds it to be. He offers the opinion that participation without community suggests individualism, which leads to a healthy democracy.

Pluralist Democracy is one in which, “free people with similar interests naturally collect together to protect and promote their interests, and in politics this means they form interest

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19 Terchek and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” pg. 166.
21 Terchek and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” pg. 166.
groups that seek to be heard and influence policy.” 24 This is a good theory for Chambersburg, because it has a number of non-profit organizations, which include, but are not limited to: VFW Post 224, Marine Corps League, American Legion, Amvets, The Moose, Kiwanis International, Lions Club, Rotary Club of Chambersburg Foundation, and various 4-H Clubs. 25 The list of non-profit organizations in Chambersburg goes on and on, however, these are the most prominent. These organizations throughout the community seem to be healthy. While speaking with an employee of the Marine Corps League, I discussed what the health of the organization was. He simply told me that there are a large amount of members who come in regularly. Of course, one must be a member or the guest of a member to enter the facility. The League often holds events, such as spaghetti dinners and even serves as a hot spot for banquets for other local organizations.

Arthur Bentley discusses his view on pluralist democracy in “The Process of Government.” He argues that, “interest groups form the basis of democratic politics, and how a robust pluralism is said to be able to correct its own mistakes.” 26 Bentley goes on to say that these interest groups are the “substance of politics” and believes that,

“in democracies, interest groups compete with each other over scarce resources. In his theory, group competition leads to an equilibrium that remains stable until disturbed by the arrival of new groups discontented with the present arrangement.” 27

Bentley argues that without a common interest, there is no group and that, “such interest groups

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24 Tercheck and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” page 123.
25 Tax Exempt World; Non-Profit Organizations.
26 Tercheck and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” page 123.
27 Tercheck and Conte, “Theories of Democracy,” page 124.
are of no different material than the ‘individuals’ of a society. They are activity; so are the
individuals.”\textsuperscript{28} So, in Bentley’s point of view, interest groups help democracy to be healthy
because they are concerned with the individual, but also with the common interest of those
individuals.

Robert Dahl has a different point of view, however. He argues that there is a problem
with pluralism and that it is a serious one, “because independent organizations are highly
desirable and at the same time their independence allows them to do harm.”\textsuperscript{29} He believes that
these organizations give too much independence, which in turn, causes the base of democracy to
be weak. “Every organization develops an impulse toward its own independence. The two
universal tendencies are alloyed; and in the alloy, the law of oligarchy bends more easily than
iron.”\textsuperscript{30} Dahl also feels that organizations have too much power, which as a result does not allow
for changes that are needed in a community. Dahl finishes by saying that,

“Each of the major organized forces in a country prevents the others from making
changes that might seriously damage its perceived interests. As a consequence,
structural reforms that would significantly and rapidly redistribute control, status,
income, wealth, and other resources are impossible to achieve.”\textsuperscript{31}

Basically, Dahl believes that the competition between the organizations in a community could
severely harm the health of the community and the organizations as a whole. This could be a

\textsuperscript{28} Arthur Bentley, “The Process of Government (1908),” Terchek and Conte, “Theories of
Democracy,” page 125-127.

\textsuperscript{29} Robert Dahl, “Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy (1982)” Terchek and Conte, “Theories of
Democracy,” page 134.

\textsuperscript{30} Robert Dahl, “Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy (1982)” Terchek and Conte, “Theories of
Democracy,” page 135.

\textsuperscript{31} Robert Dahl, “Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy (1982)” Terchek and Conte, “Theories of
Democracy,” page 139.
factor in the health of Chambersburg’s democracy, since the town has a large number of non-profit organizations.

The future of Democracy in Chambersburg is uncertain. If the borough stays on the track of making changes to improve and benefit the community, the town will prosper. However, one factor that weighs against the community is that the median age is forty years old. The population in age, as of 2007, is as follows: under 5 years: 1088, 5-17 years: 2628, 18-21 years: 947, 22-29 years: 1987, 30-39 years: 2281, 40-49 years: 2322, 50-64 years: 2251, and 64 and over: 4058.  

The population growth from 1980 to 2003 is not very impressive either. In twenty-three years the population went from 16,174 to 17,864. Although there are currently strong numbers for the ages under seventeen, the ages between eighteen and twenty-nine years seems to be lacking. However, a reason for this could be, as mentioned previously, that nearly sixty-five percent of Chambersburg graduates continue on to higher education, which more often than not, sends them to different areas. But Chambersburg needs to find a way to keep adults here after they turn eighteen and these young adults need to be participating in local and national government. The town also must find a way to bring back those who continue their education elsewhere.

There are a variety of planning commissions throughout Chambersburg. These consist of Development Corporations, such as the Franklin County one, as well as different planning commissions for the different townships. There is a Comprehensive Plan for the entire county, which is a,

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32 City Facts USA, Chambersburg, PA.
33 Franklin County Area Development Corporation.
34 Franklin County Area Development Corporation.
“guide for development, land use, economic progress and the preservation of the quality of life over the long-term. It is not a regulatory document, but is intended to provide recommendations and guidance for growth and development. The overall goal is to foster positive growth while maintaining the rich heritage and rural character of Franklin County.”

This plan will basically preserve large areas of farmland, as well as natural features of the land, and ensure that the quality of water remains. This plan also provides for community facilities and services, economic development, land use and housing, and transportation. Basically, the plan is designed to provide and protect for the community. As long as the planning commissions stay the course and are concerned about the quality of life for its residents, Chambersburg is well on its way to having a healthy future.

35 Franklin County Planning Commission.
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