Introduction

In order to understand how democracy works and why there is such a high value placed on it, a definition of democracy is needed. But first, one must think of what democracy means to them, is something that is taught in schools, where people learn about what it is and what it is not? Or is democracy something people believe in because that is the only type of government they have experienced? Alex de Tocqueville states that “The citizen of the United States is taught from his earliest infancy to rely upon his own exertions, in order to resist the evils and the difficulties of life; he looks upon the social authority with an eye of mistrust and anxiety, and he only claims its assistance when he is quite unable to shift without it.” (Terchek, Conte 27) ¹

I believe this quote comprises the idea that most Americans look towards our government with a sense of uncertainty and suspect and would like noting more but a government that is there and invisible. But when one is need of things such as assistance or support, one feels compelled to look at our government for these types of things. Therefore, is the concept of democracy one that entails a government that acts for the people, by the people, a government that figures out the needs of the population and making solutions available to them or a just an entity that is there but invisible.

¹ Ronald Terchek, Thomas Conte. Theories of Democracy 27.
Anthony Downs, a performance theorist, tries to define what government and democracy is. “Government is that agency in the division of labor which has the power to coerce all other agents in society; it is the locus of “ultimate” power in a given area” (Terchek, Conte 155)  

According to the Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, democracy is defined as “term originating in ancient Greece to designate a government where the people share in directing the activities of the state, as distinct from governments controlled by a single class, select group, or autocrat.” The definition of democracy has been extended to illustrate beliefs that maintain the right and the capability of a people to control their institutions for their own purposes. This way of thinking has placed a high value on the equality of each and every individual.  

A region’s economic development can be looked at and evaluated at how well democracy is or is not working in that specific region. Economic development can also be defined as “Efforts to increase employment opportunities by getting new businesses to relocate in a community or existing businesses to expand.”  

Performance Theorists, such as Joseph Schumpeter, look towards democracy as an entity that has voters that look how policies will affect themselves as an individual rather than how policies will affect the community as a whole. I believe that Schuylkill County has moved from a community that looks towards the good as a whole to one where the people try and figure out how democracy will benefit them individually. Schumpeter states that voters do not pay attention to what they share with other citizens or to the long-term good of the policy or even to their own long term good. 

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2 Ibid, 155.
3 www.columbiaencyclopedia.com
4 Ibid
5 Conte, Terchek, Theories of Democracy_141
Another definition of economic development, coming from the book, *Economic and Demographic Relationships in Development* by Ester Boserup is “The development of economic wealth of countries or regions for the material well-being of their inhabitants. The economic development process supposes that legal and institutional adjustments are made to give incentives for innovation and for investments so as to develop an efficient production and distribution system for goods and service. It is considered by some as a move towards a Western model. It expresses the reasons why we have developing economies. Received economic lore, among others that of capitalism, aims at continued growth and expansion of national economies so that 'developing nations' become 'developed nations' and followers of this school deride any possibility of an economically stable state.” (Boserup 6)

Economic development can be seen as how well a region is developed all around. I believe that how a region is developed within their education, quality of life, infrastructure, etc…is a direct reflection of their development economically.  

This paper will contain a definition of democracy, the history of Schuylkill County, why democracy along with the economic development of Schuylkill County dropped and the many efforts of the community to bring back what was lost and instill the feeling of pride within the community.

**Location**

Schuylkill County is located in the beautiful section of Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is only a couple hours away from cities such as New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington D.C. Schuylkill County is sometimes known as the “Coal region”. It contains well-

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7 [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
known establishments such as the Yuengling Brewery which is America’s oldest continuing Brewery. It is best known for its Anthracite resources and for its past mining history. Schuylkill County has wonderful sections of wooded areas and contains agricultural areas which stem from small little villages that are prevalent in the area.

**History**

The history of Schuylkill County is large and stems from a background rich in agriculture and an industry in coal. Anthracite coal was not discovered till 1790, but the outstanding benefits of anthracite coal was not recognized until 1824 when Colonel George Shumaker made the coal mining business a successful one by selling loads of coal to the owners of a rolling mill in Delaware County. (History of Schuylkill County 34)  

The Schuylkill Canal, which was part of the Schuylkill Navigation Company, opened in 1825 as part of the series of locks and canals along the Schuylkill River. The river was the cheapest and most efficient transportation for shipping. As a result of this improved transportation, coal-mining grew as the major source of industry between Pottsville and Eastern Pennsylvania and nowhere was the connection of the anthracite reach as noticeable as in Pottsville.  

Pottsville, today’s county seat, was the core of business that controlled the system’s “coal shed.” Pottsville was an important transshipment point for coal traveling by canal, and later rail, to regional and national markets. Later, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, through its

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8 History of Schuylkill County. 34  
9 Ibid
subsidiary, Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company, took over most of the mining operations.  

The ever going sounds of steel wheels on railroad tracks came to Schuylkill County in 1833 and coal was exported more efficiently. The first Schuylkill locomotive ran from Tamaqua to Port Clinton and almost overnight tracks were criss-crossing the region. It was only the third railroad built in America. Passenger service followed soon thereafter, with trains running daily from Pottsville to Philadelphia. By the mid-1880s, railroads had replaced canals as the chief form of transportation in the county.  

With the increased demand for anthracite, more immigrants soared to the region with backgrounds of Welsh, English, Irish, and German. By 1900, Eastern European migration swelled the population to over 200,000. Coal dominated the economic life of the county until the middle of the century.  

The anthracite industry fueled the county’s own industrial revolution. As the demand for mining equipment and machinery grew, the county’s economy expanded to one that included powder mills, mining equipment, iron manufacturing, boat building and eventually a heavy influence of textile manufacturing with a many female employees. Tanneries, sawmills, slaughtering houses, distilleries and breweries can all trace their beginnings to the coal industry.  

Poor working conditions in the mines and labor unrest led to workers’ associations that attempted to improve conditions by bargaining with coal barons for fair wages and benefits. Much of the American labor movement can trace its roots to the Working Men’s Benevolent

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10 Ibid
11 Ibid
12 Ibid
13 Ibid
Association that eventually led to the formation of the United Mine Workers of America under the leadership of John L. Mitchell.\footnote{Ibid}

Unfortunately, as wages and working conditions improved, the demand for hard coal declined. The Great Depression, followed by World War II and increased consumption of fuel oil and natural gas, led to the decline of the coal industry. The anthracite landscape still dominates the scenery in Schuylkill County. Four billion tons of anthracite coal reserves remain, but more importantly there is a rich heritage, with many people who take pride in Schuylkill County’s role in the industrial revolution.

Since 1950, Schuylkill County has made many efforts in trying to redevelop its economic foundation and bring back what was lost. An economy that flourished from a coal mining background many years ago is now flourishing from manufacturing and service related businesses. Schuylkill County is a region where pride and spirit make the community. It is rich in heritage and is seen through its many events held every year.\footnote{Ibid}

**A Drop in Development**

For the past five decades, Schuylkill County has been busy rebuilding its economic foundation. There has been a decline of the anthracite mining industry which started shortly after World War II and is still seen today. Schuylkill County has seen a shortage in jobs. But there are efforts in alleviating this problem. Efforts and effective partnerships of a number of community-based organizations have been able to increase job opportunities and put an increase in the
According to Schuylkill Vision, the top ten issues facing Schuylkill County are:

1. Economic and Employment Development
2. Education
3. Quality of Life
4. Infrastructure
5. Environment
6. Government Sanctions
7. Attitude
8. Youth
9. Recreation
10. Health Care

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population count in Schuylkill County, beginning in 1900, started out with a population of 17,297. In 1910, Schuylkill County saw a jump in the population to 207,894 people. But the 1990 census shows the decrease in population to almost 152,585. Therefore the county lost, in a matter of 100 years a total of 55,309 people. One should really ask the question where are all these people going or maybe the real question is WHY are they leaving? A county similar in population beginning in 1900 such as Westmoreland County started with a population of 160,175. In 1990, the population grew to a whopping 313,179. An increase of 153,004 people. The county of Schuylkill has figured out why the

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\( ^{16} \) Schuylkill Chamber Office
drastic decrease in population, economic development. But what is being done to alleviate this problem. 17

What is being done?

There are many efforts made within the region of Schuylkill County to keep economic development in a turn for the best along with keeping democracy alive. Some key economic and community development organizations that have played a key role are the following:

The Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce is one establishment that is serving Schuylkill County. It focuses on “the promotion of commercial, industrial and civic welfare of Schuylkill County and vicinity to help ensure a better quality of life for all.” The Schuylkill County Chamber has led in the development of SEDCO, Schuylkill County’s VISION, Northeast PA Manufacturers and Employers Association, and PA CareerLink. There are still numerous establishments and organizations in Schuylkill County that are seeking to develop the economy and quality of life of Schuylkill County.

Schuylkill County’s Organizations

The Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO) is a non-profit community and economic development organization that is committed to providing services which promote job creation and retention through capital investment. The primary mission of SEDCO is “expanding productive employment opportunities and strengthening the overall economic base of the regional community.” SEDCO assists Schuylkill County in establishing

17 www.censusbureau.org
companies throughout the region. It tries to locate where the business will prosper and also helps in the expansion process of businesses throughout the region. They also provide applicants for employment for many of the corporations they serve. 18

The Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority (SCIDA) is a public authority that finances job creation projects through tax-exempt financing, usually bonds or mortgages. SCIDA works closely with SEDCO in the development of services to build the Schuylkill County economy. 19

Schuylkill County Commissioners Economic Development has responded to a need for economic development on a county level, the Schuylkill County Commissioners developed the Office of Economic Development. It also assists the county in many ways. First, by providing planning and developing efforts, developing better ways of marketing businesses, developing ways of integrating business with government assistance, and finally by gaining assistance with the planning and zoning department of Pennsylvania. 20

The Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau promotes tourism, supports the development of new tourist attractions, and works to enhance the county’s image of friendliness. It has tried to establish tourism as a key factor in the county’s economy. 21

Schuylkill Keep It Pretty (SKIP) is an environmental education and awareness program that coordinates periodic litter pick-up programs and conducts presentations for school students concerning sound environmental practices. 22

PA CareerLink is a Schuylkill career center that helps establish a workforce development partnership that provides job seeker and employer workforce development services.

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18 Schuylkill Economic Development Corporation
19 Schuylkill County Industrial Development Authority
20 Schuylkill County Commissioners Economic Development
21 Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau
22 www.schuylkill.org
and resources through an integrated system. The system provides linkages to the services provided by a wide range of private and community organizations that are part of the career development in Schuylkill County.  

Schuylkill County’s VISION was created in 1997. It was created in order to help re-establish the economic and community development in Schuylkill County by a 20 year commitment of very devoted people. It contains people working together to make Schuylkill County a place where children in the county will want to live, learn, grow, prosper and raise their families, and where newcomers are welcomed. VISION was placed in order to achieve certain goals with the dream of success.

The Pottsville Area Development Corporation (PADCO) oversees the revitalization of downtown Pottsville. Through start-up funding, enterprise and opportunity zone programming, Main Street operation and organization. PADCO has been the focal point of the resurgence of downtown Pottsville as both a community center and a tourist destination point.  

But Pottsville, considering it being the biggest town in Schuylkill County, is not the only town in need of economic development. Therefore, other organizations have been put in place by communities to help revitalize and bring back what was lost to their community.

Presentation on Community Resources

On March 18, 2005, I attended a speaker’s forum on the economic development of regions such as Allentown and Schuylkill County. Terri Madison, Executive Director of the Emmaus Main Street Program, Patti Rader, Executive Director of Upper Schuylkill Revitalization, and Amy Burkhart, Executive Director of the Pottsville Area Development

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23 PA CareerLink

24 Pottsville Area Development Corporation
Corporation all spoke on how their region is being developed. They spoke on issues such as main street revitalization programs, downtown businesses and how their region has soared due to such efforts as these.

Amy Burkhart spoke on the four-point approach in achieving an action strategy for the development of the community. This approach included:

1. **Organization**: By building consensus and cooperation among the groups that play roles in the downtown. This is seen through partnerships and establishing them through an organized effort and identifying participants.

2. **Design**: By enhancing the physical appearance of the business via many ways.
   a. Building
      i. Design guidelines
      ii. Façade improvement program
      iii. Property inventory
   b. Physical Improvements
      i. Inventory existing downtown improvements
      ii. Analyze for effectiveness
      iii. Establish goals and objectives
      iv. Incremental implementation plan
   c. Planning and Zoning
      i. Downtown focused comp plan
      ii. Appropriate land use provisions
      iii. Mixed use development
      iv. Pedestrian friendliness
   d. Parking and Transportation
      i. Survey existing parking resources
      ii. Survey and assess space use
      iii. Evaluate enforcement policies and regulations
      iv. Identify problem areas
      v. Develop management strategy
   e. Visual Merchandising
   f. Graphics

3. **Economic Restructuring**: By strengthening the existing economic base of the business district while diversifying it.
   a. Market Information
      i. Conduct a business inventory
      ii. Delineate trade area
      iii. Define customers
      iv. Calculate potential sales
      v. Determine best business mix
b. Business Retention
   i. Program of retention
   ii. Business owner survey
   iii. Educational survey
   iv. Resource library
   v. Business expansion

c. Business recruitment
   i. Recruitment plan
   ii. Location strategy
   iii. Recruitment packet
   iv. List of prospects

d. New economic uses

e. Financial incentives
   i. Low interest loan pool

4. Promotions: Marketing the unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, tourists and others.

   a. Retail sale
      i. Develop promotional calendar
      ii. Organize through committees
   b. Special Events
      i. Develop events calendar
   c. Image
      i. Campaign to combat negative image
      ii. Establish market identity
      iii. Define image

Amy Burkhart also spoke on ways to help establish economic development in Pennsylvania. She used the Top Ten Ways you can help improve your downtown

1. Buy goods and services from local downtown businesses
2. Attend community celebrations downtown
3. Eat at a downtown restaurant at least once a week
4. Support efforts to keep downtown clean
5. Perform as many weekend errands and activities as you can
6. Walk – don’t drive – to really see what your downtown has to offer
7. Volunteer with youth on activities that benefit downtown
8. Take your friends with you downtown for shopping or dining or playing
9. Participate in community discussion groups on the future of downtown
10. Help start a Main Street Program or invest time volunteering if one already exists in your town.

Patti Rader spoke on the downtown efforts of Upper Schuylkill County, where the re-establishment of the main streets of towns such as Ashland, Frackville, Girardville, Mahanoy City, Ringtown, and Shenandoah are all taken into consideration. All three women spoke about how important revitilizing the community is because it establishes a forefront for businesses to come in and make jobs available; a sign of a healthy democracy. 25

Conclusion

In conclusion, Schuylkill County has seen its ups and downs. Democracy has been seen as an entity that was slowing diminishing but now seems to have an uplifting by the communities. People from this area are proud of it and would like nothing more for it to become a place where people feel safe and secure. A place where their children can go to school and jobs can be readily available. I believe that Schuylkill County is starting to reach its potential and it is clearly shown in the many organizations established by the people themselves.