

Planner hopes proposals will give cities opportunities

Former city planner **Jeri E. Stumpf** hopes his legislative proposals will provide new opportunities for revitalization of Pennsylvania municipalities and eradicate blight.

Stumpf, director of the urban affairs committee of the state House of Representatives for 28 years, writes



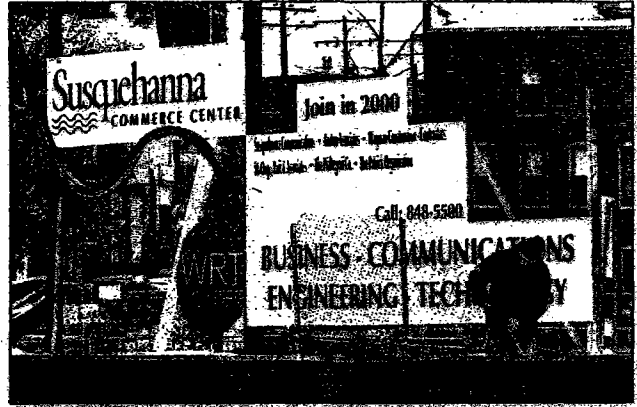
HARRY McLAUGHLIN

Around Town that the proposals should be "of great assistance" to the city of York. He expects to present the proposals at the new session of the House of Representatives and Senate this fall and have it signed into law by Gov. Tom Ridge by the year's end.

"Pennsylvania urban areas are on the way back. The future of Pennsylvania cities looks bright, in my opinion. Those who fled Pennsylvania's urban areas for the suburbs are now finding that every day the rural landscape — the rolling hills and fertile farms that attracted them in the first place — is being replaced by sprawling housing developments, indistinguishable from one another," says Stumpf.

He adds that they also are subjected to endless miles of architecturally uninteresting commercial malls, industrial parks and identical national chain restaurants and retail stores, which repeat themselves every so many miles.

"Successful community revitalization must be market-driven and developed with the input and support of neighborhood residents and the local business community. Quality urban school systems and public safety are as critical to the success of urban revitalization efforts as any economic development project contemplated," writes Stumpf in *Municipal Reporter*, a publication of the



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Proposals in the state Legislature would help improve blighted city areas with projects similar to the Susquehanna Commerce Center, on West Philadelphia Street at the Codorus Creek.

Development of urban areas will expedite the renaissance of Pennsylvania's cities and urban areas and will aid in eliminating sprawl and managing growth in the suburban areas, says Stumpf. "It will result in saving vital and limited farmland, natural resources and open space, from developments in the future," writes Stumpf.

Some of the legislative proposals are technical, but they call for financial assistance for renovations, support of Main Street, business improvement districts and commercial incubators funding, increased penalties for landlords in violations of building codes, and the creation of a Pennsylvania Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee. Also, there would be funding for renovation programs aimed at converting vacant second and third floor office space above downtown businesses as affordable housing or new office space.

The proposals also would establish a state tax credit to encourage individuals to purchase urban area homes.