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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ADOPTION

No comprehensive plan can be completed without input from the citizens and municipalities it serves. As part of the County's comprehensive plan update, planning commission staff engaged a variety of stakeholders and solicited input from the public. Public participation included the use of surveys, regional meetings, social media, websites, press releases and a public open house unveiling the draft plan. The following are brief overviews of the various public outreach initiatives that were undertaken during the planning process:

A. Municipal Survey

As part of the planning process a twelve question survey was prepared and distributed to the 72 municipalities in the county on January 20, 2017. The survey was intended to solicit input from the municipalities regarding their current and future planning initiatives. Out of the 72 municipalities in Berks County 36 responded to the survey. The majority of respondents (47%) to the survey were elected officials.

B. Citizen Survey

To gain public input for the county comprehensive plan update, the Berks County Planning Commission released an online survey on July 11, 2017. This survey was prepared in both English and Spanish languages and promoted through a press release to the local media. It was forwarded to the Hispanic Center of Reading and the Latino Chamber of Commerce as well as posted to the Planning Commission's Facebook page and website. Surveys were emailed to all email lists we have on file in the planning commission office and advertised via the televised Commissioner's Board Meeting on July 13, 2017. The survey period ended on August 11, 2017. A total of 866 citizens replied to the survey during the roughly month-long period in the summer of 2017. Unfortunately, the planning commission received no input from the Hispanic community in Berks County during the survey response period or thereafter.

C. Berks County Board of Commissioners

On August 10, 2017 Planning Commission staff presented the draft Future Land Use plan and map to the County Board of Commissioners during their weekly televised meeting.

D. Regional Meetings

The Planning Commission staff conducted five regional meetings to engage municipal officials. The meetings were designed to gather input from the 72 municipalities in the county regarding the Future Land Use map that was developed during the plan update. The following is the list of the five regional meetings and the dates they were held:

- Metro Region - Tuesday January 30, 2018 at Muhlenberg Township Municipal Building 5:30PM
- Oley Hills Region – Thursday February 8, 2018 at Earl Township Municipal Building 5:30PM
- Southern Highlands Region – Thursday February 15, 2018 at Birdsboro Borough Hall 5:30PM
- Hawk Mountain Region – Thursday February 22, 2018 at Perry Township Municipal Building 5:30PM
- Tulpehocken Region – Tuesday March 13, 2018 at Robesonia Borough Hall 5:30PM

E. Act 247

In accordance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act 247, the draft plan was sent out for review on June 18, 2018 for the required 45 day review period. Notice was sent to all Berks County municipalities, adjacent counties and municipalities, school districts, and other community partners in the county.

F. Public Open Houses

Planning commission staff held two public open houses on July 16, 2018 and September 17, 2019. The purpose of these open houses was to unveil the original draft and revised draft documents to the public and gather comments and answer any questions regarding the draft plan. The open houses were held at the County's Agricultural Center which is

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centrally located and easily accessible for the general public. Citizens could submit comment forms on-site or take them home and send them into the office. The open houses were advertised using print media as well as digitally via the planning commission website and Facebook page. Comments were received and reviewed by the Berks County Planning Commission at their monthly meetings in August and September of 2018 as well as October of 2019. Planning commission staff prepared responses to all of the comments received. Based on some of those comments changes were made to the plan where appropriate.

G. Adoption

At the beginning of the regularly scheduled weekly televised meeting of the Berks County Board of Commissioners on January 23, 2020 the Commissioners held a Public Hearing where the planning commission staff presented the draft Berks County Comprehensive Plan Update for adoption. The plan was unanimously adopted by the County Board of Commissioners by enactment of Resolution No. 21-2020.