

CHAPTER 6

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES PLAN

“We need to build real communities in Pennsylvania, not loose accumulations of buildings, highways, and parking lots.”

--Thomas Hylton

Goals and Objectives

The goal for community facilities and services is to provide essential facilities and services necessary to meet the existing and future needs of area residents within the fiscal capacity of the Borough and the Townships.

The objectives for community facilities and services are as follows

- Periodically evaluate the need and opportunity for additional, expanded or improved community services and facilities and plan for the efficient and economical provision of those services and facilities.
- Review proposed developments to ensure that required infrastructure is provided by the developer.
- Review opportunities and/or needs for regional cooperation in the provision of services and facilities.
- Determine what efficiencies can be obtained in the provision of services to area residents.
- Work with the School Districts to assure adequate, local school facilities are available to area residents and new facilities are located to be consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan.
- Extend any needed community facilities to schools in the area.
- Investigate opportunities for cooperation among municipalities and school districts in providing facilities and programs to area residents.
- Encourage the interconnection of water systems within the region where appropriate.
- Require developers to adequately manage stormwater runoff and erosion and sedimentation in manners consistent with the protection of water resources in the area.
- Work toward the provision of a variety of recreation facilities and programs for area residents.

- Assure that the scale of development in the area is consistent with the capacity of the area's infrastructure.
- Coordinate sewer and water planning with land use policies.
- Assure sewage treatment plant discharges and standards are consistent with the highest stream fishery standards classification for receiving streams.
- Foster the establishment and linkage of community resources within Wernersville and the surrounding developed areas.
- Encourage continued cooperation among and management and staffing of the Western Berks Fire Department to address the fire protection needs of the community.
- Work with the fire department to assure there are adequate fire hydrants and volume and pressure of water to provide adequate fire protection.

Coordination of Sewer and Water Facilities and Land Use Planning

One of the land use and housing objectives is to coordinate policies for land use, circulation and community facilities and services to assure realization of the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. It is critical that policies on provision of public sanitary sewer and water facilities be coordinated with the Future Land Use Plan. The municipalities should work with the Robesonia-Wernersville Municipal Authority, Sinking Spring Borough and Spring Township with regard to sewer, and Western Berks Water Authority, Wernersville Municipal Authority, and Pennsylvanian American with regard to water to assure coordination of policies. If sanitary sewer and water systems are expanded and sewage treatment plant capacities expanded or sold, they should be expanded or sold to serve the Medium Density Residential areas, Village Commercial, Office, General Commercial, Light Industrial and General Industrial areas shown on the Land Use Plan. Public sanitary sewer and water facilities in general should not be extended into Resource Preservation, Agricultural Preservation and Rural Conservation areas unless to address pressing health concerns. Extension to Low Density Residential areas could be appropriate if such areas are next to Medium Density Areas and would not increase development pressure on areas not intended for intensive development.

Emphasis has been placed on preserving stream corridors within the area and maintaining the quality of streams as habitats, water resources and recreational resources. Sewage treatment plant discharges and standards should be consistent with the highest Stream Fishery Standards classification for receiving streams so the streams will not be degraded by the discharges through the plants. This should be monitored with the owners and operators of the plants.

Cooperative Efforts

A number of the objectives relate to cooperative efforts in the area. The municipalities should continue to review opportunities and/or needs for regional cooperation in the provision of services and facilities as demands for services and costs increase as the Southwestern Berks

County area continues to grow. Municipalities can also work with school districts in providing facilities and programs to area residents.

Fire companies are finding it more difficult to get adequate numbers of volunteers, and cooperation among and management and staffing of fire companies in the area to address the fire protection needs of the community should be encouraged. Recently, the fire companies of Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships, and Sinking Spring and Wernersville Boroughs combined to form the Western Berks Fire Department.

Another cooperative effort that recently occurred is the formation of the Western Berks Regional Police Force. This is a combined effort of the Boroughs of Robesonia and Wernersville.

Where appropriate, the interconnection of water systems within the region will be encouraged to address emergency situations and provide improved service to area residents. Water planning should also involve fire companies in the area to insure that there will be adequate fire hydrants and volume and pressure of water to provide adequate fire protection.

Other potential opportunities for regional cooperation which could be investigated over time include purchase or use of equipment, such as road equipment.

If new school facilities are proposed by the school districts, the municipalities should work with the school district to assure that school facilities are located to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. For instance, it would be desirable to consider location of school facilities in Low and Medium Density Residential areas, where development has or is expected to take place, rather than locate school facilities in Agricultural Preservation areas which are intended for the continuation of agriculture. In those instances where school facilities lack adequate facilities, such as public sewer in the case of Lower Heidelberg Elementary School, the feasibility of extending necessary facilities should be investigated.

To facilitate implementation of this Comprehensive Plan, and to address the needs and possibilities for cooperation in the future, municipalities should maintain the joint planning process that has began with formation of the Joint Municipal Planning Committee. This committee comprised of representatives from Lower Heidelberg, South Heidelberg and Wernersville should meet, at a minimum, on an annual basis to review the Comprehensive Plan and to identify what steps should be taken to foster implementation of the Plan.

Monitoring of Needs

It is important in an area that has experienced growth like Southwestern Berks County has, and will continue to experience substantial growth, to continue to monitor the need, and opportunities, for additional, expanded or improved community services and facilities. Municipalities must plan for the efficient and economical provision of services and facilities and determine what efficiencies can be obtained in the provision of services either on an individual basis or in cooperative efforts. It is necessary to monitor needs municipality-and area-wide, but also for specific groups, whether it be the elderly, the youth, or families. Concerns have been raised about the need for additional programs for the elderly and older youths within the

community, and these concerns should be further investigated and discussed. Provision of needed services to and facilities for area residents can be coordinated with community agencies within the area and those serving larger geographic areas.

Residents have concerns and ideas about different items. Forming committees to deal with specific issues, such as the committee that was formed for the first Joint Comprehensive Plan, has proved to be very successful. The use of committees composed of area residents to address major issues of concern within the area works well because it gives those residents the opportunity to become involved in the issues that they are most interested in.

Recreation

There are considerable opportunities already existing for recreation within the planning area and region, as shown on the Existing Land Use Map and Parks and Recreation Map. Also, there are recreational facilities that have been proposed by developers, which once the development occurs will be built.

The policy of the Borough, when a new development is proposed within the Borough, is to obtain a recreation fee from the developer rather than require provision of a new recreation facility. This policy is expected to continue in the future and no new recreation facilities are proposed within the Borough.

Lower Heidelberg realizes that increased development will result in increased demands for recreation facilities, and will encourage the developers of large subdivisions to provide recreation facilities for the residents within those developments, preferably maintaining private ownership of the facilities. For small developments, those less than 20 units, developers would be expected to pay recreation fees to the Township which could be used for the upgrade, expansion, or provision of recreation areas.

Additional recreational facilities in Lower Heidelberg Township are provided at the new elementary school within the Township. The Township will also consider the need for recreation facilities at the Township building site.

The two largest undeveloped areas in the Medium Density Residential areas in the Township north of Wernersville are the tract along Point Road between Saddlebrook and Hickory Farms Mobile Home Park and the tract along Ruth Avenue across from Saddlebrook. The developers of these tracts would be expected to provide recreational areas. The Township could then determine whether it would want to accept dedication of facilities in one or both of the areas.

With the completion of Heidelberg Run East and Heidelberg Run West South Heidelberg Township will have approximately 75 additional acres of park land. Given the existence of South Mountain Community Park, the Township will not look to significantly expand its recreational facilities. If increased development occurs in the southwest portion of the Township, the Township would have to determine whether it would want dedication of additional parkland from a developer to provide a decentralized recreation area in the southwestern portion of the Township. Also, the YMCA of Reading and Berks County has

acquired the facility along Route 422, previously known as the Spring Valley Tennis Club, this is now the YMCA West facility.

The existing recreation facilities at the Wernersville State Hospital have been designated Recreation in the Future Land Use Plan. These attractive facilities provide an additional recreational resource in the northwest portion of the Township, where no public facilities are available.

The Park and Recreation Boards in the three municipalities should work together, with the school district and community organizations such as the Conrad Weiser Community Association, to monitor the need for additional recreation facilities and programs within the area and make recommendations to the governing bodies.

Trail and Greenway Planning

Introduction

Emphasis has been placed on developing a conceptual trail system throughout Southwestern Berks County. The trail system would accomplish several things, including providing a recreational resource for bicycling and walking; providing connections to the existing Blue Marsh and Union Canal Towpath trails, and thus the rest of the trail system in Berks and surrounding counties; and providing an alternative circulation system throughout the area which would provide access between developed areas, access to businesses and jobs, and access to community facilities and recreation facilities.

The trail system is quite extensive, and would include trails along the Cacoosing and Little Cacoosing Creeks, Spring Creek, Brownsville, Church and Gaul Roads, a portion of Green Valley Road, Route 422, Krick Lane, Lincoln Drive, Belle Alto Road, Hill Road, Galen Hall Road, Mountain Road, Mountain Top Road, Hospital Creek, Furnace Road, the sidewalk and pathway system within Wernersville and nearby locations in the Townships, and connecting elements.

In addition to connecting to the Blue Marsh and Union Canal Towpath trails, connections will be to the trail system within Heidelberg Run East and Heidelberg Run West, the Conrad Weiser education complex, Robesonia, the pedestrian circulation system within the Borough, Green Valley Elementary and Middle Schools, and to West Cocalico Township and potentially Middle Creek Wildlife Management area.

On a County-wide basis, eventual connections would be available to the Thun Trail being developed by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, the Horseshoe Trail which passes through the southern portion of Berks County, and the Appalachian Trail which passes through the northern portion of Berks County.

It should be emphasized that this is a Conceptual Plan, and it will be necessary to refine the Plan with Recreation Boards and a Joint Trail Commission of the three municipalities.

Issues to Address in Detailed Planning for a Trail System

The first item to address is establishing destinations for the trail system. The conceptual trail plan has generally done this, but the destinations to be reached would have to be finalized and prioritized.

It also has to be determined what routes would be used to reach the destinations. The trail system could follow roads, creeks, railbeds, pipeline rights-of-way, sanitary sewer easements, electric company rights-of-way, and drainage easements.

It will also be necessary to determine the users to be accommodated, whether it is hikers, walkers, bikers, or horseback riders, or a combination.

Trail design studies would be necessary to actually design the trails. These studies would determine the actual locations, the extent to which existing pathways and sidewalks would be incorporated into the system, materials of the trails, and width of trails.

It will be necessary to determine costs, including construction costs, land costs, and maintenance. It will also be necessary to determine what method would be used to control the area necessary for the trail, including usage of existing or dedicated road rights-of-way, donations, easements, lease or purchase.

Sources of funding for trail construction would have to be identified, such as Keystone Grants, TEA, and Land and Water Conservation Fund. The municipalities could coordinate their efforts and use recreation fees-in-lieu for construction costs to accomplish the interconnecting trails.

If roadside lanes will be utilized, standards for road design should be established. The following typical bicycle lane cross-sections are from *Pennsylvania Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*.

It will be necessary to determine whose responsibility trail planning will be, whether it be individual Recreation Boards, or preferably, a joint recreation board or a trail commission or the entire area.

The planning agency will have to determine what are the primary trail routes and secondary routes. Once the trails are prioritized, if it is determined that some trails will be within PennDOT rights-of-way, PennDOT should be approached for assistance in providing the trails. Bicycle lane width and shoulder width will vary with the average motor vehicle operating speed for a road, the average annual daily traffic volume, and the adequacy or inadequacy of sight distance along the road.

As conceived now, the State roads that would be involved in the trail system include Route 422, Green Valley Road, Church Road, and Reber's Bridge Road. Attempts could be made to have trails put on the State Transportation Plan. PennDOT could be requested to pave wider shoulders where the rights-of-way permit.

The municipalities could coordinate the adoption of separate Official Maps that would coordinate the placement of the trails and potential other projects. This would ensure that as the areas are either improved or developed the trail system would be put in place.

Cooperation with Other Agencies

As noted in the Background Study, the Western Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan speaks of working with Berks County, the Berks County Conservancy, neighboring municipalities and local trail groups to plan for a greenway along the Tulpehocken Creek corridor. The plan also recommends investigating the feasibility of a greenway along Spring Creek in cooperation with Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg Townships. This greenway would connect to the Tulpehocken greenway. Spring Township has adopted a greenways initiative throughout the Township and recommended that Spring Township and Lower Heidelberg Township cooperate in the creation of a greenway along the Cacoosing Creek.

Plan for the Reliable Supply of Water

The Wernersville Municipal Authority serves the Borough of Wernersville, portions of Lower Heidelberg Township north of the Borough, and portions of South Heidelberg Township south of the Borough. A reservoir is located near Hain's Church off of Church Road in Lower Heidelberg Township. Reservoirs, springs, and wells are located in South Heidelberg Township, mainly in the Wernersville Municipal Authority watershed in the vicinity of Furnace and Point Roads. Existing water facilities are shown on the map in Chapter 13. There is also an interconnection with the Western Berks Water Authority.

The Rosewood Hills development along State Hill Road is supplied from the Western Berks Water Authority, which has a treatment plant off of Water Road in Lower Heidelberg Township, along the Tulpehocken Creek. The transmission main extends from the treatment plant through Rosewood Hills to Spring Township. Western Berks and Pennsylvania American have worked cooperatively in the past and would do so in the future.

The eastern portions of Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg, including Green Valley Estates, Cacoosing Gardens, Spring Meadows, and Heidelberg Run are served by Pennsylvania American.

The Wernersville State Hospital has its own private water system, with filtration plant along Hospital Creek and storage tank near Hospital Road. They also have an interconnection with the Wernersville Municipal Authority. Galen Hall also has a private water system, with storage facilities, springs and wells located on its property. These systems at this time are intended to remain private and only serve the existing private users.

The Womelsdorf-Robeson Municipal Authority serves Robeson Borough and Heidelberg Township, but does not extend into Lower Heidelberg or South Heidelberg Townships. The watershed area is located south of Robeson. Wells are located within the watershed and along the railroad tracks near Furnace Road in Heidelberg Township.

Both the Wernersville Municipal Authority and Pennsylvania American take the position that they will “take on all comers”. If water capacity were not immediately available, arrangements would be made to secure sufficient capacity. Wernersville Municipal Authority could sink additional wells, or purchase additional water from the Western Berks Water Authority. Pennsylvania American has had additional wells provided as development occurs (such as the case of Heidelberg Run) and has cooperated with Western Berks Water Authority to secure water supply.

Where appropriate, the interconnection of water systems within the region will be encouraged to address emergency situations and provide improved service to area residents. To date, there have not been any discussions of interconnections between the Wernersville Municipal Authority and the Womelsdorf-Robeson Joint Authority, nor between the Wernersville Municipal Authority and Pennsylvania American. Water planning will involve fire companies in the area to insure that there will be adequate fire hydrants and volume and pressure of water to provide adequate fire protection.

The following water supplies should be protected with regard to quality and quantity:

Wernersville Municipal Authority watershed and wellhead protection areas

Wernersville State Hospital watershed

Womelsdorf-Robeson Joint Authority watershed and wellhead protection areas

Pennsylvania American wellhead protection areas

Western Berks Municipal Authority treatment plant supply

Galen Hall Water Company watershed and wellhead protection areas

Other areas of the Townships rely on private wells and springs. Both surface and groundwater are used as sources of water supply, and both sources should be protected with regard to quality and quantity.

In order to protect the surface water within Southwestern Berks County, the watercourses within the area have been designated Stream Corridor Preservation. It is intended that the Stream Corridor Preservation areas, now generally in private ownership, could be preserved as open space by private property owners. The granting of conservation easements to municipalities and conservation groups will be encouraged. If adjoining land is developed, developers will be encouraged to establish linear stream parks. Riparian forest buffers will also be encouraged.

Resource Preservation areas have been established at the Blue Marsh Recreation area and a large band through the South Mountain. The Wernersville Municipal Authority watershed and Wernersville State Hospital watershed are included within this Resource Preservation area. Only limited development will be permitted in the Resource Preservation area in order to protect the

watersheds of watercourses and water supplies, to protect vulnerable steep slopes, agriculture and protect woodlands.

In Rural Conservation areas, in the Church Road corridor in central Lower Heidelberg Township and interspersed among Resource Preservation and Low Density Residential areas in South Heidelberg Township, the density of development would be established through analysis of the natural, scenic and historic features and resources at each site, and steep slopes, floodplains and wetlands would be protected. This area also contains agriculture, efforts should be made to reduce conflicts between new development and existing agriculture.

Where developments, businesses, or other uses propose to utilize ground or surface water supplies in substantial amounts, hydrologic studies should be required and the party causing the extraction should be required to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects on the water supplies of other entities in the region.

The issue of utilizing watershed areas for limited public recreation purposes has been discussed elsewhere in this report. Any public access and usage would have to be consistent with the need to protect water supplies.

Zoning Ordinances should contain provisions to protect sources of water supply through the following techniques:

1. Natural Resource Protection standards (net out provisions) protecting floodplains, wetlands, wetland margins, steep slopes, watercourses, water bodies, lake and pond shores, and limestone areas.
2. Lot averaging provisions to allow flexibility in lot layout so houses can be sited away from natural features and resources.
3. Conservation zoning in resource preservation and rural conservation areas to protect natural resources.
4. Steep slope protection provisions
5. Woodland protection provisions
6. Wetlands, wetland margin and hydric soil protection provisions
7. Floodplain protection provisions
8. Limestone area overlay zoning

The highest aquifer yields in the area are typically found in the limestone areas in the northern portion of South Heidelberg Township and eastern portion of Lower Heidelberg Township. The potential for large groundwater yield is coupled with an increased potential for pollution of the groundwater. In limestone areas, use of public sewer and

water should be encouraged, stormwater management techniques must be designed and used to minimize groundwater pollution and sinkhole formation and potential polluting activities restricted.

9. Stream Corridor Overlay Zoning

This should be coordinated with efforts of the Berks County Conservation District, Penn State Cooperative Extension and Berks County Conservancy to fence stream banks and use other Best Management Practices to protect stream quality. Development of impervious surfaces should be limited, riparian buffers established, and stream habitats improved.

When development plans are reviewed, developers should be required to adequately manage storm water runoff and erosion and sedimentation in manners consistent with the protection of water resources in the area. Storm water management should be considered as part of the hydrologic cycle with less emphasis on detention, more emphasis on infiltration, reducing pollution, and reducing thermal impacts through BMPs.

Developers should also be required to identify the resources within their tracts, analyze the impacts of development and mitigate those impacts. Natural resources should be incorporated into the open space system.

It should be noted that lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities. Commercial agricultural production impacts water supply sources and Best Management Practices should be applied to mitigate the impact on water supply sources.