

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan is an expression of good community sense and forethought. Comprehensive planning illustrates a community's interest in current and future events both within and beyond its boundaries, and is also a demonstration of civic pride because it represents substantial efforts and funds invested by residents and public officials in developing the means to protect and preserve significant features of the community while addressing the inevitable consequences of growth, development and an increasing population. Essentially, a Comprehensive Plan evaluates resources (both physical and social), identifies goals and objectives, then develops implementation strategies to meet these goals and allocate resources. This Joint Comprehensive Plan has been prepared to help local officials administer their respective municipality's land use planning program, based on objective data and clear goals.

This Plan is also a compilation of data (both background information and future projections) which support policy goals and specific regulations. Officials from Leesport Borough, Ontelaunee Township, Perry Township and other government agencies, prospective residents, and businesses

may use this Plan as a reference resource. Additionally, the Joint Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide a level of certainty and stability for local neighborhoods, which directly affect people in personal and physical ways. For a healthy community to prosper, people need reassurance that their environment will maintain its "sense of place". For example, the stability and compatibility of surrounding land uses are crucial issues to the owner of a single-family home. Also, farmers require assurance that their way of life will not be subject to unnecessary restrictions as a result of nearby changes in land use. Prospective developers, additionally, must be able to plan for a project using clear and explicit regulations. A secure investment and business climate must be maintained through reasonable adherence to the comprehensive plan.

This Plan does not intend to prevent growth. By nature, it encourages well-planned and appropriate growth, while striving for a balance between conflicting or competing interests. Arriving at such a balance is no simple task. Many residents, landowners and officials have contributed to the creation of this Plan. The Plan is an attempt to provide acceptable levels of satisfaction to different groups while conforming to the regulations established in the

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

This Plan is not a "one time", static document; it is intended to be flexible and accommodate inevitable changes and allow appropriate responses to unforeseen events. It should be a dynamic and evolving tool that must be periodically reviewed and revised so that it may continue to guide the Planning Area municipalities into the Twenty-first Century.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Eight related basic elements are included in the comprehensive plan, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 170 of 1988, as amended). The basic elements are as follows:

1. ***A statement of objectives of the municipality, concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development;***
2. ***A plan for land use, which may include provisions for the amount, intensity, character and timing of***

land use proposed for residence, industry, business, agriculture, major traffic and transit facilities, utilities, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, preservation of prime agricultural lands, flood plains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses;

3. ***A plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels;***
4. ***A plan for movement of people and goods, which may include expressways, highways, local street systems, parking facilities, pedestrian and bikeway systems, public transit routes, terminals, airfields, port facilities, railroad facilities, and other similar facilities or uses;***

5. ***A plan for community facilities and utilities***, which may include public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police stations, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and waste treatment, solid waste management, storm drainage, flood plain management, utility corridors and associated facilities, and other similar facilities or uses;
6. ***A statement of the interrelationships among the various plan components***, which may include an estimate of the environmental, energy conservation, fiscal, economic development and social consequences on the municipality;
7. ***A discussion of short- and long-range plan implementation strategies***, which may include implications for capital improvements programming, new or updated development regulations, and the identification of public funds potentially available;
8. ***A statement indicating the relationship of the existing and proposed development of the municipality to the existing and proposed***

development and plans in contiguous municipalities, to the objectives and plans for development in the county of which it is a part, and to regional trends.

STEPS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

There are four major steps required in the process of producing a comprehensive plan: (1) the survey and analysis of existing conditions and trends, (2) the determination of policies and goals, (3) the combining of existing conditions and goals into a comprehensive plan, and (4) the implementation of the policies and proposals of the comprehensive plan.

1. ***Community Inventory and Analysis.*** *The initial step in any planning process is to review a wide range of existing conditions. This survey and analysis of existing conditions will provide the information on which policies and the plan are based.*
2. ***Policy Determinants.*** *The identification of each municipality's desired role within Berks County and the determination of policies which best carry out*

this role are the heart of the plan. Whereas the survey and analysis and comprehensive plan stages can be accomplished largely through professional planning assistance, there is no way in which policy determination can be made by other than the municipality itself and still consider the Plan to be a useful local document.

3. **Comprehensive Plan.** A comprehensive plan combines the information gained during the survey and analysis with the policies established in the policy determination step. The uses of a comprehensive plan are several. First and foremost, the comprehensive plan provides a means for setting forth a unified group of general proposals for the physical development of the Planning Area. Second, after adoption, the plan will enable the municipal Governing Body (Borough Council or Township Board of Supervisors), Planning Commission and the general public to review current issues and proposals against a clear picture of what has been decided as the most desirable plan for the future physical development and character of the Planning Area.

Third, through the plan, the Planning Area municipalities will be able to present a clear picture of their long range and general policies of development to all outside persons concerned with the area's development. Fourth, the comprehensive plan will help educate all who read it regarding existing conditions, problems and opportunities; the possibilities of the future; the present status and projected future trends; and the policy of government with respect to physical development.

4. **Implementation.** The final and critical step is the process of carrying out the policies and proposals contained in the plan. Unfortunately, implementation cannot be accomplished by a single act or in a single document. It is a continuous series of individual private actions, which must be monitored by responsible public agencies, and public action initiated when feasible and timely. The success of such efforts will require the cooperation of Planning Area residents and the coordinated efforts of its public officials and agencies.