

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to establish overall policies for the development and conservation of the Northern Berks region over the next 15 years. The region includes Hamburg and Shoemakersville Boroughs and the Townships of Perry, Upper Bern, Upper Tulpehocken, Tilden, and Windsor. Public education in the region is served by the Hamburg Area School District. This Plan is not by itself a regulation, but is intended to provide the policy direction for changes to the municipalities' development regulations.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the following major elements:

- The Overall Vision and Goals of the Plan
- The Demographics and Housing Overview
- The Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan
- The Community Facilities and Services Plan
- The Historic Preservation Plan
- The Economic Development Plan
- The Transportation Plan
- The Existing Land Use Plan
- The Future Land Use Plan
- The Implementation Plan
- The Action Program

What does a Comprehensive Plan Accomplish?

The Comprehensive Plan contains a vision of what the Boroughs and the Townships want to be and includes goals and objectives for attaining that vision. Through accomplishing those goals and objectives and realizing the vision, the quality of life for the Region's residents will be enhanced.

The Comprehensive Plan is also an educational document, providing a discussion of conditions, strengths, issues, concerns, and opportunities, and identifying resources that are worthy of protection and preservation.

The Comprehensive Plan contains policies for land use, circulation and community facilities which will serve as a guide for public and private decision-making to accomplish the goals and objectives, and thus the vision, for the Boroughs and the Townships. The appropriate location, amount, and pattern of development is established and standards for developers to meet are identified.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for implementation techniques, such as land use ordinances, administrative actions, official maps and capital improvement programs, which will implement the policies contained in this plan.

This Comprehensive Plan is a Living Document

This Comprehensive Plan is just a start. It is the foundation for the attainment of the goals and objectives established within the plan, which can be accomplished only with the support of the municipal governments, municipal commissions, boards and committees, area businesses, area residents, and surrounding municipalities and regional planning groups.

The objective has been to prepare a plan which will not sit on a shelf and gather dust, but a plan that will be implemented and used by municipal governing bodies, planning commissions and other groups within the municipalities to guide their actions in attaining the goals of this Plan.

This Plan presents a strategy to guide municipal officials and other agencies in making decisions that will assure that the Northern Berks region will continue to be an attractive place in which to live, work and visit. Again, this Comprehensive Plan **is not** an ordinance or regulation, but is the basis for proposing regulations and undertaking specific functional plans designed to implement the policies established within this plan. Implementation of the action plan is critical.

How Was this Plan Developed?

The Northern Berks Regional Comprehensive Plan was originally prepared with the assistance of many groups, organizations and individuals. In June of 2001, the County of Berks in cooperation with Hamburg Borough, Strausstown Borough, Tilden Township, Upper Bern Township, Upper Tulpehocken Township and Windsor Township selected the professional consulting team of Spotts, Stevens and McCoy, Inc. to prepare the Regional Comprehensive Plan. After approximately four years of meetings and gathering of information from the stakeholders in the region the plan was adopted by the municipalities in 2005.

After approximately 15 years since the adoption of the 2005 iteration of the Plan the municipalities determined that it was time for an update to the original document. The Berks County Planning Commission was chosen by the municipalities to work on updating the Plan and began work on the update in the summer of 2020.

Before the members formally embarked on updating their existing multi-municipal plan, they reached out to neighboring municipalities within the school district to assess their willingness to participate in updating the plan. Shoemakersville Borough and Perry Township were approached with the idea of adding them to the project. At the time Shoemakersville Borough was not part of a regional planning initiative, although they did have a singular comprehensive plan from 1969, this document is extremely outdated by today's standards. Perry Township was involved in a joint comprehensive planning effort with the borough of Leesport and Ontelaunee Township. That plan was from 1996.

Since the 2005 Plan was adopted, much has changed in the region. For instance, Strausstown Borough merged into Upper Tulpehocken Township in 2016. The area has also seen increased warehouse development pressure and traffic and congestion has become a major issue, especially in Hamburg Borough. There have been zoning amendments and new demographics, new economic and housing information has also become available. After 15 years it is a good time to assess the current joint comprehensive plan and amend it to make it compatible with the issues and conditions that are impacting the municipalities today. Because of this, the municipalities decided to pursue an update to their multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

The first step in the process was the identification of major issues and concerns that needed to be addressed. The next step was an analysis and mapping of the existing conditions and trends. The mapping started with computerized information provided by the Berks County Planning Commission. A survey was prepared to gather input from the public on their thoughts about the community.

An "overall vision" was prepared and a set of goals were written to provide overall direction for the Plan. Then a series of alternatives were considered to guide development in different areas of the Region. The Land Use Plan was prepared, followed by recommendations concerning Community Facilities, Transportation, Economic Development, Historic Preservation and Natural Features. All of these elements were produced and reviewed by the Planning Committee at monthly meetings advertised and open to the public. Public hearings were then held. After making revisions to respond to public input, the Plan was adopted by the elected officials of each municipality.

Regional Location

The municipalities composing the Northern Berks region include Hamburg and Shoemakersville Boroughs, Perry Township, Tilden Township, Upper Bern Township, Upper Tulpehocken Township and Windsor Township. As the name of the plan implies these seven (7) municipalities are located within the northern portion of Berks County. The regional planning area consists of a little over 66,227 acres of land (103.5 square miles) with a total population of 17,269 residents (2010 Census). The center of the Northern Berks region is located approximately 22 miles

NEED FOR CONTINUING PLANNING

Planning is not a static discipline. Planning is an ongoing process and this Comprehensive Plan must be continually reviewed in light of development trends, the state of the economy, unforeseen influences, availability of public infrastructure, changes in community goals, and the appropriateness of the Plan's objectives, policies, and implementation program.

to the north of the City of Reading, 20 miles south of Pottsville, 34 miles to the west of the City of Allentown, 80 miles to the northwest of the City of Philadelphia, 48 miles to the northeast of the City of Lancaster, and 65 miles to the east of the City of Harrisburg. The map below depicts the geographic proximity of the Northern Berks Region within Berks County.



