

Appendix A

Identification of Issues - Public Participation

For a Joint Comprehensive Plan to be a useful tool for guiding future development and policy in an area, it must represent a consensus among the Region's stakeholders. The residents, business owners, community service providers, and municipal officials must each have a part in forming the policies of the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires public input at the *end* of the process, in the form of public meetings and public hearings. Restricting public involvement to merely what is required is not likely to produce a successful plan, as the public will have little sense of participation in the process or ownership of the final document: they are being asked to approve a plan in which they had no voice. Early and frequent public participation is essential to the development of a practical, community-based Comprehensive Plan, regardless of the number of municipalities that are involved.

The public participation component of the Alsace, Oley, and Ruscombmanor Townships Joint Comprehensive Plan surpasses the requirements of the MPC. Public input was sought early in the planning process, well before any policies or future land uses were determined. A three-pronged approach to direct public input was implemented.

- The Committee held monthly meetings, which were open to the public, starting in October 2007 for the duration of the planning process.
- The Committee and SSM prepared a written questionnaire. The questions were largely similar to those asked in the interviews, but were structured in a way that allowed for quantitative analysis of the responses. Questionnaire responses were reviewed and analyzed by Berks County Planning Department.
- SSM conducted a series of telephone interviews with specific individuals identified by the Committee. The selected persons were chosen because of their positions within the community and the particular insights those positions gave them. The interviewees included a variety of public officials, local business leaders, and farmers.
- SSM, The Committee, and Berks County Planning Department Coordinator held a public meeting on July 22, 2008 to review a draft of the plan prior to sending it to the Planning Commissions for review and approval.

This Appendix will include the results of the public outreach, including a summary of the questionnaire results.