

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Why a Comprehensive Plan?

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to proactively work to assure that the future of Mt. Penn Borough and Lower Alsace Township will be shaped by the municipalities' own vision, rather than by reactions to forces acting upon the Borough and the Township.

The Borough and the Township have prepared individual comprehensive plans in the past. This Comprehensive Plan is the first joint planning effort by the two municipalities, and was initiated because of the recognized need to examine overall planning for the area in light of development trends and pressures in the region; determine common goals and objectives for land use, circulation, community facilities, housing, open space and recreation, natural resources, municipal services, and resource preservation; analyze interconnections with and connections to surrounding municipalities; coordinate land use and traffic planning; and recognize the Comprehensive Plan for Berks County.

What does a Comprehensive Plan Accomplish?

The Comprehensive Plan contains a vision of what the Borough and the Township want to be and includes goals and objectives for realizing that vision.

The Comprehensive Plan is an educational document, providing discussion of conditions, strengths, weaknesses, threats, 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 Borough and the Township.

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

Benefits of Multi-Municipal Planning

- Provides a regional planning approach and allocation of land uses
 - Where
 - How much to accommodate population projections
 - Patterns of development
- Establishes growth areas and future growth areas regionally
 - Coordination with infrastructure
 - Opportunities for infill
- Provides coordinated planning along the common boundaries of the municipalities
- Supports existing centers rather than weaken them
- Coordinates road corridor planning, standards, and management
- Provides for linkages between municipalities
- The Plan and implementing ordinances are considered by state agencies in permitting decisions
- Addresses review of “developments of regional impact”
- Identifies opportunities for future joint efforts
- Promotes common land use designations and definitions
- Establish goals for economic character over the entire Region
- Provides support for municipalities in zoning challenges
- Enables Transportation Impact Fees across municipal boundaries
- Enables Transfer of Development Rights across municipal boundaries
- Enables priority consideration in state funding programs
- Provides opportunity to learn from neighbors’ shared experiences
- Enhances the Region’s attractiveness to quality development

- Enables developing a “specific plan” for an area designated for non-residential development, preparing regulations for that area, and streamlining the approval process

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 Borough of Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace Township will continue to be attractive places in which to live and work. This Comprehensive Plan is not an ordinance or regulation, but is a basis for proposing regulations and undertaking specific functional plans designed to implement the policies established within this plan.

Need for Continuing Planning

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, changes in community goals, and the appropriateness of the Plan's objectives, policies, and implementation program.