

Chapter 1

The Joint Comprehensive Plan

Introduction & Purpose

Washington Township and Waynesboro Borough contain a variety of landscapes which make the Region unique in many ways. The nearly built-out historic Borough of Waynesboro and the rural and suburban areas of Washington Township present distinctive and separate land use needs, yet both municipalities share many of the same problems and issues, including provision of community facilities, transportation, and the increased cost of services.

The rolling farmlands of the west and central portions of Washington Township, the busy and commercialized Route 16 Corridor, the historic character of Waynesboro, and the scenic vistas of Michaux State Forest create unique challenges as well as opportunities in future land use planning. Issues such as economic growth and viability of downtown Waynesboro, agricultural and open space preservation, cultural development, and the preservation of natural resources in the face of increasing development pressure makes this Plan critically important.

In 1968, the Pennsylvania legislature passed Act 247, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. This was the legislation that enabled local governments to develop Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances, and Official Maps. In the years since then, the Act has been amended numerous times, providing municipalities with more restrictions as well as more means to implement their plans, but these original document types remain the foundation of local planning.

In 2000, Pennsylvania adopted amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code, specifically Acts 67 and 68, known as “Smart Growth” legislation. This new legislation allows municipalities to work together to plan regionally across municipal borders using “smart growth principles” and specifically enabled the creation of joint municipal Comprehensive Plans. A Joint Comprehensive Plan can address both development and preservation issues with the flexibility of allocating land uses over the entire planning area, rather than the traditional method of providing for all land uses within each municipality. Additionally, a Joint Comprehensive Plan allows for regional coordination of transportation and community facilities issues, which helps to prevent overlap of municipal resources. The Action Plan will address specific recommendations pertaining to these new planning tools.

A Joint Comprehensive Plan is more than just a plan for development. The Plan is a means granted to local governments by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by which

participating communities may work together to create a vision of what they want to become and how they intend to achieve that vision. Surrounding communities are changing as well. This Joint Comprehensive Plan will help to anticipate change, to identify community goals, and to examine local resources. It will provide the guidance that allows a higher degree of control in *how* change occurs in the Washington Township/Waynesboro Region.

The municipalities have prepared individual comprehensive plans in the past, Washington Township's last revision was 1999, and the Borough of Waynesboro's last comprehensive plan was completed in 1990. There have been other studies and visioning efforts among the municipalities as well, most recently the *Vision 2015* study. This Joint Comprehensive Plan was initiated because of the recognized need to update and examine overall planning for the area in light of development trends and pressures in the region, bring together previous studies, and to determine common goals and objectives for land use.

Contents of a Comprehensive Plan

The State allows local governments to address virtually any issue that is of municipal concern, but Act 247 established certain minimum requirements. According to §301 of Act 247, a valid Comprehensive Plan must include:

- a statement of objectives concerning future development;
- a plan for land use;
- a plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and of any anticipated increase of population;
- a plan for the movement of people and goods, which may address automobile travel, parking facilities, non-motorized trail systems, and public transportation facilities;
- a plan for community facilities and services, which may address public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police services, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and solid waste management, storm drainage, and utilities;
- a statement of the inter-relationships among the components of the plan;
- a discussion of short-range and long-range implementation strategies for the plan objectives;
- a review of how compatible the plan is with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities outside of the planning region;
- a statement regarding consistency with the county comprehensive plan;

- a plan for the protection of natural and historic resources; and
- a plan for the reliable supply of water.

In addition, the municipalities may address virtually any area of local concern.

It is important to realize that this Joint Comprehensive Plan does not have the force of law, although it provides the foundation for ordinances and regulations that do. In fact, a sound Joint Comprehensive Plan becomes critical in the event that an ordinance of either municipality is challenged in court: if the ordinance in question is shown to be consistent with a duly adopted Joint Comprehensive Plan, a successful legal challenge is much more difficult than it would be otherwise.

What does a Comprehensive Plan Accomplish?

The Comprehensive Plan contains a vision of what Waynesboro and Washington Township want to achieve and includes goals, policies and strategies for realizing that vision.

The Comprehensive Plan is an educational document, providing discussion of conditions, issues, 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 region.

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. It is critical that the Action Plan be implemented.

Planning jointly allows allocation of land uses, housing types, densities, and development patterns over the entire region, rather than trying to fit all types of uses and densities into each municipality separately. It also allows for coordinated land use planning along municipal boundaries; coordinated planning for trails, recreation and open space, and transportation throughout the Region; and coordinated planning along the common road corridors in the Region. Coordinated input can be provided to County and State agencies and an overall approach to economic development can be presented, addressing retention of major components of the economy and allowing for appropriate commercial and industrial development, which complements rather than detracts from existing commercial areas. The following list summarizes benefits of multi-municipal planning:

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

Some Basic Terms

Clear communication is essential to sound planning. A potential source of confusion lies in the meaning of basic terms. Many of these terms are commonly used words, and different individuals have different interpretations of their precise meanings and how they are meant to relate to each other. Planning terms tend to reflect the iterative process of revision and refinement that is planning itself. For the purposes of this document, the following terms shall be defined as follows.

- An **ISSUE** is a particular topic to be addressed. It is value-neutral and can usually be expressed as a single word or phrase. Examples of **ISSUES** addressed in this Comprehensive Plan are “traffic” and “housing.”
- A **POLICY** expresses the municipalities’ position regarding a given issue. For purposes of clarity, it is ideal to establish a single **POLICY** statement for each issue, but this is not a strict rule. Depending upon the complexity of the issue, it may be necessary to define several policies, although it is critical to be sure that they are not in conflict. A **POLICY** statement relative to the issue of agricultural preservation would be “Preserve remaining agricultural lands, particularly those characterized by prime agricultural soils and soils of state-wide importance”.
- A **GOAL** is a general statement of a long-term objective relative to a particular policy. A **GOAL** is always a qualitative statement. Continuing with the example, a sample **GOAL** for the policy could be “preserve agricultural and natural resources.”
- **OBJECTIVES** are specific steps toward a goal. Typically, a single goal will be supported by multiple **OBJECTIVES**. **OBJECTIVES** are always quantitative. One possible **OBJECTIVE** for the sample goal could be to “encourage purchase of development rights of active farmland in the Region”.
- The **ACTION PLAN**, also known as the implementation strategy, will include a compilation of all the objectives identified in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, setting forth specific steps to achieve each one. The **ACTION PLAN** will also identify who should be responsible to execute each step, including a time element. Obviously, financing is a critical part of implementation. An **ACTION PLAN** should include guidance on funding sources, but a comprehensive budget and financing strategy would be premature.

When the Joint Comprehensive Plan is first adopted, the Action Plan is likely to be the most useful portion of the document, as it provides very specific direction. As time passes and objectives are achieved, the less specific elements will be more useful. Clear goals and policy statements are particularly helpful as unforeseen circumstances arise, as they assist local decision-makers to determine what actions are in the best interest of the community.

Arrangement of This Document

This Joint Comprehensive Plan has been arranged in that the conclusions and plan elements are presented first, with the research and documentation provided at the end. This arrangement may be confusing for someone attempting to read the Plan straight through – and it is certainly not the order in which the document was written – but the Plan will be used most efficiently when arranged like a research document. The Plan should be a reference document that users will consult for guidance or research on specific topics. Also, since this document is a *plan*, it is logical to give the plan elements prominence rather than precede it with research about conditions that will change over time and become increasingly irrelevant.

The initial introductory chapters are designed to provide the user with sufficient information on the planning process and planning terms to assure clear understanding of the document. A summary of municipal-related information is provided to give a sense of the character of the community and of the issues that will be addressed by the plan.

The later chapters discuss the Goals and Objectives which name the specific issues to be addressed by this Plan. This section of the Plan then presents each of the actions that have been established, including a chapter for each plan element, as well as the overall Action Plan.

This Plan concludes with a chapter reviewing the interrelationships among the plan elements, which is required by Pennsylvania law.

Methodology

The Washington Township/Waynesboro Planning Committee began the planning process in December 2006 by selecting Spotts, Stevens and McCoy (SSM) and Derck and Edson (D&E) as the professional planning consultant team to work with the municipalities. Local officials appointed a Planning Committee to work with SSM and D&E, including representatives from the Washington Township and Waynesboro Borough Planning Commissions, municipal staff, and had contributions from members of the governing bodies as well as local private and non-profit agencies.

The Committee held monthly meetings starting in January 2007 for the duration of the planning process. Among the earliest actions of the Committee was to identify goals and priorities, and to identify means to gain input from local residents and business owners regarding their perceptions of the municipalities, and any critical issues they share. A three-pronged approach to obtain public input was implemented.

- SSM conducted a series of interviews via telephone with specific individuals identified by the Committee. The selected persons were chosen due to their positions within the community and the particular insights those positions gave them. The interviewees included a variety of public officials, public and school district employees, and other local leaders. These individuals were questioned about their specific likes and dislikes in the region, what they felt were the most pressing issues facing the community, what they would like the community to become, and other questions more directly related to their particular areas of expertise.
- The Committee and SSM prepared a written questionnaire that was mailed to 10% of the households of the region.
- Finally, the Committee and consulting team facilitated a visioning session that was open to all interested residents. The session was in two parts, the first being a detailed presentation of the analysis of the survey responses and the second being a discussion about possible solutions to the principal issues identified by the resident surveys.

Once the planning process was underway, Committee meetings were largely occupied with discussion of the various plan issues and review of text as prepared by SSM. Upon completion of the text and maps, the entire draft document was reviewed to assure that the plan elements created a coherent whole.

As required by Act 247, the complete draft was submitted to the Franklin County Planning Commission, the adjacent school districts, and each adjoining municipality in February 2009 in order to allow them to review and comment upon the Plan. Drafts were also available for public review. Each municipal Planning Commission convened a public meeting for the purpose of presenting the draft as submitted by the Committee to the public, and to solicit comments. Following the Public Meetings, both of the governing bodies held official public hearings, as per the requirements of the Municipalities Planning Code, to hear any additional comments from their respective residents. The municipalities officially adopted the plan in -----.

Need for Continuing Planning

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 Washington Township/Waynesboro Region will continue to be an attractive place in which to live, work, and visit. This Comprehensive Plan is not an ordinance or regulation, but is a basis for establishing regulations and undertaking specific functional plans designed to implement the policies set forth within the plan. Each municipality retains the right to control zoning within its municipality, whether through individual zoning ordinances or a joint zoning ordinance.

Planning is an ongoing process and this Joint Comprehensive Plan must be continually reviewed in light of unforeseen changes in development trends, the state of the economy, capacity of public infrastructure, changes in community goals, and the appropriateness of the Plan's objectives, policies, and implementation program. It is recommended that the recommendations of this Plan be reviewed every 5 years.