



places2040

• communities • corridors • landscapes

a plan for lancaster county pa





OUR PLACE: Lancaster County

Lancaster County is a special place — and places like this don't just happen. If we want the county to remain a great place, we have to plan ahead. We need to take stock of where we are, consider where we're going, and how we're going to get there. What do you want Lancaster County to be like in the future?

Cover agriculture photo: Dawn R. Ekdahl



Updating the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan

Just as businesses need a business plan, communities need a plan that sets goals and objectives for the future. All counties in Pennsylvania — and most municipalities — have a comprehensive plan or “comp” plan that establishes a vision for the community. In Lancaster County, the Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC) prepares this plan for adoption by the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners. LCPC is currently leading a process to update the county’s existing comprehensive plan. That effort is [places2040: a plan for lancaster county pa](#).

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan or “comp” plan is a document that:

- *Educates people about a place — its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats*
- *Discusses how key resources will be protected and enhanced*
- *Establishes principles for growth and development*
- *Prioritizes financial resources and outlines strategies for new investment*
- *Provides a rationale for future direction and policies*
- *Guides community leaders in making decisions*



A New Approach to Places

Historically, Lancaster Countians have had strong associations with their municipality or school district. While this kind of local identity contributes to the county's character, it makes it challenging to plan for the future, because many of the county's places aren't defined by these boundaries.

Consider places such as the Lancaster City metropolitan area, the Susquehanna River Valley, the Amish & Mennonite heartland of eastern Lancaster County, or Manheim Pike.

Today, we're trying to think about places in a new way — one that doesn't focus on old boundaries. To maintain our quality of life and economic competitiveness, we have to look past what divides us. We need to look beyond individual resources and see places as a whole.

That's why we're emphasizing the concept of communities, corridors, and landscapes. Thinking about places in these terms helps us approach them with a fresh perspective.

Placemaking

Great places are places that people write home about. They're attractive environments that encourage interaction, create a sense of belonging, and

spark creativity and investment. All of us can think of a few places like that. It might be our hometown, or a favorite destination.

Some places, such as the Susquehanna Riverlands, are considered great places due to their natural beauty. Others acquire the qualities of a great place over time, through the interaction of people and their surroundings. The Lancaster County agricultural landscape is an example of that process. In recent decades, however, we've also created a lot of places without that kind of character.

How do we protect the great places in our community, and transform the ordinary ones into places we're proud of? The art of creating and sustaining great places is called placemaking – and it happens from the ground up, by the people who live, work, and play there. To paraphrase planner Ed McMahon, placemaking is turning a spot on a map into a location with a unique identity and sense of place.

Ensuring That Lancaster County Remains a Great Place

Lancaster County is constantly changing. Is anyone keeping track of these changes and working to ensure that Lancaster County remains a great place?

At the Lancaster County Planning Commission (LCPC), our job is to raise awareness about what makes the county special, educate people about what's ahead, and work with you to set some common goals. We're a staff of professional planners guided by a board of citizen volunteers, and it's our goal to serve as a leader and catalyst for innovative planning and placemaking in Lancaster County.

LCPC has been working to improve quality of life here since the 1950s — and we've always counted on local residents to help us set the agenda.

1950s–70s

LCPC was created in 1958, at a time when Lancaster Countians welcomed suburban development, but were unsure about its impact. Throughout the 1960s, LCPC produced a series of background studies that led to the *Sketch Plan* (1970), the first effort to outline a set of countywide goals. Five years later, the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners officially adopted the county's first comprehensive plan, called *Directions* (1975).

1980s–2000s

As the pace of development increased, Lancaster County residents became increasingly concerned about traffic congestion and the loss of agricultural land. In response, LCPC produced the county’s first growth management plan in 1991. That plan called on municipalities to adopt urban growth boundaries — and within a few years, they became a reality.

Despite the success of this strategy, ongoing concerns about sprawl prompted LCPC to develop a new comprehensive plan called *Envision Lancaster County*. This plan included:

- *ReVisions* (1999), a policy element;
- *Balance* (2006), an updated growth management element; and
- Six functional elements (2005–2012) that focus on:
 - Tourism (*Tourism*);
 - Cultural heritage (*Heritage*);
 - Housing (*Choices*);
 - Transportation (*Connections*);
 - Green infrastructure (*Greenscapes*); and
 - Water resources (*Blueprints*).

Why Are We Updating Our Existing Plan?

Envision Lancaster County laid a strong foundation of policies and actions that directed growth to appropriate areas, protected agricultural and natural resources, and encouraged intermunicipal cooperation. So why are we updating this plan?

- It’s been over 15 years since we adopted the first component of the plan.
- We still have a lot of work to do. Growth areas are still seeing a sprawling, disconnected development pattern, housing is less affordable, infrastructure is aging, and we’re still losing treasured resources.
- Changing conditions require us to think differently about where people live and work, how we move around, and how we protect our heritage.
- Our existing structure of municipalities and school districts makes it difficult to achieve some of our goals. We need to strengthen our collaboration.
- It’s not all bad news. We’re seeing new opportunities — more investment in the city and boroughs, greater interest in walking and bicycling, and new technologies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR places2040

This update to the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan will:

- *Involve the public, private, and nonprofit sectors;*
- *Promote best practices in planning and placemaking;*
- *Build on past planning efforts and principles;*
- *Integrate previously adopted plans into a single visually oriented document;*
- *Focus on countywide issues and opportunities;*
- *Reinvent our growth management strategy to focus on places, not land uses;*
- *Provide a framework for local and regional comprehensive plans;*
- *Consider our role in the region, state, and nation;*
- *Articulate a 25-year vision that is realistic and evolutionary;*
- *Include an action plan for implementation and indicators to measure success.*

While the existing plan has served the county well, we now need a different kind of plan — a more concise document that clearly states the kind of place we want Lancaster County to be. Ensuring that the county remains a place where people want to live, work, and play requires a more holistic and integrated approach. This new framework is [places2040: a plan for lancaster county pa](#).

What Are the Steps in Creating the Plan?

Planning to Plan

In this phase, we'll prepare for the planning process by studying best practices for comprehensive plans. We'll also consider options for gathering public input, such as social media strategies and a comp plan website.

Taking Stock

Using the county's existing plan as a starting point, we'll collect data to document where we've been over the past 15 years, and assess where current trends are taking us. The results will be presented in a report called **Changes**. We'll release this report at a kickoff event featuring an inspiring speaker who will discuss the importance of place and placemaking.

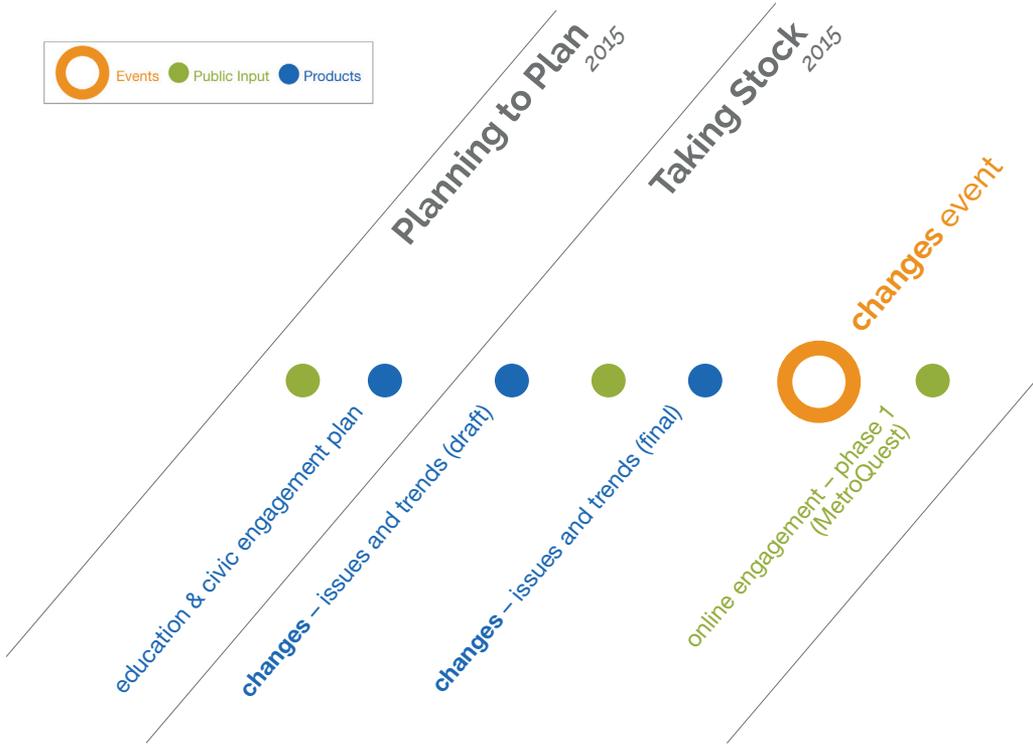
At the event, we'll also begin to prioritize the issues and opportunities identified in the *Changes* report. We'll introduce an interactive online engagement tool that will help us gauge how people feel about the changes we're observing in Lancaster County. Should we continue to emphasize the goals in the existing county comprehensive plan, or make some adjustments?

Framing the Future

The purpose of this stage is to consider our alternatives. We know that Lancaster County will look different in 2040, but how can we bring about the kind of changes people want to see? More specifically, how should we accommodate the growth we anticipate? At a public event, we'll show you how

TIMELINE

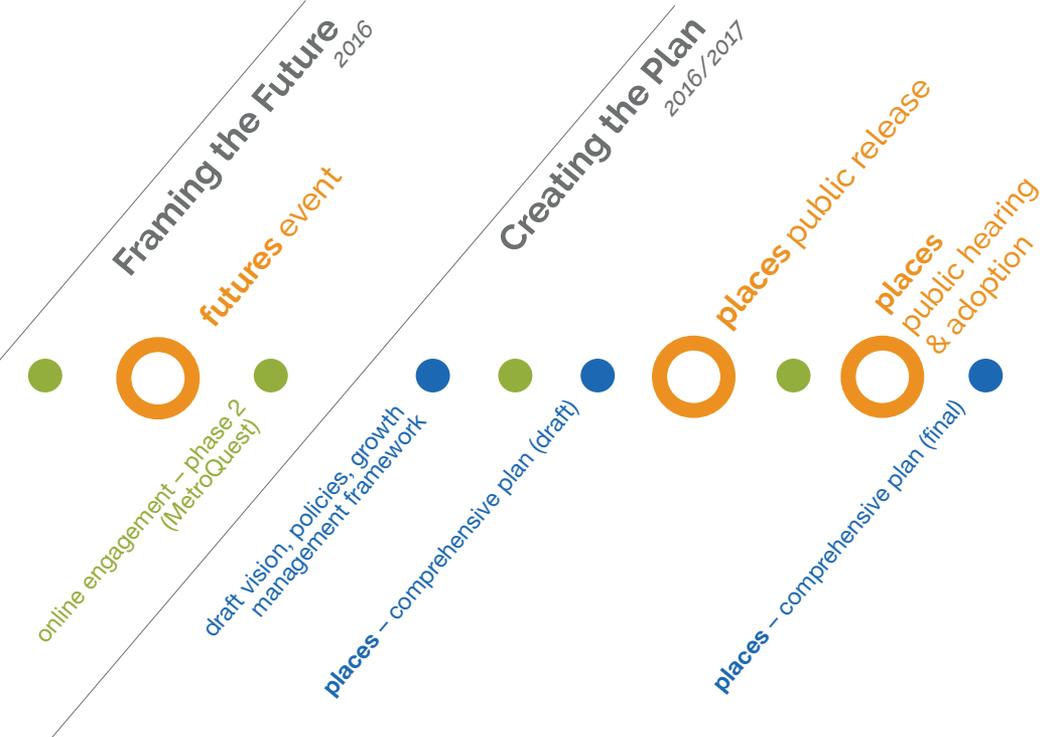
○ Events ● Public Input ● Products



different scenarios might play out. We'll also give you plenty of opportunities to engage in the process at places2040.com, a second online engagement exercise, online surveys, a variety of community meetings, and other venues.

Creating the Plan

The last step is to write the plan based on analysis and input gathered during the planning process. LCPC staff will put it together, and LCPC members — a board of citizen volunteers — will review the draft and make a recommendation to the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners, who will consider adopting the plan as county policy.



Who's Involved in the Process?

LCPC staff will prepare a plan that reflects the hopes and concerns of people throughout the county. We'll check in with community leaders and local experts, but your input is equally important.

The General Public — That's You!

The public will be involved in all stages of the planning process. Whether you live, work, or play here, we want your input about the future of our community. You'll have opportunities to participate in public meetings, provide online input, and get your community or neighborhood involved in the process.

Government

Municipal governments and planning commissions will play an essential role in the process, as will school districts, local and regional authorities, state agencies, and elected officials. They will have opportunities to provide input at face-to-face meetings, regional forums, and other venues.

Targeted Stakeholders

These are organizations, associations, and groups whose input is critical to the plan. They will be consulted at key stages in the process, and will be encouraged to participate in public events associated with the plan. After the plan is adopted, they will assist in implementing its goals.



Dirck Harris

Partners for Place

These are countywide and regional organizations that have the capacity to contribute directly to the process. They will actively build awareness of the plan, educate people about its purpose, and engage the public by sponsoring events. They will also be encouraged to highlight their involvement in the plan by displaying the “Partners for Place” logo.



Technical Advisors

These are “subject matter” experts – organizations and individuals with specific knowledge about areas relevant to the plan. Many of them were involved in developing the existing Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. They will evaluate the data collected for the plan and review strategies for awareness, education, and engagement.

Steering Committee / Staff

LCPC members will serve as the steering committee, provide guidance and oversight, and make a recommendation to the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners regarding possible adoption of the plan.

How Can I Get Involved?

Without your involvement, we can’t make this plan the kind of inclusive effort we want it to be. We need your ideas! Here’s what you can do to stay aware of what’s happening, learn about the issues and opportunities ahead, and join us in making Lancaster County a better place:

- **Register** at places2040.com, so we can keep you informed about upcoming meetings and events.
- **Follow us** on social media outlets and help us spread the word:
facebook.com/places2040
instagram.com/places2040
- **Participate** in our online surveys and engagement exercises, explore the interactive tools on places2040.com, and visit the links we share.



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