INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan is a general policy guide for the physical development of the County. It is a document designed to state basic policies for the purpose of guiding future growth and development in Perry County. The Comprehensive Plan provides a blueprint for housing, transportation, community facilities and utilities, and for land use, as well as an examination tool for social and economic characteristics of the County. In general, the comprehensive plan is in part, a factual report that examines how the past has led to the present, as well as a report that can be used to chart the County’s path into the future.

LEGAL STATUS OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is not a legal document nor is it a land use ordinance. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act No. 247 of 1968, P.L. 805), as reenacted and amended (MPC), establishes the basic authority for planning in Pennsylvania. Section 301.4(a-b) of this Act mandates that counties prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan and that municipal comprehensive plans be generally consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan.

Upon adoption of a comprehensive plan by the County, the MPC grants the Perry County Planning Commission authority to make recommendations on any proposed action of the governing body of a municipality if the proposed action relates to:

1. The location, opening, vacation, extension, widening, narrowing or enlargement of any street, public ground, pier-head or watercourse;
2. The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structures located with the municipality;
3. The adoption, amendment or repeal of any comprehensive plan, official map, subdivision or land development ordinance, or provisions for planned residential development; and;
4. The construction, extension or abandonment of any water line, sewer line or sewage treatment facility.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Perry County’s landscape comprises a variety of land use patterns. It is a combination of homes, agriculture, forest, businesses, industries, schools, parks, churches and government services. All of these segments are tied together by a network of streets and communication channels. To arrange all these uses in an orderly manner as the County develops is the function of the Comprehensive Plan. This Comprehensive Plan is a guide
to orderly development in promoting health, safety, welfare and convenience of the people within Perry County. It organizes and coordinates the relationship between land use patterns, and charts a course for growth and change. The plan expresses the aims and ambitions of the County delineating the form and character it has sought to achieve. It reflects the policies by which the identified goals contained within may be reached and are subject to continual review. Where it is permissible and support warrants, the implementation of this plan can be accomplished by way of ordinance adoption.

THE PROCESS OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan should be defined as a process rather than a fixed conclusion. It is a blueprint for the physical development of the County, to be used as a guide to County builders in locating their investments and measuring the prospect of success.

Even though this plan is a fluid process and may be modified from time to time, the plan does represent vital decisions important to the welfare of the people and the County. It represents a decision by the population that Perry County’s leadership may wish to accommodate; it represents the standards by which the County will be developed. It represents decisions as to which land use types will be developed, where they will be located and how they will be connected by lines of communications and transportation systems. It also represents decisions for the reservation of open space throughout the County.

In summary, comprehensive planning is a continuing function of county and local government, serving as a guide for programs bringing about a more orderly growth and development of the entire County.

THE PLAN’S EVOLUTION

The 1992 Plan

The first official Perry County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in March 1992. The plan contained fifteen chapters.

Chapter I provided an introduction to the plan. Chapter II enlightened the reader to some highlights in Perry County’s History. The natural environment was the focus of Chapter III. Chapter IV focused on Population/Socioeconomic Profile, while Chapter V covered the County’s economic base. Chapter VI went on to include existing land use and Chapter VII transportation. Community facilities and services were the attention of Chapter VIII and Chapter IX housing. Chapter X covered administration and finances.
The plan then went into its direction setting chapters like Chapter XI covering goals and objectives, Chapter XII with the Future Land Use Plan, Chapter XIII highlighting the Transportation Plan, Chapter XIV showcasing the Community Facilities Plan, Chapter XV framing the Housing Plan, and finally Chapter XVI containing Administration and Implementation.

**The 2007 Plan**

The second and last official Perry County Comprehensive Plan was adopted on February 26, 2007. The plan contained two primary parts. They were Part I - Basic Studies and Part II - The Plan itself. Within the Basic Studies, ten chapters were included. The Plan also contained seven chapters housing the key plan components.

This plan will stay generally consistent with the organizational framework of the 2007 two-part plan. If the reader is familiar with the last plan, they will notice additions to several areas as the plan’s preparers have worked to provide increased connections to various other plans undertaken by the County.

**THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN**

The preparation of a Comprehensive Plan involves three major steps: first, the collecting of all essential information relating to the people and the land; second, after careful and thorough analysis of this information, the development of plans which encourage the most appropriate future development of the County while maintaining existing property values and seeking ways to provide necessary municipal facilities and services; and third, upon completion of the planning process, putting these planning recommendations into action programs. This is accomplished through the adoption of official municipal maps, and through the annual preparation and adoption of a capital improvement program.

The Comprehensive Plan as explained before is divided into two primary plan parts. **Part I - Basic Studies**, includes the Introduction, Historic Resources, Natural Resources, Population and Socio-Economic Profile, Economic Base, Existing Land Use, Transportation and Circulation, Housing, Community Facilities/Utilities, and County Administration and Finance. **Part II - The Plan**, includes the following: Goals and Objectives, Future Land Use Plan, Transportation Plan, Community Facilities and Utilities Plan, Housing Plan, Historic, Cultural and Natural Resources Plan, and Plan Administration and Implementation.

Each part of the plan has been developed during different timeframes over the past nine years. Therefore many of the statistics included in the plan will be outdated at the
publication date. To overcome this problem and ensure the validity of the Plan for the forthcoming years, statistical information will be continuously gathered to facilitate future updates. Future updates will take place as prescribed by the MPC or an earlier interim update if the Perry County Planning Commission deems it necessary, with the consent of the Perry County Board of Commissioners. Such interim updates will take the most current census data and transpose it into charts and forms similar to those found in this printing of the Comprehensive Plan.

UPDATES TO THE PLAN

Periodically there may be a need to update the Comprehensive Plan. Because interconnections exist among the various plan components it is essential these updates are performed in harmony not only within their own rights but with other external influences. Some of the external factors can include the release of US Census data, the latest TIP update, the TCRPC’s Regional Growth Management Plan, and yes, changes to the MPC.

THREE PLAN DEVELOPMENT SECTIONS

Since the Tri-County Planning Commission’s (TCRPC) Regional Growth Management Plan was adopted in 2003, there has been a basic level of acceptance of the RGMP’s identified Plan Development Sections (PDS) here in Perry County. The recognition of these areas has primarily found its useful appeal with the PCPC staff in its approach to planning outreach efforts.

In Perry County three of these areas have been identified to facilitate future planning efforts. Within the text of this plan you will see how the plan has evolved to incorporate these sub-regional areas to aid the county and region with data collection, comparable statistics, and education.

The three PDS areas are depicted on MAP 1-1 and are described in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northeast Perry PDS</th>
<th>Southeast Perry PDS</th>
<th>Western Perry PDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo Township</td>
<td>Duncannon Borough</td>
<td>Blain Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwood Township</td>
<td>Marysville Borough</td>
<td>Bloomfield Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howe Township</td>
<td>Miller Township</td>
<td>Carroll Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniata Township</td>
<td>New Buffalo Borough</td>
<td>Jackson Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Borough</td>
<td>Penn Township</td>
<td>Landsburg Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool Township</td>
<td>Rye Township</td>
<td>Northeast Madison Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millerstown Borough</td>
<td>Watts Township</td>
<td>Saville Township</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport Borough</td>
<td>Wheatfield Township</td>
<td>Southwest Madison Township</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Township</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuscarora Township</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission Regional Growth Management Plan, July 24, 2003
THE NEW DIRECTION

In many cases planning becomes complacent, status quo, comfortable, and subsequently dull. For many the question will always be if it is not broke, why fix it? Regimented plan maintenance need not be viewed as an arduous task. Instead the practice should take on a more meaningful, involved, short and exacting process for all of the county’s municipalities. It is from this angle of hope we talk about a new direction in planning here in Perry County.

If your community is one of the nine municipalities in the county that do not have a comprehensive plan of perhaps the largest impediments for communities undertaking a comprehensive planning process is the underlying cost. In the same breath a common detractor is the amount of time expended preparing a comprehensive plan.

In an effort to significantly reduce the costs of developing a plan, municipalities are encouraged to adopt the County’s Basic Studies portion of the plan as their own for their planning process. Aside from a paragraph acknowledging the same within their plan’s text, the County’s Basic Studies Part will sufficiently detail information to cover the following requirements related to plan content for every municipality choosing to undertake its own planning process in as far as these elements are concerned. They include.

- §301(a)(1) and §606 - A statement of development objectives.
- §301(a)(4.1) - A statement of interrelationships between the various plan components.
- §301(a)(4.2) - A statement providing a discussion of both the short and long range plan implementation strategies.
- §301(a)6(i)-(ix) – A plan addressing state acts in conflict with the MPC.
- Identify land resources as they relate to important natural resources and the appropriate utilization of existing resources.
- §301(a)(7) – Identify a plan for historic preservation.
- §301(a)(7) – Identification of land use and developments with regional impact of significance.
- §301(a)(7) – A plan for agricultural land preservation and enhancement.
- §301.1 – The energy conservation plan element.
- §301.2 – Surveys by Planning Agency

This new arrangement will enable municipal officials to focus their attention upon issues facing their municipalities in a condensed and more focused planning process called strategic planning.

For municipal officials and citizens in all 30 Perry County municipalities wanting to develop or update their comprehensive plans, the first step in the new series of events is to advertise for the public hearing to consider passage of a resolution adopting the Basic Studies portion of the County Comprehensive Plan as their own. As with the old
Chapter 1

Introduction

comprehensive plan adoption proceedings, advertisement must comply with the latest requirements of the MPC and the “Sunshine Act.” The distribution is simplified as the document once posted on the TCRPC’s website can be downloaded for the municipality to share with its adjoining municipalities. The resolution should be structured to recognize the basic studies component of the county comprehensive plan as the basic component for the municipality’s plan. A sample copy of the municipal resolution can be found in Appendix B.

Once completed, comprehensive plans for each municipality will be half way completed. At that time, the only remaining items needing immediate attention from municipal officials will be the development of their various plans elements. To facilitate this, the County offers the following summary listing all items not included in the Basic Studies portion of the County Plan.

- §301(a)(2) - A plan for land use.
- §301(a)(2.1) - A plan to meet the housing needs.
- §301(a)(3) - A plan for the movement of people and goods.
- §301(a)(4) A plan for community facilities and utilities.

While there is nothing to say municipal officials cannot adopt the entire County Comprehensive Plan for their own municipal plan, this is not a recommendation of the Planning Commission or the Perry County Board of Commissioners. Instead, local efforts should be focused on identifying projects under the scope of the County Plan. If the municipal plan finds itself deviating from the guidance offered by the county plan it must offer up a suggestion to how the county plan could capture the needs of the municipal plan. By the same token the same concept holds true for county and region connections.

To summarize, this plan update challenges much of the social norm and approach to planning within the Commonwealth. The revised format if successful could save our municipalities significant expenses and time as mentioned. Those wanting to undertake strategic planning steps to develop their action plans will find themselves in a much better position to accomplish such tasks.

With the passage of a resolution to adopt the County’s Basic Studies plan part a municipality will find itself increasingly positioned to ensure general consistency with the County Comprehensive plan as required by the of the § 301.4.(a) of the MPC.