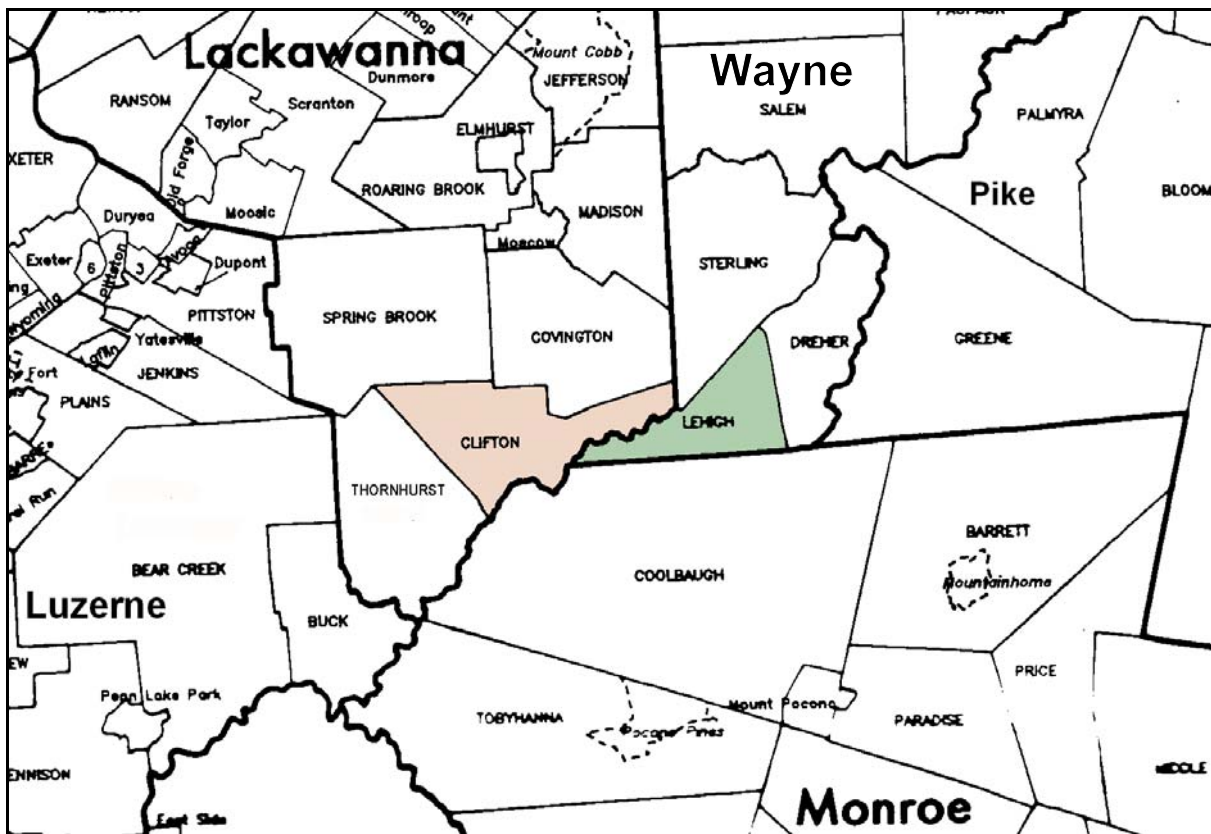


### INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW

#### Planning Needs

This *Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the local officials of Clifton Township in Lackawanna County and Lehigh Township in Wayne County in recognition of a number of principal critical community needs:

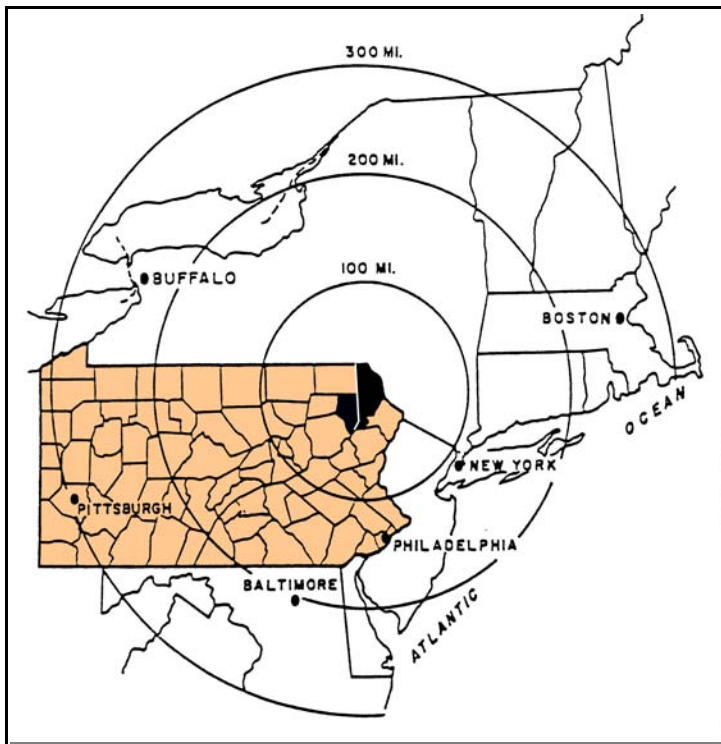
- to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place over the Townships' development history, particularly since the preparation of the 1982 Clifton Township Comprehensive Plan and the 1996 Dreher-Lehigh-Sterling Comprehensive Plan.
- to establish a framework for the conservation of the historic character, residential neighborhoods, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- to provide the foundation for updated land use management tools, principally the zoning ordinance and the subdivision and land development ordinance to ensure well designed development and to minimize sprawl;
- to organize for the most efficient administration of local government and the delivery of community facilities and services; and,
- to fully explore the possibilities and benefits of inter-municipal cooperation for providing facilities, services and administration.



Clifton-Lehigh Regional Location

## Clifton-Lehigh Planning Area

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns, but Clifton Township and Lehigh Township have much in common. Although located in different counties, Clifton Township and Lehigh Township lie geographically at the northern end of the Pocono Mountains. Concurrently, Clifton-Lehigh Planning Area residents can drive to the nearby City of Scranton in less than 30 minutes. Consequently, the Planning area has seen much of the vacation home development experienced by the Pocono along with population increases associated with residents employed in the greater Scranton metropolitan area, as well as at the Tobyhanna Army Depot some 10 miles to the south. Interstate Route 380 which connects I-80 and I-81 stimulated the development of the Planning Area, taking the place of Route 435 and Route 611 as the major north-south route.



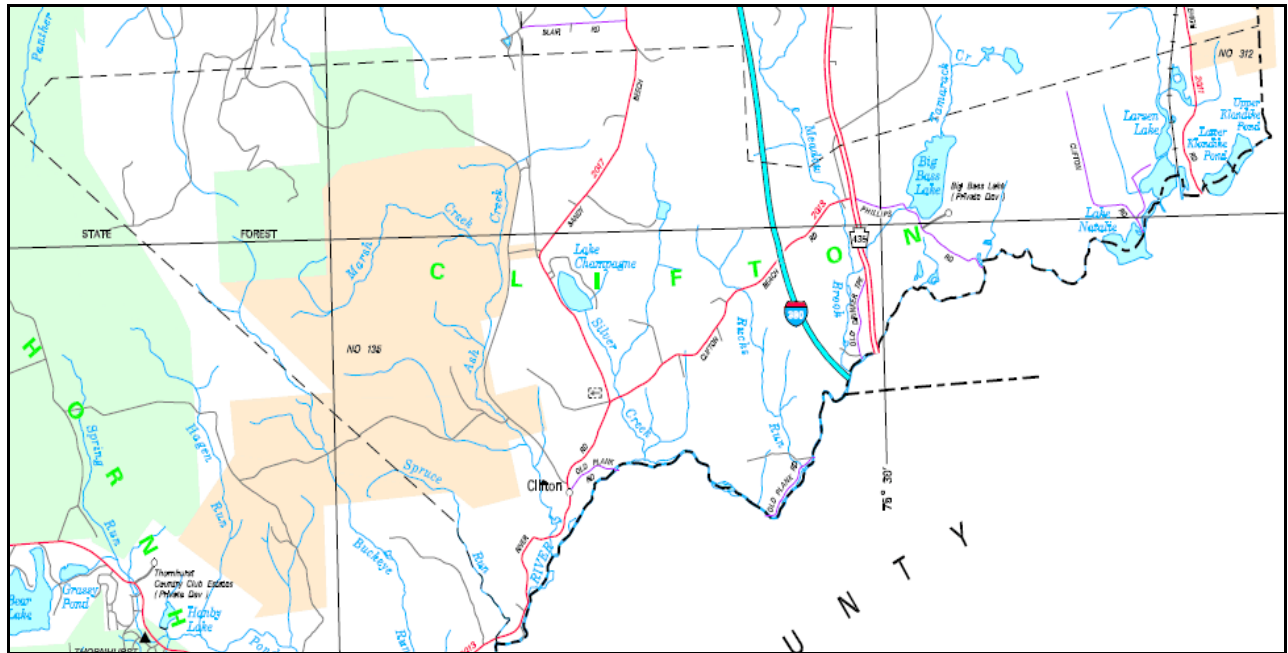
County Location Map

The two Townships and the region are blessed with thousands of acres of public land and thousands more acres of private forest land. This position has been key to shaping the area's character and will perpetually affect its future growth and development. In past years, Lehigh Township and Clifton Township to a somewhat lesser extent, were seen largely as a second home community or a destination for recreating visitors. The Big Bass Lakes Community, which spans both Townships, is the prime example. In recent years, more and more homes are being constructed or are being converted to permanent residences for retirees and families whose breadwinners commute out of the Townships to work. Historically, commercial development in Lehigh Township was centered in the Village of Gouldsboro, but businesses are now found along many parts of Route 507 with the I-380/Route 507/Route 435 interchange a hub of activity for both Townships. Most businesses in Clifton Township front on Route 435.

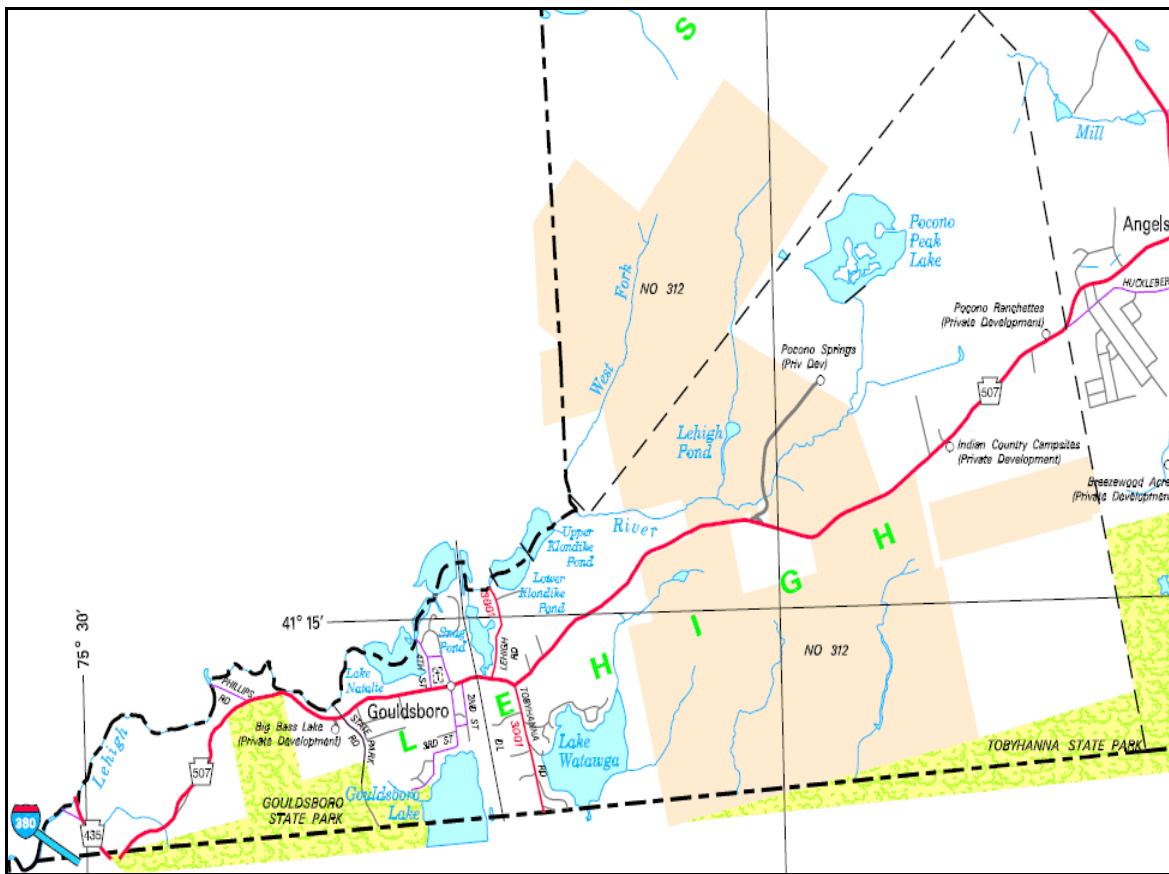
## Future Growth and Development

The recent and future growth and development of the Planning Area and surrounding municipalities is aptly described in Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities:

*Communities that once promised refuge from the ills of the city have been transformed into congested towns with clogged highways, burgeoning crime rates, and mile after mile of look-alike shopping malls, franchise architecture, and soulless housing tracts. It should come as no surprise, then, that Americans are once again on the move, this time in a migration that pushes growth even farther into the countryside. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing the suburbs and choosing to live in the small towns and open spaces surrounding America's magnificent national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas, and other public lands. Gateway communities – the towns and cities that border these public lands – are the destinations of choice for much of the country's migrating populace.*



Clifton Township (PennDOT Type 10 Map, 2008)



Lehigh Township (PennDOT Type 10 Map, 2008)

*With their scenic beauty and high quality of life, gateway communities have become a magnet for millions of Americans looking to escape the congestion, banality, and faster tempo of life in the suburbs and cities.<sup>1</sup>*

*Unlike many U.S. cities and suburbs, gateway communities offer what an increasing number of Americans value: a clean environment, safe streets, and a friendly, small-town atmosphere. But just as in the suburbs, unplanned growth and rapid development in gateway communities can create the same social and scenic ills from which many Americans are now fleeing. Worse, rising real estate values and higher property taxes brought on by an increased demand for housing can force lifelong residents from the communities they call home. Skyrocketing property values can quickly translate into housing shortages for longtime residents.<sup>2</sup>*

*If current demographic trends continue, gateway communities will experience astronomical growth rates for at least the next 20 years.<sup>3</sup>*

## **Planning Issues Overview**

Although not increasing in population at a rate as high as some other Pocono Mountain communities and area municipalities, Clifton and Lehigh Townships are expected to continue to develop at a pace which clearly demands careful planning for growth and development. Historically, open land and recreation were major factors stimulating vacation home development and tourism, and these two assets continue as important elements of the local economy. Given the amount of undeveloped land, the attractive lifestyle offered by the Townships, and the close proximity to Scranton and other developing areas of Lackawanna and Monroe Counties, continued growth in population and number of housing units and associated commercial development and traffic is expected.

This anticipated growth and change present the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. The Townships are also responsible to ensure that growth and development occur in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character. This combination of growth and development issues clearly demonstrates the critical need for this *Comprehensive Plan* and the consideration of new and innovative land use and community management techniques. In short, the citizens and public officials must resolve the land use conflicts which result from the necessary balance between new development and the need for facilities and services, environmental protection, community character and open land conservation.

## **Planning Process: Key Questions**

The Boards of Supervisors appointed a Planning Committee to conduct the planning process. Citizen participation included community meetings, a community survey, key person interviews and the Planning Commission meeting and Supervisors' hearings required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code prior to the adoption of the plan. Community Planning and Management, LLC, of Paupack, Pennsylvania, provided professional assistance.

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<sup>1</sup>Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

In short, the planning process involves finding the sometimes complex answers to four simple questions:

1. *Where are we?*
2. *Where do we want to be?*
3. *How do we get there?*
4. *How are we doing?*

### ***Where are we?*** **Background Studies**

The initial step in the process is the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community characteristics and concerns aimed at defining the existing condition of the community and identifying planning implications. This data is compiled in the following sections which are included in the *Background Studies* element of the *Plan*:

- *Community Character and Development History*
- *Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use*
- *Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns*
- *Demographics and Economic Base*
- *Community Facilities and Services*
- *Highways and Transportation*
- *Planning and Development in Lackawanna County, Wayne County, the Region and Contiguous Municipalities*

### ***Where do we want to be?*** **Goals & Objectives** **Plans**

The *Plan Goals and Objectives* are a vision of how residents and local officials expect the community to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the Planning Committee based on public input and the findings of the background studies. Based on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, the Planning Committee formulated the various plans to guide the future growth and development of the Planning Area including:

## Basic Planning Steps

*Where are we?* - inventory

*Where do we want to be?* - goals/plans

*How do we get there?* - implement

*How are we doing?* - evaluate



- *Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection Plan*
- *Community Facilities and Services Plan*
- *Transportation Plan*
- *Housing Plan*
- *Capital Improvements Program*

- *Official Map*
- *Regional Planning and Intermunicipal Cooperation*
- *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies*

***How do we get there?***  
**Implementation Strategies**

The specific means to effect the various plans are also included, and are detailed in the *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies* section and discussed at various points in the various specific plans. In addition, and to facilitate on-going use of the *Plan*, the actions and the responsible entities required to carry out the plan's expectations are summarized in a matrix titled *Implementation Strategies And Specific Actions*. Examples of *implementation strategies* include zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, historic structures preservation, and capital improvement budgeting.

While the ultimate responsibility for each Township lies with the Board of Supervisors, much of the work of implementation, assessment of the accomplishment of goals and objectives, and periodic comprehensive plan review can be accomplished by the Planning Commission and citizen volunteers who are appointed to special committees or task forces along with Township officials. These groups can provide evaluations and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for action.

***How are we doing?***  
**Need for Continued Planning**

It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. The *Plan* should be used by the community when important decisions are made and its goals and objectives and prioritized actions should be reviewed at least each year to assess the community's accomplishments or the need to shift priorities for action.

Simply stated, a comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the Townships and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the area's residents. It will require public support and positive action by each Township Board of Supervisors.

**State Mandated Plan Review**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (§301,c) requires local municipal comprehensive plans to be reviewed at least every ten years. The provision suggests a Commonwealth emphasis on planning and the need for local municipalities to incorporate the planning process into normal functions. However, the ten-year review window is certainly far too long. Planning, that is, assessing how decisions and community changes fit into the plan, should be practiced continually.