

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Planning Needs

This *Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the local officials of Blooming Grove Township in recognition of a number of principal critical community needs:

- to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place over the Township's development history, and particularly since the adoption of the 1986 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.

Blooming Grove Township

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns. Simply stated, the Township, and the other municipalities in Pike County, are grappling with and must manage the tremendous growth occurring in the County. Geographically, the Township lies at the center of Pike County within easy reach of metropolitan areas of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. Concurrently, the Township and County 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 as Pike County continues as the fastest growing county in the Commonwealth. In past years, Blooming Grove Township was seen largely as a second home community or a destination for recreating visitors. However, in recent years more and more homes are being constructed or are being converted to permanent residences for families whose breadwinners commute out of the Township to work; many for *equity exiles* who sell expensive metropolitan area homes and purchase more affordable homes in Pike County. (See the *Equity Exiles Figure* on Page 3.

The recent and future growth and development of Blooming Grove Township and Pike County 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.

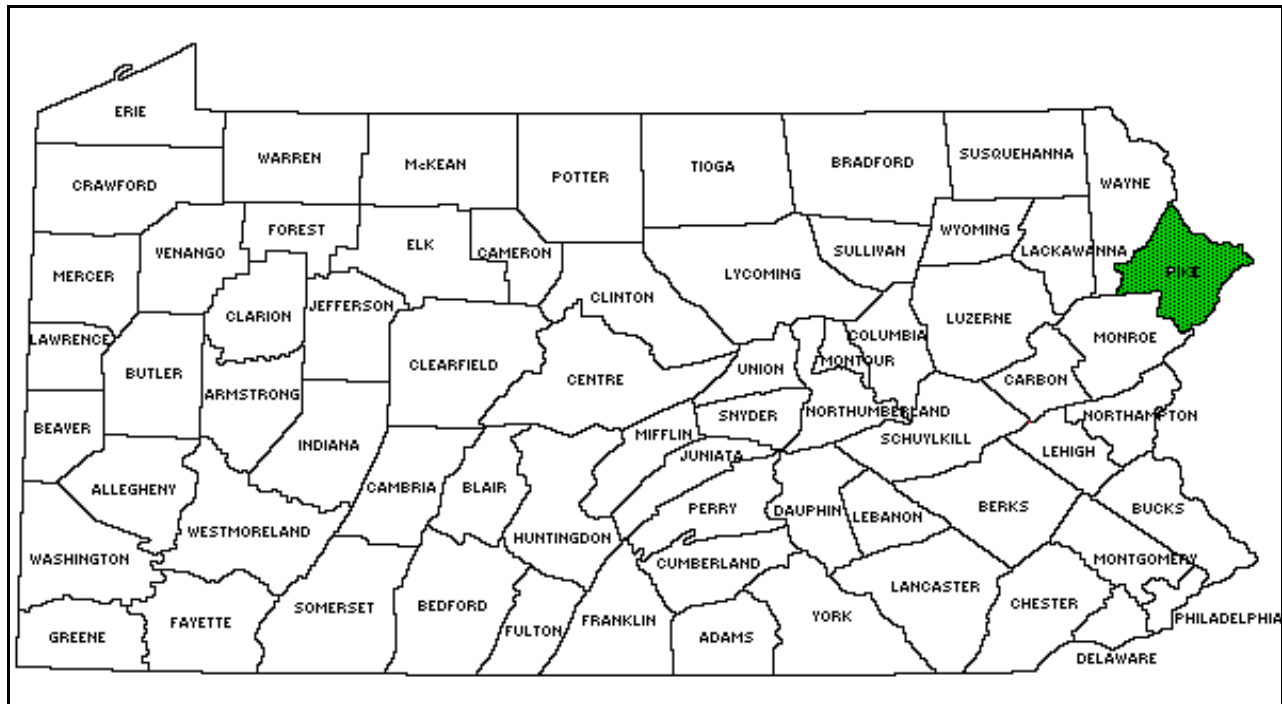
It should come as no surprise, then, that Americans are once again on the move, this time in a migration that pushes growth even farther into the countryside. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing the suburbs and choosing to live in the small towns and open spaces surrounding America's magnificent 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. 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.¹

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.²

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

²Ibid. p. 2.



Pike County in Pennsylvania

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

Planning Issues Overview

Most of Blooming Grove Township remains undeveloped woodland including some 13,550 acres of State Forest Land and 7,300 acres of State Game Land, about forty-three percent of the total Township area of 48,200 acres. In addition, thousands of acres of land owned by hunting and fishing clubs, primarily the Blooming Grove Hunting and Fishing Club, add to the open space in the Township and remain relatively secure from development.

Many residences are scattered throughout the Township with a number of planned developments, the two largest being Hemlock Farms in the southeastern section of the Township and Tanglwood North in the northwestern section. The greatest concentration of commercial development is located along Route 739 just north and south of I-84 with a number of other businesses located throughout the Township. The Pike County Jail and a number of other County facilities are located in the Township off of Route 739 north of I-

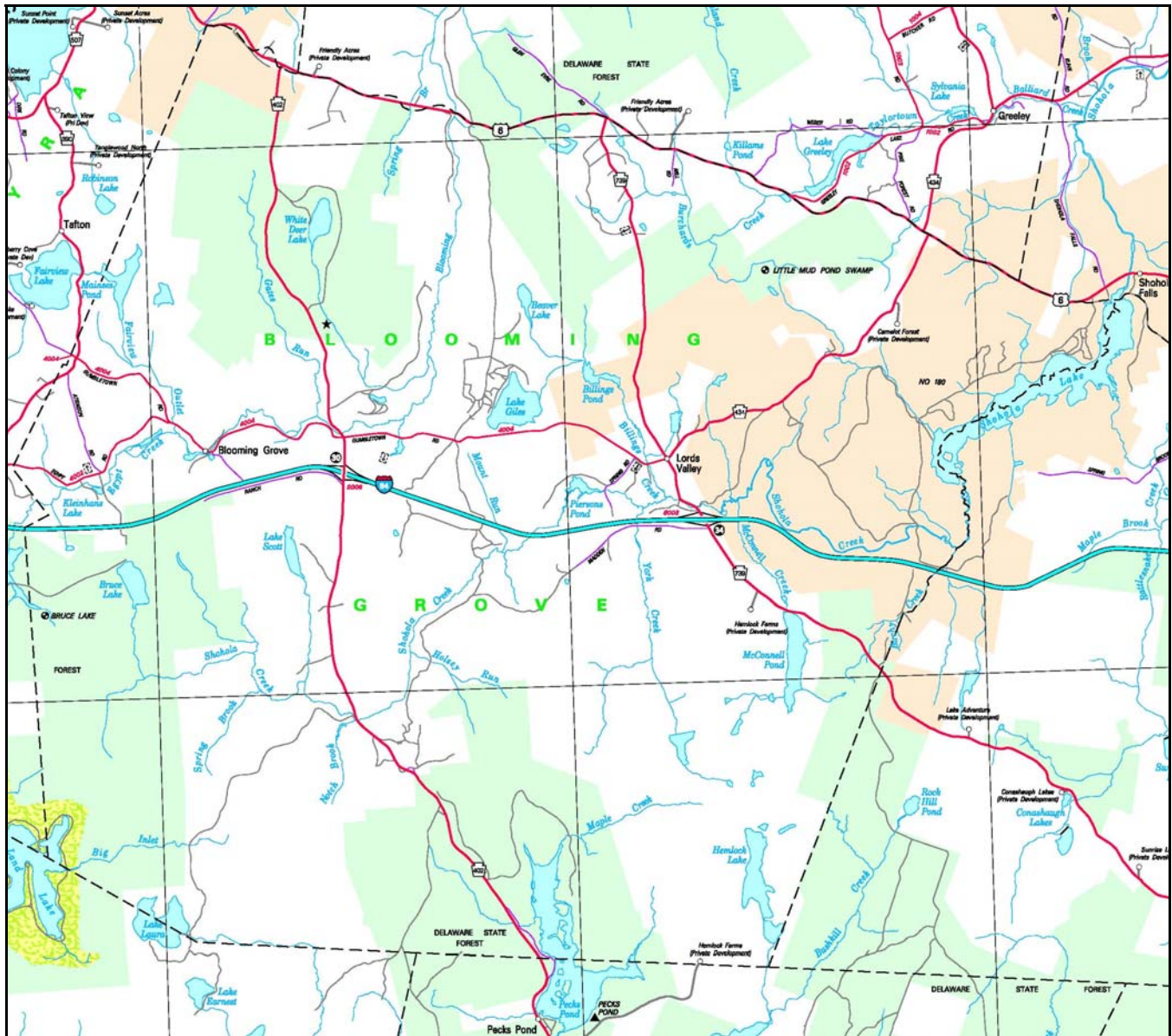


Blooming Grove Township in Pike County

84. Farming has essentially vanished from the Township, but timbering remains important.

Given the amount of undeveloped land in the Township and adjoining townships, the attractive lifestyle associated with the County’s rural-recreational character, and the close proximity to the metropolitan areas, continued growth in population

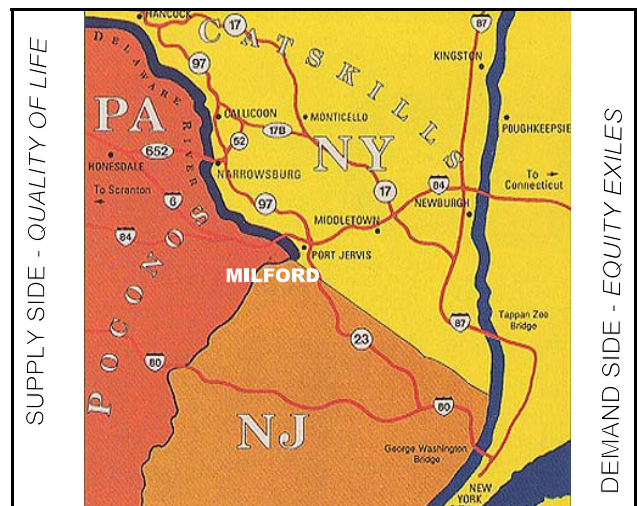
³Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 3.



Blooming Grove Township, PennDOT Type 10 Map, 2007

and housing units and associated commercial development and traffic is expected for the Township.

This anticipated change presents to the Township the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. Concurrently, the Township is responsible to ensure that the growth and development occurs in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character. 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



Equity Exiles

character and open land conservation. 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.

Planning Process: Key Questions

The Board of Supervisors appointed a Planning Committee to conduct the planning process. Citizen participation included community meetings, key person interviews and the Planning Commission meeting and Supervisors' hearing 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.

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*
- *Financial Analysis*
- *Community Facilities and Services*
- *Highways and Transportation*

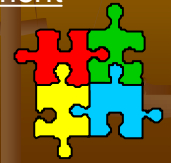
Basic Planning Steps

Where are we? - inventory

Where do we want to be? - goals/plans

How do we get there? - implement

How are we doing? - evaluate



- *Planning and Development in Pike 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 Township including:

- *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 Township 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 the 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 change suggests a greater 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.