

FINDINGS AND PLANNING ISSUES

This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* summarizes the major findings and planning issues.

Community Character and Development History

- ☞ Blooming Grove Township can best be characterized as a rural-recreational community which serves largely as a bedroom community to the larger region.
- ☞ Timbering, farming and milling served as the base for the initial settlement and early economic development of the Township and forest land remains the predominate feature of the landscape.
- ☞ Given the attractive natural environment and quality lifestyle of the Township and its regional location, continued population growth is expected.
- ☞ The Township is situated at a distance that enables employed residents to commute to nearby areas in Pennsylvania and the larger Metropolitan New Jersey and New York area, and their access to higher paying jobs has considerable effect on the local economy, land values and the cost of living for residents who rely on local employment.
- ☞ Residential development is not anticipated at the rate experienced by other municipalities in Pike County because much of the Township is state land and private hunting club land.
- ☞ Commercial development is largely retail/service in nature along with home occupations.
- ☞ The many historic resources in the Township are key components of the rural-recreation landscape and the character of the community.
- ☞ The history and historic resources of the Township have been well documented by the Township Historian and the Pike County Historical Society.
- ☞ Blooming Grove Township's economy and land use pattern is inextricably linked to nearby urban areas and environs, and as these areas expand there will be more pressure for development in the Township.

- ☞ Without careful planning and land use control, this growth will certainly change the rural landscape of the Township by fragmenting forest lands and increasing demand for community facilities and services.
- ☞ Blooming Grove Township's future land use, environmental quality and community character will evolve in response to the actions of community leaders and active citizens combined with the forces of the local and regional economy, and the demand for land and community facilities and services.
- ☞ Township officials must weigh the positive economic effects of commercial development against the negative effects on the quality of life in the community, for example, tax revenue increases versus loss of rural character.
- ☞ Taking a regional approach to economic development and using natural resources will provide the greatest opportunity for sustaining the Township's rural character and regional economy.

Existing Land Use

- ☞ The challenge in developing a land use plan for Blooming Grove Township is to provide for the essential economic growth and development of the Township while concurrently conserving its scenic and natural environment and natural resources.
- ☞ The Township area totals 75.3 square miles or 48,200 acres.
- ☞ Forest land remains the primary land use type in the Township.
- ☞ State Game Lands, State Forest Land and Promised Land State Park account for some 21,700 acres in the Township, or 44 percent of the total area.
- ☞ The Blooming Grove Hunting and Fishing Club owns 12,960 acres in the Township and this land is relatively secure from development.

- ☞ While farming was critical to the early settlers, commercial agriculture in Blooming Grove Township is now limited to one beef cattle operation and one commercial greenhouse.
- ☞ Dwellings in the Township are concentrated in a number of platted private residential subdivisions and on individual lots located along public roads.
- ☞ With its 3,800 lots, Hemlock Farms is one of the earliest (and the largest) planned residential subdivisions in the Pike County. (3,500 of the lots are in Blooming Grove Township.)
- ☞ Taken as a whole, commercial establishments in Blooming Grove Township represent only a very small proportion of the total land area and is most concentrated along Route 739.
- ☞ The 2000 Census reported 122 Township residents as self employed, 52 as working at home and nine unpaid family workers.
- ☞ When the public forest land is excluded, relatively little land is in public ownership in the Township.
- ☞ The Township must be prepared to manage whatever development is proposed by adopting, administering and updating the necessary land use management regulations.
- ☞ gravel, resulting in stoniness in many areas and the occurrence of fragipan that inhibits the downward movement of water.
- ☞ The Township contains many poor to marginal soils for on-lot sewage disposal, but through on-site investigations soils may prove suitable for on-lot sewage disposal, and, thus, be available for development.
- ☞ Although, development on slopes in excess of 25 percent is technically feasible, development costs increase dramatically as the slope increases, and the environmental concerns also escalate.
- ☞ Most of the Township falls below the steep slope threshold, and steep slopes in the Township are not significant in terms of limiting overall development.
- ☞ Residents rely entirely on groundwater for domestic supply.
- ☞ Given the minimal level of development in the Township, along with the densities expected in the future, the quantity of groundwater available should be adequate to sustain development and meet the needs of the foreseeable future. However, this is not to suggest that residents and local officials should ignore the important issues of localized groundwater supplies and groundwater conservation.

Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns

- ☞ The large expanses of private forest land and open space, combined with thousands of acres of State Forest Land and State Game Land, and the clean environment, create the rural recreational character of the Township and its quality lifestyle.
- ☞ Although the open space and forest land is extensive, the environmental quality of the Township's natural areas and vitality of its recreational appeal are very fragile.
- ☞ Bedrock geology and glacial geology are key factors affecting the natural environment and development pattern of the Township by providing the base for the formation of soils.
- ☞ Most of the parent material of the soils in the Township are glacial till and outwash sand and
- ☞ Groundwater quality is generally good, but bacterial contamination can occur from malfunctioning on-lot sewage systems or poor livestock husbandry, hydrocarbons can eventually reach groundwater from oil spills or leaking storage tanks, and nitrates and chloride can infiltrate as run-off from roads and parking lots, sewage systems, and farm fields.
- ☞ Proper siting, design, installation and maintenance of on-site disposal systems and water supply wells, and groundwater quality, must continue to be a municipal concern and proper land use controls must be applied to protect groundwater recharge areas.
- ☞ A Township on-site sewage system management program is one way to ensure proper functioning and long term viability of such systems.

- ☞ Wetlands in the Township are extensive and temper the overall development of the Township, and the development which does occur must provide for the conservation of wetlands.
- ☞ Blooming Grove Township lies in the Delaware River Watershed and the major watersheds include Blooming Grove Creek, Bushkill Creek, Shohola Creek and Wallenpaupack Creek.
- ☞ Development must be carefully managed to protect the good surface water quality in the Township.
- ☞ Blessed with many miles of streams, Blooming Grove Township has, when compared with other municipalities, relatively few areas where flooding is a significant threat to large numbers of improved properties.
- ☞ The primary minerals of commercial importance extant in the Township are sand stone, which is mined as quarry stone and dimensional stone, shale, and sand and gravel, and several small quarries are still active in the Township.
- ☞ The *Pike County Natural Areas Inventory* listed Beaver Lake and Smith's Swamp of critical importance for protection, along with many other natural communities, plants and animals associated with lakes and swamps, with Blooming Grove Township having the greatest proportion of such natural areas in the County.
- ☞ There are many local land use management tools available to protect natural areas and conserve resources such as conservation subdivision design, transferable development rights, and conservation easements.
- ☞ Provided the status of hunting club lands and state land does not change, few new large scale residential developments can be expected and the potential for long term dramatic population increases are more limited than in many other municipalities in the County.
- ☞ Population density will remain relatively low given the extent of Commonwealth and hunting club land ownership.
- ☞ The age of a community's population is important in terms of the types of community facilities and services which must be provided.
- ☞ Associated with the increasing number of residents, the Township population, as a whole, became younger between 1990 and 2000.
- ☞ In addition to the demand for more dwelling units and building lots, the increase in the number of younger families and children in the population not only results in more demand on the school system but for such community facilities as recreation parks and playgrounds.
- ☞ The number of second homes in the Township decreased from 2,230 in 1990 to 1,680 in 2000, which is evidence of an increasing permanent population.
- ☞ At 47.2 minutes, the average commute time for Township residents was the fourth highest in the County and almost double the State average, documenting the link of employment to Pike County and the region, as well as nearby metropolitan areas.
- ☞ The 2000 Census reported that the greatest proportion of employed persons from the Township worked in the *education, health and social services; retail; arts & entertainment; and construction* sectors.
- ☞ As a whole, in 1999 Township residents incomes were on par with Pike County and the Commonwealth.
- ☞ The poverty rate in the Township rose from 6.5% in 1989 to 8.6% in 2000, perhaps a result of a somewhat higher number of senior citizens in the Township.

Demographics and Economic Base

- ☞ Blooming Grove Township experienced slow and steady growth from 1950 through 1970, however, since 1970, the population growth rate has been tremendous.
- ☞ The Township population increased from 358 persons in 1950 to 3,621 persons in 2000, and was estimated at 4,504 in 2006, and is projected to reach 5,425 by 2010.

Housing

- ☞ The number of housing units in Blooming Grove Township increased from 391 units in 1970, to 2,037 in 1980, to 3,104 in 1990, and 3,273 in 2000, with almost 600 new home permits issued since 2000.
- ☞ About 96% of dwellings in the Township are single-family detached with most of the balance single-family mobile homes.
- ☞ Most dwellings in the Township are relatively new and in good condition with more than 90% constructed since 1960.
- ☞ Median value of owner-occupied homes in Blooming Grove Township, at \$137,300, was substantially higher in 2000 than that of the County and most of its other municipalities, and the Commonwealth.
- ☞ In the Township, 26% of home owning households and 38% renting households have housing costs which exceed the *thirty percent rule* for household income and housing expense as an indicator of housing affordability.

Financial Analysis

- ☞ Based on recent fund balances, non-escalating expenditures, and lack of long term indebtedness, Blooming Grove Township is in particularly good financial condition.
- ☞ Blooming Grove Township collects four types of taxes: real estate and real estate transfer; and the revenue generating capacity of the Township should be adequate to fund community facilities and services requirements at least over the next ten to fifteen years.
- ☞ The real estate transfer tax accounts for the most significant proportion of general fund revenues, and has enabled the Township to generate adequate revenues while keeping real estate tax rates low and stable.
- ☞ Absent court authorization, state law allows a maximum real estate tax rate of fourteen mills for townships of the second class which is well above the current Township rate.

- ☞ Cash surpluses can easily be depleted by any large scale capital projects, however, with the exception of road improvements, the Township anticipates no such immediate large expenditures.
- ☞ The Township's sound financial condition provides the opportunity to sensibly plan for funding any longer term capital expenditures such as recreation facilities or a municipal building.
- ☞ A formal capital improvements budget would be a valuable tool for matching anticipated revenues with projected spending for large scale equipment, road improvements or other expenditures.

Community Facilities and Services

- ☞ Community facilities and services in Blooming Grove Township are provided by the Township, Pike County, the Wallenpaupack Area School District, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and quasi-public organizations.
- ☞ As the Township and regional population continues to increase, the demand for facilities and services will also increase -- more classroom space, police protection, social services, recreation facilities, etc., will be needed.
- ☞ In addition to the historic role of providing road maintenance, townships in Pennsylvania are becoming responsible for a wider range of facilities and services including land use controls, environmental protection, police protection, water, sewer and storm water facilities, parks and recreation, and recycling.
- ☞ Blooming Grove Township is served by the Wallenpaupack Area School District. The Township has no direct involvement in school planning which is governed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- ☞ The Township has identified office and storage space as capital needs in the next 5 years.
- ☞ Current Township staffing appears adequate to meet current and short to mid-term administrative needs, but the need for additional staff must be monitored.
- ☞ Given the Township's limited population and

- proximity to nearby facilities, no recreation facilities are provided by the Township, and none are planned in the next 5 years, but the need for recreation facilities will be periodically evaluated.
- ☞ Police protection in the Township is provided by the Pennsylvania State Police and no local police are planned.
 - ☞ Fire protection is provided by three volunteer companies and service appears to be adequate and continued financial support by the Township is critical to maintaining adequate service. However, an adequate number of volunteers is always a concern for future service in the Township.
 - ☞ Solid waste collection and disposal is provided by private contractors and appears to be adequate.
 - ☞ Township residents use the county-operated recycling facilities in neighboring townships, but a recycling drop-off center should be considered at the County complex in the Township.
 - ☞ Pike County owns 270 acres along Route 739 where the jail, district court and other facilities are located, and this has added to the need for improvement to Route 739.
 - ☞ The Township is currently served by the Hawley Post Office located in Wayne County and efforts to have an independent full-service post office in the Township have not been successful, but the Township will support continuing efforts.
 - ☞ Provision of adequate infrastructure for new development can be assured by diligent enforcement of the subdivision and land development ordinance.
 - ☞ Immediate community needs and resident expectations must be balanced with local officials' long term view of the future of the community and the costs of action or non-action in providing or postponing facilities and services.
- Highways and Transportation**
- ☞ Interstate Route 84 played a key role in the recent growth and development of the Township and region and will continue to serve as the major transportation routes.
 - ☞ Route 6, Route 402, Route 739 and Route 434, are classified as arterial highways, and provide connection between commercial and population centers in the region.
 - ☞ Collector roads carry traffic from local streets to arterials and in the Township include Blooming Grove Road and Egypt Road.
 - ☞ Traffic volume is not an issue in the Township in terms of congestion and level-of-service. Level-of-service, a measure of a traffic flow, is satisfactory for current volumes of traffic and is expected to remain satisfactory for many years over.
 - ☞ The Township owns and maintains 6.55 miles of roads.
 - ☞ Township maintained roads are adequate for the traffic volumes carried if reasonable speeds are observed.
 - ☞ The primary concern for Township roads is drainage and routine paving/maintenance which will not place a serious strain on the Township budget.
 - ☞ Diligent re-paving, routine maintenance, drainage improvements and shoulder widening are the major concerns for state roads.
 - ☞ The Township has identified a number of other specific improvements for Township and state roads.
 - ☞ The Township owns only one bridge, on Madden Road crossing York Creek, which has no weight restriction.
 - ☞ The Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance includes standards to ensure adequate roads and other facilities for new development.
 - ☞ *Bicycle PA Route Y1* runs along Route 6 in the Township and any transportation planning should consider the establishment of additional bicycle routes.

Planning and Development in Pike County, Contiguous Municipalities and the Region

- ☞ The *Pike County Comprehensive Plan Update* was adopted in 2006 with the intent to *set Countywide planning goals and priorities, develop partnerships, and enhance the quality of life for the residents of the County, and as a guideline for municipal plans and regulations.*
- ☞ The *County Plan* notes that *each municipality retains the right to prepare multi-municipal or individual municipal plans; to control zoning within its boundaries, whether through individual zoning ordinances or a joint zoning ordinance; and to regulate subdivision and land development, and retain their autonomy.*
- ☞ This *Township Comprehensive Plan* is intended to address the recommendations of the 2006 report titled *A Review of Blooming Grove Township's Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulations with Recommendations to Enhance Natural Resource Conservation and Open Land Preservation.*
- ☞ As required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Township planning is generally consistent with county planning.
- ☞ The contiguous zoning districts of adjoining municipalities are largely consistent with those of Blooming Grove Township.
- ☞ No significant inconsistencies are anticipated between the plans of adjoining municipalities and this *Plan*.
- ☞ The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance serves as a planning and development information source and funnel for grants and special projects for Blooming Grove Township and Pike County, but has no municipally authorized regional planning power.