

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Need for Goals and Objectives

Any community conservation and land use management effort by its very nature must include goals. Without goals there would be little direction to the future of the community. In the case of planning for Blooming Grove Township, located in the heart of the fastest growing County in Pennsylvania, goals will establish the framework for change and growth management, and the foundation for maintaining key community characteristics. Goals pronounce the community's expectations and provide a vision of how the community plans to evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. Making decisions based on planning goals and attaining specific objectives improves the physical condition of the community and sustains and enhances the overall quality of life.

Community Balance

Rural communities and residents of rural communities are characteristically unique from their more urban counterparts, and have the opportunity to directly mold their communities. *The rural community is seen as the conservator of its own resources, habitat, and culture. Local citizens are directly involved in the control of community assets as they plan for the retention, enrichment, and equitable use of those assets for present and future generations.*

1. *Rural people place a high value on self-reliance and self determination. They have experience with techniques for cultural and economic survival. They can make decisions regarding their long-term interests, design and carry out programs, evaluate the results of their work, and make necessary adjustments.*

2. *Rural people value cooperation as a guide to problem solving. This attitude has evolved from generations of experience in rural living, where cooperation is a major tool of survival and community maintenance.*

3. *Long-term sustainability of a rural environment is achieved when citizens guide economic development according to the "physical carrying capacities" of the ecosystem. Land ownership is valued not just for its*

market value but also for sustaining a way of life. Consideration of the ecosystem's physical carrying capacity assumes that, although efficiency of use can vary, physical and natural resources are finite and can bear only so much use.

4. *Increasing the self-reliance of citizens in rural communities can be the basis for sustainability. A self-reliant community possesses the knowledge, skills, resources, and vision to identify changing conditions, locate appropriate technical assistance, and initiate actions in a manner that conserves the rural environment and distributes benefits in an equitable manner.*

Along with the community's goals, specific objectives must be identified; actions and methods for achieving the goals. Some objectives will be the direct responsibility of local elected and appointed officials. Others will require the cooperation and participation of other levels of government and the private sector.¹



¹P. Lusk, J. A. Rivera, F. O. Sargent, M. Varela, (1991) *Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities*, Island press, Washington, D. C., p. 5

Shared Vision

Every successful business, organization, or individual has a plan for the future. Communities are no different. If nothing else, a community needs to agree on a shared vision of what it wants to become. This vision should address the full range of local concerns: schools, housing, economic development, neighborhoods, parks and open space. Creating a shared vision is important because it provides a blueprint for the future of the community. People may differ on how to achieve the community's vision, but without a blueprint nothing will happen.

Source: Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 48.

The goals of all residents of the community will not be the same. Some residents will demand community conservation and environmental protection while other residents will favor increased economic development. Some residents will demand more community facilities and services, while others prefer lower taxes. Some residents will strive for land use diversity while others would prefer to live in a residential community. One function of the community conservation and land use management process is to strike a balance between these varied expectations and develop a shared vision to meet the overall goals of the community.

County Planning and Area Wide Planning

A key factor in formulating a set of local goals and objectives is the planning conducted at the county level. Typically, a county-wide comprehensive plan establishes a broad framework for the future growth and development of the county. As mandated by Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), the Pike County Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners adopted the first county-wide comprehensive plan in 1993, and adopted an updated Plan in 2006. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code §301.4, states *municipal comprehensive plans which are adopted shall be generally consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan*. This *Blooming Grove Township Comprehensive Plan* should strive to maintain consistency with the recommendations of the *Pike County Comprehensive Plan* to the extent that the *County Plan* is not untenable in terms of the key provisions of the *Blooming Grove Plan*.

Another test of consistency for this plan will be addressed in terms of the plans of neighboring municipalities along with the plans of other public entities and community organizations providing community facilities and services and dealing with growth and development issues. The Wallenpaupack Area School District is a good example of such an entity.

A Guide and Policy Statement

This *Blooming Grove Township Comprehensive Plan* is intended to serve as a means of addressing the future growth and development of the Township by identifying key issues and establishing goals and objectives. The community planning process is also aimed at fostering and maintaining cooperation between Pike County and the Township as envisioned by §306 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which states, *both the county and the municipality shall each give the plan of the other consideration in order that the objectives of each plan can be protected to the greatest extent possible*.

The following goals and objectives were developed by local officials based on the planning process. The goals and objectives are intended to serve the Township as a guide and policy statement for land use management and community facilities and services decision making. Any significant action taken by a local municipality, be it the adoption of a zoning ordinance or the improvement of a municipal building, should be evaluated in terms of the community's goals and objectives. In addition, community planning and land conservation and development management is an on-going process, and the municipalities must periodically evaluate the goals and objectives to ensure that they adequately reflect current community conditions and the expectations of residents and officials.

General Community Development Objectives

This statement of the General Community Development Objectives is intended to set the overall tone for the planning process. More detailed goals and specific objectives for particular aspects of the community follow in a later section.

- **Internal Coordination** - To strive for coordination between policies, plans, and programs in the community through cooperation among governing officials, appointed boards, community interest groups, and residents.

- **Public Information** - Achieve greater awareness, understanding and participation of residents in carrying out the recommendations in the *Comprehensive Plan* via an active public information process using such methods as a web site, newsletter, and public meetings.
- **Use of Land** - To achieve the best use of the land within the Township while allowing for reasonable residential and commercial development. The focus will be on the preservation of the environment and conservation of open space. This will ensure that the varying uses of land will complement one another and thus improve the economic, social, and aesthetic character of the Township.
- **Range of Land Uses** - To allow a range of residential and commercial uses at appropriate locations and establish performance standards through zoning to ensure that such uses do not unduly affect adjoining properties or the public health, safety and general welfare and are consistent with the historic and gateway character of the communities.
- **Population Density** - To establish realistic population densities in order to ensure health standards, privacy and open space and in order to allow for the provision of community facilities and services in the most convenient and efficient manner.
- **Streets and Roads** - To maintain and improve the street and road system for better internal circulation and to protect residential neighborhoods from through traffic.
- **Facilities and Services** - To provide the necessary community facilities and services to meet the needs of increased development and the increasing and changing population.
- **Environmental Protection** - To guide the location of future development and establish performance standards to minimize *externalities* (negative impacts) on the natural and community environment.
- **Housing** - To provide the opportunity for a wide-range and variety of housing types at reasonable densities to meet the needs of all residents; newly-formed households, growing families and senior citizens.
- **Economic Development** - To provide, within the context of overall community conservation, the opportunity for local business and strengthen the area economy by encouraging well-planned commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational growth which will provide for local employment, shopping facilities, and recreational opportunities which in turn will strengthen the local tax base.
- **Monitoring** - To update and revise planning goals and objectives, and the operational tools necessary for implementation, in light of new data and changing conditions, and to meet a changing population, both current and new residents, in concert with maintaining small town character and quality environment.
- **Plan Review/Update** - Initiate interim reviews of planning goals and objectives and the *Comprehensive Plan* and a full review/update no later than eight years from approval of the current plan.

Note About Open Space

The preservation of open space is a common thread of this *Comprehensive Plan*. Open space is land which has not been developed for a constructive or productive use and is intended for environmental and natural resource protection, scenic, or recreational purposes. Open space may include, for example, woodland, wetlands, watercourses, reverting farmland, and floodplain. In the case of a development project, open space may include passive recreation areas such as ballfields, lawns and buffer areas. Agricultural land is certainly open land, but not truly open space because it is in fact highly developed for crop and livestock production.

GOAL 1

Protect and enhance the Township's quality lifestyle by maintaining the rural-recreational landscape and maintain open land; and, recognize forest land and other open land as important elements of the local economy, character, and scenic setting.

The Township's physical environment, regional location and past development practices have shaped and maintained its character as a recreational-residential community. Tourism and recreation continue to be important elements of the Township's character. More and more families are making the Township their full-time home, largely attracted by the quality lifestyle.

Open land was the cornerstone of the Township when its earliest settlers arrived, and has played a key role in the growth and development of the Township. Without this open land, the timber resources it held and the agricultural capability it offered, the character of the Township would be dramatically different. Maintaining open land and the quality lifestyle associated with it is key to the future of the Township.

Open land is the predominate feature of the landscape, and most of the Township remains forested, the land held in public ownership or in large blocks of private land. One concentrated area of retail/service commercial development fronts Route 739 south of I-84, with no real industrial development in the Township. A number of planned residential subdivisions are found in the Township, with Hemlock Farms and Tanglwood North the two largest. Residential dwellings and small businesses and home occupations are scattered throughout the Township.

Although significant residential and commercial development has occurred, thousands of acres of open land remain. While much of this is publically owned or is held in what appears to be secure private recreation ownership, hundreds of acres are available for residential development. In addition, the status of any privately owned land can change due to economic conditions. Future development must be managed with an overriding concern to sustain the Township's community character while meeting the needs and expectations of residents for employment, shopping and services with controlled commercial development.

Objectives:

- **Land Conservation** - Conserve open land, including those areas containing unique and

sensitive natural features such as woodlands, steep slopes, streams, flood plains and wetlands, by setting them aside from development.

- **Promote Conservation** - Promote the conservation of open space within the Township and the County and actively promote the long term preservation and maintenance of valuable natural resource areas through public acquisition, private dedication of easements, and other cooperative efforts.
- **Open Space Policies** - Implement adopted municipal policies consistent with the *County Open Space and Greenways and Recreation Plan* to conserve a variety of irreplaceable and environmentally sensitive resource lands, including provisions for reasonable incentives to the connected open space in the Township for the benefit of present and future residents.
- **Multiple Development Options** - Provide multiple development options for landowners in order to minimize impacts on environmental resources (sensitive lands such as stream corridors, wetlands, flood plain, and steep slopes) and disturbance of natural or cultural features (such as mature woodlands, hedgerows and tree lines, critical wildlife habitats, historic buildings, and fieldstone walls).
- **Innovative Conservation Methods** - Adopt more progressive means of open land preservation including purchase of conservation easements and transferable development rights, especially in cooperation with conservancy and land trust organizations.
- **Minimize Views of Development** - Conserve scenic views and elements of the Township's rural character, and minimize perceived density by minimizing views of new development from existing roads.
- **Conservation Design** - Promote the use of *conservation subdivision design* to cluster residential development away from important natural, historic, scenic and cultural features, and

- preserve the resulting open space.
- **Transferrable Development Rights** - Provide for the use of transferrable development rights to direct development to locations with adequate infrastructure and enable conservation-minded landowners to preserve their properties.
 - **Act 319** - Encourage the use of *Act 319 Clean and Green* and other tax incentive programs as a means of forestalling development.
 - **Ridge Lines** - Consider measures that will preserve the characteristics of important ridge lines by limiting the amount and type of clearing associated with development.
 - **Zoning** - Develop zoning performance standards to control residential density and minimize conflicts between existing and future development, and update periodically to address changing conditions.
 - **Commercial Uses** - Ensure consistency of commercial uses with existing community character by applying performance standards to address noise, lighting, outdoor storage, and other potential effects as well as ensuring appropriate landscaping and signs.
 - **Commercial Cluster** - Encourage commercial cluster development to avoid commercial strip development.
 - **Home Occupations / Small Businesses** - Encourage home occupations and small businesses as a means of allowing the owners of large parcels to realize economic gain thereby forestalling the development of open land.
 - **Economic Development** Cooperate with local business development organizations to promote commercial development which builds on community assets and which will not compromise the quality of life.
 - **Water and Sewer** - Carefully consider the development of any central water supply and central sewage collection and treatment facilities in terms of stimulating unwanted development in areas with important historical, cultural, natural, and scenic features.
 - **Nuisances** - Control common law nuisances and threats to public health and safety due to, among others, noise, lack of property maintenance, poor building practices, junk accumulation, and odors.

GOAL 2

Protect the existing quality natural environment and conserve natural resources and use the resources in a way to sustain the Township's economy.

Without careful planning and management, the use of the natural resources and sensitive environmental areas in Blooming Grove Township can lead to the decline of the attractive rural character of the area and the quality lifestyle it affords, with eventual direct threats to the environment and public health and safety. Of special concern are soil and surface and ground water resources. Continued conservation of soil is vital because keeping the soil on the land prevents stream siltation. All residents of the Township rely on ground water wells for potable water. If the quality of the Township's natural resources and environment are diminished, the local recreation-based economy will suffer.

The Township also recognizes that the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) mandates that Township planning and land use ordinances must be consistent with and cannot exceed the requirements of the *Clean Streams Law*, the *Agricultural Area Security*

Law, the *Right to Farm Law*, the *Nutrient Management Act*, and state mining laws. The MPC also requires that forestry activities must be allowed as a principal permitted use in all zoning districts, prohibits zoning from unduly restricting agricultural (and forestry) activities, and requires zoning ordinances to provide for the reasonable development of minerals.

Objectives:

- **Resource Identification** - Identify sensitive natural areas such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, steep slopes, poor soils and flood plains, and adopt regulations to protect such areas by requiring resource sensitive development.
- **Growth Management** - Implement creative growth management techniques and design guidelines which foster suitable new and redevelopment activities.

- **Critical Resource Areas** - Promote the conservation of open space within the Township and the County and support the long-term preservation and maintenance of valuable natural resource areas through public negotiated acquisition, private dedication of easements, and other cooperative efforts.
- **Development Standards** - Maintain up-to-date regulations and standards for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control compliance, well development, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- **Water Quality** - Consider the impacts of residential and nonresidential development on water quantity and quality and encourage the use of best management practices.
- **Erosion and Stormwater Control** - Reduce erosion and sedimentation and stormwater runoff through retention of existing vegetation and minimization of development on steep slopes.
- **Floodplain Management** - Use land use management tools to direct new residential and commercial development away from floodplain to areas where land is adequate to provide facilities necessary to support development and flood damage is minimized.
- **Soil-Based Sewage Disposal** - Where soils are suitable, encourage the use of soil-based methods for sewage disposal; that is, on-site subsurface disposal and land application, instead of collection and treatment facilities with a surface water discharge.
- **On-Lot Sewage Systems** - Monitor the effectiveness of existing on-lot sewage disposal systems and ensure that new systems are installed in accord with DEP standards.
- **Protect Agriculture and Forestry** - Do not overly restrict agriculture and forestry enterprises with unnecessary zoning and other regulations.
- **Area Development** - Monitor development projects in adjoining municipalities and assess impacts on the Township.
- **Area Wide Cooperation** - Coordinate environmental preservation efforts with neighboring jurisdictions, and establish an action plan targeting environmental concerns that require a regional approach.
- **Economic Development** - Encourage local economic development groups to make natural resource protection an integral part of all promotion efforts.

GOAL 3

Expand the Township's existing economic base by exploring economic development opportunities consistent with, and building on, the existing rural-recreational character in order to strengthen the existing general and tourist economy, create employment opportunities and generate tax revenue.

A healthy economy fosters a healthy community by providing business development and employment opportunities. Local governments may choose to take no direct role in economic development, but they can institute land use management and development policies that have a positive effect on the local economy and tax base, while addressing community conservation concerns. Township officials recognize that many residents will continue to rely on the greater region for employment and shopping and service needs. However, the Township has historically allowed managed commercial development throughout the Township and recently created a Commercial Zoning District to recognize the special characteristics of commercial development along Route 739. Continued application of the zoning ordinance can

direct commercial and industrial development to the most appropriate locations and ensure compatibility with adjoining uses by applying performance standards.

Objectives:

- **Location** - Welcome new commercial and industrial development to areas of existing similar development and where community facilities are adequate so that the development is compatible with existing land use and community character.
- **Site Planning** - Establish effective landscaping and site plan design criteria in the zoning and land development regulations to ensure that new

development rises to a high standard and enhances, rather than detracts from, the appeal of the Township.

- **Performance Standards** - Adopt, enforce and update commercial performance standards to minimize community impacts by limiting such nuisances as noise; outdoor manufacturing, processing and storage; lighting; and other potential effects.
- **Commercial Design Standards** - Develop guidelines for commercial building design, landscaping and parking that will ensure high aesthetic quality and while meeting basic needs.
- **Government Efficiency** - Continue to maintain an efficient government and keep taxes low as an incentive for economic development.
- **Existing Businesses** - Support the continued development and possible expansion of existing businesses which provide local employment and contribute to the tax base.
- **Home Occupations** - Promote local economic viability by encouraging home occupations and home businesses consistent with residential districts and small businesses consistent with agricultural uses and the overall community character.
- **Regional Economy** - Recognize the importance of the regional economy and monitor and participate in county and regional business development activities.
- **Economic Development** - Cooperate with local business development organizations to promote commercial development which builds on community assets and which will not compromise the quality of life.
- **Commercial Cluster** - Encourage commercial cluster development to avoid commercial strip development with multiple highway accesses.

GOAL 4

Provide for a variety of housing types and densities.

Families and individuals of all income levels reside in Blooming Grove Township and need continued access to decent and affordable housing with proper community facilities. Demand for housing by higher income families moving to the Township from metropolitan areas has increased the cost of housing beyond the means of many local families. The special needs of young families looking for their first home and senior citizens on fixed incomes must be addressed.

Objectives:

- **Housing Types** - Provide for a diversity of lot sizes, building densities, design techniques, and housing choices (single-family, two-family, multi-family, mobile home parks) to accommodate a variety of age and income groups and residential preferences, so that the community's population diversity may be maintained while concurrently requiring adequate off street parking, water supply and sewage disposal.
- **Housing Programs** - Investigate and encourage participation in all county, state and federal housing rehabilitation and assistance programs to ensure residents receive full benefit from such programs.
- **Standards** - Require all residential development to meet adequate design standards and provide proper community facilities via the Uniform Construction Code and the subdivision and land development ordinance.
- **Community Facilities** - Require, via the subdivision and land development ordinance, all residential development to meet adequate design standards and provide proper community facilities, along with continued ownership and maintenance of all such facilities.
- **Code Changes** - Carefully evaluate the affect of zoning and other code changes on the cost of housing.
- **Senior Housing** - Encourage the development of nursing homes, adult care centers, assisted living facilities and other housing types which provide

amenities that are attractive to retirees.

- **Adaptive Use** - Encourage, where it can be adequately accommodated, the rehabilitation and adaptive use of existing older homes which typically are larger and more difficult to maintain, especially for individuals on fixed incomes.
- **Affordable Housing** - Foster a housing market affordable to younger and fixed-income residents by carefully evaluating the effect of land use management tools on the cost of housing, and consider density and design incentives to encourage the development of age-restricted and affordable housing.
- **Safe Dwellings** - Consider the adoption of an ordinance to regulate nuisances and safety hazards associated with dilapidated and dangerous structures.
- **Design Flexibility** - Provide greater design flexibility and efficiency in the siting of services and infrastructure, including the opportunity to reduce length of roads, utility runs, and the amount of paving required for residential development.

GOAL 5

Ensure that community facilities and services are provided to meet the Township's needs.

Residents rely on community and public facilities and services to meet their transportation, educational, water supply, sewage disposal, police protection, emergency response, recreation and other daily living need. Municipalities do not, and cannot, provide all the facilities and services demanded by residents, many such services being provided by other levels of government or volunteer organizations. Nevertheless, without diligent and ongoing attention to the operation and maintenance of existing facilities and services, and planning for new facilities and services, a municipality can fall short in adequately serving its residents. Municipalities must also prioritize the provision of community facilities and services based on available financial resources and the ability of residents to pay increased taxes.

Objectives:

- **Capital Budget** - Systematically identify the need for local municipal community facilities and services, including useful life replacement of existing facilities, and develop a capital budget to meet the needs.
- **Maintenance** - Provide necessary maintenance of existing municipal buildings, equipment and other community facilities to extend the useful life and forestall unnecessary capital expenditures.
- **Volunteer Organizations** - Acknowledging the critical importance of such groups to the community, encourage and continue to support volunteer fire, ambulance and other public service organizations.
- **Facilities for New Development** - Ensure that an adequate and safe water supply system, a proper sewage disposal system, well designed and constructed roads, and other facilities are provided by developers as part of any residential development.
- **Water and Sewer Extensions** - Evaluate the development of any central water supply or central sewage disposal service in terms of stimulating unwanted development.
- **Efficiency** - Manage all municipal facilities and services efficiently and effectively.
- **Cooperation** - Encourage and participate in any area intergovernmental cooperation efforts for community facilities planning and economies of scale for joint purchasing, recreation and other facilities and services.
- **Parks and Recreation** - Monitor the availability of park and recreation facilities to Township residents and address any identified deficiencies.
- **Official Map** - Consider the adoption of an official Map in accord with Article IV of the Municipalities Planning Code to identify any planned Township land, right-of-way or open space acquisitions.

GOAL 6**Establish and maintain an adequate road system to safely and efficiently move goods and people through the Township.**

Safe and well maintained roads are vital to all communities, serving not only as the means of travel within the community, but as the direct link to the region and beyond. The interstate and state routes serving the region and the Township provide easy access to and from the area, and will certainly foster continued development. New residences will be constructed to house new citizens who commute to work and associated commercial development will serve the increasing population.

Blooming Grove Township owns and maintains 6.55 miles of roads, a relatively low amount when compared to some other municipalities such as the forty-three miles in Lackawaxen Township. In addition, state owned roads in the Township total 49.22 miles including some thirteen miles of Interstate Route 84 and the Lords Valley and Blooming Grove Interchanges.

Local officials must plan carefully to ensure adequate funding for the improvement and maintenance of locally-owned roads. Land use management tools must consider the capacity of roads, directing commercial and higher density development to areas served by roads capable of carrying increased traffic and the trucks necessary to serve commercial establishments.

Objectives:

- **Classification** - Inventory and classify according to function all public roads in the Township and assess maintenance and improvements needed.
- **Improvements Program** - Identify key intersections and other problem areas, and develop a road and intersection maintenance and capital improvements program.
- **Road Task Force** - Work with the Pike County Road Task Force, an intermunicipal and interagency group, to address regional traffic impacts and highway improvement needs.
- **Capacity** - Maintain the adequacy of roads by requiring adequate off-street parking and loading, limited curb cuts, controlled and well designed access points, and standards for dedication of roads to the Townships.
- **Development Location** - Limit higher density and higher traffic impact development to areas with adequate highway capacity to accommodate such development.
- **Road Ordinance** - Maintain an up-to-date municipal road ordinance setting standards for construction of new subdivision roads.
- **Road Dedication** - Evaluate the acceptance of public dedication of development roads in terms of public benefit versus long term costs.
- **Planning** - Actively participate in all County and PennDOT highway planning programs.
- **HOP Requirement** - Require as part of any land development or zoning approval for new or expanded uses, the issuance of a highway occupancy permit by the municipalities or PennDOT, as appropriate.
- **HOP Ordinance** - Maintain an up-to-date Township road occupancy ordinance setting standards for driveway access to municipal roads and required storm water and utility improvements.
- **Official Map** - Using an official map, establish and reserve public street alignments and adequate rights-of-way for planned street improvements.
- **Road Linkages** - Include the consideration of through road connections as part of the development review process.

GOAL 7**Protect historic structures as an important part of the character of the Township.**

A number of historic sites and structures are found in the Township, ranging from residences and outbuildings, to former industrial sites, to schools and churches. Buildings were erected as part of a growing community, and although many of the early structures are now gone, the many which remain add tremendously to the character of the Township. In addition to buildings, stone walls and fences are significant historic features throughout the Township. Originally an integral part of early agricultural practices, stone walls and fences are now being incorporated into home design and as the prime feature in landscaping. The preservation of historic buildings and other features, and encouraging new development to be consistent with the existing historic character, are critical to the future of the community.

Objectives:

- **Inventory** - Develop an inventory of historic resources in the Township.
- **Historic Register** - Based on the historic resources inventory, create a local historic register and consider nomination of qualifying structures and places to the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Design Guidelines** - Develop guidelines for residential and commercial development to encourage historically sensitive design. For example, use conservation residential subdivision design to preserve farm residences and stone walls.
- **Adaptive Use** - Allow the *adaptive use* of large older homes to enable owners to adequately maintain the structures. For example, allowing the inclusion of an apartment unit or a bed and breakfast business would generate income for overall building maintenance.