LAND USE

When creating a land use plan, a municipality should consider a process which firsts determines future population figures, whether growth or decline, and its ‘targeted’ areas within the municipal borders. Secondly, economic factors must be studied and future economic activity within the municipality, determined. The municipality then completes the plan by determining the land use pattern which best reflects the outcomes of the first two steps, that is, forecasting where the population growth and economic activity is going to occur.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

This land use plan is a guide for future growth within Center Township. Since the Township already has zoning in place, the land use pattern has been established for the most part. The objectives and policies recommended in this document are based on sound planning principles and the needs of the Township. Successful land use planning is designed to provide for compatible growth and development among all land use activities.

As such, the Township has established the following statement of objectives for future development within its borders:

- Development practices that provide a more compact growth pattern will be promoted;

- Development will be encouraged in existing ‘growth areas’ in order to provide some protection for agricultural land uses;

- Encourage development which is compatible with that existing on adjacent parcels;

- Non-residential development will be encouraged where public services are provided in ‘targeted’ growth areas.
EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land uses in Center Township can be classified in six general categories:

1. Single Family Residential
2. Multi-Family Residential
3. Commercial
4. Industrial
5. Agricultural; open
6. Public/semi-public

Center Township’s land development pattern appears to be following a predictable path – where public services are provided, both residential and commercial development has become entrenched, with the residential development moving away from the main thoroughfares. For the most part, at this time, non-residential development is locating within non-residentially-zoned districts, close to public utilities, with few requests for rezoning from residential areas. Much of the vacant and unused land within the Township has some type of environmental restriction to it, and lacks ready accessibility to public utilities.

As the following map clearly indicates, the two largest land use types in Center Township are agriculture and residential, as would be expected, based on the community type and locational factors. Even though the Township can still be considered a rural municipality, residential development is slowly expanding into the agricultural lands, especially in those neighborhoods where public facilities are available or easily extended. Throughout the ‘low density’ areas of the Township, farmsteads and housing sites are situated in random format, with access being the only regulating factor.

Due to the proximity of an ‘urban center’, and the availability of facilities, the southern half of the Township has developed, and continues to develop, as dense residential neighborhoods. Another factor which has played a role in limiting the denser residential development to the southern portion of the Township, is the natural
environnent, through topographic and watershed boundaries, which limits the extension of public utilities/facilities and housing construction.

**REGIONAL IMPACT**

During the formation of this document, Center Township reviewed and considered the planning programs of all adjacent municipalities – Butler, Clay, Franklin and Oakland Townships. Of those four, only Butler and Franklin Townships have a planning program in place. Both townships have a comprehensive plan and local land use regulations in place. The zoning districts adjacent to the Township borders have been reviewed for compatibility, with only one major conflict being discovered. The northwest boundary with Franklin Township (Unionville Road, north), where Center Township properties are currently zoned Manufacturing (M-1), may present some conflicting development conditions with the abutting Franklin property currently being zoned Agriculture-Residential and Rural Residential. Further review of the proposed land use recommendations of this plan has also determined that they are generally consistent with those on adjacent lands.

Recently, Butler County completed an existing conditions summary of the entire county as a precursor to an update of the Butler County Comprehensive Plan document. At this time, the Township’s proposals are generally consistent with the existing County documents.

As a means of encouraging the ‘regional’ aspect of planning for land development, Center Township will provide adjacent municipalities with a copy of this document and of all proposed land development plans, where it is determined that there may be an impact on adjacent municipalities.

**FUTURE LAND USE**

This portion of the plan will focus on the designation and definition of those area within Center Township which are best suited for growth and development. It will guide the creation of a policy statement that will assist the Township in providing for the highest level quality of life opportunities for its residents.

The Township recognizes the importance of organizing a vision for its future, including the provision of services and construction of facilities in order to establish a
format which can then be followed when creating or amending the ‘tools’ which are essential in achieving that vision, namely, the zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development regulations, the Capital Improvement Program and other related documents.

Regionally, growth pressures may not be very high, but it is anticipated that County and Township growth will continue at a higher rate than the region. It is anticipated that the Township will continue to experience mostly residential development with minor commercial and manufacturing development, located primarily in close proximity to the main transportation routes where utilities are available.

Growth areas in Center include those lands which are determined to be the most suitable to accommodate future development and anticipated population growth in the Township. Increased needs for a variety of services and facilities will follow the anticipated growth and must be accommodated in these areas.

Center Township officials understand that lands located in the path of growth and development – along major transportation corridors or adjacent to already established residential and commercial areas, and that lands planned for sewage and water service expansion, are areas appropriate for growth. They also recognize that those areas of the Township which contain productive farmland, environmentally-sensitive features, scenic views, historic and/or cultural structures, are not suitable for extensive growth.

As a means of identifying these growth and non-growth areas, the following maps have been created. The “Future Development Plan” map will act as a guide for the timing of future development and as well as a tool to assist the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in the review of future development plans. The various categories identified on this map are:

1. Developed land – areas with existing structure(s) already on them (all uses included)

2. Short-term development (0 – 10 years) – those areas adjacent to developed land, where public facilities exist or could be easily extended
3. **Mid-term development (11 – 20 years)** – properties outside those which can be served by public facilities and utilities; may be developed after extension of facilities into short-term areas

4. **Long-term development (20+ years)** – properties where it is unlikely that any public utilities would be provided within the 20-year time span; localized development may occur on a ‘parcel-by-parcel’ basis

5. **Rural** – land which make up the ‘rural base’ of the Township, including:
   - ‘Clean and Green’ properties
   - active farmland
   - large, vacant and unused parcels
   - wooded parcels

6. **Agricultural Security Areas**

   In concert with the “Future Development Plan” map which established a format for the timing of development, a “Future Land Use” map follows which provides a generalized description of proposed land uses as well as the proposed “growth areas.” Based on review and recommendations by the Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and Township residents, this map will become the basis for any future changes to the existing land use regulations.

   This “Future Land Use” map identifies growth areas which local officials are targeting as those neighborhoods or regions which will accept the bulk of future development.

   - **Growth Area North** – is already beginning to experience some single family development pressures. Existing public utilities are available on the perimeter of this area and can be easily extended in many areas, creating growth opportunities. Local officials have determined that this **Growth Area will be best suited for single family, relatively low density development**. Current zoning regulations in place are consistent with low density residential growth.

   - **Growth Area South** – also has public utilities available along the periphery of the area which can be readily extended to create opportunities for
development. Due to this area’s proximity to the City of Butler, Route 8 and public transit, local officials have determined that **multi-family residential development should be encouraged in this Growth Area.** Single family uses will not be discouraged in this area, however, Growth Area South is proposed to accept the future higher-density residential development needs of the Township. The current zoning ordinance should be reviewed to determine its applicability to this proposal.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Center Township should focus its efforts on providing for growth, primarily residential, in the most appropriate areas, keeping in mind the vision statement of maintaining the Township’s ‘rural nature’ and the ‘preservation of active farmlands.’ Lands which are appropriate for growth are those served by, or planned to be served by, public facilities and utilities (sewer, water, roads) and those near existing commercial developments that may be easily serviced by community facilities. Commercial and manufacturing uses will be encouraged as well, however, the expansion of zoning districts to accommodate these types of uses **will not.** Non-residential uses will be asked to explore the re-use of existing sites and/or structures prior to an application seeking to rezone or amend the existing zoning ordinance.