
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gleaned from the municipal surveys and the public meetings, the following Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives for land use, community facilities, housing, transportation and economic development have been developed:

Land Use Plan

Future growth in the Township will consist primarily of residential development, with limited non-residential infill. The Route 38 corridor will serve as the primary area for light manufacturing or industrial growth, with a small area between Unionville and Swamp Run Roads providing the prerequisite zoning; however, the lack of public facilities may discourage, or even prevent, the development of manufacturing uses in this area.

Dense residential growth will continue in those areas where water and sewer facilities exist or are easily extended. Depending upon capacities, the mid-central area of the Township will be the primary residential development area. Multi-family residential development will also become a priority within the Township during the next two decades.

It is recommended by the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission that commercial development be limited to “infill” areas, that is, the re-use of existing vacant structures or development of vacant parcels, and not to expand commercial uses onto non-developed property.

Finally, this Plan identifies those areas which the Township considers adequate for growth as Growth Areas ‘North and ‘South’, as well as those areas which should be preserved.

RECOMMENDATION:

PRESERVE CENTER TOWNSHIP’S RURAL CHARACTER, FARMLAND, STREAMS AND OPEN SPACES BY DIRECTING DEVELOPMENT TO GROWTH AREAS AND LIMITING DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL, LOW-GROWTH AREAS.

OBJECTIVES:

- Identify environmentally-sensitive areas
- Identify 'growth' and 'low-growth' areas
- Review existing zoning regulations to ensure proper language is in place to carry out the recommendations of this planning document
- Encourage high density development in Growth Area South, only
- Create plan for preservation areas within the Township
- Limit rezoning of residential districts for non-residential uses
- Create development regulations which enhance and protect areas with developmental constraints

RECOMMENDATION:

ENSURE THAT GROWTH AREAS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A VARIETY OF USES.

OBJECTIVES:

- Base future land uses on location, need and desired intensity
- Limit growth into identified "growth areas"
- Permit high density residential growth only where utility extensions are not required
- Review and revise as necessary, all existing land use regulations in order to remain consistent with the recommendations of this plan

RECOMMENDATION:

PROMOTE PRESERVATION OF EXISTING FARMLAND AND/OR AGRIBUSINESSES

OBJECTIVES:

- Create preservation program for active farms
- Determine needs of township farmers for improvements
- Educate residents about Agricultural Security Area program
- Expand agricultural security areas and move to next phase of the program
- Encourage conservation easement agreements between property-owners and a conservation organization

RECOMMENDATION:

PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THOSE AREAS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

- Create an Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)
- Promote protection of the environment in land use ordinances
- Create development regulations which enhance and protect areas with developmental constraints

Community Facilities Plan

Throughout the public meetings during the development of this Comprehensive Plan, the residents indicated that it was a priority to “maintain existing living conditions”. Discussion about the expansion of public facilities (some in favor, some against), the provision of additional municipal services (police, recreation) was commonplace.

One area of concern noted by many residents, was the water service, both quality and quantity, provided within the Township. A majority of the Township is not serviced by public water. There was much public debate pertaining to the sale of the Township’s water system to a private firm. This plan does not feel who provides the water service is an issue (other than an economic one for the Township), but the fact, that public water service should be provided, especially in the indented growth areas.

This plan acknowledges the input of the residents and includes in the recommendations, several actions based on their input. The need for additional municipal facilities is warranted. However, the resident's input indicates that, at this time, there is a lack of interest in the Township providing for many types of services and facilities (e.g., recreation facilities, new municipal building, asphalt roads).

As noted in the previous section, the creation of a Capital Improvement Program is very much in need. By first identifying the needs of the residents, the Township can then create a program of meeting those needs, over a period of time (if necessary to lower the financial burden), identifying the approximate costs, and generating the necessary revenue to complete the improvements.

The provision of community facilities enhances the 'quality of life' within a municipality, and has the most impact on residential development. This is quite evident by the number and type of responses generated in the survey and public meeting forums. Surprisingly, the facility (utility) which received the most interest, was the provision of street lights throughout the Township. Other types of facilities which generated interest were recreation and road improvements.

Even though the survey and the meetings did not generate a large amount of interest in the provision of a new municipal building or police service, their inclusion in any proposed Capital Improvement Budget is warranted.

RECOMMENDATION:

MAINTAIN 'QUALITY OF LIFE' FOR TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Enforce existing land use ordinances and related regulations
- Create a Township public relations program
- Monitor needs of existing departments – create program to update equipment and services on a regular basis

- Research adequacy of existing municipal building and feasibility of the construction of a new municipal building
- As a guide for future development, all proposed plans should be reviewed to determine that all Township ordinances and policies have been addressed, including:
 - ◆ Police service
 - ◆ Fire and EMS service
 - ◆ Sewage and water treatment
 - ◆ Solid waste/refuse
 - ◆ Stormwater management
 - ◆ Soil erosion and sedimentation control
 - ◆ School facilities
- Base future budget and service needs on the following planning issues:
 - ◆ Existing population size
 - ◆ Population density
 - ◆ Expected population growth
 - ◆ Income levels
 - ◆ Existing facility capacity
 - ◆ Projected revenues

RECOMMENDATION:

PROVIDE ADEQUATE SERVICES TO TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Consider the possibility of joining with adjacent municipalities to establish a joint municipal police force

- Continue support of the volunteer fire department
- Create a Capital Improvements Program in order to prioritize future improvements and expansions of existing facilities
- Develop an inventory of municipal structures, furnishings and equipment
- Develop a program for the inclusion of additional capital improvements to be provided by Township residents
- Review park and recreation needs to determine adequacy, or lack thereof, of existing facilities and coordinate future development with other agencies/boards (e.g., school board)
- Prioritize projects on an annual basis for inclusion in the C.I.P.
- Determine appropriate action for provision of water service to the residents at the most reasonable cost
- Research feasibility of the creation of a neighborhood lighting program

Housing Plan

The housing stock of the Township is in relatively good condition, with a few “pockets” of poor or dilapidated structures. This Plan does not foresee major deterioration problems in the near future, especially with the recent enactment of building codes within the Township. However, the rehabilitation or removal of those structures in poor condition, and enforcement of all related codes and ordinances must be primary concerns of the local officials in their effort to maintain a quality housing stock.

With the aging of the community, the provision of alternative housing opportunities for the elderly and “empty nesters” will also become an important issue for the Township in the near future.

RECOMMENDATION:

CREATE A HOUSING PROGRAM FOR THE TOWNSHIP WHICH PROVIDES FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITES FOR THE RESIDENTS AND MAINTAINS EXISTING HOUSING STANDARDS.

OBJECTIVES:

- Review existing zoning ordinance to determine the need to provide for additional housing types
- Develop property maintenance program which will provide for consistent property conditions throughout the Township
- Research the feasibility of creating a program which can provide assistance to all homeowners to upgade and maintain their property
- Examine needs of elderly to determine feasibility of housing assistance programs
- Seek County assistance, both programmatic and financial, in creating a housing assistance plan and program for residents

Transportation and Circulation Plan

The overall transportation network in the Township is adequate with no major roadway defeciencies noted. The State highways are in very good to good condition, with Route 8 in excellent condition since its recent repaving. The local roadway network is in need of some major repairs or upgrading throughout the Township, mainly Duffy Road, Mercer Road, and Holyoke Road. The recent improvements to Route 8 including the Unionville Road intersection, have eliminated those roadways from the list requiring improvements or upgrades.

Intersections are a source of major conflict for traffic movement. In Center Township, there exist several intersections which are in need of upgrades, the most notable being the Duffy Road/Mercer Road and Sunset Drive/Route 308 intersections.

Since improvement projects to roads and highways can take several years, from the first drawing to completion, it is very important for the Township to create a program of inspection, review and improvement for its transportation network for inclusion in the Capital Improvement Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

MAINTAIN A SAFE, WELL-CONSTRUCTED ROAD SYSTEM AND CONVENIENT CIRCULATION PATTERNS FOR TRAFFIC MOVEMENT WITHIN THE TOWNSHIP.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create circulation study to determine patterns
- Identify intersection and roadway deficiencies; create database for future programming
- Develop program to address identified deficiencies
- Develop and enforce regulations providing access to Township streets and roads, both public and private
- Consider an illumination program which will provide lighting at all local street intersections

RECOMMENDATION:

IMPROVE THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS INTO AND THROUGH THE TOWNSHIP

OBJECTIVES:

- Develop improvement program which identifies deficiencies and establishes priorities for action
- Encourage the development of a variety of transportation means, including public transit, bicycling, pedestrian

- Seek to expand public transit service into additional Township neighborhoods
- Encourage the identification and protection of rights of way for future public use
- Consider creating a street and road management plan
- Limit creation of new or additional access points to Route 8 (both residential and non-residential)

Economic Development Plan

Even though it is still considered a rural municipality, Center Township has a well-developed commercial center (Clearview Mall); a commercial ‘strip’ along Route 8; and additional heavy commercial and/or light manufacturing establishments in the southeast and northwest corners, providing for a stable and well-rounded tax base from which to draw revenues. However, in an effort to keep the resident’s tax burden low, Township officials have not used this tax base to its best advantage. The current millage rates are quite low, limiting the Township’s ability to provide a higher level of services to its residents.

It is recommended that Township officials review the existing taxing structure with the idea in mind that additional revenue can be generated, without major impact on the residents, for the upgrading of existing services and/or the provision of new, additional municipal services.

As noted in other sections, the creation of a Capital Improvement Program should be considered as a priority for the Township. Township residents have indicated some willingness to assist (through taxes or user fees) in the upgrading of existing, or provision of new, municipal programs and services.

RECOMMENDATION:

THE TOWNSHIP SHOULD SEEK TO GENERATE ADDITIONAL REVENUES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE IMPROVED OR ADDITIONAL SERVICES TO THE RESIDENTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Research the level of need for existing programs, services and improvements
- Create a program which establishes procedures for examining alternative sources of revenue for municipal programs, services and improvements
- Create a tax base model with the ability to predict the source and amount of funds generated by various land use decisions
- Review alternative methods of financing future programs, services and/or improvements (e.g., user fees, impact fees)
- Investigate the possible willingness of adjacent municipalities to participate in joint projects
- Consider the 'privatization' of some existing Township programs and services