

The Issues

Needs Analysis

Once the findings, current conditions, and assets in Franklin Township were identified, it was important to determine what participants in the planning process felt was needed in the community. The assessment of these needs provided a comprehensive view of what residents and the business community would like to see addressed in order to improve the overall quality of life in the Township.

A review of Franklin Township's resources along with its strengths, challenges, and opportunities was completed to provide a reality check of the needs that were identified. The needs analysis led to the identification of issues (real and perceived) influencing growth in the Township along with the actions required to implement changes in municipal policies and procedures.

Issues Affecting Franklin Township

As discussed in Section 1 (The Planning Process) the Commonwealth's agencies all support an approach to comprehensive planning that is focused on plans that solve problems, meet the needs of the community, and pursue opportunities that help to fulfill the municipality's vision. One of the five key goals to an "implementable comprehensive plan" - *focus on real, relevant issues* – will be addressed in this section.

The Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan Update identified various issues during the planning process that were most important to the elected officials, Township staff, stakeholders, Project Steering Committee, business community and the residents. This input was consolidated into a priority list of issues for Franklin Township through a consensus of plan participants.

Participants in the planning process were asked to identify the issues currently impacting Franklin Township. Their responses were categorized according to various elements and included the following:

Housing / Residential

- Lack of housing for retired people (ie. Condos, Aging in Place, Village Concept, Continuing Care Retirement Communities, Co-Housing)
- Need for additional assisted living facilities – too many people are leaving the County

- Need for additional housing options – such as Patio Homes, Multi-generational Housing, etc.
- Housing at all pricing levels
- Quality starter homes for young families

Taxes

- Will not get potential residents from the Morgantown and Washington markets if taxes are not in line with their present taxes
- High taxes will impact older residents staying in the Township
- Need to lower (or even stabilize) school taxes

Aesthetics

- There are some rundown properties (junk, etc.)
- Highway and road trash / garbage should be cleaned up - too many dumping areas on the beautiful back roads
- Blighted properties not being addressed

Infrastructure / Utilities

- Lack of Water and Sewer service outside of the central part of the Township
 - Difficulty in getting septic systems approved / installed
 - Need public water and sewage to Waterdam Road / Wisecarver Recreation Area
- Need better internet service / options for homes and businesses (reliable, high-speed internet to support remote access)
 - The lack of adequate internet service affects public health / safety, education, businesses (economy)
- Provide additional infrastructure to support development around the Exit 14 Interchange of I-79

Transportation – Movement of People and Goods

- Traffic flow within the Township along Route 21
- Need sidewalks – not safe to walk to stores, etc.
- Trees along roadsides that can become a safety issue if they are not addressed
- If the Township is to expand housing opportunities, which is a good thing, make sure the roads can handle the additional vehicles.

- Learn from Morgantown which has expanded beyond the limits of its road system – too much, too quickly. The traffic is a real barrier to the quality of life for many people because it is difficult to get anywhere on time.
- Road / traffic conditions are deteriorating due to increased oil and gas development and pipeline construction
- High traffic and bad road conditions on Rolling Meadows Road
- A traffic signal on Route 21 at the entrance to the Microtel would be a big safety improvement

Economy

- Need new housing development – how to reduce taxes to entice developers
- Lack of sit-down Restaurants - the need for a restaurant and / or bar that serves adult beverages and has a conference room or two
 - This could possibly be addressed through discussions with the existing hotels in the Township
- Lack of restaurants in the area – money that can be spent in the Waynesburg area is being spent elsewhere
 - A lot of people (gas industry workers) are using Sheetz for lunch and dinner
- Retaining businesses is important
- Finding companies that provide competitive wages
- Emerald Mine abandonment
- Natural gas prices – their impact on the industry
- Need additional business (retail) and industry
- School taxes are high
- What happens when the gas boom ends?
- People are reluctant to sell their property – which has an impact on development

Policies / Regulations

- There are no Township ordinances against burning garbage
- Enforce existing ordinances
- Additional areas zoned for businesses
- Keep the natural gas activities and residential neighborhoods separated

Miscellaneous

- Drugs / substance abuse
- Identify the Township's advantages / disadvantages with respect to Washington County and Monongalia County

- Some school facilities need better maintained or replaced
- Poor subsurface for foundations because of longwall mining
- Lack of communication
- Availability of level ground for future development
- Development opportunities on the east side of Waynesburg
- Lack of recreation opportunities for adults
- Not a lot for kids and families to do
- Ten Mile Creek – flooding is becoming more frequent due to trees and sediment in the stream

The following responses were provided when participants were asked to identify the issues that may impact Franklin Township in the future (5 years from now and beyond):

- The provision of additional water and sewer service / facilities
- Traffic congestion / problems (starting at I-79 & Route 21)
- Can the current road network support additional future growth and development
- Loss of tax base – if additional business and industry is not developed
 - What types of jobs will replace any losses
 - Lack of coal and gas related industries
- Lack of housing to support any future growth
- Lack of flat (developable) ground
- New recreation opportunities
- A continued increase in taxes
- Retaining the next generation of residents – keeping young people here
- Continued progressive leadership

To help reach a consensus on the priority issues in the municipality, participants were asked to rank the top three (3) issues currently impacting Franklin Township. The following are the issues that received the most votes:

- Lack of water and sewer service outside of the central part of the Township
- Need for additional business (retail) and industry
- Need for additional / new types of housing
- Additional infrastructure to support development around the I-79 Interchange
- High school taxes
- Availability of level ground for future development
- Development opportunities on the east side of Waynesburg
- Recreation for adults
- Heavy truck traffic
- Lack of sit-down restaurants

The Key Issues

With the input of the public, stakeholders, Township officials and staff, and the business community, the results were further refined to focus on the most important issues that Franklin Township should address through the allocation of current resources or as the resources become available. The priority issues (and overall goal for each issue) for the Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan Update are:

- **Housing** – Provide a Variety of Housing Opportunities
- **Infrastructure** – Expand Infrastructure to Support Future Growth and Development
- **Economy** – Grow the Local Economy
- **Transportation Network** – Improve the Transportation Network
- **Quality of Life** – Enhance the Quality of Life

The following section includes the goals, actions, and strategies for the five priority issues of the Plan.