

Opportunities for Growth and Development

In Section 1 of the Comprehensive Plan Update, community development objectives were identified to help guide the location, character and timing of future development in Franklin Township. Objectives regarding land use focused on the: conservation of environmental, cultural, natural, and historic resources; preservation of prime agricultural soils and farmlands; protection of scenic vistas, viewsheds and open spaces; provision of additional housing options; directing future growth and development to the sites / corridors that have infrastructure in place to support it; capitalization of the abundance of mineral resources; and the development of more recreation and entertainment opportunities.

The community development objectives for Franklin Township are consistent with the guidelines for the preparation of a comprehensive plan stated in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Throughout the planning process it was important to identify recommendations that balanced the plan for future land use (development) with the protection of natural, environmental and historic resources.

Current Zoning

The Franklin Township Zoning Ordinance is how Township Officials regulate the use of land in the municipality. This document is enacted to implement the goals of the municipal comprehensive plan. The Community Development Objectives of the Zoning Ordinance state the following:

The purpose of this Ordinance is the implementation of the Township Comprehensive Plan and the promotion of the health, safety, morals, convenience, order and welfare of present and future inhabitants of Franklin Township by:

- A. Providing standards to control the amount of open space and impervious surfaces within a development and to control the intensity of development in areas of sensitive natural resources or natural features in order to reduce or eliminate adverse environmental impacts.
- B. Providing methods to implement Article 1, Section 27 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which decrees that the people have a right to clean air, to pure water, to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment, and to protect the natural resources which are a part of the ecological system to which we are all bound and, which is, therefore, the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come, and must be protected to insure the health, safety and welfare of all the people.

- C. Providing standards for all types of dwelling units so that all the people may have access to decent, sound and sanitary housing, and to meet the goals of the Federal Housing Act of 1949, providing adequate zoning to meet a fair share of the region's housing need in the year 2006.
- D. Controlling and regulating the growth of Franklin Township in terms of the community's facilities and utilities.
- E. Lessening the danger and congestion of traffic on the roads and highways and reducing the excessive numbers of roads.
- F. Securing safety from fire, panic, flood, and other dangers.
- G. Providing adequate air and light.
- H. Protecting the tax base.
- I. Securing economy in local government expenditures.

Each of the zoning districts in the Ordinance are defined by their Policy / Objectives that ensures future development is consistent with the goals, actions and strategies of the comprehensive plan. The purpose of the zoning districts within the municipality are as follows:

- *A-1: Rural Agricultural* - To delineate areas to be protected for continued agricultural use.
- *R-1: Suburban Residential* - To delineate areas of land to be protected for existing and encouraged for future low-density residential development. To maximize the efficient use of land through residential clustering influenced by topographic conditions.
- *R-2: Urban Residential* - To delineate areas to be protected for future medium density residential development.
- *C-1: Commercial* - To delineate areas to be reserved primarily for commercial activity and related needs of the residents.
- *I-1: Industrial* - To delineate areas best suited for industrial development due to location, topography, existing or planned facilities and relationships to other land uses.
- *E-1: Economic Development* - To allow a mix of compatible services, retail office and light industrial use of future growth and promote additional opportunities for commercial development.

One of the recommendations that came out of the comprehensive planning process was to review the current requirements and regulations in the Township's zoning ordinance. Amending the ordinance to reflect the goals and strategies of the comprehensive plan along with revising requirements that offer more flexibility to future development initiatives will be key to the growth of the municipality. It was also determined that additional land (properties) was needed to accommodate future commercial and

industrial development. This will require that the current C-1: Commercial, I-1: Industrial, and E-1: Economic Development zoning districts are expanded to include locations that have the infrastructure in place or where it can be reasonably extended.

Subdivision and Land Development

The subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) is the most commonly used development control tool in Pennsylvania. Enacted by local municipalities, the SALDO establishes land development regulations that govern the division of land and the improvement of land for some purpose. Franklin Township officials enacted the current SALDO in 2006 through the powers granted to them by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

In Section 102 of the SALDO, it states that the Township has enacted this ordinance for the following purposes:

1. To protect and provide for the public health, safety, and general welfare of the Municipality.
2. To guide the future growth and development of the Municipality in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of Franklin Township.
3. To provide for adequate light, air, and privacy; to secure safety from fire, flood, and other danger; and to prevent overcrowding of the land and undue congestion of population.
4. To protect the character and social and economic stability of the Municipality and to encourage the orderly and beneficial development of the Municipality.
5. To protect and conserve the value of land throughout the Municipality, and the value of buildings and improvements upon the land and to minimize the conflicts among the uses of land and buildings.
6. To guide and private policy and action in order to provide adequate and efficient transportation, water supply, sewerage, storm water management, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation, and other public requirements and facilities.
7. To provide the most beneficial relationship between the use of land and buildings and the circulation of traffic within the Municipality having particular regard to the avoidance of congestion in the streets and highways, and the pedestrian traffic movements appropriate to the various uses of land and buildings, and to provide for the proper location and width of streets and building lines.
8. To establish reasonable standards of design and procedures for subdivision and re-subdivisions, in order to further the orderly layout and use of land; and to insure proper legal descriptions and monumenting of subdivided land.
9. To ensure that public facilities are available and will have a sufficient capacity to serve the proposed subdivision.

10. To prevent the pollution of air, streams, and ponds; to assure the adequacy of drainage facilities; to safeguard the water table; and to encourage the wise use and management of natural resources in order to preserve the community and value of the land.
11. To control storm water in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the Franklin Township Engineer.
12. To regulate the subdivision and/or development of land within any designated floodplain district in order to promote the general health, welfare, and safety of the community.
13. To require that each subdivision lot in flood-prone areas include a safe building site with adequate access; and that public facilities which serve such uses be designed and installed to minimize flood damage.
14. To protect individuals from buying land which is unsuitable for use because of flooding by prohibiting the improper subdivision and/or development of unprotected lands within the designated floodplain districts.
15. To preserve the natural beauty and topography of the Municipality and to ensure appropriate development with regard to these natural features.
16. To provide for open spaces through efficient design and layout of the land.
17. And finally, to ensure that documents prepared as part of a land ownership transfer fully and accurately described the parcel of land being subdivided, and the new parcels thus created.

The purpose, regulations, and other elements in the Franklin Township SALDO should be reviewed for consistency with the Community Development Objectives found in the Comprehensive Plan as well as the Zoning Ordinance. The Ordinance may need to be amended to include some of the new concepts, tools, and techniques that have been identified in the comprehensive plan to promote new residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Any changes or amendments to the SALDO should be consistent with the Township's zoning ordinance and any land use policies and procedures that have been developed over the years.

Utilizing the Township's Advantages

It is important for Franklin Township to grow in an orderly and well planned out manner. This will ensure that the Township remains a sustainable and resilient community for years to come. The guidance provided by the Plan will also make sure that capital improvements are completed concurrently with proposed future developments in a cost-effective manner.

The Comprehensive Plan has identified areas where growth and development may occur so that the necessary infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, utilities, etc.), public services and facilities (police, fire, EMS, etc.), parks, open space and other improvements can be provided to accommodate the anticipated growth.

One of the paths that will lead new residents and businesses to the Township will be through the promotion of its many advantages such as:

- Location
- Rural Character
- Cultural and Natural Resources (Natural Gas)
- Interchange / Interstate
- Available / Developable Land

Franklin Township not only has the assets needed to support future residential, commercial and industrial growth, but it also contains important features that should be conserved to maintain the quality of life that it presently offers.

Conserving the Township's Resources

As stated in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the preservation or protection of natural and historic resources shall include the means to conserve and safeguard these resources from wasteful or destructive use, but shall not be interpreted to authorize the unreasonable restriction of forestry, mining or other lawful uses of natural resources. This is important to note because of the abundance of natural resources in Franklin Township such as woodlands / timber, coal and natural (shale) gas.

One of the questions asked of plan participants was – What areas (in the Township) should be preserved / protected from future development and the reasons they should not be developed? Some of the responses included:

- Natural lands and resources that provide recreation and leisure activities
- The green spaces that are part of the rural character of the Township
- Areas that have no public water and sewage service
- Homes and businesses that reflect our history
- Agricultural lands that contain farms and other agricultural businesses

The conservation of Franklin Township's natural environment is an essential part of creating a healthy community; one that provides an aesthetic value through its viewsheds, open spaces, and woodlands, offers recreation and tourism opportunities,

and supports economic development. The identification of these features is an important part of planning for the future of the municipality. Ensuring that development is designed to protect important cultural, natural and environmental resources will prevent conflicts and support the long-term sustainability of Franklin Township.

Maps contained in the Plan have identified the environmentally sensitive areas (soils, slopes, streams and watersheds), cultural / historic / natural sites, transportation facilities, recreation sites, protected lands, and mineral resources (gas wells, oil wells, etc.).

Opportunities

Input on what participants felt were opportunities for Franklin Township in the next ten years was provided during the planning process. In the initial discussions, “opportunities” were not limited to any particular element of the comprehensive plan. The feedback provided insight into what the residents, stakeholders, and business community thought about opportunities that currently exist in the Township and those that can be developed in the future.

As the following thoughts and ideas convey, opportunities were identified within the Township that municipal officials and staff may be able to address as resources become available.

Future Growth and Development / Economy

- Move the Greene County Airport and Greene County Fairgrounds to new locations – then redevelop that land
 - Airport property could be a commercial / retail hub or mixed use that includes advanced manufacturing
 - Fairgrounds could be mixed use
- New restaurants and entertainment options
- Develop the Walmart site
- More small businesses
- Attract a Community College
- Provide the professionals working at the WVU Medicine facility with information on why they should live in the Township
- Recruit service providers / downstream business opportunities that can capitalize on the natural gas industry
- Develop an Energy Park that focuses on power generated from the natural gas industry

- Promote growth opportunities related to the healthcare industry
- Focus on technology businesses given the internet infrastructure availability
- Rohanna's Golf Course – possible residential / mixed use development
- Small Gift / Craft Shops – well thought out with the right “vision”; investing in people who have a plan to be successful
- East Franklin School – possible redevelopment site
- Provide support – better ideas and suggestions – for local business owners to help attract new business (via Social Media)
- Provide an inventory of the local stores / retail shops that provide goods and services – people are not looking hard enough; a lot of what people want are provided by local establishments in the Waynesburg area
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote the local business community
- Invest in business owners who have a vision and are successful
- Individuals are willing to invest in the Township – are there opportunities to assist them in these efforts (leverage their commitment)
- What are the number of people staying in hotels / campgrounds that are here for the Marcellus industry?
 - Where are they going to eat and for other retail needs?
 - What services are they needing and where are they going for them?
- Work with the business community to help move plans / projects forward in Franklin Township in the future
 - Raise money / resources for community services
 - Use the Chamber of Commerce to reach the business community
 - Quarterly meetings between the Township leaders and the business owners / CEOs / Managers – task force

Infrastructure Improvements (Transportation / Water / Sewer / Utilities)

- Expand public water and sewage to the areas that have the potential for future growth
- Provide Broadband / Internet / Cable / Cell service to areas that don't have it
- Develop the Route 21 corridor
 - Some areas along the road do not have public sewage and if extended, could spur of new development
 - Approximately 1 mile of new sewage line would need to be installed to reach the Township line (to the east)

Housing

- Senior Housing
- Patio Homes

- Develop subdivisions near the interstate (\$300,000+ homes)
- Higgins / Marisa Property – previously recorded plan of lots (residential) at the end of Bonar Avenue

Quality of Life

- Improve the Central Greene School District facilities and allow the residents to use them
- Wisecarver Recreation Site – construct the softball complex / other recreation improvements
- Hunting – promote the hotels available where hunters can stay
- Walking / bike trails (Bob Mt Joy – trail plan / concept)
- Opening of the bowling alley
- Township Police Department
- Parks and Recreation improvements
- Kayaking – South Fork of Ten Mile Creek (kayakgreenecounty.com)

General

- Enforce Ordinances (eliminate blight and unsightly properties)
- More places for people to dispose of unwanted items so that they will not throw them in fields and along fence lines
- Entice folks to live here – commute to Morgantown, Washington, and Pittsburgh
- Using Township Website and social media to get information out there – presently not being used to the Township's advantage
- Merging of the Borough and the Township
- Promote the Central Greene School District
 - Is it a perception or reality regarding test scores, etc.
- Promote the Township – show successes to change the bad / wrong perceptions
- Changing the mindset of local people
- Regulations for aesthetics – raise the standards to address many of the dilapidated buildings
- Keep some flexibility in the regulations to allow developers to be creative
- Local residents are getting used to going to Morgantown, Uniontown, and Washington for food, services, goods, and entertainment – how do you change their attitudes and mindsets to do the same things locally

Potential Development Sites

The opportunities were refined further as participants in the planning process were asked - In the next ten to fifteen years, what areas / locations in Franklin Township do

you feel should be developed? Responses also included suggestions for the types of development that some of the areas / locations could support.

- Walmart Area – restaurant, retail, manufacturing
- Airport – residential, shopping, restaurants, mixed use, manufacturing
- Bonar Avenue (flat land above the Hospital) – housing
- Murtha Drive – retail, food
- I-79 Interchange
- Anywhere that can support residential development – 55+ Community; patio homes; residential development
- Property currently owned by Central Greene School District off of Rolling Meadows Road – Patio Homes
- Wisecarver Dam Property – recreational
- Powell Property – recreation, housing
- Rohanna’s Golf Course
- Sugar Run Road – residential, eliminate commercial
- Evergreene Technology Park – expand the park to provide additional businesses and industries
- Route 21 (east) – medical, transportation, recreation
- West Waynesburg (area where Emerald Coal was) – repurpose the property to permit some type of activity / business / agricultural use

The Comprehensive Plan Project Steering Committee reviewed the potential development opportunities and established parameters that should be used to identify priority development sites in the Township. These amenities included:

- Access – road network
- Water – public system
- Sewage – public system
- Utilities – electric, cable, gas, etc.
- Availability – is the property currently for sale, if not, is the owner willing to sell
- Zoning – is the property zoned for the type of development being proposed
- Cost of Land
- Broadband / Internet service
- Communication
- Partnerships

The following sites were based on recommendations from the public, stakeholders, Franklin Township staff, and business community and are included on the Potential Development Opportunities Map. They include:

- W Roy Furman Highway (McNay) – two sites
- W Roy Furman Highway (Emerald / Contura)
- Waterdam Road (Wisecarver Recreation Area)
- Route 218 (Emeral / Contura)
- Route 218
- End of Bonar Avenue (Comstock)
- Access via Wayne Road (Higgins)
- Orchard / Mt. Morris Road (Mason)
- Mt. Morris Road (Cowell)
- Greene County Fairgrounds (Greene County)
- Access via E. Oakview Drive (Central Greene SD)
- Access via Colonial Drive (Fox / Patrick)
- E Roy Furman Highway (Hook)
- Route 188 (Emerald / Contura)
- Rush Lane (McNay)
- Baker Drive (Hook)
- Greene County Airport (Greene County)
- Murtha Drive (Bowers – Kari Resources)
- Zimmer (Rohanna Iron & Metal)
- Rohanna’s Golf Course (Rohanna Iron & Metal)
- E Roy Furman Highway (Varner – West Side) (Blaker – East Side)

The potential development of these sites will require discussions with the present landowners to determine their future plans for the property. Some of the properties may require a rezoning to accommodate commercial and / or industrial uses and infrastructure may need to be extended to serve the sites.

In an interview with Greene County officials, the future development of the Airport site and the Fairgrounds is a possibility. The recommendation was to keep the lines of communication open – between the Township and the County – and to convey any interest in the property to the Commissioners so that it can be discussed.