

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan for East Pikeland Township, upon adoption, would replace the Township's Comprehensive Plan of 1984. This Plan is intended to provide the Township the opportunity to reexamine the goals and objectives of the 1984 Plan and the Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan of 1993. This reexamination has been done in light of current and future growth and demographic trends, as well as contemporary planning concepts and growth management strategies. This Plan also addresses the planning goals, objectives and policies of both the 1996 Chester County Comprehensive Plan, "Landscapes", and the 1996 Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan and the relationships between each.

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to establish a growth management strategy, consisting of a set of contemporary planning policies and implementation tools, with which to manage future growth and development in East Pikeland Township. Furthermore, it is the intent of this update to establish this growth management strategy within the context of the planning requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code<sup>1</sup>, "Landscapes"<sup>2</sup>, the Chester County Comprehensive Plan, and the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan<sup>3</sup>.

### Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) empowers municipalities in Pennsylvania to, individually or jointly, prepare plans for their future development and, by various legal and other measures, to implement those plans. Those municipalities choosing to plan for their future and take advantage of the benefits thereof, must meet the planning requirements of the MPC. Article III, Section 301 of the MPC requires that municipal comprehensive plans include the following basic elements:

1. Community Development Objectives
2. A Plan for Land Use
3. A Plan for Housing
4. A Plan for Transportation
5. A Plan for Community Facilities and Utilities

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<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, P.L. 805, Act 247, as reenacted and amended.

<sup>2</sup> Landscapes, Managing Change in Chester County 1996-2020, Comprehensive Plan Policy Element, Adopted July 12, 1996 by the Chester County Board of County Commissioners.

<sup>3</sup> Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan, December, 1996.

6. Interrelationships of Plan Components
7. Implementation Strategies
8. Regional Plan and Development Relationships

The MPC also enables municipalities to plan for the supply of water and the conservation of energy, however, these plans are not requirements. All municipal plans must be submitted for review and comment to the County in which the municipality is located as well as to the surrounding municipalities and the local school district. The MPC requires that all Counties within the Commonwealth prepare and adopt comprehensive plans and that the municipal plans be “generally consistent” therewith.

#### “Landscapes”, The Chester County Comprehensive Plan

Recognizing that recent unprecedented growth and development in Chester County has created a sprawl pattern of development which, if left unchecked, would continue to degrade the quality of life of Chester County residents, the Chester County Board of Commissioners adopted, in July, 1996, a comprehensive plan for the County entitled *Landscapes, Managing Change in Chester County, 1996-2020, Comprehensive Plan Policy Element*. The stated purpose of the Chester County Plan is to reverse the trend toward a continued pattern of sprawl development. This is to be accomplished by enlisting the cooperation of the municipalities in working, in a coordinated fashion, toward a new way of managing growth and development that will preserve the unique character of and quality of life in Chester County. “Landscapes” is intended to provide a County-wide Vision for the future and, as an alternative to the current pattern of sprawl development, a growth management framework to help:

- Preserve the unique character of Chester County
- Preserve open space and farmland
- Preserve historic resources
- Strengthen communities
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Control public costs
- Maintain a competitive economy

This growth management framework establishes the concept of “Livable Landscapes” wherein four distinct types within the County are identified – natural, rural, suburban and urban, together with strategies for achieving the appropriate intensity and character of development with each of the landscapes. In order to protect and enhance the character of each of the landscape types, growth boundaries are delineated to define those areas in which growth and development should occur. The urban and suburban

landscapes are designated to accommodate future growth insofar as they have traditionally been development centers and have infrastructure in place. The natural and rural landscapes are designated as protection areas, not suitable for development, because they serve as important sources of open space and contain environmental, scenic and agricultural resources.

In order to define and create the livable landscapes, a number of guiding goals have been developed as a reflection of the desires of Chester County residents. The Comprehensive Plan advocates that all future planning decisions be made within the context of these goals if the County's Vision of the future is to be achieved. A summary of the guiding goals follows:

- Preserve and enhance the diversified mix of Land Uses through municipal cooperation and concentration of development.
- Sustain and enhance natural, scenic and historic resources while accommodating planned growth.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy business climate to ensure Economic Development and growth and preserve the quality of life.
- Provide an inter-modal Transportation system optimizing mobility, strengthening the economy, protecting the environment and supporting the Vision.
- Provide Community Facilities and Services to meet residents' needs through cooperation of the public and private sectors.
- Provide Utilities to meet all needs while protecting the environment and public health and supporting development consistent with Livable Landscapes.
- Provide diverse and affordable Housing to meet the needs of all households.
- Provide for the Human Services needs of County residents.
- Provide for the Public Health needs of the County residents.
- Achieve a high level of intergovernmental and public-private Planning and Coordination.

The concept of Livable Landscapes provides the basic growth management framework within which planning decisions can be made. In addition to the establishment of growth boundaries, the concept also includes the identification of centers, villages and developed corridors, all of which, as patterns of development, have and will continue to add to the character of Chester County. Centers exist in the rural and suburban landscapes and serve as the focus of existing and future growth. Villages are important to the historical character of the County and will serve the local shopping community needs of rural

residents. Developed corridors, on the other hand, are of more recent vintage and have been identified as areas that will require new development and land use controls in order to improve their appearance and their functional operation with respect to the transportation facilities that serve them.

Insofar as Chester County has no land use and development regulatory powers, in order to achieve the future Vision expressed in the County's Comprehensive Plan, a very close working relationship among and between the municipalities and Chester County is essential. To assist in accomplishing this level of coordination and cooperation, the County has established a Vision Partnership program through which, in return for support of the Chester County Comprehensive Plan initiatives, a municipality is eligible for technical and financial planning assistance. This assistance includes a review of local plans and ordinances to identify any changes necessary to implement the Vision, identification of growth boundaries, and funding for changes to the municipality's plans and ordinances.

The implications of the Chester County Comprehensive Plan initiatives for East Pikeland Township and its planning and growth management program are significant and will provide direction to this Plan Update. They are summarized as follows:

1. Critically analyze population and housing projections and determine the most appropriate locations within the Township for accommodating additional growth and development.
2. Inventory natural, historic and agricultural resources and ensure protection through appropriate zoning and infrastructure planning.
3. Identify areas within which higher intensity development can be accommodated. These should be areas, identified in the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan, in or adjacent to Phoenixville or Spring City, where infrastructure exists or can be most economically provided.
4. Identify the potential for a multi-modal transportation system that creates or enhances the use of public transit and bicycle and pedestrian circulation in order to reduce the reliance on the automobile.

5. Identify revisions to the Sewage Facilities Plan for consistency with the Chester County Plan and the Township's growth management strategy.
6. Plan for a variety of housing types to meet the needs of all income levels.
7. Plan for the creation of neighborhood and/or community service centers.
8. Identify environmental, medical or social needs within the Township.
9. Establish a strong intergovernmental planning coordinating mechanism as identified in the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan.
10. Establish a growth management implementation strategy to guide and direct zoning and land development regulatory revisions in order to realize the Township's planning goals within the context of the Chester County Vision and the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Regional Land Use Plan goals.

#### The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities (FNCCC) Regional Land Use Plan

Since its inception in 1976, the FNCCC has been an organization of adjacent municipalities that has been able to address various issues that have impact beyond the local municipal boundaries. Members of the FNCCC are the Townships of East Pikeland, East Vincent, West Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, East Coventry, Warwick, East Nantmeal, and the Borough of Spring City. The first Regional Land Use Plan was adopted in 1980. The 1996 Plan was an acknowledgement that, in the interim, growth pressures had increased and development accelerated. Improved accessibility to the region and improvements in sewer and water systems have contributed to the growth trends that continue today.

The Regional Land Use Plan, adopted in 1996, is significant for addressing the land use concerns of the region and insuring that compatibility exists at the boundaries. Many services, such as transportation, schools, and utilities transcend municipal boundaries. The FNCCC provides a forum for the mutual

consideration of issues, resulting in a coordinated approach to planning and the provision of services. The Regional Land Use Plan has several objectives.

- Provides a clear direction on land use policies
- Provides municipal and regional planning tools to guide growth
- Establishes a strategy for managing growth cooperatively

Members of the FNCCC, comprised of officials from the municipalities, meet regularly to consider matters of mutual interest and concern. The 1996 Plan is comparatively recent, but as time passes and development concerns continue, it will be necessary to update the Plan. It has been used in the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan for input on many of the mentioned planning issues that don't end at the Township's borders. Continued and consistent participation should be encouraged of all the member municipalities.

#### East Pikeland Township Comprehensive Plan, 1984

The most recent Comprehensive Plan for East Pikeland Township was prepared in 1984. It provided a review of the conditions found in the Township at that time, including natural features, land use patterns, circulation systems and cultural factors. One element that was not included in the 1984 Plan was a history of the Township. This Comprehensive Plan Update stresses the value of the historical evolution of the Township and its place within the region. The 1984 Plan has served the Township reasonably well, but like any plan committed to words and maps, its reliability and effectiveness declines as it ages. Not only have growth pressures increased due to population increases in general, but the mobility of the population has caused East Pikeland Township to be attractive for primarily residential expansion.

Conditions within the Township have changed by magnitude since 1984. The seventeen year period has seen numerous new housing developments reviewed, approved and constructed, with a particular emphasis on multi-family developments. More and more of the agricultural and open space lands of the Township have become home for an ever increasing population. That population finds that is increasingly easy to commute to employment centers that in the past would have been too distant to be practical. Highway improvements and service expansions of mass transit systems have reduced time spent getting to and from jobs.

The Future Land Use Plan in the 1984 Comprehensive Plan bears some resemblance to the patterns of growth that have occurred since its adoption. That Plan called for the preservation of the southwestern sector near Pickering Creek in low density development. With some exceptions that has occurred

and the area remains one of rural character. The central sector was proposed for medium and high density residential growth, as well as industrial and commercial corridors. The strip commercial areas have materialized along the major roads, particularly near the eastern Township boundaries. The industrial area proposed near Kimberton Village has not developed to the extent proposed, although there is a concentration of such uses in the area south of the Village. The northeastern sector was proposed for all levels of residential growth and an industrial area adjacent to the Schuylkill River, where the PECO electric plant is located.

Since 1984, the Township has seen considerable sprawl type single family development. It is clear that lands available for future growth are becoming increasingly rare. The 1984 Plan designated broad areas for future growth, building on the pattern of land use at that time. This Comprehensive Plan takes into account that only limited areas are available and, that to preserve a semblance of the agrarian character of the past, it will be necessary to focus growth in defined growth areas. These areas have undeveloped land and are served by adequate infrastructure to support growth. The balance of the Township could experience limited growth but it should not be routinely encouraged.

#### East Pikeland Township Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan, 1993

The Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan for East Pikeland Township was prepared by the consulting firm of Robert E. Bartmann, AICP. This document provides a thorough background for the natural and open space resources of the Township and it is intended to be included as an element of this Comprehensive Plan. The Open Space Plan is exhaustive in its detail relating to the factors which make up the process of planning for the retention of open space. The science of the natural features, such as geology, hydrology, biology, and zoology are the underpinnings of value of such features. The Plan develops the case for additional protections being needed to preserve areas of the Township that have historically made up the Township character. Recognized as well is the presence of population that has needs for recreational activities. The merger of the open space areas and the ability to function as recreational areas leads to planning to preserve and utilize the natural areas. Not all recreational needs can be met in a stream corridor, or even locally. The plan analyzes the availability of active recreation areas and programs. Proposals are made to augment areas that are lacking and to coordinate with other municipalities for regional activities.

Although approximately eight years older than this Comprehensive Plan, the information contained in the Open Space Plan is valuable and still timely. It is a significant planning document and considered an important element of this Comprehensive Plan Update. In order to maintain consistency among the relevant planning documents of the Township, this Comprehensive Plan Update incorporates much of the important resources inventories and open space preservation and protection strategies of the Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan.

### Local Government Organization

East Pikeland Township is governed by a Board of Supervisors consisting of three elected officials. The Board is supported by a number of Commissions, Boards, and Task Forces of volunteers who are appointed by the Supervisors, as well as by a small paid staff hired by the Supervisors. The overall responsibility of local government rests with the Board of Supervisors. The Board establishes the annual budget, sets priorities for expenditures, directs the staff, makes appointments to the various other local boards and commissions, makes local laws and regulations in accordance with state and federal enabling legislation, and adopts long-range goals, plans, and objectives. The Supervisors are responsible for the adoption of the Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan.

The Planning Commission is advisory to the Board of Supervisors and assists the Board by: preparing, formulating, and reviewing long-range plans, such as the Township Comprehensive Plan, formulating various zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations that help the Township to realize its environmental and recreation goals and plans; integrating the plans for open space, environmental resources, recreation land, and recreation facilities with the Comprehensive Plan; and overseeing the approval of individual development plans for land development, the subdivision of land, new roads, utilities, landscaping, parks, and recreation facilities in accordance with such goals and plans.

The Historical Commission is responsible for: promoting the preservation of local history and historic architectural sites; gathering and researching the history of the Township or historic sites; and the general dissemination of historic information to the citizens of East Pikeland Township. The Cultural and Historic Resources that are outlined in the Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan provide a basis for coordination between the Planning Commission, Historic Commission, and County and State agencies in providing protection for these resources.

The Park and Recreation Board is responsible for preparing, reviewing, and formulating long-range plans for recreation lands and facilities, preparing capital budgets and annual operational budgets of the recreation lands, facilities, and programs for the Supervisors to consider, preparing recreation programs, scheduling the use of facilities, and directing the expenditure of funds for maintenance and programs. The Commission may also recruit volunteers, solicit private funding sources, and make minor expenditures for certain recreation services.

The Phoenixville-East Pikeland Park and Recreation Board is responsible for coordinating recreation program budgets and the use of facilities that serve both communities. More specifically, the joint Board oversees the summer recreation program that operates at the East Pikeland Elementary School and ensures that many of the programs in Phoenixville are also available to the residents of East Pikeland Township.

The Zoning Hearing Board is a quasi-judicial body that interprets the application of the zoning regulations adopted by the Board of Supervisors. As an independent judicial body, the Zoning Hearing Board, aside from the appointment of its members, stands aloof from the other municipal functions. State law requires that this board be established whenever a local zoning ordinance is adopted.

The Valley Forge Sewer Authority is concerned with providing sewer services to certain areas of the Township. Its actions should be coordinated with the Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan so the sewer utility lines do not harm the cultural and historic resources or natural resources. In some instances, Authority land and rights-of-way may also be used for open space or recreation facilities.

The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities provides a mechanism for the coordination of plans and development efforts between member communities. Natural resources do not recognize most boundaries of political subdivisions. The preservation of a ground water aquifer, a stream valley, a ridge top, or a unique environment may, and usually does, depend on parallel and coordinated efforts among two or more communities. In many instances, joint development and use of recreation facilities among municipalities allows for better recreation facilities and services and/or reduced costs for their provision.

The size of the staff employed by the Township varies over time, but consists of a full-time Township Manager and two administrative employees. Other departments within the Township government consist of six (6) full-time and two

(2) part-time police officers, a volunteer Emergency Coordinator, two (2) full-time and one (1) part-time roads department employees, and one (1) building inspector on a consultant basis.

The Township retains consultants in several cases to provide professional services as needed. These individuals include a Township Engineer, a Township Planner, and a Township Solicitor.