

DRAFT
MULTI-MUNICIPAL
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN

FOR
CARROLL TOWNSHIP, FINLEYVILLE BOROUGH,
UNION TOWNSHIP, AND NOTTINGHAM TOWNSHIP
IN
WASHINGTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

DECEMBER 2005

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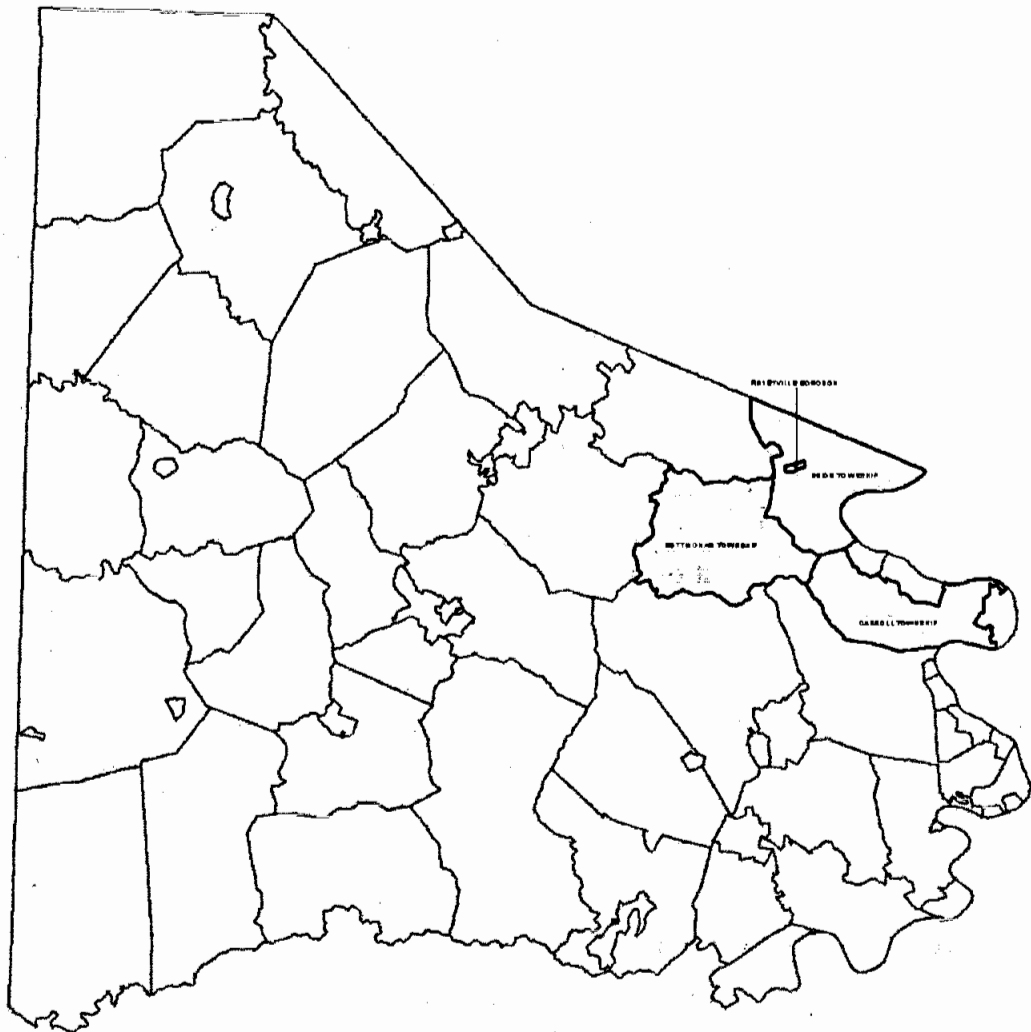
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Chapter 1 Overview

Introduction to the Planning Region

The planning region encompassed by this multi-municipal comprehensive plan includes four municipalities in eastern Washington County: Carroll Township, Finleyville Borough, Union Township and Nottingham Township. (See map below.) These communities formed a partnership for the purpose of developing a long-range plan for their future as a single planning region.

Multi-municipal planning was logical since the four municipalities belong to the same local school district (Ringgold) and share other common interests and issues such as the construction and impact of the Mon-Fayette Expressway and the Southern Beltway, solving the dilemma of abandoned mines and mine drainage, and a strong desire to preserve the quality of life in a predominantly rural environment.



Map 1-1 Planning Region Map

Local Planning in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania municipalities are empowered by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) “to plan their development” and to “govern development locally through both zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances.” The MPC authorizes municipalities to prepare comprehensive plans for the purposes of promoting and protecting safety, health and morals; accomplishing coordinated development; providing for the general welfare; guiding uses of land and structures, type and location of streets, public grounds and other facilities, among other things.

Finally, the MPC authorizes two or more municipalities to enter into an intergovernmental cooperative agreement for the purpose of developing, adopting and implementing a comprehensive plan. By developing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan, there is the potential to plan more efficiently and effectively on a regional basis. Such was the case with Carroll, Union and Nottingham Townships and Finleyville Borough.

Planning as Policy

Webster’s Dictionary defines “policy” as “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions.” As a policy guide for township and borough officials, the comprehensive plan is meant to provide guidance in the day-to-day administrative decision-making encountered by the elected bodies. For example, a request to rezone a large parcel of land from an agricultural use to an intensive commercial use can cause significant impacts, both positive and negative, for a municipality. As part of the decision-making process, municipal officials, planning staff, and local planning commissions should be able to find justification within the approved multi-municipal comprehensive plan as to whether the rezoning request should be approved or denied.

The comprehensive plan is a policy guide for Carroll, Union and Nottingham Townships and Finleyville Borough as they assess the location, character and extent of future development. Plan policies and recommendations are to be implemented over time through a variety of decision-making actions including subdivision of land, and the location and construction of public infrastructure improvements, among other things. The comprehensive plan was developed to respond to the growing concern that future land use decisions affecting land within the four municipalities should be made in a coordinated and responsible manner to capitalize on potential economic development initiatives and to preserve and enhance the quality of life.

The Regional Planning Process

The regional planning process for Carroll, Union and Nottingham Townships and Finleyville Borough began in January 2005 with the first of several steering committee meetings. Members of the comprehensive plan steering committee were appointed by the elected bodies of each municipality to

assist with the development of a community vision statement, community development goals and objectives, and a draft future land use map.

Assisting the municipalities were staff members from the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington and Mullin & Lonergan Associates, a planning and community development consulting firm.

In February, a planning workshop was held for steering committee members. Denny Puko, Regional Local Government Policy Specialist with the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, presented a Saturday morning workshop to introduce the committee members and other local planning commissioners to the planning process.

In March, Mullin & Lonergan Associates presented a demographic overview and a photographic survey of existing conditions in the four municipalities to the steering committee. Plans were also made for the community-wide visioning workshop scheduled for the next month.

On April 7, the visioning workshop was held in Carroll Township. Approximately 120 residents attended and participated in small group activities designed to encourage the residents to envision the future of their municipalities on a regional basis. The idea of regionalism was easily understood and accepted by those in attendance. Several individuals commented on the increased political power their state elected officials would have if the officials were able to speak with one voice for the entire planning region. Other residents recognized the benefits of planning for major new developments with significant impact on more than one municipality. Many participants fully recognized the physical impact that current land uses have on surrounding properties without any regard for municipal boundaries. By the end of the workshop, most attendees realized that preserving and enhancing their quality of life would require a proactive response on their part to regional planning.

The steering committee continued their work with a second public meeting on May 12. At that meeting, a progress report was given and the draft comprehensive plan vision statements were presented for public comment. The statements were accepted by those in attendance with only minor revisions.

In June and July, two workshops were held with the steering committee to draft a future land use map for the planning region. Existing land use maps were created for each of the municipalities and a composite map was prepared for review by the committee as a whole. Committee members identified areas appropriate for new development, areas that should remain primarily rural in nature due to infrastructure restrictions and a desire to preserve agricultural areas, and priority areas for new infrastructure development. Based on these concepts, a draft future land use map for the planning region was created. This map, along with land use designations and descriptions, was incorporated into the draft comprehensive plan.

From August through November, sections of the comprehensive plan were drafted and presented to the steering committee for review and comment. In December, a complete draft of the comprehensive plan was provided to each of the four municipalities.

Using This Plan

This multi-municipal comprehensive plan is to be used as a guide for making decisions relative to land use and development in the four municipalities. Elected officials of each municipality will continue to act as the governing body for their respective municipalities, but their decisions should be guided by the recommendations included within this document and developed in joint collaboration with each other. This document provides guidance for site plans, subdivision plans, zoning requests, community facility projects and other development-related concerns.

The multi-municipal comprehensive plan is divided into thirteen chapters containing nine plan elements, most of which are required by the MPC. Following the Introduction and Regional Profile sections, the chapters include:

- Vision for 2025
- Land Use Plan
- Housing Plan
- Historic & Cultural Resources Plan
- Natural Resources Plan
- Community Facilities Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Economic Development Plan
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan
- Energy Conservation Plan
- Implementation Plan.

The Implementation Plan contains a detailed and descriptive list of the strategies included in each of the plan components. The primary purpose of the Implementation Plan is to provide a step-by-step guide for municipal officials and residents to achieve the community goals and objectives, and ultimately the long-range community vision, established in the multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

Interrelationship with Plan Elements

One of the requirements of the MPC is that a comprehensive plan shall include an explanation of how the individual plan elements (such as land use, housing, transportation, economic development, natural resources, historic resources, etc.) are interrelated and impact one another. This may be best explained by the new Mon-Fayette Expressway interchange in Union Township and the planned Southern Beltway interchange in Nottingham Township. It becomes impossible to describe the future physical impact of these two major thoroughfares without touching upon how the land on either side of the roadways for a significant distance will be physically changed.

Furthermore, these potential physical changes are viewed by many as economic development initiatives because of the new employment opportunities and increased tax revenues that they may generate. As a result, there exists an obvious interrelationship among various plan elements such as land use and housing, transportation, community facilities and economic development in the very least.

Because of this interrelationship among plan components, basic planning principles can provide guidance when making recommendations, and eventually approved policies, for future land use decisions. The comprehensive plan's Future Land Use and Housing Plan allocates land uses and specifies the recommended types of land uses and densities for those uses. The availability of sanitary sewer and water facilities influence the shaping of development patterns, including location and density. Coordination of land use and infrastructure planning is critical to ensure that future land use reflects the availability of public sewer and water facilities, and public sewer and water facilities are not proposed for those areas not intended for future development.

Through land use planning, such as designation of rural residential areas, watersheds and wellhead protection areas for community water supplies can be established. Intensive residential development is not proposed where sewer infrastructure is not planned, available, or in close proximity, and where soils are not suitable for on-site sewage disposal.

It is important that community facilities, including recreation and open space, are available to serve the residents of the area. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan notes existing recreational facilities, proposed recreational facilities, and potential opportunities for recreational facilities. The Plan discusses greenways for recreational purposes and linking residential areas to community facilities.

Future public facilities should be sited to be consistent with the community goals and objectives of the Future Land Use and Housing Plan, such as maintaining open space and recreation uses.

The Future Land Use and Housing Plan encourages economic vitality by providing areas for commercial and industrial development and agricultural activities. Preservation of residential communities can provide support for local businesses and a local workforce. Providing for open space and preservation of community resources supports the quality of life in the area and can encourage additional private investment.

It is necessary to maintain a transportation circulation system, which can accommodate generated traffic volumes. In turn, future development should not adversely affect the circulation system. Land use decisions are influenced by the existing circulation system, while at the same time those land use decisions affect circulation systems and their functions. Existing rural and residential areas should be protected as much as possible from the impacts of through-traffic, which can be accomplished by proposed improvements to the circulation network.

Compatibility with Other Plans

Another regulatory requirement of the MPC is that a comprehensive plan must indicate how the recommendations contained with this plan are compatible with the comprehensive plans of neighboring municipalities and Washington County.

The municipalities of New Eagle Borough and Monongahela City are surrounded by the planning region covered by this comprehensive plan. These two communities will be initiating a joint comprehensive planning process over the next twelve months.

The Washington County Comprehensive Plan Draft (June 2005) was reviewed. This document is primarily a public policy guide to decision-making regarding the physical development of the county as a whole. The goals and objectives contained within this multi-municipal plan are consistent and compatible with the proposed county comprehensive plan.

Relationship to Adjoining Municipalities

The existing and proposed development in Carroll, Union and Nottingham Townships and Finleyville Borough are, in many cases, compatible with the existing and proposed development and plans in adjoining municipalities.

Where there are some instances of adjacent incompatible uses, buffering techniques are recommended to be included in subdivision and land development ordinances and zoning ordinances.

With the Monongahela River forming a large part of the eastern boundary for most of the planning region, land uses in adjoining Allegheny County will have minimal impact on the region.