

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Introduction

The future land use plan provides the overall framework for guiding land use, housing, historic and scenic resource protection, economic development, and related policy decisions for the next ten years. Housing is closely tied to land use, and the two should be considered together. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) sets forth each municipality’s responsibilities regarding housing, and specifically references housing of different types and densities. The MPC requires housing be addressed in the comprehensive plan and offers examples of strategies that include conservation, rehabilitation, and facilitation of new construction based on projected needs. Historic and scenic resources ensure that the character of the Township remains intact. Economic development is also guided by future land use decisions and influences a community’s character and ease of access by residents to commercial facilities.

This chapter focuses on addressing the primary challenges and opportunities to implement the goals for land use, housing, historic and scenic resource protection and economic development.

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Challenges & Opportunities

The following challenges and opportunities were identified as part of the inventory and analysis of land use, housing, historic and scenic resources, and economic development presented in Chapter 7: Existing Township Conditions.

- While the limited availability of developable land reduces the potential for new growth in the community, new development should be consistent with existing Township character, goals for open space and resource protection, pedestrian connectivity, and a desire to continue agriculture in the community.
- Population projections indicate by the year 2025 the population of Thornbury will be 3,662, up from the year 2015 by 319 people. Based on the average household size of 2.69, the Township will have to accommodate 119 new housing units by the year 2025.
- The protection of historic resources (and natural resources) will enable the community to protect its scenic resources and, in turn, rural character.
- The intersection of Routes 202 and 926 represents a consumer base for commercial land uses in the Township. The Township should consider expanding the adjacent land area available for commercial uses to take advantage of this opportunity and review zoning to ensure that permitted uses are consistent with the changing economy.

Goals and Objectives

Land Use and Community Character Goal

Encourage future development that maintains and enhances existing residential neighborhoods and quality of life throughout the Township.

Land Use and Community Character Objectives

1. Guide the location and intensity of future development to protect existing neighborhoods, public spaces and commercial facilities.
2. Update and adopt the Township's Official Map to reflect the current needs and objectives of the Township.

3. Coordinate future land development with the logical and efficient extension of public utilities and services, especially along the Route 202 and 926 Corridors.
4. Enhance and improve the U.S. Rt. 202 Corridor by:
 - Discouraging the use of Township residential roads as alternatives to U.S. Rt. 202 (short cuts).
 - Encouraging the use of visual buffering and noise abatement from adjacent/nearby residential neighborhoods;
 - Encouraging a non-stop flow of U.S. Rt. 202 traffic through the Township;
5. Identify areas and appropriate uses for infill development.
6. Ensure that commercial development throughout the Township does not detract from the quality of life in the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
7. Coordinate planning with neighboring communities to ensure compatible land use patterns for adjoining areas.
8. Support and participate in multi-municipal planning initiatives (such as the West Chester Area COG) for compatible development, continuation of historic community patterns, natural resource protection, and coordination of infrastructure development.

Housing Goal

Develop remaining undeveloped land in the Township in a manner that reflects the existing community character and enhances existing neighborhoods.

Housing Objectives

1. Identify existing housing maintenance and code deficiencies and recommend actions to address these deficiencies.
2. Investigate the adoption of applicable sections of the International Property Maintenance Code.
3. Identify remaining parcels of available land and ensure that any new development on these parcels is in keeping with the character of surrounding neighborhoods.
4. Explore opportunities for regional planning efforts related to meeting housing needs.
5. Extend public water and sewer to existing residences when opportunities present themselves, as needed.

Historic and Scenic Resources Goals

Identify, protect, and enhance the integrity of historic and scenic resources and their settings to maintain the Township’s heritage and character.

Historic and Scenic Objectives

1. Continue to ensure the preservation of historic properties identified in the 2009 *Township Historic Resources Inventory* by working with the Township Historic Preservation Commission.
2. Develop a list of planning tools that provide incentives and requirements for the protection and preservation of historic resources.
3. Require historic reviews for properties listed as Class 1 or Class 2 on the 2009 *Township Historic Resources Inventory Map*.
4. Identify current significant landscapes and scenic areas in the Township.
5. Designate scenic roadways through the Township and develop criteria and tools to help ensure the maintenance of their scenic qualities.

Economic Development Goal

Continue to support the Township’s commercial properties in order to provide for employment opportunities and commercial resources in the Township.

Economic Development Objectives

1. Maintain and improve the economic viability of the commercial properties along U.S. Rt. 202.
2. Improve the streetscape and access to commercial properties along U.S. Rt. 202.
3. Allow for flexibility in uses for all properties adjacent to U.S. Rt. 202.

Existing Land Use Information

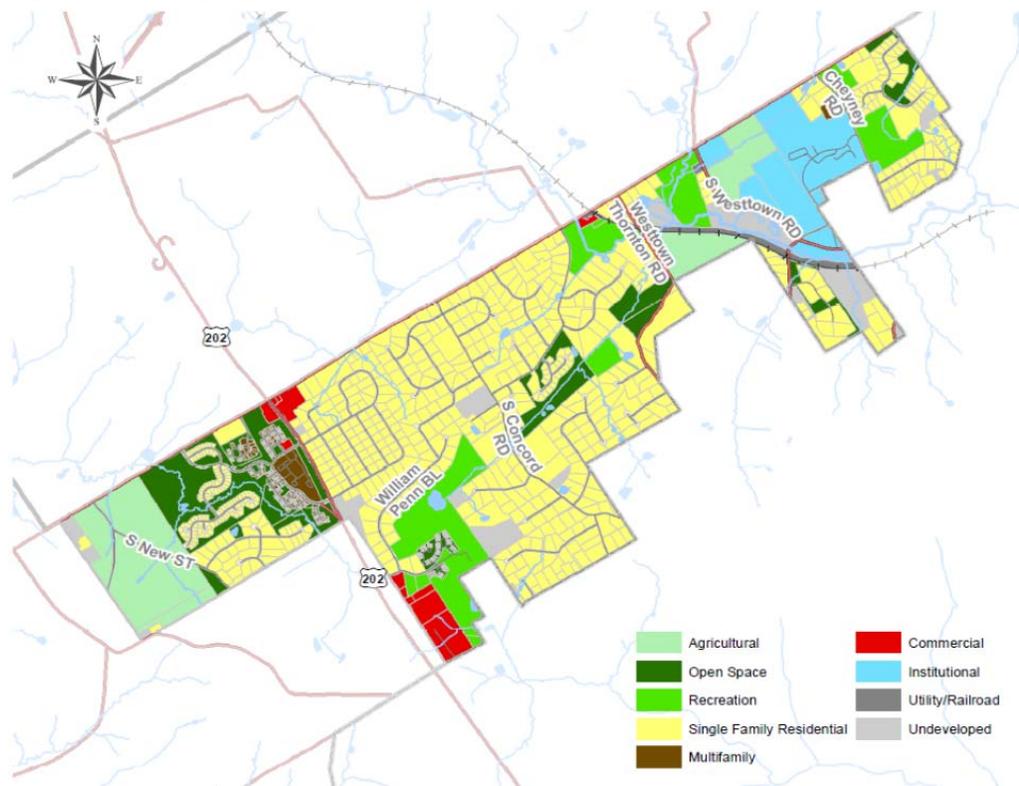
In order to establish future patterns for the Township it is necessary to review the current status of land use in the community, land development trends, land in the township that is available for future development (developable lands), fair share obligations, and current land use regulations (zoning).

Land use refers to the use or activity occurring on a parcel of land or within a building situated upon a parcel of land, not ownership or zoning.

Existing Land Use

Existing land use includes eight categories: Agricultural, Open Space, Recreation, Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Utility/Railroad, and Undeveloped as shown on Figure 3-1. Residential represents the largest existing land use category at 1,291 acres or 55.3% of the Township and is broken down into single family and multi-family designations. A breakdown of all of the existing land use categories is included in Chapter 7: Existing Township Conditions.

Figure 3-1: Existing Land Use (see also Map 3-A in Appendix A)



Source: CCPC, December, 2016

Land Development Trends and Developable Lands

Land Development Trends

The number, type, and size of subdivisions and land developments proposed in recent years provide one measure to assess growth pressure in the Township. Figure 7-22 presents the subdivision and land development applications received for review by the County from 2005 to 2016, a 12-year period. While not every submitted plan is approved, or necessarily built if approved, these proposed plans provide insight into development trends in the community.

While development was fairly consistent prior to the year 2010, in the years that have followed (2011 – 2016) submitted plans have been limited to just 17 single family detached and 625 square feet of commercial, industrial, or institutional space. This reduction in subdivision and land development activity may be attributed, at least in part, to the limited number of developable acres discussed below.

Developable Lands

The amount and location of developable lands that remain in the Township are important to future land use planning. Determining which lands are available for development (developable) is helpful in projecting the amount, type, and location of future growth that could occur in the Township.

After the land unavailable for development (developed, protected, and constrained) has been deducted, approximately 136 acres or about 5.8% of the Township is considered developable.

Figure 3-2: Developable Lands Criteria and Analysis

Primary Category	Included in Category	Total Acres
Developed Lands	existing developments, street rights-of-way, approved subdivisions	1,736
Protected Lands	parks, easements, open space, utility parcels, deed-restricted parcels	465
Natural Resources/Constraints	streams, lakes, wetlands, very steep slopes, very steep slopes, 100 and 500 year floodplains, 75' riparian buffers	498
Developable Lands	remaining lands	136

Source: CCPC, December , 2017.

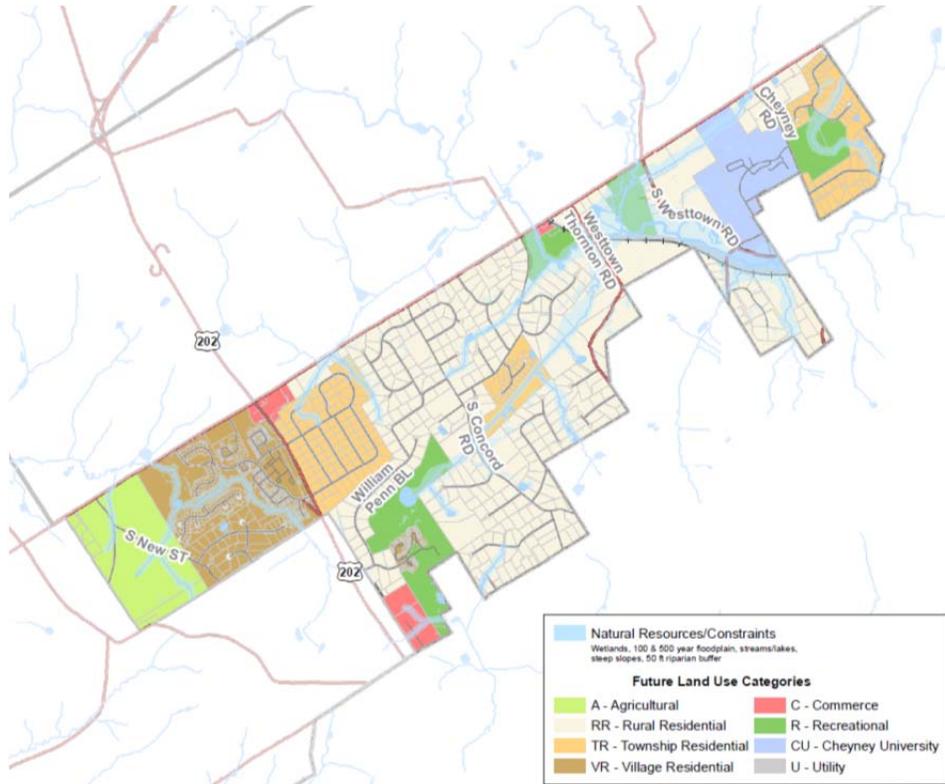
Future Land Use

This section recommends an overall land use pattern for the Township for the next ten years and provides recommendations for how to best achieve that pattern. The future land use plan (and map) designates the future land use or reuse of land in the Township. Therefore, it serves as a **guide** for official decisions regarding the distribution and intensity of growth, the need for expansion of infrastructure, location of recreational facilities, and resource and/or open space preservation.

The overall intent of the land use plan is to promote growth in those areas where it can be accommodated or continue the existing development pattern. Because developable land is limited to only 5.8% of the Township, future growth will be constrained to parcels that are surrounded by existing

development. The proposed land use categories are shown from the largest land area to the smallest, not in order of importance, and are included on Figure 3-3: Future Land Use. Current zoning designations that overlap with the area of each land use category are also included.

Figure 3-3: Future Land Use (see also Map 3-C in Appendix A)



Source: CCPC, 2017

Residential Categories:

There are three categories whose character is determined by density, configuration, lot layout, and road alignment: Rural Residential, Village Residential, and Township Residential.

Rural Residential (RR)

1,193 acres

Current Zoning: AL: Agricultural/Residential (Large Lot) and AS: Agricultural/Residential (Small Lot)

Rural Residential represents the largest land use category encompassing the majority of the area located between Route 202 and the eastern border of the Township. This area is dominated by subdivisions of 1-2+ acre lots,

such as Deer Point, within close proximity to parks and recreational facilities.

Strategy: Continue to permit development that is consistent with the character of the Township’s lower density areas. Further, continue to permit smart growth techniques, such as open space development, to accommodate growth while preserving open space and natural resources and promoting the Township’s pedestrian and bicycle network.

While the Township supports the continuation of agriculture in the community, if current farm parcels are developed in the future, the strategy discussed above will be implemented (see Map 7-9). Further, the Township will review the zoning ordinance to ensure it permits transitional uses such as tree farms and equestrian facilities that have a low impact on adjacent uses similar to existing agricultural uses.

Township Residential (TR)

294 acres

Current Zoning: AS: Agricultural/Residential (Small Lot) and AL: Agricultural/Residential (Large Lot)

Township Residential is located southeast of the intersection of Routes 202 and 926 and in the area surrounding Squire Cheyney Farm Park in the eastern most portion of the Township. This includes Thornbury Estates, Sage Hill, and Preserve at Squire Cheyney. These nodes of medium density housing are located near community amenities such as parks or commercial centers.

Strategy: There are very limited developable lands available in these areas, therefore development would include single residential units, infill opportunities, redevelopment, or conversions of existing single family uses.

Village Residential (VR)

270 acres

Current Zoning: A/PRD/MH: Residential/Plan Residential Development/Mobile Home, CCR: Country Club Residential, AL: Agricultural/Residential (Large Lot), and H: Historical

Village Residential accommodates the highest density uses in the Township and includes Brandywine at Thornbury and the Greens at Penn Oaks. More than density, this land use category is characterized by a pedestrian scale with sidewalks, short setbacks, and narrow roadways.

Strategy: The Village Residential land use category is essentially built out. See Recreational Strategy. Consider



A view of the homes and pedestrian amenities in the Greens at Penn Oaks

working with PennDOT to acquire residential properties currently located within the ultimate right-of-way of State Route 202.

Recreational (R)

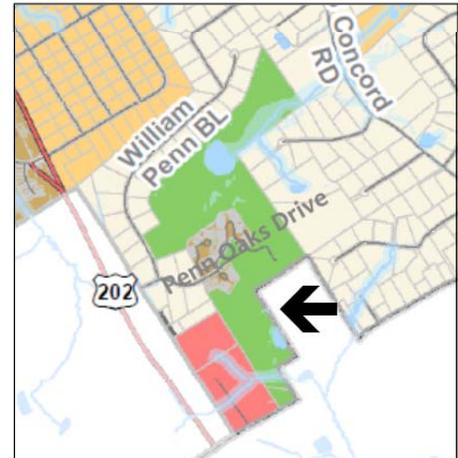
207 acres

Current Zoning Designations: A/PRD/MH: Residential/Plan Residential Development/Mobile Home and CCR: Country Club Residential

The recreational land use category includes public (Township parks) and private (Penn Oaks Golf Course) recreation areas in the Township.

Strategy: The strategies for parks and recreation areas in the Township are included in Chapter 6: Preserving and Enhancing Green Spaces. If the golf course were to close in the future, the Township may want to consider expanding the pattern already existing in the Greens at Penn Oaks to the south of Penn Oaks Drive as shown in Figure 3-6. This would address the need for additional housing, including multifamily, and promote a village pattern and density near the Route 202 corridor and the adjacent commerce area. The golf course acreage north of Penn Oaks Drive would be developed at a density and lot size consistent with current development along William Penn Boulevard.

Figure 3-4: Expanding Penn Oaks Pattern



Agricultural (A)

164 acres

Current Zoning: A/PRD/MH: Residential/Plan Residential Development/Mobile Home and CCR: Country Club Residential

While there are a number of agricultural parcels in the Township, the Agriculture category includes the parcels to the west of Brandywine at Thornbury and Thornbury Knoll. This designation includes Thornbury Farm and represents an area where active agricultural uses could potentially expand and continue the agrarian traditions of Chester County.

Strategy: Continue to promote the agricultural industry by regulating in a manner that responds to evolving agricultural industry trends (such as permitting secondary and accessory farm businesses) and working with the County, land trusts, and local landowners to preserve agriculture and preserve prime agricultural soils through easement.

Cheyney University (CU)

139 acres

Current Zoning: A/PRD/MH: Residential/Plan Residential Development/Mobile Home and CCR: Country Club Residential

The Cheyney University land use category is the land area occupied by the University in Thornbury Township.

Strategy: The Township promotes and supports the continuation of this historic institution. If the University were to close its doors in the future the Township would prioritize the opening of a two-year university or other institutional use. The underlying zoning accommodates a low density residential development option that would promote the protection of open space, natural resources, and the Township’s pedestrian and bicycle network.

Commerce (C)

45 acres

Current Zoning: B: Business and MP: Multipurpose.

The Commerce land use category includes commercial and industrial uses along the Route 202 corridor including the Commons at Thornbury and CVS. It also includes a few small parcels adjacent to Route 202 between the Commons at Thornbury and Red Lion Road and the area along Route 926 occupied by the Goose Creek Grill and post office.



The Goose Creek Grill is located near the entrance of Goose Creek Park.

Strategy: Continue to provide flexibility for establishment and expansion of commercial facilities in the Township.

Utility (U)

22 acres

Current Zoning: AL: Agricultural/Residential (Large Lot), and H: Historical

The Utility land use category includes the railroad right of way that is located to the south of Cheyney University and to the north of Goose Creek Park through recreational and agricultural parcels.

Strategy: The Township supports the re-establishment of rail service through the community with a focus on providing transportation to and from Cheyney University. If the rail line were to be deemed inactive in the future, the Township would actively explore funding opportunities to develop a trail that would link the University to Goose Creek Park and continue the network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Township. See Map 5-B.

Consistency with Adjacent Land Use Plans

In order to eliminate, reduce, or at a minimum, identify potential land use conflicts with adjacent municipalities, it is necessary to compare the Township’s land use categories with adjacent municipalities (in clockwise

order): Birmingham and Westtown Townships in Chester County and Thornbury Township, Delaware County.

Birmingham Township, Chester County

Generally Consistent

Birmingham Township designated six land use categories that are adjacent to the boundaries of Thornbury Township: Residential: Low Density (LDR), Institutional (INST), Parks, Permanent Open Space, Resource Conservation, and Recreation (OS), Residential: Medium Density (MDR), and Highway Mixed-Use (HMX). With the exception of the LDR and INST categories that abut the Spackman property along the western boundary of Thornbury Township, the land uses in Birmingham are generally consistent with those in Thornbury.

Westtown Township, Chester County

Generally Consistent

Westtown Township designated four land use categories that are adjacent to the border they share with Thornbury Township: Low Density Residential, Open Space, Medium Density Residential, Agricultural/ Cluster Residential. Along Route 926 (Street Road) to the East of Route 202, Westtown designates a small area of commercial (immediately adjacent to the intersection of Routes 202 and 926) and a mix of residential uses and open space that is consistent with the uses adjacent and to the South Route 926 in Thornbury. With the exception of a small part of Bridlewood (Spur Lane) along Route 926 to the West of Route 202, the open space designation in Westtown is generally consistent with Westtown's designated open space anchored by Crebilly Farm.

Thornbury Township, Delaware County

Generally Consistent

With consideration for the fact that it was not possible to locate a land use map for Thornbury Township, Delaware County, the overall land use along the shared boundary of the Thornburys is a combination of medium and low density residential. The two communities also share the Cheyney University Campus and the railroad right-of-way.

Recommendations

Recommendations 3-A through 3-N below detail how Thornbury can continue the historic pattern of the community, address the need for new housing, preserve and protect historic and scenic resources, and promote and expand economic development in the Township. Implementation of these recommendations will help Thornbury achieve its goals and objectives for land use, housing, historic and scenic preservation, and economic development.

Land Use

- 3-A** Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance, as necessary, for improved consistency with the Future Land Use Plan and to better reflect opportunities for development and preservation in the Township.

The zoning ordinance provides several options that include conventional development and open space/cluster. In practice, the regulations may be difficult to use and slightly cumbersome. Considering that there are limited developable acres in the Township, the regulations should be simplified to meet the Township’s goals for growth and preservation in the community.

- 3-B** Coordinate the Act 537 Plan (sewage facilities) with the Future Land Use Plan.

Public Sewer can play a critical role in addressing failing systems and defining areas for future growth. The Township needs to ensure consistency between the Act 537 Plan and the Future Land Use Plan.

- 3-C** Continue to support Cheyney University as an important historical resource and community asset.

The Township should continue to work with Cheyney to promote the history and unique attributes of the University through their website and include them, where possible, in community events or activities.



The new Science Building on the campus of historic Cheyney University

Housing

- 3-D** Ensure that the density of new housing is consistent with existing residential uses.

Thornbury Township’s housing stock is predominantly single family (97%). The Township should consider where and how it could encourage more multi-family housing (single family attached and apartments). A diversity of housing choices would benefit residents as well as make efficient use of existing infrastructure and limit impacts to natural resources.

- 3-E** Continue to support a diversity of housing choices in the limited developable areas of the Township.

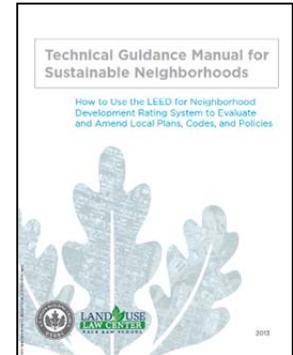
Same Comment as 3-D above.

- 3-F** Encourage “green” building and development practices through Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Energy Star, or other green building standards to improve the sustainability of housing and development within the Township.

Sustainable housing is affordable to the resident over the long term, within healthy, vibrant neighborhoods. For some homeowners and renters, housing

becomes cost restrictive with the additional cost of heat and other utilities. Incorporating green methods and materials reduces energy costs, making utility costs more manageable. Features such as water conserving fixtures, energy star appliances, high efficiency lighting, renewable energy sources (including photovoltaic and geothermal), and green roofs all contribute to reducing energy usage and therefore lowering the long term costs for the resident.

There are multiple resources available from the U.S. Green Building Council on how to incorporate sustainability into development that could help the Township to broaden its support of green building and development practices (www.usgbc.org/neighborhoods). Two specific resources of note include *A Local Government Guide: to LEED for Neighborhood Development* and the *Technical Guidance Manual for Sustainable Neighborhoods*.



Historic and Scenic Preservation

3-G Continue identifying historic resources with local markers and investigate installing historic markers and individual resources plaques through PHMC's Historic Marker Program.

3-H Continue to identify and evaluate historic resources through historic resource surveys.

The *Historic Resource Atlas* completed by Thornbury Township in 2009 was a reconnaissance or windshield survey – information collected included physical information such as age, materials, style, and condition. Surveys of this nature would document architectural and historic features and significance and would require a professional consultant. For consistency, the PA Historic Resource Survey Form should be used, as it is the form used when applying to PHMC for a National Register determination of eligibility.

3-I Support nominations of high priority properties for eligibility and/or listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Given the value of the National Register as a public education tool, support should be provided for the nomination of high priority properties to the National Register.

National Register listing is a two-step process. First, a Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, ideally completed as part of the comprehensive historic resource survey, is submitted to PHMC. If a property is determined to be eligible, the second step is completion of a National Register nomination form. If a property is determined to be eligible but then formal listing is not pursued, it is important to understand the differences between the two categories. Eligible resources are provided the same level of protection as listed resources with regard to federal projects. However most tax credit programs are limited to properties formally listed on the National

Register. National Park Service guidance documents on pursuing National Register listing are available online (www.nps.gov/history) and includes, but is not limited to:

- How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Bulletin #15)
- How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (Bulletin #16A)

3-J Actively encourage community involvement and participation in historic preservation efforts through the Historic Preservation Commission.

There are a variety of methods to promote public involvement and community education through the activities of the HPC and the following:

- Continue to encourage and sponsor historic tours that focus on one or more areas, communities, or the entire Region.
- Add historic information on township website or through township newsletters.
- Provide expertise for residents with reuse, preservation, renovations.
- Provide assistance with historic information and National Register eligibility and nominations.
- Continue to research and provide information to historic property owners about State and federal grants, tax incentives, and other historic resource protection programs and help with the application process, as possible.
- Consider holding workshops for residents to promote knowledge about preserving historic structures. Specifically, an important topic area would be educating property owners about the meaning of National Register status.
- Update school curriculum on local history to include preservation topics.
- Provide recognition to owners of historic properties (commercial and residential) that undertake construction, rehabilitation, or restoration projects sensitive to the historic character of the community or Region.
- Send an informational letter from the HPC to new owners of historic properties.

3-K Coordinate with PennDOT (or Chester County as appropriate) on any proposed transportation projects early and throughout the project development process to ensure a context sensitive design.

Context Sensitive Design is a process which traffic engineers should follow that takes into consideration public input as well as the setting (environmental, cultural features, etc.) within which a transportation facility is designed.

Construction or rehabilitation of roads or bridges can create significant impacts to the local environment, including scenic, natural, historic, or agricultural resources. In any transportation project it is critical that the local community be involved at the earliest stages to identify significant resources and transportation needs in order to achieve a project that serves the transportation needs while protecting community resources.

- 3-L** Amend Township ordinances to recognize the negative impact of scenic intrusions and require that applicants seeking to construct a new scenic intrusion, or redevelop an existing scenic intrusion, investigate options to avoid, minimize, or mitigate its negative scenic impacts.

Scenic intrusions can be addressed in part through regulations. As sites with existing scenic intrusions are redeveloped or require any type of municipal permit, discussion of ways to minimize or mitigate the intrusion should occur between the municipality and the property owner. Early awareness and coordination regarding scenic intrusions is key to minimizing the negative aspects of these features within a community.

- 3-M** Review ordinance provisions to ensure they permit and encourage design of parking facilities to respond to scenic qualities as well as functional requirements.

Important issues to consider with parking facility design and construction are access, location, layout, surface treatment, screening, buffering, and landscaping. Inadequate consideration of these features can greatly impact aesthetics. Encouraging or requiring the use of native trees, shrubs, and plants has multiple benefits (see Chapter 5). Ordinance language should be flexible enough to allow for innovative ideas (such as pervious pavement or shared parking) without compromising minimum standards.

Economic Development

- 3-N** Encourage the continuation of agricultural operations, businesses, and employment opportunities.

Review and amend zoning in a manner that responds to evolving agricultural industry trends (such as permitting secondary and accessory farm businesses) and work with the County, land trusts, and local landowners to preserve agriculture and preserve prime agricultural soils through easement.

- 3-O** Promote the continuation and possible expansion of commercial uses at the intersection of routes 202 and 926.

Review and amend zoning to provide flexibility for new and existing commercial uses to expand and/or adjust to compete in the changing economy.

Implementation

Priorities for implementation of the recommendations are established in Chapter 2: Implementation Strategies.

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