

# Executive Summary

---

# Washington Township Comprehensive Plan

**Adopted December 12, 2017**

---

## **Washington Township's Comprehensive Plan puts the future in local hands.**

Since the adoption of its last General Development Plan in 1989, Washington Township has remained insulated from the development pressure characteristic of many communities with direct access to a major interstate. This is no accident: The township has adopted official intentions to preserve its rural character and created protections in its zoning ordinance to control the location, scale and intensity of development.

The planning process revealed that the township has not experienced any major change in recent history, with the exception of gas drilling activity and the creation of associated infrastructure. The total population has remained virtually level since 1980, and only 3% of homes turned over within the last year, a number indicating exceptional residential stability.

However, changes to the local and regional economy necessitated an update to the plan. The township saw a need to determine how to remain economically sustainable in the long run, especially in the wake of coal mine closures and the long-range uncertainty of impact fees coming in from gas well and pipeline activity. Additionally, strong growth in Washington County has increased development activity along the highway corridors leading into Greene County, so a plan update was needed to ensure that local voices decide if, when and how development should take place in the township.

In December 2017, Township Supervisors adopted a Comprehensive Plan to articulate a collective vision for the Township's future and a strategy to achieve it. Input from the public and stakeholders framed the plan, which will shape the nature, pace and location of future development as well as plans for future economic and social conditions.



Residents rank priorities at a May 2017 public meeting about the plan

## Developing the Plan

Authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), a community's Comprehensive Plan lays out strategies for the nature, pace and location of physical development as well as plans for future economic and social conditions.

In short, a comprehensive plan is an educational tool for understanding current conditions, issues and opportunities, an assessment and prioritization of needs, a statement of the optimally desirable vision of future growth and development, and a public policy guide to community decision-making.

Township Supervisors, Planning Commission members, Steering Committee appointees and community members worked together on the Comprehensive Plan with assistance from Mackin Engineering Company. The Steering Committee met monthly and direct the plan's development.

In addition to research and mapping, information collection for the planning process involved:

- Outreach to **stakeholders** identified by the Steering Committee (agencies such as utility providers, PennDOT, local business owners/operators and community leaders).
- **Public events.** The township presented four total public meetings, including the public hearing legally required for adoption. These meetings were intended to present findings as they were developed and solicit comments and input from residents. Invitations for the first three meetings were sent via mail to every household, while the final public hearing was publicized in multiple newspaper articles as well as legal ads.
- The township mailed a **survey** form about the plan to every resident household. The survey had a strong response rate of more than 140 responses received representing about 430 households. The Steering Committee reviewed all responses and used the information to understand community priorities and preferences.

### Feb 2016

Public meeting, Steering Committee formed

### Spring 2016

Draft vision and objectives begin to form

### July 2017

Background Studies complete

### Oct 2016

Second public meeting

### Winter 2016

Needs Assessment

### Nov 2016

Second public meeting

### May 2017

Third public meeting

### Summer 2017

Steering Committee workshops plan

### Fall 2017

Steering Committee and Supervisors review plan, circulate it for public and agency comment

### Dec 2017

Township Supervisors adopt plan following public hearing

# Vision

The **vision statement** represents a general community consensus on the type of place Washington Township is and intends to become. The vision will provide guidance to elected and appointed leaders in planning future projects, making land use decisions and providing quality municipal services.

“ *Vision statement:*

**Washington Township will continue to preserve its rural and agricultural historic character, scenic beauty, natural environment and high quality of life while carefully managing development to maintain a viable tax base and continue to provide amenities that are important to its residents.**

”



# Community development objectives

The community development objectives for Washington Township are designed to provide guidance to local officials, to direct growth to appropriate areas, to plan on a broader scope, and to build partnerships in order to promote development in a positive and orderly manner.

The following objectives were developed based on the findings of the Comprehensive Plan research and public outreach process, incorporating comments from stakeholders and residents received at community meetings about the plan. They are designed to support in the plan's implementation, including updates to the zoning ordinance, as well as provide a framework for future decisions by Supervisors and their appointees.

## *Community Facilities*

- Increase access to public water service throughout the township while minimizing the cost of and burden to residents. Seek equitable solutions that leverage external funding sources.
- Locate sanitary sewer infrastructure investment near the interchange, focusing any future development pressure in this vicinity.
- Continue to provide a variety of safe, attractive recreational amenities to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.
- Support the provision of adequate fire and police protection and emergency services throughout the Township.
- Maintain priority scheduling and fiscal planning for the development of community facilities and services.

## *Land Use*

- Ensure that development and/or redevelopment is compatible with the surrounding landscape and existing features in use and scale, and that it does not compromise the Township's quiet, private and rural atmosphere.
- Guide development to maximize the benefits of the expressway interchange.
- Protect wooded or agricultural lands for recreational uses, especially in areas having steep slopes.

## *Economics*

- Preserve existing business and agricultural prosperity in the Township.
- Encourage the proper development of land well suited for business use.

## *Environment*

- Encourage preservation and enhancement of natural and scenic beauty, especially in developed or developing areas. Maintain an efficient, compact use of developed land.
- Ensure that regulations are in place to reasonably protect the public interest to the extent permitted by state and federal law while providing for extractive activities including, but not limited to, unconventional drilling.
- Protect watersheds and streams from pollution to ensure both the availability and the quality of water for current and future needs of the Township residents.
- Encourage protection of the natural ground cover, prevent soil erosion and encourage proper methods of storm water drainage in developed areas.
- Achieve environmental sustainability by responsibly stewarding natural assets and empowering residents to take good care of their surroundings.

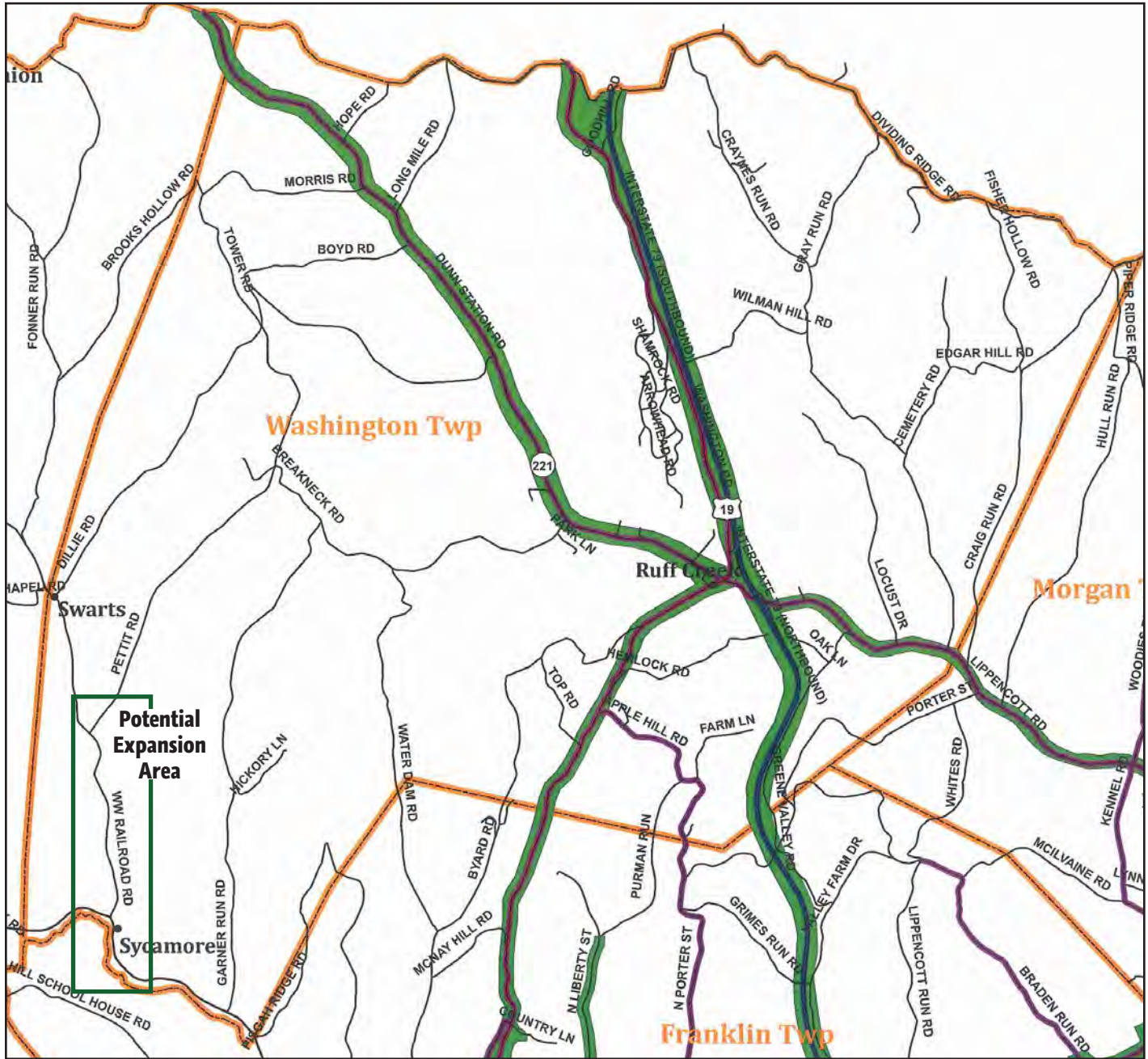
## *Transportation*

- Proactively address roadway maintenance and capacity needs to provide a safer, more efficient roadway system for existing and future residential, commercial and other uses.
- Actively lobby for safety reconfiguration improvements at the Route 19/221 intersection.

## *Housing*

- Protect and enhance housing values.
- Promote the rehabilitation of existing deteriorating housing, the continued upkeep of sound housing units and the removal of dilapidated structures.

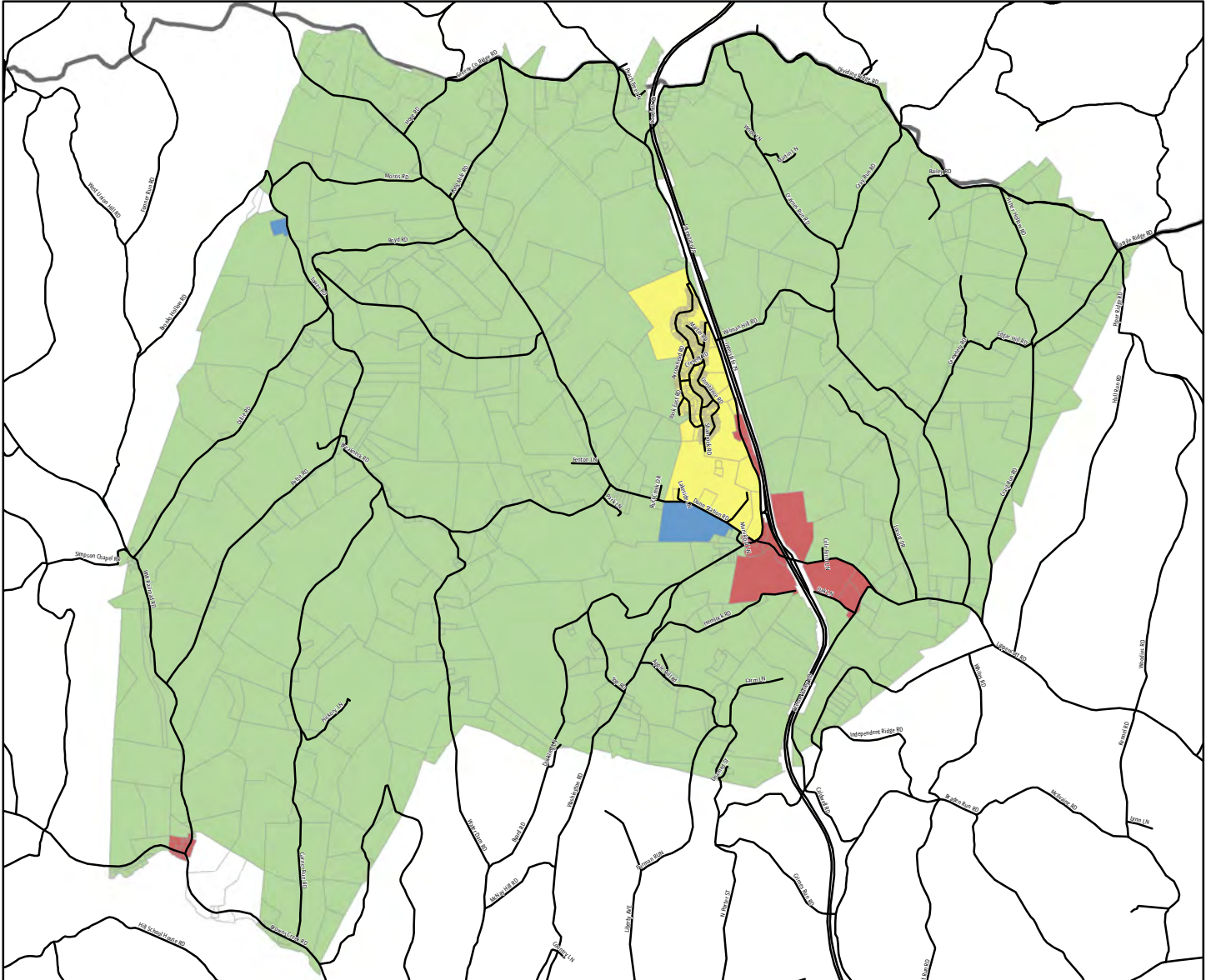
# Public Water Area Map



●	TOWNS
—	Local Roads
—	Interstate 79
—	US 19
—	PA State Route
—	Waterlines
<b>Greene County Water Service Areas</b>	
■	BRAVE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY
■	CARMICHAELS MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY
■	CLAY BATTELLE PUBLIC SERVICE DISTRICT
■	DUNKARD VALLEY JOINT MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY
■	EAST DUNKARD WATER ASSOCIATION
■	LEMLEY MHP
■	MOUNT MORRIS WATER AND SEWAGE AUTHORITY
■	SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA WATER AUTHORITY
■	MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES

Source: Greene County Planning

# Future Land Use Map



- Roads
- Parcels
- Residential
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Agricultural

## From ideas to action

The Comprehensive Plan contains detailed recommendations designed to address the needs and issues that the planning process identified. The recommendations are also critical to successfully implementing the plan's vision. Successfully bringing the Comprehensive Plan into reality will require the support of the entire community, including elected and appointed officials, the public, local businesses owners and other key stakeholders.

A Future Land Use Map (left) appears at the end of the plan. This map is general and non-regulatory in nature, unlike the township's Zoning Map. It exists to convey a community consensus on the way in which the township should evolve in the long term, with respect to future development and areas that should be protected or preserved.

The recommendations are organized by the same topic areas that appear in the Community Development Objectives. This framework evolved from discussions of the Steering Committee and multiple public meetings where many residents participated in the plan's development. These topic areas represent the highest priorities for Washington Township for the next 10 to 20 years. The recommendations do not include every possible project or initiative, but sketch out an action plan that will help the township become the best possible future version of itself. Where possible, information is included on possible partners or funding mechanisms, as the township itself has only limited resources (in terms of both funding and the time of staff and volunteers) available to apply to these initiatives.

# Implementation

## Here's where you come in.

Even prior to the Comprehensive Plan's formal adoption, momentum began building for some of its recommended projects, including a zoning ordinance update. The plan document will continue to be available for public review at the Township Building and online, and meeting minutes for Township Supervisors, Planning Commission and other appointed groups will describe how projects proposed in the plan are unfolding. Stay tuned for updates on the status of implementation. Township officials invite residents, business owners and any other interested parties to help work toward achieving the plan's goals — contact them or attend a regular Supervisors meeting to find out how!

The following actions will need to be taken to ensure the successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan:

► **Identify a committee whose mission is to work with Township officials to oversee and implement the Comprehensive Plan.**

The Planning Commission should quarterback the plan's implementation. Checking in on consistency and progress with the Comprehensive Plan should be a regular (quarterly?) agenda item. This group that oversees the plan will not be responsible for personally carrying out all of its recommended action steps, but can provide leadership to help organize projects and keep momentum strong.

► **Update the township's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance to achieve consistency.**

These documents are the most powerful tool available to the township to ensure that development happens if, when, where and how residents desire. Now that the community has articulated a consensus vision and future land use map, updating the Zoning and Subdivision/Land Development ordinances can help to ensure that these ideas become reality.

**Washington Township**

112 Municipal Lane

Prosperity, PA 15329

724-627-6471

*washtwpgc@windstream.net*

---