

Planning Commission Update: Whitemarsh Township Comprehensive Plan Update



Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is a shared vision that provides direction and guidance for the future of Whitemarsh Township. Included in the Plan are a series of goals and policies developed for the purpose of directing and accommodating future growth within the Township. The Comprehensive Plan provides a legal basis for zoning codes to be implemented.

The process for and the contents of the Plan are consistent with Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, P.L.805, NO.247, which outlines specific components to be included in the preparation of a comprehensive plan. According to this Law, the comprehensive plan must be reviewed at least every ten years. Comprehensive plans must be adopted by the governing body following a public hearing.

How Do We Get There?

Development of a comprehensive plan is an iterative process. The planning process encompasses three major activities: (1) understanding the present state of the Township (i.e. existing conditions), (2) identifying the Township's goals and vision for the future, and (3) determining the actions necessary to achieve that vision.

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update modernizes the Township's Comprehensive Plan of 2003 by accounting for changing conditions and projected trends such as, economic factors, demographic characteristics, development activity, infrastructure conditions, and land uses characteristics.

As every good comprehensive plan should, this Plan builds upon the community's strengths, addresses its weaknesses, identifies threats, and capitalizes on opportunities to achieve the community's vision. The plan accomplishes this by establishing goals, policies, and action items that address a myriad of topics related to improving the quality of life for residents.

What We've Heard

Community engagement, support and ownership are essential to ensure successful implementation of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update. The following community engagement activities have been undertaken to ensure that all interested stakeholders have a voice in the process.

Steering Committee

The Whitemarsh Township convened a Steering Committee to help guide the planning process and provide expertise on a variety of issues and topics identified during the process. Six steering committee meetings have been held to date:

1. August 14, 2017
2. October 2, 2017
3. December 5, 2017
4. January 29, 2018
5. March 5, 2018
6. July 16, 2018

The Steering Committee includes representatives from various Township Departments, the Board of Supervisors, Parks, Planning Commission, business owners, development community and residents with targeted expertise in topics related to land use and associated factors.

Stakeholders

One-on-one and small group interviews were conducted with key stakeholders early in the planning process to help provide feedback about specific needs and opportunities. Stakeholders were identified with assistance from Township staff and the Committee and included representation from a wide variety of backgrounds, expertise, and interests: local school officials, business owners, property owners, residents, historic preservation, local sports organizations, senior citizens, bicycle/pedestrian interests, and developers.

Public Meetings

Community-wide meetings were convened to give residents a chance to learn about the Comprehensive Plan Update process, share ideas, and provide feedback and ideas related to the Township's vision, actions and future land uses.

Three public workshops have been held to date:

1. October 2, 2017 - Intro & Visioning
2. April 5, 2018 - Future Land Use Planning
3. September 20, 2018 - Actions & Recommendations

Community Feedback

Through the community engagement strategy, key themes were identified that serves as the foundation of the vision, goals and actions. These themes include:

- walkability;
- mixed-use;
- environmental stewardship;
- multi-modal transportation;
- open space preservation;
- transportation corridors;
- historic preservation; and
- high quality design.

Vision & Goal Areas

The foundation for the Whitemarsh Township Selective Comprehensive Plan Update is a vision statement, as it informs goals, policies, and actions. The vision statement is the basis of the policy framework and lays the groundwork for Whitemarsh Township's future.



Land Use



Housing



Circulation



Quality of Life

Whitemarsh Township boasts a unique combination of small town character and urban amenities. Whitemarsh will continue to celebrate our natural beauty and heritage, while encouraging thoughtful growth that promotes vibrancy, diversity and walkability, resulting in welcoming neighborhoods, active mixed-use corridors and connected open spaces.