



Chapter 1

Introduction

Springfield's Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan provides an overall vision for the community and serves as a guide for township leaders as they make land use policy decisions. It provides a framework for the zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance, subdivision and land development reviews, planning for capital improvements to municipal facilities, parks and infrastructure as well as redevelopment programs. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) authorizes and guides local planning by outlining the required elements of the comprehensive plan. The required elements include but are not limited to provisions for land use, housing, transportation, community facilities, historic and natural resource protections, goals and objectives, long and short term implementation strategies, and compatibility with neighboring municipalities.

Springfield Township's first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1968 during the period where much of the township was developed and its identity as a suburban residential

community was established. When the plan was updated in 1998 it was during a time when Springfield was more concerned with improving upon the existing conditions than shaping future growth. With the 2012 comprehensive plan update, the township considers existing conditions as well as changes in its population, land use, and the built environment that have occurred since the last update and explores other emerging trends and critical issues.

To prepare for the needs of the current and future residents this plan considers the demographics changes, housing needs, modes of transportation and

circulation patterns, community facilities and services, as well as redevelopment and economic development opportunities. As the township looks toward creating a



sustainable future, Springfield acknowledges the intrinsic value of its historical past, environmental and natural features, and contemplates the importance of preserving and protecting these vulnerable resources for future generations use and enjoyment.

Planning in Springfield Township

The township has undertaken or been the subject of plans and/or studies as shown in Figure 1.1. Some of the plans are focused on the township or a portion of the township, while others take a regional focus. Some of the plans are described in more detail below.

Figure 1.1

Springfield Plans, Studies

Plan/Study Name	Date	Author
Springfield Comprehensive Plan	1998	MCPC
Sandy Run Park Master Plan	2003	Land Concepts Group, Metz Engineers
Flourtown Edenheim Vision Plan	2004	Carter van Dyke Associates, Urban Partners, Carroll Engineering, Corporation, Runyan & Associates Architects
Springfield Open Space Plan	2005	MCPC
Increasing Intermodal Access to Transit: Oreland Station	2006	DVRPC
Taming Traffic - Context Sensitive Solutions in the DVRPC Region: Bethlehem Pike	2008	DVRPC
Springfield Township Parks and Recreation Connections Plan	2008	Toole Recreation Planning
Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Master Plan	2008	Michael Baker Jr., Inc. and Carter van Dyke Associates
Mobilize to Thrive Chestnut Hill Regional Area Study	2008	DVRPC
Natural Area Inventory Update	2008	Ann Rhoads, PhD., Tim Block for MCPC



Flourtown Erdenheim Vision Plan, 2004

Recognizing the potential of the Bethlehem Pike corridor, a group of interested neighbors and business owners banded together to form the Flourtown–Erdenheim Enhancement Association (FEEA) and raised public and private funds to hire a consultant to create a vision for the revitalization of the Flourtown–Erdenheim corridor. In 2006, the vision plan was adopted by the township board of commissioners as an amendment to the township comprehensive plan.

Bethlehem Pike Streetscape Master Plan, 2008

Springfield Township commissioned this Streetscape Master Plan to further advance the concepts developed in the Flourtown Erdenheim Vision Plan for portions of Bethlehem Pike between Gordon Land and West Valley Green Road. The Streetscape Master Plan sought to create a unified identity and sense of place, improve public spaces to encourage pedestrian activity, improve commercial vitality, and create a blueprint for future public and private projects in the Villages of Flourtown and Erdenheim, the two central business districts that contain a mix of public and private uses, historic structures, shopping destinations and other business services. Proposed improvements included enhanced crosswalks, sidewalk reconstruction, pedestrian-oriented street-lighting, ornamental signal poles and street trees.

Taming Traffic – Context Sensitive Solutions: Bethlehem Pike, 2008

The DVRPC study reviewed roadway characteristics, transit access, corridor crash statistics, neighborhood character and amenities and recommended strategies for altering the roadway corridor to match the emerging new context as a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant commercial corridor.

Mobilize to Thrive: Regional Area Study, 2008

The Regional Area Study was undertaken as part of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission’s Strategies for Older Suburbs initiative which examined the potential for city/suburban collaboration. The study proposed 5 objectives relative to Springfield Township:

- Promote commercial development that solidifies Springfield’s market niche and reflects community character.
- Adopt clear policies and expand institutional capacity to guide development approvals and the retail recruitment process.
- Continue phased streetscape improvements on Bethlehem Pike to encourage walking between retail locations.
- Enhance pedestrian, bicycle and transit mobility between Springfield Township, Whitmarsh Township and Philadelphia.
- Create a coalition of public officials, private business and community members to encourage dialogue and action across municipal boundaries.



Township Character and Vision

Where individuals or families decide to live or to conduct business is often the result of choices we make based on employment or school location, proximity to family, and easy access to social and entertainment venues. Decisions to locate tend to be based on the benefits and features that are associated with a community. Many of the values held by the Springfield Township community are reflected in and supported by the unique character of the town. People speak of the quality of life that Springfield Township offers: a small town feel; sense of community; pride in the area's history; respect for the environment; proximity to Philadelphia and the desire to exercise civic responsibility.

Sense of Community

Many residents attribute their sense of community to a myriad of reasons: proximity to neighbors; their associations through school-aged children; attractive neighborhoods with a traditional feel; active volunteerism and opportunities for community involvement; and a sense of commitment by citizens and the local government to continue the small town atmosphere. The township staff and elected and appointed officials work hard to be responsive to citizen needs.

Pride of Past

Springfield has a rich historical and cultural heritage from its origins as a point along an early transportation route from Philadelphia to Bethlehem. From its unique buildings and its homes with varied architectural styles, the residents and local officials realize that the continued success in the township is tied to a respect for and preservation of its history.

Civic Responsibility

Citizen participation is a key element in the continued success of the township. There are numerous citizens that serve on various boards, commissions, committees, authorities and task forces. This demonstrates the concern that the citizens have for Springfield and their willingness to play an active role in its future.

Public Safety

Citizens and businesses value the safety of the community and its low crime rate. People want to walk safely in their neighborhoods and enjoy a pleasant community experience with out the problems often associated with “the big city.”

Location

Springfield's proximity to the City of Philadelphia and the greater Delaware Valley region makes it an ideal location for many. Access to major highways and train service to Philadelphia easily connects the community to the regional museums, performing arts centers and other cultural institutions, universities, top quality medical centers. It has easy access to regional shopping and employment centers



in Willow Grove, Plymouth Meeting, Montgomeryville, and King of Prussia. Springfield Township is only minutes away from regional parks and open space such as, Fort Washington State Park with access to county-wide trails, the Morris Arboretum, and Fairmount Park's Wissahickon Trails.



Vision for Springfield

Springfield Township is a community that seeks to create, maintain and improve the quality of life for its residents. Springfield strives to:

- Protect the character of existing homes and neighborhoods and the sense of community that is born from its rich historical past;
- Protect its environment and natural resources;
- Increase access to the parks, open space and recreational amenities and offers a range of activities for its citizens of all ages;
- Allow for reasonable and adaptive reuse of historical dwellings, buildings and landmarks;
- Improve public infrastructure systems, including stormwater management facilities;
- Support the revitalization of commercial districts that encourages more pedestrian activity and reduces unnecessary vehicle traffic;
- Value sustainable growth in locations with easy access to public transit; and
- Support responsible development and redevelopment opportunities that generate revenue that support the various programs and operations of the municipality.



