

Appendix A

SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP:

Emerging Trends & Critical Issues

Background

The purpose of a municipal comprehensive plan is to provide an overall future vision for Springfield Township along with proposing tools to implement that vision. The comprehensive plan becomes a guide for the community and its leaders in making land use policy decisions such as preparing zoning and land development ordinances, capital improvement plans, providing programs and services for residents and businesses, and reviewing subdivision and land development proposals. The comprehensive planning process begins by assessing existing conditions in the community, then establishes goals and objectives for how the Township should look and function in the future, and proposes actions to implement the proposed goals and objectives. Comprehensive plans identify and evaluate various land uses, demographic trends, transportation, housing, community facilities and services, and the relationship of the Township to the Delaware Valley region.

Springfield Township is updating its 1999 Comprehensive Plan. This process evaluates the various demographic and physical changes that have occurred in the Township and region since 1999, updates the vision, goals and objectives, and prepares an implementation strategy to be used in the next decade and beyond.

Emerging Trends and Critical Issues Questionnaire

The purpose of the Emerging Trends and Critical Issues Questionnaire is to provide a preliminary summary of land planning trends and issues that have been identified by the Springfield Township Planning Commission with assistance from the Montgomery County Planning Commission. The questionnaire was presented to the various Township boards, commissions, staff, and the community at large, to gain their input. This report will serve in the development of the plan's vision, goals and objectives, and implementation strategies for the Springfield Township Comprehensive Plan Update. A summary of the questionnaire response and public outreach is located beginning on page 20 of this report.

Township Character

Where individuals or families decide to live or to conduct business is often the result of choices we make based on cost, 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.



Vision Statement

Over the coming months and throughout the upcoming public outreach process, a shared community vision for Springfield Township will be crafted. As the planning process proceeds, input from residents, township organizations, the business community and other stakeholders will be sought.

The next page has preliminary vision statements offered for your consideration.

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;
- Protect our natural resources;
- Increase access to the Township parks, open space and recreational amenities;
- Allow for reasonable and adaptive reuse of historical dwellings, buildings and landmarks;
- Improve public infrastructure systems, including stormwater management facilities;
- Support the revitalization of the Township's commercial districts to encourage more pedestrian activity while limiting unnecessary vehicle traffic;
- Value sustainable growth in locations in the Township with easy access to public transit;
- Support responsible development and redevelopment opportunities that generate revenue that support the various programs and operations of the municipality.



Emerging Trend: Sustainability

Energy conservation, alternative energy, conserving natural resources, growing or buying food locally, geographic purchasing, reduce/reuse/recycle, and composting leaf, yard and garden waste are all terms we are learning about in our schools, in the workplace, in the community, and being written about in the mainstream media. As part of a global community, the Township’s natural resources are getting more constrained and the cost of doing “business as usual” is rising. At the local level, the Township has been saving resources in the form of time, money and fuel with its successful recycling and yard waste composting program. With the proposed PECO rate hikes in 2011, the cost of electricity is rising as is the price of natural gas, gasoline, and home heating oil. These energy price increases will create a greater burden on residents, local businesses and the Township operations.

Issues Questions

1. *Should the Township do more to promote energy conservation, alternative energy technologies, and other sustainable practices through the land development approval process and more generally throughout the community?*

2. *Should the Township encourage sustainable practices and upgrades to existing properties and buildings such as reuse of stormwater, solar energy or geothermal heating and cooling technology?*

3. *Should the Township create incentives for residents and businesses to convert existing systems to “green” technologies?*



4. *Should the Township create incentives in zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances for sustainable design practices in new development?*



Emerging Trend: Community Facilities and Services

There are numerous public services and facilities which must be provided and maintained by local government to meet the daily health, safety, convenience, and cultural needs of the community. Community facilities refer to the variety of public uses and services that may be provided to residents of a community, such as emergency services, schools, and police protection. In addition solid waste disposal, sewer and water service, government office facilities, and libraries are also provided. The Township must strive to enhance the efficient utilization of existing facilities and services, and replace or rehabilitate obsolete facilities.

Issues Question

1. *Most of the Township facilities are more than 50 years old. Would the Township benefit from preparing a long-term capital improvement master plan?*

Township Complex – Physical Plant

The Township's complex consists of four buildings that house the administrative offices and meeting rooms, police department, public works facilities, parks and recreation office, and library. It is centrally located in the Township making it convenient for residents needing services and assistance. Due to growing demands on the physical plant of the complex, specifically, the public works facility, the library program, and the need for larger community meeting space, the Township is exploring the feasibility of updating the facilities to meet these needs.



The Free Library of Springfield, founded in 1966, is considered by the residents to be “a community center for lifetime learning.” Centrally located in the Township complex on Paper Mill Road, it provides free access to 60,000 books and other education materials, including reference materials, children’s services and internet access. The library participates in Montgomery County Library and Information Consortium (MCLINC), a consortium of libraries that provides online access to the Montgomery County library collections and online databases from the library, home or office. Supported by a cadre of volunteers, 6 full-time and 20 part-time staff manage to provide a high level of services and programs to the residents. The library houses volumes well beyond its design capacity of 43,000. Despite the extraordinary development of the Internet and technology, library usage and circulation have been increasing at the same time that the state has reduced its support for libraries. Further expansion is limited by space constraints while requests for programs and services are growing.

Issues Questions

1. *Springfield remains committed to providing adequate library services to meet the needs of the community. Given the space constraints of the existing facilities how should Springfield continue to sustain and grow its popular library program?*

2. *Some communities have elected to house their library within or adjacent to other community facilities, such as administration or recreation facilities, in order to provide expanded hours and services, while sharing overhead costs and responsibilities among existing program staff. Is this something the Township should consider or are there alternative locations or satellite facilities that would better serve the community?*

3. *Springfield remains committed to providing adequate services to the residents and a safe physical plant for public works employees. Given the space constraints of the existing facilities how can Springfield to continue to sustain the existing level of services and provide secure and safe facilities for employees?*



Public Safety

Issues Question

1. Does the Township's physical characteristics (roadways, accessways, traffic control, visibility, lighting), communications, and regulations adequately support the needs of the emergency services providers?

Parks and Recreation

Springfield Township's 2008 Parks and Recreation Plan is the current Board of Commissioner's adopted 10-year plan/policy for the programming, operations and maintenance of the parks by the recreation department. Springfield Township has 118.6 acres of parkland located at 10 sites throughout the municipality. 8 of these locations are open for public use. The Flourtown Country Club is a Township owned property that is leased to a private management group who operate the facility as a private club. Residents are given priority over non-residents for both golf and swimming memberships, and receive reduced membership fees. Sandy Run Park is currently an unimproved property that the Township plans to develop into a full-access park. Phase I improvements should be complete by the end of 2011.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAN'S KEY FINDINGS:

The key findings that emerged from the 2008 parks and recreation planning process are organized around seven goals. The goals represent the long-term conditions toward which the Township will strive.

- Goal 1: Provide parkland that is sufficient in acreage, location, suitability, and configuration to serve the citizens of Springfield Township.
- Goal 2: Ensure that recreation facilities offer safety, accessibility, variety, appearance, availability, beauty, and function to meet the needs of the community.
- Goal 3: Interconnect the neighborhoods of the community and the region.
- Goal 4: Manage the parks and recreation system in a professional manner that conveys the greatest possible benefit to the public.
- Goal 5: Build upon the existing programs and services to create recreation opportunities that enrich the quality of life for people who live, work, and visit here.
- Goal 6: Invest in parks and recreation to sustain and enhance the health, safety and welfare of the community.
- Goal 7: Increase public awareness and stewardship regarding parks, recreation greenways, trails and natural resources conservation in Springfield Township.



Issues Question

1. *What should be the Township's priorities and next steps for implementing the Park and Recreation Plan?*

Emerging Trend: Stormwater Management

Springfield Township was developed and built-out in a period when stormwater was not considered in the land development process for individual properties. Stormwater drainage is handled at the municipal level through a stormwater conveyance system that includes pipes, culverts, inlets, outfalls, and above- and below-ground stormwater basins. The Township has taken steps to improve stormwater management systems and anticipates continued progress in this area. The Township's stormwater management milestones over the last decade include various legislative efforts, construction projects, regular creek maintenance/inspections, studies, watershed partnership projects, and public outreach and education. Springfield Township:

- Created a community-wide stormwater management study to examine alternatives for how stormwater could be managed in the future;
- Has in place floodplain protection and other ordinances that regulate the location and intensity of new construction, and allows for a temporary reduction in parking facilities required to meet zoning requirements;
- Participates in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System – Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (NPDES MS-4) program, which has six (6) elements: public education, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, construction site run-off controls, post construction storm water management (including best management practices), pollution prevention and good housekeeping for municipal operation and maintenance;
- Created an Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) to advise the Township in how to best promote environmental education including stormwater management best management practices (BMPs);
- Township participates in regional watershed groups and studies.

Stormwater Infrastructure

Most of Springfield Township lands are privately held and not subject to land development plan review or current management standards. Most of the storm water runoff in the Township is from private land to private land and could be mitigated by improving storm water management on private land.



Issues Questions

1. *Given the limitation on the local government's ability to take actions on private lands, how can the Township encourage or incentivize more actions by individual land owners to become better stewards of the land and more responsibly manage stormwater?*

2. *What can the Township do to encourage changes in stormwater management on private land that is not subject to development review?*

Alternative Approaches to Stormwater Management

In Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) is responsible for managing the stormwater system and for improvements to water quality in the Schuylkill and Delaware Watersheds mandated by the Clean Water Act. PWD has come up with a creative way to share the cost of improvements to their stormwater management network. PWD has implemented a program that estimates the amount of impervious coverage and calculates the impact of stormwater runoff for each property in the city. This calculation in turn is figured into the fee structure for providing water and sewerage to PWD customers.

Issues Questions

1. *While the PDW approach may not be feasible for townships that do not have centralized control over water and sewerage systems, are there other creative ways to address stormwater management and water quality that would benefit the property owners in Springfield?*

2. *Some communities have realized that one of the less costly and "greener" solutions to reduce storm water volume, intensity, and pollution is by planting large canopy trees. Infiltration rates decreased from 12.4 inches per hour to 4.4 inches per hour in one study where the site was changed from woodland to suburban lawn (Kays, 1980). In urban and suburban settings a single deciduous tree*



can intercept 500 gallons of stormwater per year and a mature evergreen can intercept more than 4,000 gallons per year. Most of the best tree planting opportunities in the community are found on private land. The Township does not have a tree inventory or tree management plan. Should the Township take a more proactive role in preserving our existing tree cover by providing education, tree planting and management planning for property owners? What can be done to encourage tree planting on private lands?

Stormwater Impacts on the Watersheds

Most of Springfield Township is located in the Wissahickon Watershed. The Wissahickon Creek has been designated an impaired stream by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. This means that it would support the fish and wildlife that would be expected to live in the Creek if it were not polluted. One problem that contributes to stream impairment is excessive sediment that comes from eroded stream banks due to excessive stormwater runoff volume and flow velocity. Excessive sedimentation also contributes to the filling in of formerly perennial streams that may contribute to localized flooding.

Issues Questions

1. *What should the Township do to help reduce excessive sedimentation and improve water quality in the local streams?*
2. *Should the Township pursue restoration of ephemeral streams that were formerly perennial streams?*

3. *How should the Township prioritize any proposed actions to improve the stormwater management infrastructure?*



Emerging Trend: Land Use and Zoning

Springfield Township is largely a fully built-out community. According to the 2010 Montgomery County Board of Assessment data, developed land accounts for 97% of total acreage. Nearly 60% of developed land is devoted to residential uses, whereas approximately 16% of developed land is open space and/or recreational uses. Large institutional uses make up another 15% of Township lands and also contain significant open space areas. Conversely, less than 5% of Township land is occupied by commercial, office or industrial uses. A summary of existing land use is shown on the table below:

Township Land Use

Land Use Summary	2010			
	Parcels	% of Total Parcels	Acres	% of Total Acres
Residential	6,736	91.0%	2,234	59.2%
Commercial/Office	286	3.9%	121	3.2%
Industrial	75	1.0%	64	1.7%
Institutional	100	1.4%	566	15.0%
Utilities	32	0.4%	64	1.7%
Combined Open Space	62	0.8%	623	16.5%
Undeveloped	112	1.5%	104	2.8%
Total	7,403	100%	3,776	100%

Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment

The Comprehensive Plan update should consider changes to land use and zoning that will ensure that all future development will be consistent with the community's values and future vision. The community's values and vision may include maintaining traditional residential neighborhoods and neighborhood level commercial areas, protecting existing open spaces and recreation facilities, preserving a strong institutional presence in the Township, preserving the cultural and historical context of the community through adaptive reuse of existing buildings, while creating more pedestrian-friendly and accessible centers that promote a strong sense of community ownership and pride.

Issues Questions

Values

1. What are the community values that should be protected and encouraged? What should the future vision for the Township include?



2. *In a built-out community such as Springfield, the impact of land use planning is limited by the degree of development already in place. Some of the opportunities for sustaining or improving the quality of life in our community exist to a large extent on private land, in particular residential lots and to a lesser extent commercial and institutional property. Most of the property in the community will not be subject to public plan review for many years, if ever. Should implementation of code changes or overlay districts be considered to protect and preserve the existing community?*

3. *Should the Comprehensive Plan consider solutions to community challenges such as storm water management and pedestrian safety that can be addressed by voluntary efforts and coordinated changes in land management by private land owners? What are the options to encourage or support land use practices on private land that is not subject to subdivision or land development review?*

Traffic Impacts

1. *What can be done to reduce the impacts of busy commuter corridors on residential uses?*

Adaptive Reuse of Historic Homes and Buildings

1. *How can the Township encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings and residences?*

Infill Development

1. *Most of the remaining unprotected open space parcels are zoned to allow more housing units that can create a burden on the school district, existing roadways and other Township*



infrastructure. Are there additional uses beyond housing that should be considered for the remaining undeveloped/underdeveloped parcels? What other types of development are desirable? Should alternative housing styles be considered to allow for residents to remain in the community after they wish to downsize from large homes?

2. Infill development in some neighborhoods such as Wyndmoor is often disruptive of natural resource benefits by decreasing the tree cover and potential for tree cover. Is overlay zoning to retain large lots or established tree cover a desirable tool in some neighborhoods?

Commercial District Redevelopment

1. What mix of uses creates vital and vibrant commercial centers? Does the existing zoning support such a mix?

2. Should the Township consider expanding residential uses into the existing commercial and industrially zoned areas?

Emerging Trend: Economic Development

Economic development, growth and diversity of businesses can have a huge impact on quality of life, community vitality, and community character. Continuing the Township's high quality of life with a diverse and thriving



local economy will take investment and effort that may include reuse, revitalization, and redevelopment of the underutilized or outdated commercial buildings and industrial/brownfield sites. A thriving local economy also requires the ability to attract and retain businesses by improving the business climate, having a well trained workforce, and easing the commute of workers so they can get to their jobs. Economic development is primarily driven by private sector practices. However; there are a range of government policies and actions that can influence private sector decisions.

Issues Questions

1. *What economic strategies are needed to maintain the quality and character of the community and also have a thriving local economy?*

2. *How can Springfield help with local job retention/job creation? How can businesses be retained? How can the Township encourage new business enterprises both large and small?*

3. *Should the Township create a plan to recruit new businesses that complement existing ones?*

4. *Should the Township create a plan to address storefront vacancies that impact local commercial districts?*

5. *What is the mix of uses that best address the retail and service needs of the community?*



6. *How can the Township build on the existing vibrant public spaces and encourage new ones that will attract more local spending?*

7. *Where do Springfield residents shop outside of the Township (Chestnut Hill, local malls, big box stores)?*

8. *How can the Township encourage more local spending via shopping, dining, and utilizing local service providers?*

Business Districts

The main commercial districts in Springfield Township are located along Bethlehem Pike in Erdenheim and Flourtown; in Oreland near the train station; and in Wyndmoor along Willow Grove Avenue and along Ivy Hill Road. The commercial districts in the Township have evolved over time into established smaller-scaled mixed-use districts, each with a somewhat different scale of development and level of commercial and retail intensity. These districts provide local goods and services and generate jobs and taxes for the community. As mixed-use areas mature, there is a need for continuous reinvestment and redevelopment if the area is to remain attractive, vibrant and productive.

Vibrant commercial districts can also lead to more traffic congestion and delays in procuring those goods and services. There can also be pressure on the adjacent residential uses for rezoning. This raises the question of how the established mixed use areas of the Township are fairing, what impacts they have on the adjacent residential neighborhoods, and how these impacts might be mitigated through adaptive zoning or other means.

Flourtown-Erdenheim

Bethlehem Pike is a busy commuter corridor that needs a broader base of businesses that will attract local and regional customers. Springfield Township has invested time and money into assessing the needs of the Flourtown-Erdenheim business districts. The Township has taken several steps taken toward addressing the needs of the business district/corridor:

- Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan adopted in 2006.



- Village Center Zoning – Drafted regulations to help implement the plan.
- Gateway Design – Creates roadway landmarks to identify entrances to the business district.
- Traffic analysis and traffic calming strategy prepared for the corridor with assistance from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC).

There are some emerging trends that support the type of community development proposed in both of the Plans and the Village Center Zoning. With growing access to reliable Internet service more people are interested in working from home. Regional traffic congestion is increasing, which makes it more difficult for people to get to large concentrated office destinations. More people are interested in starting their own business or consulting firm and a location where they can live and work provides an easy place to start a small business. Springfield Township residents are aging, as is the County, and while older residents may need fewer retail goods, they often need convenient access to more services such as medical, financial and legal offices.

Issues Question

1. *Considering the steps that have been taken and the emerging trends, what are the next steps to implementing the Flourtown-Erdenheim Vision Plan?*

Oreland Train Station Area

The Oreland mixed-use commercial area grew around the Oreland Train Station. It contains a combination of light industry, small offices and retail establishments, personal service shops, and a residential community made up of single family homes, twins, duplexes, triplexes and small apartment complexes. This is a working example of a neighborhood level business district, however, to sustain its success some evaluation, visioning and strategies will be needed.

Issues Question

1. *What is working, what is not, and what strategies should the Township pursue to maintain the quality of life and economic vitality of the Oreland Train Station Area?*



Wyndmoor Business Districts

Willow Grove Avenue – The Wyndmoor mixed-use business district is located on both sides of Willow Grove Avenue between Flourtown Avenue and Beech Lane. Only a few blocks long and one block wide, it is made up of neighborhood-level retail, personal service shops and small offices surrounded by mostly single-family homes and places of worship.

Ivy Hill Road – The Ivy Hill business/industrial area is located along Ivy Hill Road and Mermaid Lane between Elm Street and Cheltenham Avenue. It is located along the border of Philadelphia between two adjacent residential neighborhoods. It contains light industry, storage facilities, retail, and offices.

Issues Questions

1. *Along Willow Grove Avenue, what is working, what is not working, and what strategies should the Township pursue to maintain the quality of life and economic vitality of the Wyndmoor businesses and make them attractive to a broader range of residents? Is there sufficient parking? Is signage adequate?*

2. *Along Ivy Hill Road, what is working, what is not working, and what strategies should the Township pursue to maintain the quality of life and economic vitality of the Wyndmoor businesses?*



Emerging Trend: Housing

Most of Springfield's housing was constructed prior to 1970. Nearly 63% of Township's housing was built between 1940 and 1969 and 20% was built before 1940. Approximately 58% of the housing units in Springfield are single-family detached, 10% are single-family attached (townhouse, duplex, triplex), and 14% are multifamily units (apartments). There is a perceived need for lower-maintenance housing for residents who are aging but want to stay in the community. There is also a need for residents to be able to accommodate their parents at home, due to the increasing costs of alternative care facilities outside the home.

Issues Questions

1. *How can the Township preserve the character and charm of existing homes and neighborhoods while*



meeting the needs of contemporary families and lifestyles?

2. *How can Springfield encourage a range of housing types and housing prices that will continue to meet the needs of the existing residents and allow aging residents to remain in the Township near family and friends?*

Emerging Trend: Historic Resources and Community Character

Historic buildings and sites are an important yet vulnerable community resource in Springfield Township. Historic resources add to the quality of life by providing a sense of place, civic pride and ownership of past and add to the community's educational, cultural, and social environment. Historic preservation can also make good economic sense when existing buildings can be re-used or adapted to new uses, retaining the physical heritage that helps to define the community. Springfield, like many communities, struggle with how to best protect these at-risk resources when the cost of restoration is high, properties are privately owned, and the priorities and criteria for preservation is not well established or accepted at the local level. Through partnering with individuals and organizations over the years, the Township has taken the following steps:

- Previous plans have identified a selected list of Springfield Township historical structures and sites, some of which are listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- The township acquired the Black Horse Inn through the land development process. Through a multiphase process, public, nonprofit, and private fund raising efforts were used to stabilize the structure, restore the exterior and then fit-out the interior of the historic inn for adaptive reuse by the Springfield Historical Society. There is ample space that could accommodate an additional tenant on the second floor.
- With support from the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) and the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), the Township Planning Commission drafted an ordinance to create a Springfield Township heritage landmark list, the Springfield Township



Historical Commission, and establish criteria for recommending buildings and sites for a heritage landmark list designation.

Issues Question

1. *How can historically important buildings and properties and their histories be preserved? What are the next steps for the Township to pursue to that end?*



Emerging Trend: Natural Resources, Open Space and Environment

Natural Areas Inventory

According to the 2007 Natural Areas Inventory Update of Montgomery County (NAI), Springfield Township's lower panhandle is located in the Lower Schuylkill River Conservation Landscape (SRCL). The Springfield Township portion of the SRCL includes environmentally sensitive and unique natural features such as steep slopes, dense woodlands and wildlife. The valley of Manor Creek is a corridor extending from the uplands near Ridge Pike to the Schuylkill River. The mostly forested tract includes the headwaters of the Manor Creek. The 102-acre Shelly Ridge Girl Scout Reservation is the largest parcel of open space on the east side of the river in this landscape. The Shelly Ridge forests include several mature stands of red oak. Red oak, black oak and American beech are the dominant canopy tree species. Severe browsing by deer has eliminated most of the understory and shrub layer of the forest, although spicebush, white bane, jack-in-the-pulpit and yellow and blue violets remain.

The NAI provides general recommendations for the conservation of landscapes, including protection of large uninterrupted forested areas; protection of riparian corridors from headwater areas to the main stem of creeks; sustainable public and private land management practices, and public education, interpretation, and further study of the Lower Schuylkill River Conservation Landscape.

The 2005 Springfield Township Open Space Plan also identified this area of the Township as one of the highest priorities for protection.

Issues Question

1. *Should the Township pursue specific strategies for protecting SRCL in the lower panhandle area of the*



Township, including possible acquisition or the transfer of development rights?

Emerging Trend: Transportation

Transportation can have a large impact on the local economy and quality of life. Employers tend to locate near the best transportation facilities that serve their employees. Too much traffic congestion or infrequent trains or bus service and the lack of access to alternative transportation networks (walking, biking, public transit), reduces everyone's quality of life. As a nation we have become almost completely dependent on the car in the past 50 years. Most new development is driven by vehicular transportation, particularly access to highways.

Commuting to Work and School; and Pass-Through Commuting

Springfield Township was built-out at a time when the primary location for employment was the City of Philadelphia and several transportation options were available to commuters including; trains, trolleys and buses, and cars. The migration of many thousands of jobs from the city center to the far-flung suburbs and exurbs should be considered as a major change in commuter patterns. Portions of Springfield are in or near the service area of seven (7) of the County's eleven (11) major highway transportation corridors making it a convenient place to live and these major commuter corridors include:

- PA 73 – Between Northeast Philadelphia and Boyertown
- PA 611 – Between Philadelphia and Doylestown
- PA 63 – Between North Penn and Willow Grove
- I-476/PA 309 – Between Lehigh Valley and Plymouth Meeting
- US 202 – Between Doylestown and King Of Prussia
- I-76 – Between King of Prussia, Plymouth Meeting and Philadelphia
- I-276 – Between King of Prussia and Willow Grove

Most households today have multiple cars and drivers, each commuting to different destinations. In Springfield Township, traffic congestion peaks during the morning commute along principal arterial roads such as Church



Road, Ridge Pike, and Germantown Pike, minor arterial roads such as Bethlehem Pike, Willow Grove Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue, and at locations near public and private schools.

Issues Questions

1. *What can be done to improve traffic flow through the Township and protect the quality of life for residents in neighborhoods adjacent to major commuter corridors?*

2. *What traffic calming techniques (as opposed to enforcement techniques) should be explored on key blocks where speeding is perceived to be a problem?*

Support All Modes of Transportation

Roadways in the Township need to accommodate all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit, and vehicles. Traveling between neighborhoods or to commercial centers on foot or by bicycle often requires traversing areas designed exclusively for vehicle traffic. This situation is exacerbated during inclement weather when snow blocks paths and forces pedestrians into the roadway. Better connections are needed between neighborhoods, business districts, schools and playgrounds. Sidewalks are missing or located intermittently in many neighborhoods such as Cheltenham Avenue, Church Road, Ivy Hill Road, and Wissahickon Avenue. Wider sidewalks or alternative pedestrian pathways that accommodate all types of users may be desirable. Creating border areas between existing busy streets and sidewalks may add a feeling of safety for pedestrians. More crosswalks are needed, especially in the business districts, near schools and churches, and at busy intersections.

Issues Question

1. *Should the Township create a plan for a safe pedestrian network of sidewalks and alternative pathways with crosswalks that connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and commercial areas?*

Commuter Trains and Buses

Commuters that drive frequently complain that SEPTA trains and buses are inconvenient to where they



live or work, that the schedules are inconvenient and driving is their only option. Where public transit services are available, however, they are limited and may not be meeting the needs of the nondriving residents. Bus stops should be well marked and provide shelters, benches and other commuter amenities.

Issues Questions

1. *What can the Township do to encourage SEPTA to provide more frequent and convenient train and bus service and to run connections to intersecting train and bus lines?*

2. *What can be done to upgrade the local train stations and make them more accessible and appealing to commuters?*

Parking in the Township

Parking is limited or not easily identified along the business corridors. Parking lot regulations encourage shared parking, but many landowners are reluctant to implement shared parking.

Issues Question

1. *What can the Township do to encourage more shared parking in central locations in the business districts to promote walking between multiple destinations?*

Other Comments





Summary of Public Outreach

Background

The following summary documents the ETCI questionnaire responses and the public outreach process for the 2012 Springfield Township Comprehensive Plan Update.

The ETCI questionnaire includes background information and a series of questions organized around 9 categories: Sustainability; Community Facilities and Services; Stormwater Management; Land Use and Zoning; Economic Development; Housing; Historic Resources, Natural Resources and the Environment; and Transportation. A copy of the ETCI questionnaire is attached to this report.

Public Outreach Process

The Emerging Trends and Critical Issues were presented to the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners at their regular meeting on October 12, 2011. The Board of Commissioners authorized the ETCI questionnaire to be made available for public review and comment at the Springfield Township library and on the Township website. In addition, they authorized the Planning Commission to conduct a public open house for the purpose of sharing the ETCI and gathering feedback from the public.

Public Open House

On November 15, 2011, the Springfield Township Planning Commission hosted a public open house where the Emerging Trends and Critical Issues were presented through a poster session. Members of the Springfield Township Planning Commission, Township Staff and Community Planners from the Montgomery County Planning Commission were on hand to discuss with residents the 9 categories and 40 sub-categories of the ETCI. Residents were encouraged to fill out the questionnaire in writing or by accessing it on the Township website.

Attendees of the public open house also participated in an activity where they identified their priorities among the 40 sub-categories. The top 5 priorities selected by the open house participants were as follows:

- Stormwater Management – public stormwater management facilities.
- Land use and Zoning – commercial district revitalization.
- Stormwater Management – private land-owner incentive programs.
- Community Facilities – parks and recreation facilities.
- Economic Development – Flourtown-Erdenheim business district.

Questionnaire Methodology

The Emerging Trends and Critical Issues document contained 49 questions. There are several questions



that required a simple “yes” or “no” answer. Most of the questions however, were asked in an open-ended fashion. This was purposeful so that participants could provide a more detailed response. While this method of questioning does not necessarily provide quantitative data that can be tallied and measured statistically, it does permit the participants to provide a more in-depth response which can enhance the understanding of an issue or indicate where there may be a need for more information.

Questionnaire Responses

Below is a synopsis of the responses received from the questionnaire. They are organized in the same order in which the 9 categories appear in the ETCI document. One additional section was added at the end for miscellaneous comments.

Sustainability

There was general support for discussing “sustainability” throughout the comprehensive plan.

- Participants stated that a definition of sustainability and related terms would be needed and sustainability should be promoted through public education.
- They recommend that the Township consider sustainable choices and alternatives with all projects and purchases, utilizing grant opportunities and incentives from sources outside of Township whenever possible.
- The Township should consider adopting flexible standards in the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance that encourages sustainable practices without preventing a reasonable amount of growth.
- Township staff (code enforcement, building inspectors, and engineer, etc) should be offered training so that they are well versed in sustainable options available to residents and businesses.
- Encourage local self-sufficiency practices such as: local food production and bio-waste composting;
- Elevate the value of trees and green spaces;
- Encourage a mix of uses and regulations that reduces resident’s dependency on cars;
- Increase opportunities for residents to walk and bicycle.

Community Facilities and Services

Township Complex

The participants acknowledged that the physical constraints and programmatic needs of all the township facilities, including the municipal complex need to be addressed in the comprehensive plan and that the range of issues be determined with a detailed analysis of each site. The Township acknowledges that concurrent to the comprehensive plan update, the township is already engaged in a process to explore possible solutions for updating the Township complex so a status update will be provided in the final comprehensive plan.



Library

- Any planning for the library should address emerging trends in library usage, such as an increase in the use of electronic resources as well as consideration for more informal spaces for community groups to meet, as the library has become the “defacto community center” for a variety of programs.
- Make the library more pedestrian/bicycle accessible from the neighborhoods by adding sidewalks, where they are missing, safe street crossings, and secure bike racks.

Public Safety

- Participants identified concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety but otherwise were unaware of any current problems/issues with emergency services, response times etc.

Parks and Recreation

In addition to the recommendations proposed in the 2008 Springfield Parks and Recreation Connections Plan (SPARC), the participants recommended:

- Utilization of organic methods and best practices as an alternative to use of pesticides/herbicides of township facilities.
- Greater use of native plants in the landscape.
- Explore the use of “greener” technology for Township vehicles and maintenance equipment when they need to be replaced.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is the area where the most comments were received. The comments are grouped into 3 categories: stormwater infrastructure; alternative approaches to stormwater management; and the impact of stormwater on watersheds.

Stormwater Infrastructure

- Find ways to partner with organizations and neighboring municipalities to improve regional stormwater management.
- Seek out state and other grants and programs for the design and construction of municipal stormwater management systems.

Alternative Approaches to Stormwater Management

- Create demonstration projects.
- Promote the Shade Tree Commission’s activities to elevate the role that trees play in stormwater management.
- Encourage planting of native trees and other vegetation, and discourage removal of healthy trees.
- Consider implementing a tree removal permit process.
- Create incentive programs for planting more trees.



Stormwater Impacts on Watersheds

- Study and prioritize actions and projects that address the critical issues for water quality such as reducing or eliminating the use of herbicides and pesticide in riparian areas and stabilizing stream banks to reduce sedimentation.
- Create demonstration projects that invest in ‘model’ best management projects on public land and seek grant funding to support them.
- Continue the public education process to promote the benefits of managing watersheds such as the benefits for wildlife habitats, improved aesthetics, and community enjoyment.

Land Use and Zoning

Participant’s comments on shared community values included:

- Small town atmosphere.
- Self-sufficiency.
- Personal responsibility.
- Non-discrimination.
- Valuing trees, streams, natural spaces.
- Concern for how the actions of today can effect future generations.

Future land use and development comments ranged from those strongly opposed to any new development until after the stormwater issues have been resolved to those who are content with the way things are. Some other recurring themes included:

- The township zoning codes should prevent overdevelopment and excessive impervious surfaces.
- Infill development should fit with the context of adjacent properties and the neighborhood as a whole.
- Consider known strategies for preserving remaining undeveloped land such as working with a land trust and direct purchase or lease of lands that connect contiguous open spaces.

Economic Development

Flourtown-Erdenheim Business District

- Create a Friday-night scene in the business district with some attractions and promotional incentives from local retailers and services. Other recommendations included:
- Recruitment of a good mix of stores and perhaps some art galleries or other destination venues that support night-time activities.
- Promoting more pedestrians and bicycles and less cars.
- Providing safe bicycle storage throughout the district.



Oreland Station Area Business District

- Respondents identified the post office, hardware store, bakery and pizza shop as businesses that are an asset to the district and recommended the addition of a coffee shop located within the train station, and more restaurant choices in general.
- Enhance the perception of safety in and around the train station.
- Making the train station area more attractive and welcoming.

Wyndmoor – Willow Grove Avenue Business District

- Respondents identified businesses that are an asset to the district including the hardware store, hair salon, professional services and the restaurant/bar.
- Adding more retail, a small-scaled independent grocer that residents could walk to, and more restaurants.
- There is a perceived mismatch between where there is parking and where it should be.
- Seasonal businesses create a kind of “dead zone” in the middle of the district during the off-season.
- The district could benefit from more unifying design elements along the right-of way.
- Create a vision-plan for the district.
- Create a friendlier atmosphere between the community and business community.

Housing

- Respondents commented that a variety of smaller housing options already exist within the Township but that some additional units for older adults could be permitted through the creation of in-law-suites in existing homes or some new higher-end multifamily condominiums.
- There is concern about possible over-development of smaller residential lots that may be out of scale and character with the neighborhood.
- Most respondents expressed an interest in maintaining the character of the community for the existing residents.
- Some commented about the enforcement of property maintenance and impact on housing values.

Historic Resources and Community Character

- Participants believe that people’s awareness and appreciation of the historic nature of the township encourages people to move to Springfield.
- If important historic homes and other buildings are neglected or demolished, they will be lost to history forever.



- Important buildings should be identified and their maintenance and preservation should be promoted.
- While some respondents would subscribe to a strict historic plan and code, others opined that efforts should be strictly voluntary on the part of the property owner.

Natural Resources, Open Space and the Environment

- There was support for the concept of preserving portions of the Township identified in the Natural Areas Inventory – Schuylkill River Conservation Landscape.
- Environmentally sensitive and natural features in the panhandle should be preserved in appropriate ways to create a continuous natural area as much as possible.
- The Township should explore state funds and public-private collaboration with organizations that would support a permanent easement.

Transportation

The following are a synopsis of numerous comments received by the participants about transportation:

- Traffic calming techniques such as digital speed sign monitors and strategically placed unmanned police vehicles, well signed and striped cross-walks could remind drivers of the presence of pedestrians and the posted speed limit.
- Slowing traffic down by reducing the number of lanes of traffic and adding more signals along Bethlehem Pike could force through-traffic back to Route 309.
- Birdwatchers, strollers, parents with baby strollers and toddlers, kids of all ages, joggers, bikers, folks going to visit with friends would benefit from safer and better connected sidewalks and alternative pathways. Trips to school and the library could be made without cars.
- To encourage new riders and more ridership generally among Township residents would require better coordination of schedules between connecting routes of existing service.
- Improve the feeling of safety around the Oreland Station with enhancements of lighting, signage, landscaping, and maintenance (paint and trash removal).
- Explore how existing or new businesses could have a façade that faced the train station.
- Access to the bridge at Oreland Station is very steep and difficult to traverse by the elderly and handicapped. Explore if the slope of the bridge could be improved.
- Create a business district parking master plan that looks to identify, sign, and stripe existing parking spaces as well as finding long-term opportunities for new and/or shared parking.



Miscellaneous Comments

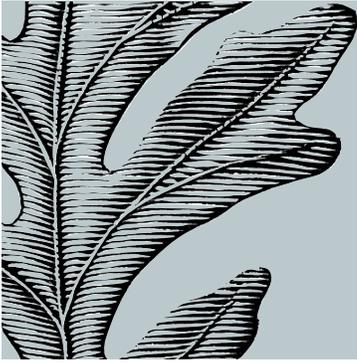
Respondents had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the questionnaire. The major themes included:

- The need to find long-term solutions to stormwater and sewer issues.
- Making safe bicycle and pedestrian connections to schools, library, parks, and businesses can be a benefit to resident's health, relieving traffic congestion, improving safety, help businesses, and encouraging community interactions.
- Consider allocating more staff time to enhancing the economic development of the business districts.
- Preserving green spaces, existing tree cover and plant new trees is a priority.
- Some participants expressed concerns about declining property maintenance in some areas of the Township and the impact it could have on nearby property values and people's perceptions about the community.
- Consider devoting some space in the comprehensive plan for a discussion of technology and communications such as social media, public meetings, dispersal of information, the "public square," television, and bandwidth, due to the rapid advancements in each.
- Residents appreciated the opportunity to participate in the process.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Emerging Trends and Critical Issues Report is to provide a summary of land planning trends and issues that will help guide the development of the plan's vision, goals and objectives, and implementation strategies for the Springfield Township Comprehensive Plan Update.





Appendix B

Township Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 1322

A RESOLUTION OFFICIALLY ADOPTING THE 2013 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE OF SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA.

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township, Montgomery County, PA, has conducted duly advertised public meetings to discuss the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Update of Springfield Township; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township has determined that it is in the best interest of the Township and its residents to adopt the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, which updates the Comprehensive Plans of 1998 and 1968; and

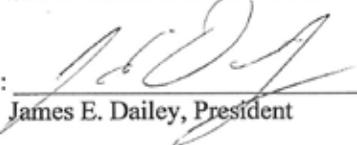
WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code authorizes and guides local planning by outlining the required elements of the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, a Comprehensive Plan provides an overall vision for the community and serves as a guide for Township leaders as they make policy decisions, plan capital improvements and work within the Township Zoning Code, and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

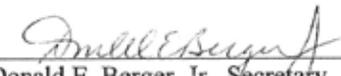
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of Springfield Township, Montgomery County, PA, hereby adopts the 2013 Comprehensive Plan entitled "Comprehensive Plan: Vision for 2025" in its entirety as the official Comprehensive Plan of Springfield Township.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED this 12th day of February, 2014.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP

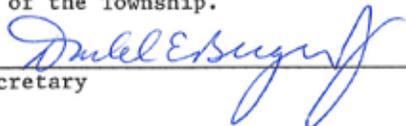
By: 
James E. Dailey, President

ATTEST:


Donald E. Berger, Jr., Secretary

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the foregoing Resolution No. 1322 was unanimously adopted by the Springfield Township Board of Commissioners at a regularly scheduled business meeting held on February 12, 2014, and that same has been duly recorded in the official Minute Book of the Township.

(SEAL)


Secretary



