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NOVEMBER 2011

Plan Purpose and Background

Bucks County, Pennsylvania, is valued for its open spaces, wealth of natural resources and farmland, historic, scenic, and recreational amenities, and high quality of life. It is these very qualities that make Bucks County attractive to people and businesses looking for new opportunities. Over the years the county's municipalities have made a concerted effort to plan for and adapt to the demand for new development. As a result of these efforts, we've preserved thousands of acres of open space and farmland and helped plan and develop good communities. But sprawling development continues to hinder us economically, environmentally, and socially—traffic congestion keeps getting worse, our natural and agricultural heritage has become more fragmented and diminished, and our neighborhoods remain disconnected from each other.

With the support and guidance of the Bucks County Board of Commissioners and Bucks County Planning Commission, the *Bucks County Comprehensive Plan* presents a common vision for the future of Bucks County and seeks to coordinate and assist the county's municipalities, agencies, and the general public in the planning, development, and management of Bucks County's natural and built environment.

Long-standing issues of traffic, flooding, water supply, and economic development are regional in character and cannot be solved by individual communities; it is only through the collective efforts of the county and each of its constituent municipalities that we can put into place long-term and comprehensive solutions. The comprehensive plan fulfills an important role by identifying regional issues, problems, and opportunities in guiding municipalities in the development of their own local planning and implementation programs.



How to Use the Plan

The *Bucks County Comprehensive Plan* is meant to serve as a guide for local officials, residents, developers, business owners, and interested agencies. The plan seeks to set forth a common vision of the future of Bucks County and to coordinate, educate, and guide development and preservation in appropriate areas of the county.

Public Outreach

An essential step in the plan development process was to gather public opinion to make it inclusive and representative of both county residents and stakeholders. This process involved three key activities: distribution of a public opinion survey, hosting stakeholder meetings at various locations in the county, and consideration of public comments on the draft plan during the required public comment period.

Survey

The comprehensive plan survey was open to Bucks County residents and was available to be completed online through the Bucks County Planning Commission webpage and as a paper

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copy to be submitted by mail. The county received 1,746 completed surveys. Due to the method of distribution, the survey cannot be considered a statistically random sample. However, it can still serve as a tool to examine the opinions of county residents about the major planning issues facing the county.

The survey comprised nine questions. The first three questions asked the respondent's place of residency expressed as a zip code, age of the respondent, and the role the respondent may play in the community. The next six questions were designed to gauge what residents liked the most about the county, how satisfied they are with community services, and what planning priorities they would most prefer in the future.

Stakeholder Meetings

The three stakeholder meetings targeted municipal officials and representatives, county residents, community organizations, special interest groups, and regional agencies. The purpose of the meetings was to seek consensus on the comprehensive plan, to uncover any issues that needed to be addressed, and to hear what may require modification.

Meeting attendees were organized into groups, specific comprehensive plan topics were discussed and responses were recorded. At the end of the session, stakeholders were asked to review all comments gathered and agree upon summary statements which best captured main points of discussion.

The insight and input from the stakeholders has helped to shape the emphasis, direction, and recommended strategies of the comprehensive plan.



Public Comment

Two public meetings were held before the plan was submitted to the county commissioners for adoption. Municipalities, school districts, and the general public had 45 days to submit additional feedback to the planning commission. The public comment process was in accordance with Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requirements.

Foundations

The *Bucks County Comprehensive Plan* is founded on the long history of innovative planning carried out by the Bucks County Planning Commission and the values and principles embodied in the concepts of sustainable development and stewardship. The planning commission has continued to work with municipal, county, regional, state, and federal agencies, as well as civic and professional groups, in planning for the future of the county.

In 1961, Bucks County was the first county in the Commonwealth to enact a comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan was revised in 1977 and again in 1993. Over the years, the planning commission has developed innovative guidance documents and spearheaded groundbreaking initiatives such as:

[*Performance Zoning \(1973\)*](#)

[*Village Planning Handbook \(1989\)*](#)

[*Bucks County Natural Resources Plan \(1999\)*](#)

[Stormwater Management Planning](#)

[Bucks County Open Space Preservation Program](#)

[Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program](#)

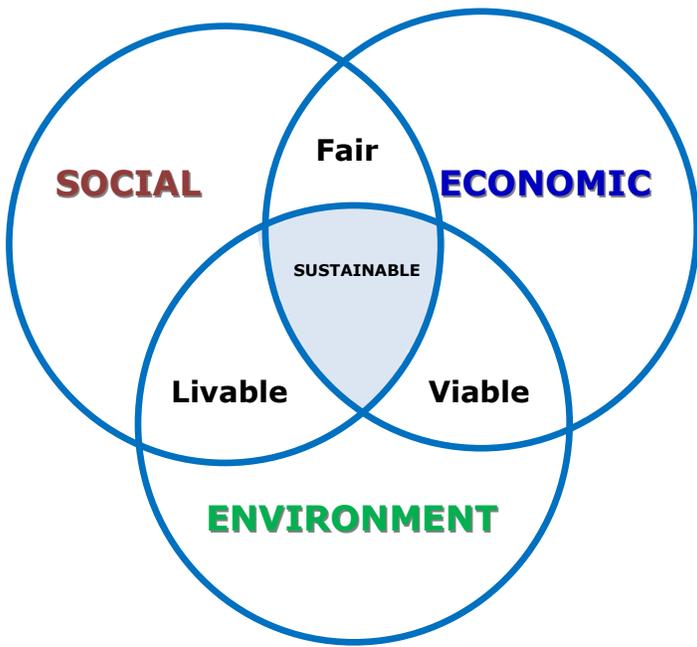
This comprehensive plan is a continuation of the leadership role taken by the county over the course of its history. It has been developed with the understanding of the responsibility of this role and with the acknowledgment that the values represented in this plan must also reflect the values of the county's citizens.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is often defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept, which uses the term "development" in the socio-economic sense, was first popularized by the 1987 United Nations document *Our Common Future*.

A key recognition of the document is that the many crises facing the planet are in fact interlocking. For example, in

some parts of the world the failure to prevent deforestation has had devastating impacts on a communities' ability to feed and shelter themselves, and these conditions have further led to spiraling disease and mortality rates and long-term political instability. While the problems of Bucks County are not nearly as dire, it is clear they are interconnected. One community's uncontrolled growth will eventually become everyone else's traffic and congestion problem. Thus, at its core, sustainable development, attempts to understand how things influence one another within a whole and seeks to address the root causes of problems rather than just the symptoms.



Sustainable development is often thought of as environmental sustainability, such as ensuring long-term water supplies for a region or ensuring that species habitat is preserved for the future. Sustainable development grasps that we cannot help the environment without also addressing people's social needs and basic standard of living. Sustainable development can be broken into its constituent parts of economy, environment, and society, and is often represented as interlocking circles of influence.

Development which is sustainable addresses each of the constituent influences, seeking to create communities which are fair, livable,

and viable. Sustainable development is not an end to be achieved, but an ideal for which to strive.

The concepts of sustainable development are implicit in the principles, strategies, and actions of this comprehensive plan. Each element of the plan looks at the issues in the context of the overall system and seeks to address underlying causes. The plan also gives equal consideration to the human needs of society, economy, and environment. The comprehensive plan puts into practice the concepts of sustainable development most evidently by emphasizing a smart growth planning framework.

Stewardship

Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. Stewardship is a natural outgrowth of sustainability in that it is long-term in concept, implies reasonable economic use, but also emphasizes social and environmental responsibility. When we think of the county's many natural, cultural, and historical resources, we as members of the community and private landowners, must think of how we can maintain and enhance these resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Stewardship also emphasizes the responsibility we have in ensuring that our activities have minimal impact on our neighbors, community, and region.

Stewardship is most often applied to open space and agricultural preservation activities, but it also applies to our responsibilities to other resources including water, mineral, energy, scenic, forested lands, and fauna and flora. Therefore, each citizen of the county must be a steward of the resources that support and maintain our high quality of life. Stewardship is a foundation of the principles and planning elements of the comprehensive plan.



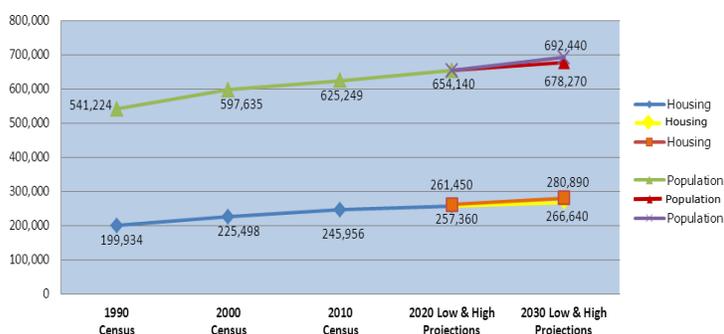
Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics and Trends

Bucks County’s population has changed over the past 80 years and will continue to change due to factors from inside and outside the county’s boundaries. The most rapid period of growth was between 1950 and 1960 when Bucks County grew by 113 percent. The county’s population more than doubled over the last 50 years but has slowed during the past 10 years.

After 1970 the county population increased approximately 60,000 each decade. The decade intervals after 1970 showed a growth of 10 percent. Between 2000 and 2010 county population grew by only 27,614 persons, or 4.6 percent. The county’s 2010 population of 625,429 makes it the 4th largest county in Pennsylvania.

The county is projected to continue this slower rate of growth through 2030. The county’s population and housing projections are based on the assumption that maintaining the recent pace of growth is more than reasonable considering the current slow economic and housing market recovery that is anticipated to have reverberating effects for the next 5 to 10 years. This assumption results in 2030 high population and housing projections of 692,440 and 280,890, respectively and low population and housing projections of 678,270 and 266,640, respectively.

Population and Housing Projections, 2020 and 2030



Other demographic and socioeconomic trends influencing growth and development in Bucks County include:

- **Increases in older residents**, including Baby Boomers and older seniors, and the decline in the numbers of younger residents, through a “Brain Drain,” are two of the most significant demographic trends facing the county.

Baby Boomers

- The most significant demographic changes will involve the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) who made up almost one third of the county’s population in 2010.
- The health care, housing, and service needs of this group will affect future land use and transportation planning.

Brain Drain

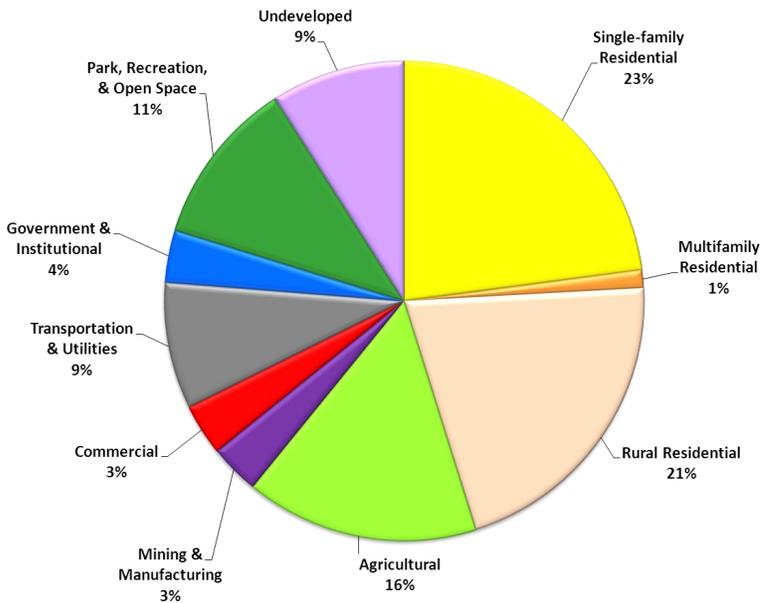
- Bucks County has lost significant numbers of young people aged 25-34 who have left the area for education, jobs, or other types of communities.
- These young workers are important to the business and job development in the county.
- **Households** in the county have become smaller, with more single headed households, more single households and fewer children. This may lead to a greater demand for smaller housing types.
- **Demographic diversity** is increasing slowly (race, foreign born, income).
- **Per capita income and average household income** in Bucks have grown since 1990 and at a rate faster than inflation.
- **Educational attainment** is high, with average education levels in Bucks County exceeding those in the state and the United States.

Existing Land Use and Land Use Trends

While there are areas that are significantly developed, the county’s land use composition continues to provide a rural setting. Rural residential, agricultural, park, recreation, and protected open space, and undeveloped land covers nearly 60 percent of the county. Single-family residential comprises 23 percent of the county, making this the predominant single land use in Bucks County.

While all regions of the county contain developed areas as well as open space, there are distinct overall land use differences between the regions. Generally, upper Bucks is more rural in character than the other regions, central Bucks contains rural and suburbanized areas, while lower Bucks is considered more urbanized.

Existing Land Use 2009



Over the last 19 years, the amount of residential, nonresidential, and park, recreation, and open space land increased while land devoted to agricultural/undeveloped uses decreased. Overall, this pattern has been consistent throughout the last four decades, with the exception of park, recreation, and open space which dropped slightly between 1980 and 1990. However, from 1990 to 2009, land categorized as park, recreation, and open space almost doubled, increasing from 6 to 11 percent of the county's land area.

Despite the continued residential growth, land consumption for residential development generally appears to be occurring at a lower rate. The reduction in rate of land consumption per dwelling unit may be attributed to concentration of residential development at higher net densities (using conservation or "cluster" development, smaller lot sizes, and attached and multifamily development). From an overall county perspective, however, the change in average acreage per dwelling unit has been minimal between 1990 and 2009.

The following provides additional snapshots of the county's physical character:

- Bucks County contains a significant amount of residential land. Almost half (45 percent) of the county land area is classified as single-family, multifamily, or rural residential land.

- Rural residential occupies over one-fifth of the county's land area and is concentrated primarily in upper Bucks.
- Despite losing almost 27,000 acres between 1990 and 2009, farming still has a major presence with nearly 16 percent of the county in some type of agricultural use. As with undeveloped land, agricultural lands will continue to face development pressures in the future.
- Park, recreation, and protected open space accounts for 11 percent of the county's land area, making it the fourth largest land use by acreage. From 1990 to 2009, this category almost doubled, gaining more acreage than any other land use category. This increase is indicative of the success of the county and municipal open space programs as well as a result of cluster developments which provide higher open space ratios.
- Undeveloped land decreased by slightly more than 24,500 acres from 1990 to 2009. Undeveloped land occupies nearly 9 percent of the county. While some sites may have limiting factors such as environmental constraints, it can be expected that some of this land will face development pressures in the future.
- Transportation and utilities accounts for 9 percent of the county's land area. This category, which includes utility installations and rights-of-way, parking and terminal facilities, stormwater basins and roadway acreages, gained almost 8,000 acres between 1990 and 2009. This increase is likely the result of additional roadways associated with new development.
- Commercial uses comprise 3 percent of the total land area. These uses are generally concentrated near major highway intersections and along major roadways. Between 1990 and 2009, commercial land increased by almost 2,000 acres, with almost half of the commercial development occurring in central Bucks.
- Mining and manufacturing accounts for roughly 3 percent of the county's land use. The bulk of this use is within lower Bucks, mainly in and around the former U.S. Steel plant in Falls Township.
- At 1 percent, multifamily residential covers the least amount of land in the county. This use does not require as much land as other residential uses and generally uses less space since units are attached.

Vision

The comprehensive plan update reaffirms the county's long-term goals of sustainability and good stewardship through a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. This vision was developed by examining past accomplishments, such as Bucks County's long standing planning history, and current land use trends. The goal of the visioning process is to set direction and to create an inspirational image for what the county could achieve within the next 20 years. This Bucks County vision statement exemplifies where the county is going and what it could look like by the year 2030.

VISION STATEMENT

In the year 2030...

Bucks County has a diverse population that enjoys a high quality of life. Our villages, boroughs, and townships are some of the most livable places in the nation. Our residents respect the environment, support economic opportunity, and provide for the needs of our communities. The county continues to benefit from the contributions of the older and younger population. The communities of Bucks County are dedicated to ensuring the Delaware River waterfront remains a regional amenity, with a vibrant and accessible public riverwalk, new and thriving businesses, and diverse residential uses.

Bucks County is a leader in job creation. Our public officials work to capitalize on our strategic location and cater to the economic needs of our residents and businesses. Bucks County's industrial sites are vital employment centers with a diverse combination of new endeavors and prosperous businesses. The county is a focal point for green business nationwide and our strong Main Streets and downtowns are centers of commerce with thriving business districts.

Bucks County residents have access to excellent community facilities and services that address the public's health, welfare, and safety. Lives and property are protected by highly-trained professional and volunteer emergency services personnel. Through the efforts and commitment of our government agencies, the county has reduced the impact of natural disasters and hazards through planning, equipping, and preparing our residents.

Bucks County has a distinguished history and natural beauty that create an ideal setting in which to live, work, and raise a family. Collectively, historic, natural, and scenic resources contribute to the county's unique identity and sense of place. Management of stormwater, water supply, wastewater, and solid waste helps to protect our water and natural resources. By reducing waste output and exceeding environmental regulations, the county is cleaner and safer for residents, businesses, and visitors.

The county continues to lead the region with its extensive open space system consisting of parks, recreational amenities, natural resources and agricultural land. These lands and amenities contribute to the cultural landscape, and they provide active and passive recreational needs of residents, while also supporting farming and tourism as a strong component of the county's economy. The County continues its artistic heritage, fostering the arts, music and many educational events.

A mature multi-modal transportation system meets the needs of our residents and visitors with safe, reliable mobility and supports our expanding population and developing economy. This transportation system connects our residents and visitors with other areas in our county and in the region. Biking and walking are an integral part of the county's transportation network. The system is not only safer, but more enjoyable, and adequately meets travel demand.

Bucks County is a leader in energy conservation. Our people conserve resources, wherever possible, and many residents and businesses get their energy from renewable, non-polluting sources.

Guiding Principles

The “ideal” setting expressed in the Vision Statement cannot come to fruition by accident; it can only come about through the collective decisions and actions of the county, its municipalities, and the people who live and work here. The following Guiding Principles identify the priorities of the comprehensive plan and serve to guide future decisions. They form the basis for the actions of the plan and, when implemented, ensure the plan is carried out in a manner that is consistent with the vision for Bucks County.

Protect Natural, Historic and Scenic Resources

The county’s natural and cultural heritage provides biodiversity, stimulates tourism, triggers private investment, and fosters community pride. By utilizing effective land use planning and preservation methods, the county’s sensitive natural, scenic, and historic resources will be protected for future generations of residents and visitors alike.

Preserve and Expand Parks, Open Space, and Agricultural Resources

Farmland, rural character and the county’s park and recreation facilities are what residents like best about Bucks County according to the comprehensive plan survey. The use and enjoyment of these open space amenities depends upon the continued support and improvement of the overall county’s greenway network.



Promote Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Bucks County is committed to reducing energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. Improving energy efficiency, raising community awareness of the importance of energy conservation, and transitioning to renewable sources of energy and green technology in the areas of transportation, land use and buildings, will lead to a decrease in the use of nonrenewable and consumptive sources of energy.

Protect Water Resources and Reduce Waste

Providing sound water infrastructure and treating wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste as a resource rather than a disposal problem will achieve



the protection of water and the natural environment. In addition, integrating comprehensive water resources planning and integrative waste management combined with thoughtful land use planning will protect the quality and quantity of our water and environmental resources.

Mitigate Hazards to Life and Property

Assessing the county’s vulnerability to hazards and developing mitigation actions as part of a prioritized implementation strategy will reduce the risk from potential hazards. Preventing new development from contributing to flooding problems, controlling development in the floodplain, and making changes in repetitive flooding areas are examples of needed actions.

Provide Adequate Community Facilities and Services

Continuing to promote proactive, cost-effective and efficient community facilities and services will keep pace with and fulfill the changing needs of our citizenry. Bucks County’s exceptional community services and facilities, such as excellent schools, libraries, medical care, fire and police protection, enhance the county’s appeal as a desirable place to live and work.



Enhance Transportation Mobility

To effectively manage traffic congestion, the county’s transportation system should be multi-modal and be designed to improve safety, provide a well-functioning public transit system and promote non-motorized means of travel. A well-developed transportation system also allows for an efficient movement of goods, maintains air travel, and strengthens the transportation/land use connection.

Promote Economic Opportunity, Housing Diversity, and Efficient Use of Land

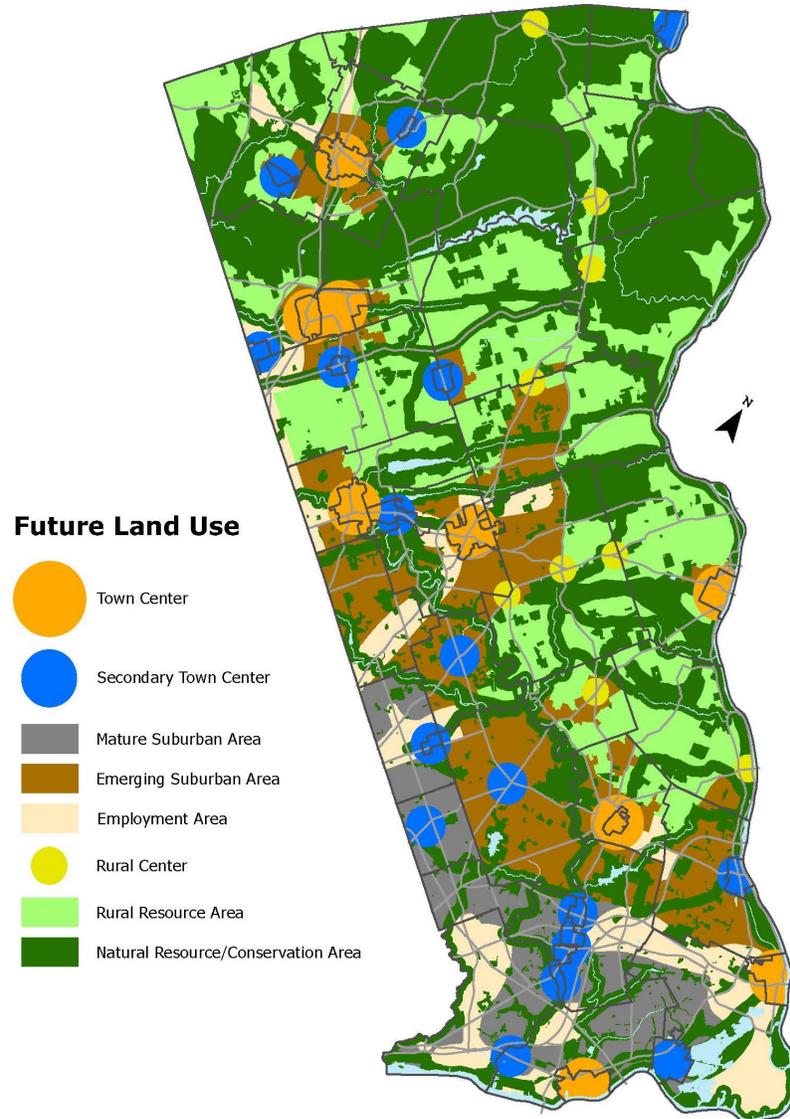
Efficient land use is essential to Bucks County’s ability to continue to thrive in the future. It creates livable communities by sparing resources and providing a mix of land uses, a range of transportation options, a pedestrian-friendly environment, and a distinct sense of place, all of which cater to the population’s social, economic, and physical basic needs. It is supported by a varied and affordable housing stock and sustainable, job-creating economic growth. Opportunities are given to living and working arrangements that meet the needs of older residents and attract a younger, educated workforce.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan map provides a countywide vision to implementing the principles of Smart Growth. Smart Growth is a land use planning strategy which seeks to focus development on existing developed areas, preserve open space and natural resources, and link transportation and land use planning efforts. The map is meant to assist in the coordination and implementation of local and regional planning efforts. By designating appropriate places for development to occur, municipalities can plan for and coordinate infrastructure systems, including roads, public transit facilities, trails, sewage disposal systems, water supply systems, and public utilities. Providing a plan for future land use also enables officials to direct development to those areas with infrastructure capabilities while protecting and preserving those areas with sensitive natural resources and agricultural land.

The map was developed by analyzing existing land use characteristics, natural resources, water and sewer infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure. Also taken into account were population and development trends, the various plans developed by the county, and the local planning and zoning of county municipalities. The following nine future land use categories were identified through this analysis and incorporating the concepts of Smart Growth that are at the core of this plan.

Town Centers have unique history, character and a sense of place and are typified by high-density land uses and mixed-use building types. They are pedestrian-oriented and may include regional rail service and public services (e.g., hospitals, schools, social services). The residential



areas are traditional neighborhoods and the primary commercial areas are typical of “Main Street.” These are vital areas for compact and efficient development and redevelopment with a mixture of uses, a variety of transportation options, a range of housing opportunities, and walkable and distinctive communities.

Secondary Town Centers are similar to Town Centers except that they do not have the full range of public services, infrastructure, or the mix of uses. These Centers include boroughs not identified as Town Centers and other nodes of commercial activity. Secondary Town Centers are expected to continue to function as focal points for revitalization.

Mature Suburban Areas are the older, residential areas of the county which were mostly planned and developed during the period immediately following World War II.



These areas are generally built-out and have had limited population growth during the latter part of the 20th century. A full range of infrastructure and public services are available for infill and redevelopment. The long-term survival and success of these areas will be tied to both repairing and enhancing infrastructure, redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized lands, and effective neighborhood planning. The Delaware River waterfront is one concentrated area of potential redevelopment and will be important to redevelopment efforts in the region and as such the Comprehensive Plan fully supports the recommendations of the *Bucks County Waterfront Revitalization Plan*.

Emerging Suburban Areas are those areas with available public infrastructure and services intended for future development by municipalities. These areas have experienced significant population gains within the last 20 years. They conform generally to the Development Areas identified by municipalities anticipating intense development. Mixed use, Smart Growth development types should be implemented in these areas.

Employment Areas are where primarily nonresidential growth (commercial, industrial, and office development) has and will continue to occur along, or in close proximity to, arterial corridors having access to the regional transportation network (i.e., rail, interstate highways, and ports). These areas are often characterized by single use and land intensive development. Nonresidential development should be undertaken in a planned and coordinated way.

Rural Centers are commercial villages that are adjacent to or within Rural Resource or Natural Resource/Conservation Areas. There is a concentration of commercial uses but fewer public services and less infrastructure than a Secondary Town Center. New development and infill development should continue with village-style development that is compact and pedestrian-oriented.

Rural Resource Areas mostly contain rural residential and agricultural uses, but may include limited nonresidential uses. The rural residential uses are characterized by large lots with very low density. Rural Resource Areas include farms, significant agricultural soils, and other natural resources of economic value (e.g., mineral and timber areas) not meant for significant development. Development should be constructed in a way that preserves these resources to the greatest extent possible.



Natural Resource/Conservation Areas include greenway corridors, recreation areas, and significant natural resource areas. These areas are largely undeveloped due to the presence of natural resources. The Natural Resource/Conservation Areas may include Rural Resource Areas. Protecting and preserving these features are essential to the image of the county and its quality of life.

Unique Land Uses are those uses which have countywide significance, including airports, quarries, and landfills. Unique land uses are too small to be shown on the Future Land Use map and will be assumed to continue in their current use. In the event that one of these uses ceases operation, redevelopment of the site should be undertaken in keeping with the character of the area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- > Protect Natural, Historic and Scenic Resources
- > Preserve and Expand Parks, Open Space, and Agricultural Resources
- > Promote Energy Conservation and Efficiency
- > Protect Water Resources and Reduce Waste
- > Mitigate Hazards to Life and Property
- > Provide Adequate Community Facilities and Services
- > Enhance Transportation Mobility
- > Promote Economic Opportunity, Housing Diversity, and Efficient Use of Land

Principle and Element Overviews

Principle 1. Protect Natural, Historic, and Scenic Resources

Natural Resources Protection

Bucks County's has a beautiful landscape defined generally by its gently rolling hills, productive farm fields, and wooded stream valleys. The county contains natural resources of state-wide, county-wide and local importance, and residents believe that protecting these resources is one of the most important issues facing the county. Protecting natural resources means preserving the most important environmentally sensitive areas as well as respecting the landscape when development occurs, so that water quality, scenic characteristics, and habitat are protected and hazards such as erosion are avoided.



Not all natural resources are protected by federal and state laws. Municipal governments, empowered with land use planning authority, have the ability to plan for and develop local ordinances to address the unique land use issues and conflicts in the community and to protect the natural resources they deem most valuable. The county has promoted natural resource protection standards and sound land use policies that municipalities have adopted and implemented to protect natural resources.

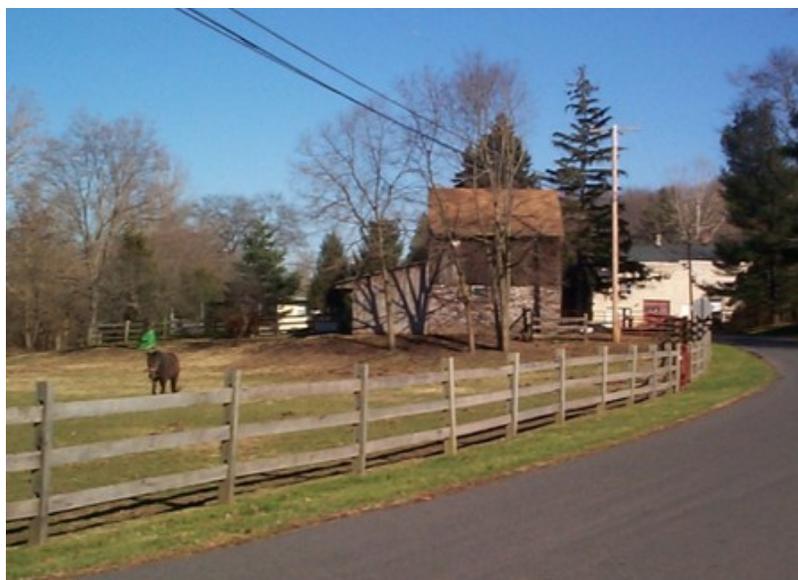
These approaches protect native wildlife, the visual character of the county, and balance human activities with the safeguarding of the environment. The Comprehensive Plan provides recommended strategies and actions that address the human impacts caused by land development that place pressure on our natural resources, and foster sustainable practices that mitigate impacts, taking into account the land use, economic development, and environmental characteristics of our communities.

Historic Resources

Bucks County, one of the three original counties in Pennsylvania, has a rich historic and cultural legacy. The historic buildings, sites, villages, covered bridges, and artifacts are material reminders of those who once lived here and the ways in which they lived, and a tangible way of transmitting cultural heritage from generation to generation. Increasingly, development pressures threaten the integrity of historic resources and the physical and natural settings that frame them, the context, which is nearly as important as the resources themselves. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan may foster preservation of historic resources aimed at stimulating tourism, triggering private investment and resurgent neighborhood pride, and strengthening cultural legacies for future generations of county residents and visitors.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources are characterized by natural and visual qualities, among them prominent historic structures and sites, pristine landscapes, villages, farmlands, geological formations, and combinations of resources such as river and stream valleys and wooded hillsides. While threats to the integrity of scenic resources come from a variety of sources, scenic assets are lost, depleted, or overwhelmed primarily by insensitive development activities. The preservation of scenic resources reinforces a unique sense of place and helps to retain our cultural and natural heritage for generations to come. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions provide practical means of identifying, protecting, and preserving these resources.



Principle 2. Preserve and Expand Parks, Open Space, and Agricultural Resources

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Bucks County possesses an immense array of open space resources including natural areas, recreational amenities and historic and cultural resources that contribute to a high quality of life that is valued by residents and visitors. These resources, including the Delaware River, municipal, county, and state parks and game



lands, and the diversity of cultural and historical sites all contribute to the network of open space that provide opportunities for recreation, contact with nature, and education. The county's commitment to the protection of open space resources has a strong and established foundation to build upon, dating back to the adoption of the Bucks County Park Plan in 1974 to the recently adopted Bucks County Open Space and Greenways Plan, including funding from the successful county Open Space Program. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan focus on meeting the challenges of ensuring recreational and cultural needs of both residents and visitors continue to be met.

Agricultural Resources

Bucks County's agrarian history has shaped today's landscape and connects us with the county's heritage. Farms provide jobs, produce a commodity for consumption, generate tax revenues, and provide valued open space. Many of the farms in the county provide recreation and education benefits in addition to environmental benefits where managed properly. The county has been at the forefront of farmland preservation through the Agricultural Preservation Program. Municipalities have seen positive results from the use of agricultural preservation tools and techniques as a means of temporarily and permanently preserving farmland. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions will enable sustainable agricultural preservation to satisfy food and fiber needs, enhance and protect the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends, sustain the economic viability of farm operations, and enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

Principle 3. Promote Energy Conservation and Efficiency

The supply and demand for energy and how it is generated and transmitted affects how we plan for Bucks County's future. Energy heats and cools homes, fuels factories and vehicles, powers computers and appliances, and helps residents maintain the standard of living they enjoy. Decisions such as where to live, how to travel to work, how to heat and cool buildings, or where to locate a business can be related to energy availability and cost. The county was the first among Pennsylvania's 67 counties to commit to the Cool Counties Initiative, thus joining the ranks of counties across America pledging to reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050. In addition, the Bucks County Employees Green Initiative Committee was established to improve energy efficiency of Bucks County government operations and serves as a model for others. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions bolster these commitments by promoting practices that reduce energy consumption, increase efficient energy use, and foster increased use of green technology and renewable energy sources.

Principle 4. Protect Water Resources and Reduce Waste

Water Supply and Infrastructure

Maintaining a sufficient amount of safe water is important to meeting future community and business needs. Water supply and infrastructure planning must focus on how surface water and groundwater are used by individuals and public water suppliers to ensure an adequate supply of good quality water. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions support a comprehensive water supply planning process that: ensures adequate and safe drinking water is available to all citizens; encourages, and protects uses such as recreation and wildlife habitat; protects and enhances the quantity and quality of surface water and groundwater resources; encourages, promotes, and develops incentives for alternative water supply solution strategies including, for example, structural improvements, systems upgrades, new source development and management solutions such as coordination with other entities; and fosters integration of water supply, wastewater facilities, stormwater management, and land use planning.

Wastewater Facilities

Wastewater treatment and disposal facilities are inextricably linked to the protection of public health, protection of water resources, and comprehensive growth and development plans in each community. The location of wastewater systems is a determinant of land use patterns.

Likewise, the timing and location of future extensions or new systems influences the location and rate of growth in a community. For this reason, effective planning requires strong coordination between future utility plans and future land use plans. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan foster timely wastewater facilities planning that addresses proper selection, operation and maintenance of facilities aimed at ensuring adequate capacity and providing sustainability, such as land application systems that provide groundwater recharge.

Stormwater Management

Bucks County has been on the forefront of stormwater management planning. Watershed management plans and regulations in the county require the incorporation of volume - (quantity) and rate- (speed) reducing best management practices for all new development. Stormwater regulations have been in place for a number of years, and great strides have been made in avoiding new stormwater problems. But because much of Bucks County was developed before stormwater controls were put in place, and because the techniques to managing runoff are continually improving, there remain areas where flooding and polluted runoff exist. Residents responding to the comprehensive plan survey ranked stormwater management as the most inadequate of all the services provided by their communities. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions aim to improve stormwater management practices that protect the public and the county's natural water resources by controlling the amount of runoff and the flow of pollutants into streams, treating stormwater as a natural resource, ensuring proper operation and maintenance, and addressing rehabilitation and retrofitting of existing stormwater facilities.

Solid Waste Management

The management of solid waste involves the storage, collection, transport, processing, and disposal of household and commercial waste at landfills, transfer stations, material recovery and recycling facilities, composting areas, and waste-to-energy facilities. The generation and disposal of municipal solid waste engenders important community issues including human health, economic, and environmental concerns. Increased waste generation led to legislation regulating waste management, as well as grassroots efforts to recycle and recapture useful elements in the waste stream. The county's commitment to providing, environmentally sound management of waste is well founded in the 2006 Bucks County Solid Waste Management Plan and the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive

Plan augment these commitments by promoting additional waste reduction, minimization, recycling, and composting programs that are environmentally safe and economical.

Principle 5. Mitigate Hazards to Life and Property

After suffering the effects of floods, tornadoes, winter storms, and other natural hazards, Bucks County moved forward with the development of a long-term approach to reduce the county's vulnerability to natural and man-made hazards. In 2005, Bucks County began an ongoing hazard mitigation planning process to identify strategies to reduce damage from disasters. The Bucks County Hazard Mitigation Plan was updated in 2011 and functions as a pre-disaster, multi-hazard mitigation plan that will guide the county toward greater disaster resistance.

Hazard mitigation planning asserts that current dollars invested in mitigation practices will significantly reduce the demand for future dollars by lessening the amount needed for recovery, repair, and reconstruction. Mitigation practices also enable local residents, businesses, and industries to re-establish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the economy back on track sooner and with less interruption. Bucks County has already implemented mitigation projects on more than 230 properties, making the county a leader in hazard mitigation planning in Pennsylvania. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan reinforce efforts to provide careful selection of pre-disaster mitigation comprised of long-term, cost-effective means that reduce risks to life and property from hazards.

Principle 6. Provide Adequate Community Facilities and Services

Bucks County is known as a good place to live because of the quality of services and facilities provided. Residents view community facilities and services as being very satisfactory. Community services and facilities provided by the county, municipalities and private organizations address health, education and public safety needs. The service responsibility and authority for community facilities is divided among many entities, each with its own resources and sources of funding. Consequently, the county's control over community facilities and services has been limited to agencies which are part of county government, or to those facilities and services the county is mandated to fund or oversee as required through state or federal regulations.

Many service providers have been compelled to rely increasingly on local sources (private or public) to generate a greater share of funding to support and maintain services due to declines in federal and state programs and funding. This has

been compounded by a number of other factors including: continued mandates and regulations without accompanying funding; revenue bases affected by the business cycle; resistance to new taxes; and a disparity of revenues and expenditures between local governments. With increased growth, community service problems may arise, particularly in communities which traditionally have not provided a significant number of services, and those still trying to address and cope with demand from previous population growth. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions center on maintaining effective administration, improving staffing, and providing coordination between service providers to further enhance quality of life in the county.

Principle 7. Enhance Transportation Mobility

Bucks County's transportation network has had an enormous impact on the economic, cultural, and social characteristics of the county. The network consists of an assortment of transportation modes that serve the county's residents, workers, and visitors. The county's well-developed highway network supports extensive private car and commercial traffic and is the dominant form of transportation in the county. Residents believe that controlling traffic congestion is the most important issue facing the county.

While Bucks County owns over 100 bridges, it does not own any roads. All road ownership is either by the state or the local municipalities, and funding of the repair of these roadways is done through federal, state and local dollars. The amount of funding dedicated to transportation projects has been decreasing, while the cost of projects has been increasing. Scarce resources need to be used on projects that ensure more efficient and effective operation of the county's transportation facilities.

Previous transportation planning efforts revolved around the theory of moving as many cars as possible in the least amount of time possible. Today's transportation planning efforts understand the function and impacts of transportation and the need to encompass all facets of mobility, including highway safety, pedestrian mobility, cyclists, goods movement and aviation. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan promote an integrated transportation system that sustains the existing community infrastructure, manages improvement funding more efficiently, controls traffic congestion, supports the mobility of all segments of the population, and facilitates the type of development that enhances, rather than detracts from, the county's character.



Principle 8. Promote Economic Opportunity, Housing Diversity, and Efficient Use of Land

Economic Development

Economic development is the process of improving a community's well-being through job creation, business growth, and income growth, as well as through improvements to the community that enhance quality of life and strengthen the economy. While this general definition of economic development could be applied to most communities, it takes on its own character and flavor when applied to Bucks County.

Bucks County has many advantages, including its quality of life, a valuable asset, and its location. Bucks County's position, near the center of the large metropolitan area of the northeastern United States, makes it well suited for business activities. Major highways provide important access to and across Bucks County. The county's scenic and rural character, quaint villages and boroughs, and cultural institutions attract tourists, visitors, and businesses.



Bucks County is defined more by its economic past than its present. The rise and fall of U.S. Steel and the manufacturing establishments along the Delaware River and in lower Bucks County transformed and defined the county during the past 60 years. More recently, services (office-type activities) have increased while manufacturing and farming have decreased.

Today's economic picture is less uniform and less clear, characterized by smaller businesses throughout the county. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions reinforce the goals and vision of the Action Plan for Progress (2009) in addition to addressing the challenge of competing and succeeding in a world economy and promoting coordination and partnering of economic development functions and agencies, use of existing economic agencies/organizations resources, assistance to existing businesses, attraction and maintenance of key industries, building and retaining a skilled work force, and targeting areas for economic development.

Housing

Bucks County housing stock in 2010 totaled nearly 242,000 units, an eightfold increase since 1940. Housing growth over the last 20+ years has largely occurred in portions of the central and upper Bucks County, although certain portions of lower Bucks began to see a resurgence of residential development in the early 2000s. The type and age of housing varies by municipality, with mature townships and boroughs usually having more multifamily housing. Age-restricted housing emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a prominent development type in reflection of the aging population. Housing growth has been significantly impacted by the nation's economic downturn.

A supply of safe, sound, affordable, and accessible housing is important to the vitality of Bucks County and residents'

quality of life. Local planning and zoning, population changes, market forces and housing preferences are among the factors that influence the type, location, cost, and design of neighborhoods and homes where Bucks County residents will live. Although housing is often considered the domain of the private sector, government policies and programs can have profound impacts. The Comprehensive Plan recommended strategies and actions will assist in increasing the amount and variety of new housing built in the county, expanding the supply of affordable housing, conserving and protecting existing residential neighborhoods, promoting better design and location of residential development, and meeting the demand of those with special housing needs.

Future Land Use: Planning for Smart Growth

Throughout Bucks County, public officials and residents have strived to create communities that are sensitive and responsive to our environment, economy, and society. When land is managed properly, jobs are created, and neighborhoods are respected, people can feel good about their efforts to plan for and protect their community. On a local level, success stories are common: historic buildings are preserved, intersections are made safer, and new compact and walkable communities are developed. Municipal growth management policies have done much to temper the pace of residential development, generally concentrating it in areas of existing and planned infrastructure. Yet despite local efforts, it is clear that the problems caused by sprawl development continue. Residents continue to express that managing new growth and development is one of the most important issues facing the county.

Smart Growth is a response to the modern, car-dependent pattern of development. It is a coordinated, holistic policy of Sustainable Development in the context of land use planning, addressing the long-term viability of regional growth patterns and the underlying costs involved. Smart Growth recognizes the importance of land use policy and planning beyond just "stopping sprawl," and most significantly, the transportation-land use connection. It builds upon and further refines the Development District concept that has been the foundation of growth management in the County for over 35 years. The recommended strategies and actions in the Comprehensive Plan complement the Future Land Use map shown previously and detail the type and characteristics of development and preservation that are necessary to fully implement Smart Growth, including:

- Compact, Efficient Development
- A Development Focus on Existing Communities



- A Mix of Land Uses
- Transportation Options
- Walkable Neighborhoods
- A Range of Housing Opportunities
- Distinctive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Protection of Resources
- Community Collaboration/Public Process
- Transparent, Predictable, Cost-Effective Rules for Development



Plan Implementation

Without strategic and timely plan implementation, the most thoughtful planning will not reach its full potential, falling short of achieving the plan’s vision and principles set by community leaders and citizens. Plan implementation establishes the activities that need to be taken to carry out the strategies and actions expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The four implementation components of the plan include: role of stakeholders, priorities for actions, plan monitoring, and supplemental products.

Role of Stakeholders

Stakeholders in this planning process include public sector (elected and appointed officials), development community, private/nonprofit organizations, and the general public. Each stakeholder has responsibility for decisions and actions, and all stakeholders need to work together to achieve the sustainability and prosperity for Bucks County.

Priorities for Actions

New initiatives and good ideas—which could make a real difference—can go to waste unless there is a commonsense understanding of their importance and buy-in from stakeholders. To provide a starting point, the strategies

and actions of the plan are distilled into two simple lists of priorities, which are easy to understand and publicize—top overall plan actions, which include all stakeholders as actors and facilitators, and top county actions, which include the county as the main actor or facilitator.

Top Overall Plan Actions

Throughout the components of the plan there are many common ideas and recommendations—the need to preserve resources, to make smarter infrastructure investment choices, and to increase economic opportunity. The top plan actions embody the policies of smart growth, resource preservation, and sound economic development planning to provide a simple, yet clear direction for Bucks County. The following actions strive to meet multiple goals while minimizing competing objectives:

- Reduce Our Vehicle Miles Traveled
- Expand Our Open Space Preservation Efforts
- Promote Comprehensive Water Resources Management
- Increase Housing Opportunities in Development Areas
- Create Walkable Communities
- Expand Business and Job Opportunities

Top County Actions

Several plan strategies and actions fall within the jurisdiction of county government for implementation. These county actions were compiled and grouped into three categories: county plans/studies, municipal planning assistance, and model ordinance development. While these actions have been categorized, neither the individual listings nor the category listings are in order of priority. Time and resources may dictate if and when individual actions are undertaken in the future.

COUNTY PLANS/STUDIES

- Key Industries Study
- Critical Transportation Corridor Management Plan
- Infill and Redevelopment Site Assessment
- Economic Development Study
- Countywide Stormwater Management Plan
- Drought Protection and Emergency Water Supply Plan
- Housing Opportunities Study
- Regional Agricultural Areas Preservation Assessment
- Agricultural and Farm Support Services Inventory
- Historic Preservation Resources Inventory
- Organic Waste Management Study
- County Branding and Marketing Study
- County Space Needs Assessment
- Developments of Regional Significance and Impact Assessment

MUNICIPAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE

- Municipal and Joint Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Updates
- Water Resources Planning
- Jobs and Business Growth Study
- Downtown/“Main Street” Plans
- Corridor Plans
- Illustrated Development Guides/Standards for Key Development and Redevelopment Areas
- Access Management and Traffic Calming Plans
- Municipal Park & Recreation and Open Space Plans
- Source Water Protection Plans
- Wastewater Facility Plan Updates
- Neighborhood Plans
- Greenway Corridor Feasibility Plans
- Transfer of Development Rights Programs
- Groundwater Studies
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans
- Critical Facilities/Infrastructure Action Plans
- Critical Habitat Studies
- Scenic Resource Studies
- Recycling Assessments

MODEL ORDINANCE DEVELOPMENT

- Mixed-Use Traditional Neighborhood Developments and Live-Work Unit Standards
- Transit Oriented Development Design Standards
- Agricultural and Accessory Use Standards
- Greenway Corridor Standards
- Trail and Open Space Link Criteria
- Scenic Roads and Vistas Criteria
- Waste Management, Minimization, & Recycling Ordinance

Plan Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving the plan’s visions and principles is needed to ensure its success and to allow for adjustments in response to economic, social, or regional changes. Monitoring activities will include development and assessment of community indicators that can be used to determine how effective the Comprehensive Plan has been at promoting sustainability and smart growth, at linking the economy, environment and society goals. An annual report card will be prepared to review progress that has been made in achieving indicator targets over the course of the year and whether a change in policy may be needed. Also, the county will assist municipalities in the development of smart growth cards that can be used by communities to evaluate policies and regulations that determine a community’s development patterns and to promote dialogue among decision-makers, developers, and citizens. Finally, an Interim Assessment Report will be prepared every 5 years to identify progress of plan implementation as well as changes important to the planning process, thus ensuring the Comprehensive Plan remains dynamic and ‘in sync’ with forces influential to the plan’s outcome.

Supplemental Products

Other documents, summaries, and studies will be needed as part of the county’s ongoing planning process following the adoption of this plan. A web-based version of the Comprehensive Plan will be produced that can be easily accessed and navigated, including links to major plan topics and individual plan components. In addition, studies will be conducted on planning concepts that have been put into practice by various communities in Bucks County, but with varying degrees of success, including transfer of development rights, traditional neighborhood developments, mixed use developments, brownfield/greyfield developments, town centers, conservation by design, village planning, low impact development, transit-oriented development. These studies can examine issues such as the location and application of a planning concept, why it has or has not been effective, and what may be needed to make it work better.

BUCKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION



1260 Almshouse Road
Doylestown, Pennsylvania 18901

Phone: 215-345-3400
Fax: 215-345-3886
www.buckscounty.org