

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Planning Needs

This *Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the local officials of Milford Borough and Milford Township both municipalities in recognition of a number of principal critical community needs:

- to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place in both municipalities over their development histories, and particularly since the adoption of the Borough Comprehensive Plan in 1979, and the Township Comprehensive plan in 1987;
- to establish a framework for the conservation of the historic character, residential neighborhoods, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- to provide the foundation for updated land use management tools, principally zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development regulations, to ensure well designed development and to minimize sprawl;
- to organize for the most efficient administration of local government and the delivery of community facilities and services; and,
- to fully explore the possibilities and benefits of inter-municipal cooperation for providing facilities, services and administration.

Gateway Community

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns. Simply stated, the Borough and Township are grappling with and must manage the tremendous population growth occurring in Pike County. Geographically, the Borough and Township lie at the eastern edge of Pike County and adjacent to an early Delaware River ford to and from New Jersey. This position has been key to shaping the area's character and will perpetually affect its future growth and development as Pike County continues as the fastest growing county in the Commonwealth. Today, the River crossing, now a Joint Toll Bridge Commission bridge, carries thousands of vehicles per day between Pike County and the greater New Jersey and New York metropolitan area. Many of these

travelers are second home owners and tourists; however, in recent years, more and more are permanent residents of Pike County commuting to work.

The recent and future growth and development of the Milford Planning Area is aptly described as a *Gateway Community* in Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities:

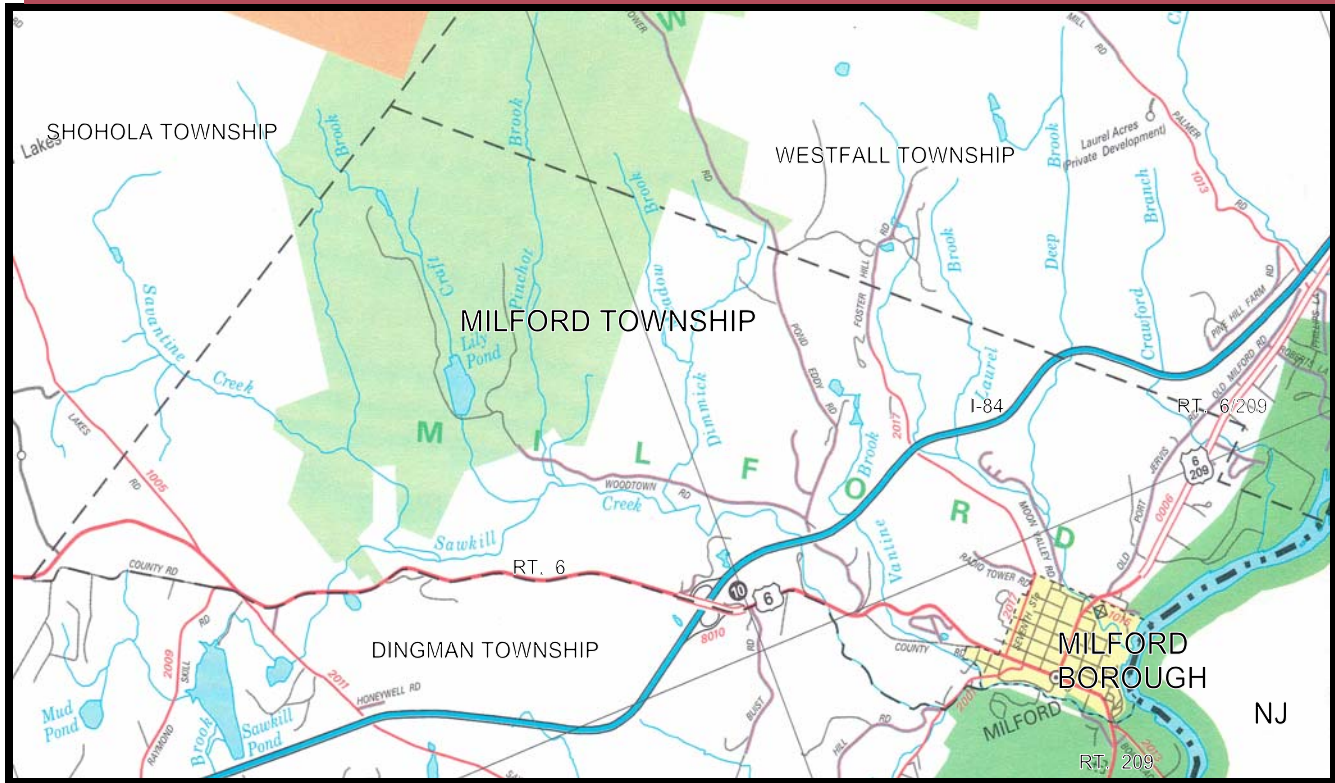
Communities that once promised refuge from the ills of the city have been transformed into congested towns with clogged highways, burgeoning crime rates, and mile after mile of look-alike shopping malls, franchise architecture, and soulless housing tracts.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Americans are once again on the move, this time in a migration that pushes growth even farther into the countryside. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing the suburbs and choosing to live in the small towns and open spaces surrounding America's magnificent national and state parks, wildlife refuges, forests, historic sites, wilderness areas, and other public lands.

Gateway communities – the towns and cities that border these public lands – are the destinations of choice for much of the country's migrating populace. With their scenic beauty and high quality of life, gateway communities have become a magnet for millions of Americans looking to escape the congestion, banality, and faster tempo of life in the suburbs and cities.¹

Unlike many U.S. cities and suburbs, gateway communities offer what an increasing number of Americans value: a clean environment, safe streets, and a friendly, small-town atmosphere. But just as in the suburbs, unplanned growth and rapid development in gateway communities can create the same social and scenic ills from which many Americans are now fleeing. Worse, rising real estate values and higher property taxes brought on by an increased demand for housing can force lifelong residents from the

¹Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 1.



Milford Borough and Milford Township, Pike County

(PennDOT, Type 10 Map, 1999)

communities they call home. Skyrocketing property values can quickly translate into housing shortages for longtime residents.²

If current demographic trends continue, gateway communities will experience astronomical growth rates for at least the next 20 years.³

The Borough and Township clearly serve as a gateway community lying between the 15,600-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Areas and the Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River, and at the eastern edge of a county which some 95,000 acres of state park, state forest and state game lands. Complementing this public land are the many historic resources highlighted locally by the Pinchot Institute in Milford Township and the Milford Borough Historic District.

Planning Issues Overview

Although not increasing in population at a rate as high as Pike County and other of its local municipalities, Milford Borough and Milford Township, serving as the gateway, bear much of the traffic destined for other locations in the County. The Borough and township also serve as a principal trade and community activity center for surrounding parts of the County. Route 209 from the south (combined with the New Jersey Route 206 traffic crossing the toll bridge) meets Route 6 in the center of Milford. Route 6 carries traffic west into Pike County and, in combination with Route 209, east to the state line. The recently upgraded State Route 2001 also connects the planning area to Dingman Township and other points to the south. Interstate Route 84 is easily accessible from Route 6 at the Milford Interchange, the northern half of which lies in Milford Township.

The Borough is largely developed with relatively few vacant lots. Commercial development is primarily retail/service found along Broad Street and Harford Street; and, the recent inclusion of many of these commercial structures in a National Historic District, along with the many historic residences in the

²Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 2.

³Ibid., p. 3.



Borough, highlights the character of the community. Local efforts for community improvement have resulted in the recent installation of new bluestone sidewalks along Broad Street and additional improvements are planned. The Pike County Courthouse and Administration Building are also important elements of the Borough, and along with the commercial zones, have raised the issue of need for additional off-street parking. The Borough is served by a central water supply and the Municipal Authority has upgraded much of the conveyance system and is taking steps to protect the spring water supply and its watershed. The entire Borough relies on on-lot sewage disposal systems and the need for central sewage, along with the potential stimulus of additional development, have become part of the growth and development management discussion.

Much of Milford Township remains undeveloped woodland including some 2,150 acres of State Forest Land, 100 acres owned by the U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers (The home of Governor Gifford Pinchot), and about 1,300 acres owned by the National Park Service as part of the Delaware Water Gap

National Recreation Area. Most of the Township lies within the Sawkill Creek Watershed which is classified as *exceptional value* by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection resulting in more stringent environmental standards applied to development.

Most commercial development is located largely along Harford Street just west of the Borough and along Route 6 to the east. Businesses in the Township are also mainly retail and service establishments, with the Altec/Lansing electronics facility the most notable exception. Although not as expansive as many of the residential subdivisions in other Pike County townships, a number of private residential communities are scattered throughout the Milford Township. Farming has essentially vanished from the Township, with the Santos Farm just east of the Borough, the only remaining evidence of the once active agricultural community.

Given the amount of undeveloped land in the Township portion of the planning area and adjoining townships, the attractive lifestyle associated with the

traditional, small town character, and the close proximity to the New Jersey and New York metropolitan and developing areas, continued growth in population and number of housing units and associated commercial development and traffic is expected for the Borough and Township. Clearly, the Milford Borough and Milford Township are poised to become one of the most changing areas of Pike County. This anticipated change presents to the municipalities the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. Concurrently, the municipalities are responsible to ensure that the growth and development occurs in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character. In short, the citizens and public officials must resolve the land use conflicts which result from the necessary balance between new development and the need for facilities and services, environmental protection, community character and open land conservation.

This combination of growth and development issues clearly demonstrates the critical need for this *Comprehensive Plan*, continued intermunicipal cooperation, and the consideration of new and innovative land use and community management techniques. Each individual municipality must choose its direction, and continue to work cooperatively to accomplish the goals of the *Plan*.

Planning Process

The comprehensive planning process is being conducted cooperatively under recent amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning code. Local planning in the Commonwealth is governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and this *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared and adopted in accord with Planning Code requirements. The two municipalities, recognizing the changes occurring in the area, came together and organized this intermunicipal planning effort.

The elected officials from Milford Borough and Milford Township organized the planning process, and each governing body appointed four members to the Planning Committee that managed the process. The Milford Borough Municipal Authority played a key role by providing part of the funding for the plan and participating from the perspective of the supplier of public water and potential provider of central sewage service Community Planning and Management, LLC

of Paupack, Pennsylvania, and Shepstone Management Company of Honesdale, Pennsylvania provided professional planning assistance.

In short, the planning process involves finding the sometimes complex answers to three simple questions:

1. Where are we?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. How do we get there?

Where are we? - Background Studies

The initial step in the process is the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community characteristics and concerns aimed at defining the existing condition of the community and identifying planning implications. This data is compiled in the following sections which are included in the *Plan*:

1. *Community Character and Development History*
2. *Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use*
3. *Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns*
4. *Demographics and Economic Base*
5. *Financial Analysis*
6. *Community Facilities and Services*
7. *Highways and Transportation*
8. *Planning and Development in Pike County, the Region and Contiguous Municipalities*

Where do we want to be? - Goals and Objectives/ Plans

The *Plan Goals and Objectives* are a vision of how residents and local officials expect the community to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the Planning Committee and local officials based on the public participation process and the findings of the background studies. Based on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, various plans to guide the future growth and development of the Milford Planning Area were developed and include:

1. *Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection Plan*
2. *Community Facilities and Services Plan*
3. *Transportation Plan*
4. *Housing Plan*
5. *Capital Improvements Program*
6. *Official Map*
7. *Regional Planning and Intermunicipal Cooperation*
8. *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies*

How do we get there? - Implementation Strategies

The specific means to effect the various plans are also included, and are detailed in the *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies* section and discussed at various points in the various specific plans. In addition, and to facilitate on-going use of the *Comprehensive Plan*, the actions and the responsible entities required to carry out the plan's expectations are summarized in a matrix titled *Implementation Strategies And Specific Actions*. Examples of *implementation strategies* include zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance updates, historic structures preservation, and capital improvement budgeting.

Need for Continued Planning

It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. A comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the two-municipality area and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the area's residents. It will require public support and positive action by the local municipal officials.

State Mandated Plan Review

A recent amendment to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (§301,c) requires local municipal comprehensive plans to be reviewed *at least every ten years*. The change suggests a greater Commonwealth emphasis on planning and the need for local municipalities to incorporate the planning process into normal functions. However, the ten-year review window is certainly far too long. Planning, that is, assessing how decisions and community changes fit into the plan, should be practiced continually.