

Comprehensive Plan

INTRODUCTION

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-range, strategic planning document that serves as a guide for the physical, social, and economic development of a municipality. It outlines a vision for the future of the community and provides a framework for decision-making regarding land use, infrastructure, housing, transportation, economic development, and environmental stewardship.

- Adopted policy document
- Required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Section 3) & Delaware Municipal Code (22 Del. C. § 702 (b)).
- Provides the Vision, Goals and Objectives for the municipality for the next 10-20 years.
- The basis for zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development regulations, and other land-use-related policies.
- Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan is required for new development plans and municipal projects.
- Review and update schedule
 - Pennsylvania: Must be reviewed every 10 years to determine if update is needed.
 - Delaware: Must be reviewed every 5 years and updated every 10 years.



APPLICABILITY

A Comprehensive Plan can be used to support the following goals:

1. **Recreation:** It can be used to prioritize land to be used as public parks and trails and define goals for park and recreation enhancements.
2. **Conservation:** It can also be used to identify land as a conservation priority.
3. **Water quality:** If that land includes riparian areas, conserving it can protect and improve water quality.
4. **Transportation:** A comprehensive plan identifies a plan for transportation including multi-use trail corridors, as well as to improve the street network.
5. **Cultural Resources:** A comprehensive plan can identify a plan for the preservation of historic and cultural sites and landscapes.
6. **Community development and resiliency:** Comprehensive plans evaluate housing diversity, make recommendations for economic development, support urban revitalization and can include priorities addressing community resiliency.



IMPLEMENTATION

Planning Process

- 18-24 month process
- Task force meetings (Task force comprised of representatives from municipal boards and commissions)
- Public engagement: Public meetings, surveys, community visioning
- Inventory of existing conditions
- Goals and objectives
- Recommendations

Plan Adoption

- Pennsylvania
 - 45-day public review period: Review by surrounding municipalities, school district, county and general public
 - Public hearing
 - Adoption by governing body
- Delaware
 - State review
 - Public Hearing
 - Adoption by governing body and certification by State



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

- Existing conditions
- Land use and future land use transportation
- Economic development
- Housing
- Community facilities and utilities
- Economic development
- Protection of natural, historic and cultural resources
- Open space and recreation

Optional elements:

- Energy Conservation
- Additional elements that promote health, safety prosperity and public welfare

Elements unique to Delaware:

- Annexation
- Community Design

SUCCESSFUL CASE STUDIES

Local examples:

- Unionville Area Regional Comprehensive Plan (2024)
 - East Marlborough, West Marlborough and Newlin Townships
- Penn Township, Chester County (2024)
- Malvern Borough, Chester County (2022)
- Highland Township, Chester County (2022)

For more information on the comprehensive planning process see the expanded technical bulletin included in this toolkit.



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