

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Community sustainability goes beyond energy conservation and tree planting; it involves a comprehensive approach that addresses the social, economic, and environmental needs of a community to ensure its health and resilience. Implementing sustainability measures can help preserve community character, protect resources, improve health, save money, and strengthen the local economy. The Sustainable Community Assessment conducts a comprehensive review of municipal policy, regulations and planning documents to identify sustainability achievements and barriers.

Sustainable Community Assessment involves reviewing various municipal planning documents, such as the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The assessment provides both short- and long-term recommendations for improving these documents, including new regulations and policies. Recommendations are categorized by their potential to remove barriers, create incentives, or establish standards for municipal officials.



The Assessment reviews items related to the following topics:

- Natural resource protection
- Water quality and conservation
- Land-use and community character
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Energy conservation/ renewable energy
- Local economy
- Mobility and transportation
- Community health and safety
- Food production and security
- Open space, parks and trails
- Resilience

APPLICABILITY

- To inform comprehensive plan updates
- Prior to ordinance updates
- As part of larger sustainability or climate action plans
- To guide a municipality's future initiatives
- To support municipalities in their pursuit of the Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification by evaluating 131 sustainability-related policies and practices

IMPLEMENTATION

- Review of municipal plans, policies and regulations
- Strong, weak or neutral policies, plans and regulations are highlighted as they related to sustainable practices
- Recommendations are developed to address gaps revealed through the assessment
 - Prioritized by:
 - Near-term (NT – within 6 months)
 - Short-term (ST – 1 year)
 - Medium-term (MT – 2-3 years)
 - Long-term (LT – beyond 3 years)
 - Ongoing (currently underway)
 - Recommendations also categorize based on whether they:
 - Remove obstacles
 - Create incentives
 - Set standards for sustainability
 - Recommendations relevant to upcoming Comprehensive Plan Updates are noted separately



SUCCESSFUL CASE STUDIES

- *East Brandywine Township, Chester County*
 - *Conducted in 2020, prior to the Comprehensive Plan Update.*
- *Upper Uwchlan Township, Chester County*
 - *Conducted in 2022, prior to the Comprehensive Plan Update, currently underway.*
- *East Goshen Township, Chester County*
 - *Conducted in 2013, prior to the Comprehensive Plan Update.*
- *Westtown Township, Chester County*
 - *Conducted in 2016, prior to the Comprehensive Plan Update.*
- *Warwick Township, Lancaster County*
 - *Conducted in 2009, prior to the region's joint strategic plan. Helped the township achieve Pennsylvania's first Platinum Certification in 2015 through the Sustainable Pennsylvania Community Certification program.*



For more information on the Sustainable Community Assessment see the expanded technical bulletin included in this toolkit.



**BRANDYWINE
CONSERVANCY**

1 Hoffman's Mill Road
P.O. Box 141
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

610.388.2700
conservancy@brandywine.org
www.brandywine.org/conservancy