

# Section 2.....The Vision

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## *A Plan for South Franklin Township & Green Hills Borough*

*The purpose of Part 2: The Vision is to establish the direction that the two communities desire to achieve. What do residents want to see in their community five years, ten years and twenty years from now? The answers to these questions emerge during this process and allow the elected officials to hear what the residents believe are the most important features to have in a community. The visioning process ensures that the participants (elected officials, residents, civic and religious leaders and the business community) stay focused on the issues and establish a “shared vision” for South Franklin and Green Hills; thus creating viable and sustainable communities.*

- ❖ **Vision Statement**
- ❖ **Community Development Objectives**
- ❖ **Public Involvement Summary**

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## Vision Statement

The primary goal of a vision statement is to provide a focus for the future of the Project Area. A vision statement is the answer to the question: What do you want to see in the community five, ten and 20 years from now? The vision statement identifies the Project Area's most important values. It is a result of the public involvement process, during which elected officials and residents had a chance to discuss and identify the most important feature they would like to see nurtured and developed in their community.

The following vision statement has been developed for South Franklin Township and Green Hills Borough, which will serve as the core for the rest of the Comprehensive Plan, and will be achieved through:

- ❖ The development of citizen-supported goals and objectives
- ❖ The development of regionally focused strategies and solutions
- ❖ The prioritization of objectives
- ❖ The development of final recommendations and implementation strategies

## South Franklin and Green Hills Vision for 2020

The South Franklin Township and Green Hills Borough will be a community:

- ❖ That is quiet, peaceful, and safe.
- ❖ That has strategically provided expanded public infrastructure (public sewerage, cellular and high speed internet service) to targeted areas along S.R. 18 and the employment hub surrounding the Washington County Airport.
- ❖ Where the "town center" offers a mix of small-scale local commercial amenities alongside the Township Building and Park.
- ❖ Recognizable by the gateway near the "town center" that welcomes residents and visitors to the community.
- ❖ That is committed to preserving the open space, agricultural lands, and other rural characteristics of the lifestyle cherished by past and current residents.
- ❖ Offering a refreshing and attractive alternative to traditional suburban communities.

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# Community Development Objectives

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## **Community Development Objectives**

Generally, the purpose of Community Development Objectives is to provide a basis for Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives. Specifically, the Community Development Objectives are reflective of Article III, Section 301 (1) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). "A statement of objectives of the municipality concerning its future development, including, but not limited to, the location, character and timing of future development objectives as provided in section 606." The Community Development Objectives will provide guidance to direct growth to appropriate areas of two communities, to plan regionally, and to share resources in order to control future land development in a positive and orderly manner. They are broad in scope and reflect the overarching accomplishments that the Comprehensive Plan aspires to achieve. They are an important road map for the Project Area, and all goals, objectives, and recommendations relate to one or more of the Community Development Objectives in some manner. Furthermore, each Community Development Objective strives to accomplish the vision statement.

## South Franklin and Green Hills Community Development Objectives

- ❖ *Improve and protect the Project Area's environmental and natural resources, with special attention paid to energy conservation, recycling, and protecting sensitive stream corridors.*
- ❖ *Provide a diverse mix of housing options that will attract and welcome people of all ages, races, and incomes, with particular emphasis on drawing segments of the population who are seeking a quiet, rural lifestyle.*
- ❖ *Provide all residents and visitors with an adequate transportation network that meets needs for automobiles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit.*
- ❖ *Enhance the existing rural residential character of the community through well-thought, controlled growth that uses innovative site design concepts and conservation techniques.*
- ❖ *Provide for adequate employment opportunities for residents and encourage small-scale convenience commercial to satisfy local needs.*

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### **Public Involvement Summary**

Public involvement is an essential part of the comprehensive planning process. In order to make certain that the plan is an adequate reflection of the community, participation by residents, community leaders, service providers, and the business community is crucial. Opportunities for public input were important steps in the process of developing the vision, goals and objectives, and recommendations for this planning process. Including the public from the onset of the project provided the opportunity for the community to feel a sense of pride and ownership in the South Franklin and Green Hills Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, and will further ensure that it will be a living document and one that the communities can successfully implement. The public involvement process identified community values and the desired vision for the future of the Township of South Franklin and the Borough of Green Hills, and utilized the following process.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee**

A Steering Committee was developed to oversee the project and met on a monthly basis from July of 2008 through July of 2009. The Committee was comprised of representatives appointed by the municipal governing bodies from both communities, including Township Supervisors, Planning Commission members, the Mayor of Green Hills Borough, municipal authorities, local residents and business owners, and other interested parties. The role of the Steering Committee was to review plan sections, provide data and information, and to assist in the development and prioritization of goals and strategies.

#### **Stakeholder Interviews**

Steering Committee members identified stakeholders in the project, including persons representing municipal service organizations, community organizations, business owners, economic development professionals, and other interested parties. The interviews were conducted via mail-in surveys, phone interviews, and face-to-face meetings. A total of 21 stakeholder interviews / surveys were conducted.

#### **Educational Workshop**

In April of 2009, an Educational Workshop was conducted that focused on Transportation Impact Fees, Innovative Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development (SALDO) ordinances, and other land use and smart growth techniques that may be of interest to the communities. Invitees from South Franklin included Township Supervisors, Planning Commission members, Zoning Hearing Board members, the Code Officer, and the developer proposing the Franklin Lakeview Estates plan. Green Hills Borough invitees included the Mayor, the borough solicitor and the private developer of Lone Pine Estates. Of the 19 invited, 9 attended, including all three Township supervisors, three Planning Commission members, one Zoning Hearing Board member, and the Green Hills Borough mayor and solicitor. The workshop included the Manager for Peters Township as the guest speaker, who answered attendees' questions about the implementation of these techniques in Peters Township, Washington County.

#### ***Transportation (Traffic) Impact Fees***

Background information on transportation impact fees was presented, including what they are, how they work, and benefits for implementing these fees. The workshop reviewed the steps necessary to enact a Transportation Impact Fee ordinance as well as the cost-benefit analysis that should be completed prior to beginning work on an ordinance. Key points to consider include:

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- ❖ Is intense development projected for the area during the next 5 years? Development should be a minimum of 50-100 residential units and 50,000-100,000 square feet of non-residential development *per year*.
- ❖ Are road improvements already planned for and funded? If so, additional improvements may not be necessary thereby negating the need for traffic impact fees.
- ❖ Are current traffic volumes and road capacity sufficient to handle the additional development? If so, traffic impact fees are unnecessary.
- ❖ Will enough revenue be generated through the fees to cover costs for improvements? If projected revenue is low, it may not warrant instituting fees.

### *Innovative Zoning & SALDO Techniques*

Information was also presented on different types of development methods to include in zoning and/or subdivision and land development regulations. Options discussed include:

- ❖ Managing Residential Development
  - Conservation by Design
- ❖ Managing Commercial Development
  - Design Standards and other requirements

### *Other Growth Management Options*

The workshop also covered additional methods to manage growth and development. Strategies discussed include:

- ❖ Farmland Preservation
  - Clean & Green
  - Agricultural Security Areas (ASA)
  - Agricultural Preservation Easements
  - Agricultural Zoning
- ❖ Downzoning
- ❖ Planned Residential Development (PRD) & Planned Urban Development (PUD)

For a full summary of questions and discussion, please refer to Appendix 3.

### Public Meetings

The first public meeting was held in November of 2008, and the second was held in July of 2009. Each meeting took place at the South Franklin Township Volunteer Fire Department. The purpose of the meetings was to gain public input on the Multi-Municipal plan and its recommendations. Meetings were open to the public and advertised via newspaper articles, radio announcements, and the distribution of flyers and posters. Each meeting is summarized briefly below:

## *Public Meeting #1*

Forty-six residents attended the first public meeting. A full attendance sheet and summary is located in Appendix 3. The following is a brief summary of the meeting.

### *Visioning*

Mackin led an exercise designed to develop a vision for South Franklin & Green Hills; asking what residents wanted their communities to look like in ten years, what residents like about where they live, what residents want to see improved, etc. The comments included:

- ❖ Maintain high quality of life – low crime, low traffic, peace and quiet
- ❖ Uphold rural character by preserving farmland and open space
- ❖ Attract new residents by offering an alternative to suburban sprawl – allow for limited residential and commercial development on a smaller scale within a country setting
- ❖ Encourage environmental sustainability by offering “greener” choices like recycling, solar panels, etc.
- ❖ Address future effects of longwall mining



Supervisor Tom Hart explains the benefits of planning to residents (Mackin 2008).

### *Breakout Groups*

Mackin and the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington (RACW) staff facilitated breakout groups. Each group was asked to identify specific strengths, opportunities, issues, and concerns within each plan element.

### Community Amenities

The community's rural character was identified as an overwhelming strength. Residents appreciate the peace and quiet and are satisfied with the level of municipal services. Other strengths identified included access to major road networks and nearby retail, the local school system, low rates of crime, fire and emergency services, the availability of parks and library facilities, and public water.

Identified concerns included declining volunteer rates at the fire department, the appearance of SR 18 in some locations, the need to address illegal dumping, failing on-lot disposal systems and lack of sewage, and the lack of adequate State Police protection.

### Transportation

Residents felt that transportation within the Project Area is overall satisfactory. Strengths identified included low traffic, proximity to interstates and major highways, adequate winter road maintenance, and the recent improvements to the County Airport.

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Identified concerns included speeding on state routes, the need for safer biking routes and adequate pedestrian pathways, lack of a Park N' Ride or public transit, and concerns over the increased traffic congestion that development may bring.

### Natural and Historic Resources:

For the most part, natural resources were classified as assets while most residents note the lack of historic resources in the Project Area. Identified strengths included the abundant green space and wooded areas found throughout the Project Area.

Identified concerns included the need to preserve historic resources such as the Clark House and old family cemeteries, the need to address flooding and stormwater runoff issues, concerns over sewage overflows and water quality, and concerns over the slumping of land due to mining activities.

### Land Use, Economic Development, and Housing

As expressed during the visioning exercise, most of the residents wish to see very little development in order to preserve their high quality of life and rural character. However, many realize that there is a need to allow for controlled development. This development should occur in areas where existing infrastructure can support it and should not detract from the existing nature of the community. Identified opportunities included the opportunity to provide for more single-family homes to respond to increased demand in the area, including the need to provide for more senior housing and more housing for young families, the opportunity to develop commercial amenities including small convenience retail that could serve the local population, and expanding opportunities for business and light industry.

Identified concerns included the need to preserve the rural character of the Project Area, the need to address issues of home and commercial building maintenance in some portions of the Project Area, and the need for better working relationships with coal, oil, and gas companies.

### Priority Concerns

Each group prioritized their top three issues and presented them to the larger audience.

#### *Group 1*

- ❖ Sewage
- ❖ Clean up unattractive areas
- ❖ Recreation for multi-age groups

#### *Group 2*

- ❖ Sewage
- ❖ Controlled growth
- ❖ Keep rural character

#### *Group 3*

- ❖ Sewage/water extensions

- ❖ Preserve rural open space and farmland—controlled development
- ❖ Aesthetics- clean up community- 18

### *Public Meeting #2*

Sixty-six residents signed in at the second public meeting; approximately 75 were in attendance. Please see Appendix 3 for sign-in sheet. South Franklin Township Supervisor Tom Hart opened the Public Meeting explained that this was the final public meeting for the Comprehensive Plan. Mackin staff provided a PowerPoint presentation on what a comprehensive plan is, why it is important, what the benefits of multi-municipal planning are, and what it will accomplish. The presentation highlighted the vision statement for the project area as well as the priority needs that were identified throughout the planning process. Staff then answered attendee's questions. Major questions included the following:

- ❖ Does the plan take into account the impacts from Marcellus Shale drilling?
  - The plan documents the presence and potential impacts as a result of such drilling; however this is mostly regulated at the state level through the Oil and Gas Act. The Township is in the process of passing a road bonding ordinance that would address impacts on municipal roads.
- ❖ The presentation noted the need for commercial development such as a bank, grocery store, and gas station – how was this identified?
  - These items were specifically mentioned at the first public meeting in November as well as through other public involvement processes as being the priority needs for the Township. The plan documents this need and provides recommendations on how such development should occur. In addition, the plan recommends this development take place in the vicinity of the Township building as this area is to be served by public sewerage and can accommodate commercial development.
- ❖ What about the potential impact on traffic along SR 18 if more development occurs?
  - Mackin's traffic engineers conducted preliminary assessments of traffic volumes and determined that SR 18 and many other arterial roads can support additional traffic as a result of proposed development. However, PennDOT would require a traffic impact study be conducted by any proposed future development that would utilize SR 18 or other state roads as their main access road to the development site.
- ❖ Does the plan encourage more development along SR 18?
  - The future land use plan identifies the area surrounding SR 18 north of Lone Pine Country Club as being most suitable for commercial development, mixed use (residential / commercial) as well as medium density and multi-family residential. This area is designated as such due to the proposed locations of public sewerage service. The southern portion of 18 is proposed to stay rural, allowing agricultural and low density single-family residential uses.
- ❖ What are the neighboring townships doing in regards to comprehensive plans?
  - A few adjacent townships (Amwell, Canton, etc.) are currently working with the Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington (RACW) to submit an application to the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) to conduct a multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

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- As part of the South Franklin / Green Hills Comprehensive Plan, Mackin reviewed all existing comprehensive plans for the adjacent municipalities. In addition, the draft plan will be sent to all adjacent municipalities, McGuffey School District, and the Washington County Planning Commission for review and comment prior to adoption.
- ❖ Has there been any discussion about the proposed I-70 interchange near the Airport?
  - The plan includes a discussion on the proposed “Skypointe” industrial park that is to be located near the Airport as well as the desire for a new interchange on I-70 to serve this area. However, the interchange is not on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and so there is not a lot of emphasis placed on this concept in the plan.
- ❖ Rumors have it that all of the sewerage taps have been used as a due to recent developments and that South Franklin is going to have to construct its own sewerage plant as a result – who will pay for public sewerage?
  - South Franklin Township is still working to complete their Act 537 Sewage Management Plan, which will address the proposed plans for public sewerage. The comprehensive plan includes a summary of the draft plan and recommends that the Township implement the priority projects and recommendations contained in the Sewage Plan. Residents can obtain more information regarding the Sewage Plan by contacting the Township.

After the question and answer session, the attendees then broke out into two groups. Each group took 15 minutes to discuss the Future Land Use Map and to rank each recommendation according to whether it was high priority, medium priority, or low priority, and whether it should be a short-term (within the next 5 years) or long-term (5 to 10 years) goal. For the results of that session, please refer to Appendix 3.

### Public / Web Surveys

Public participation for the South Franklin and Green Hills Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan also included the distribution of a public survey over a five-month period from December 2008 to April 2009. The survey was made available at the first public meeting and was posted on both the South Franklin Township and the RACW websites. Hard copies were also made available at the Township office.

Eleven surveys were completed and returned for analysis. All of these surveys were from residents of South Franklin Township; there were none from Green Hills Borough residents. The surveys asked responders to rank their priorities in each of the categories of the Comprehensive Plan: Community Facilities, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Natural Resources, Historic Resources, Agriculture, Residential Development, and Growth and Development. Following is a list of the most frequently ordered rankings for top three priorities in each category:

### *Community Facilities / Amenities*

- ❖ Extension of public sewerage
- ❖ Road maintenance
- ❖ Cell phone service / Internet service

### *Parks and Recreation:*

- ❖ Walking trails

- ❖ Skate park
- ❖ Game lands
- ❖ Adult programs / activities
- ❖ Public park land

## *Transportation*

- ❖ Road Safety
- ❖ Walking trails
- ❖ Public Transportation

## *Natural Resources*

- ❖ Illegal dumping
- ❖ Stormwater
- ❖ Stream / groundwater pollution
- ❖ Littering

## *Historic Resources*

- ❖ Documentation of historic cemeteries
- ❖ Recognition as "Home of Joe Walker"
- ❖ Historic markers placed at historic locations

## *Agricultural*

- ❖ Agricultural preservation through zoning
- ❖ Enrollment of farms in preservation programs
- ❖ Agritourism (promotion / marketing)

## *Residential Development*

- ❖ Single-family residential
- ❖ Senior housing
- ❖ Townhouses

## *Economic Development*

- ❖ No more businesses needed
- ❖ Light industrial
- ❖ Small-scale retail
- ❖ Heavy industrial

*Growth and Development*

❖ Public Sewerage

The survey also asked responders to list their top five priorities for the Project Area. The most frequent top five priorities were as follows:

1. Stormwater management
2. Protection of natural environment
3. Extension of sewerage
4. Preserving / protecting farmland
5. Walking trails / biking trails

A full summary of responses is located in Appendix 4.