

GROWING TOGETHER

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR CENTRAL LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

PLANNING THE FUTURE • PRESERVING THE PAST

4. Public Process: An Overview



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Above

Area residents receive training to facilitate the Stakeholder Workshop, January 2004.



Participants work in a small group at the Public Meeting held at the Southern Market Center.

The *Growing Together* public process provided numerous opportunities for anyone living or working in Central Lancaster County to become involved in the formulation of the multimunicipal comprehensive plan.

There were two phases to the public process, an idea generation phase followed by a comment phase. During the idea generation phase (which included meetings from August 2003 to September 2004), residents, municipal officials, businesses, and other stakeholders brainstormed ideas, identified strengths and weaknesses in the region, and dealt with critical questions addressing specific issues related to the future of Central Lancaster County. In the comment phase (which included meetings in March 2005), participants had an opportunity to review draft components of the multimunicipal plan, provide comments, and prioritize strategies.

These two phases of the public process for *Growing Together* are described in this chapter.

A. The Idea Generation Phase

This phase consisted of four types of public meetings; each is described below. These meetings provided the foundation for plan formulation, ensuring that the resulting comprehensive plan reflects the values and concerns of area residents and the aspirations they have for the future of Central Lancaster County.

The Kickoff, August 2003

The Kickoff offered an opportunity for participants to hear about the planning process and to express preliminary ideas and concerns about the future of Central Lancaster County.

Stakeholder Workshop Topics

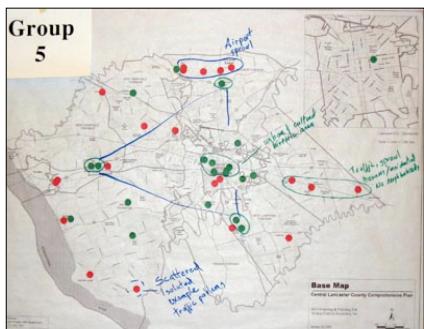
- Agriculture
 - Balanced Development and Housing Choices
 - Creating Quality Development
 - Community Character
 - Developments of Regional Impact
 - Economic Development
 - Natural Resources
 - Parks and Recreation
 - Circulation/Transportation
 - Redevelopment and Infill
 - The Urban Core

The Stakeholder Workshop, January 2004

The Stakeholder Workshop gathered municipal officials, special interest groups, planning staff, and citizens to address critical questions related to the specific elements of the plan. The topics addressed at the workshop are listed in the left margin. Small groups of five to ten participants were organized by expertise or topical interest.

The workshop had two parts: Strong Places, Weak Places and Critical Questions. Strong Places, Weak Places is an exercise to engage citizens in an examination of their physical environment. Participants were asked to identify places in the area that they believe do or do not reflect well on the community for their assigned topic. They then suggested recommendations for improving the weak places.

The Critical Questions discussed at the workshop dealt with key issues that the comprehensive planning process would need to address, again related to the assigned topics. Participants identified opportunities and challenges, discussed specific issues, and then provided recommendations.



A sample Strong Places, Weak Places Map from one of the public meetings.

Public Meetings, January and February 2004

Four Public Meetings were held in urban and suburban schools throughout Central Lancaster County. These open meetings were divided into two parts. In the first part, participants brainstormed ideas about how to make Central Lancaster County the best that it can be in the future. In the second part of the meeting they conducted the Strong Places, Weak Places exercise described above. Through this activity, participants highlighted strengths and weaknesses in the region in areas such as housing, open space, transportation, and community character. In order to ensure an inclusive public process, special focus groups were conducted with high school and college students and with African American and Latino individuals.



Participants at the Community Vision Summit review a map of Central Lancaster County.

The Community Vision Summit, September 2004

The Community Vision Summit was designed to accomplish the following tasks:

- Review the goals and refine draft objectives that were developed through a combination of public input and the efforts of the Steering Committee;
 - Suggest strategies for achieving the goals;
 - Indicate visual preferences for the physical environment; and
 - Identify future development patterns and priorities.

The Summit consisted of presentations, small group work, and a survey. It was an open public meeting and included representation from throughout Central Lancaster County.

B. The Comment Phase

The comment phase served as the public's opportunity to further refine the elements of the plan.

The Public Forums, March 2005

List of Maps Presented at the Public Forums

1. Urban & Village Growth Boundaries
2. Existing Land Use
3. Future Land Use
4. Existing Park & Recreation Facilities
5. Public Parks & Recreational Service Areas
6. Community Facilities
7. Natural Resources Protection Plan
8. Agricultural Resources
9. Agricultural Easements
10. Historic Resources Management Plan
11. Public Sewer Services Areas
12. Public Water Service Areas
13. Transportation Network

Three public forums offered an opportunity to review and comment on *Growing Together*'s goals, objectives, and strategies and to recommend priorities for the strategies. The forums were organized in three parts. The first part included a presentation of the key elements of the plan and a question and answer period. The second part encouraged participants to review a set of 13 maps on display and to post comments. (See list of maps at left). The third part invited participants to rank the three draft objectives they believed would have the largest impact on each *Growing Together* goal, and to rate each draft strategy as very important, somewhat important, or not important in relationship to the goal.

Using worksheets designed specifically for the public forums, participants were able to prioritize and comment on one or more goal areas by choosing them based on personal or professional interest. Participants were also given the opportunity to modify objectives and strategies and to suggest new ones. A total of 236 worksheets were completed.

C. Summary of Results

Throughout both phases of the public process, a set of consistent themes emerged. These general themes, which are reflected in many of the goals, objectives, and strategies of the *Growing Together* plan, include the following.

- **Preserving farmland and the farm economy**, with recommendations on adopting transfers of development rights, on allowing limited factory farming operations, and on providing financial incentives for farmers to remain in business.
- **Managing future growth better**, with ideas on containing development within the designated Urban and Village Growth Areas, on using smart growth tools to limit land consumption, and on limiting unplanned and uncoordinated growth (sprawl).
- **Giving emphasis to redevelopment**, with recommendations on recycling land, particularly abandoned older industrial areas and underperforming commercial areas, and on creating incentives for the adaptive reuse of buildings.
- **Changing existing development patterns**, with suggestions on increasing the number of mixed use, traditional, walkable

neighborhoods and developments, and on mixing the size and value of properties within the same development.

- **Strengthening the core of Lancaster City and boroughs,** with ideas on coordinating revitalization efforts regionally, and on creating safe, attractive, urbane, and sophisticated centers in the region.
- **Maintaining the rich character of the area,** with suggestions on strengthening a sense of community through social events and activities, on improving the quality of the region's visual environment, and on developing attractive neighborhoods rather than conventional subdivisions.
- **Increasing mobility,** with suggestions on expanding connectivity, on improving the current roadway system, on expanding public transportation options, and on introducing alternatives to the private automobile within Central Lancaster County.
- **Expanding trails,** with suggestions on enlarging networks of greenways and trails to enhance recreation and fitness opportunities, on improving trailhead access and connectivity, and on garnering volunteer support for trail maintenance.

These ideas, collected through the public process, enabled the Steering Committee and the consultant team to develop the goals, objectives, and strategies that are described in detail in the following chapters.