

## PLANNING PROCESS AND INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG PLAN ELEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### Framework for the Future

This *Matamoras/Westfall Comprehensive Plan* provides a framework for the growth and development of the Borough and Township. Although the *Plan* is comprised of a number of separate elements, each element, and, in fact, each planning and development action taken by a public body or private individual, is inextricably interrelated with other plan elements and planning and development actions. For example, the development of housing implementation strategies cannot be accomplished without taking into account land use controls and economic development trends. Economic development strategies cannot be formulated without considering land use controls and transportation needs. Community facilities and services planning requires an assessment of future development, transportation needs, and housing affordability. In most cases, these types of interrelationships and implementation strategies are discussed in the various comprehensive plan elements.

### Planning Process

A theme consistent throughout all elements of this *Comprehensive Plan* is the concept of *process*. The published comprehensive plan document represents only the first step of what should evolve into an on-going planning process. If this *process* frame of mind is not firmly established, local officials, businessmen, land developers, and citizens, all players in the community growth and development arena, will have little chance of achieving the sustainable growth vital to the social, economic and environmental future of the Planning Area. This process will also allow the recognition of the shifting interrelationships of community growth and development decisions vital to the success of long-term planning efforts.

### Conservation of Community Character

Another key theme of this *Plan* is the conservation of the Planning Area's rural recreation landscape and residential and small town character. All public and private actions must be assessed in terms of its effect on the community's character. For example, residential development standards in the normal pattern of large lots will fragment remaining open land. The alternative, conservation design or planned residential development, provides the opportunity to conserve open land. The conundrum of central sewage disposal provides another good example of planning interrelationships. This community facility is often the only means of correcting sewage disposal problems yet can stimulate development of more land at higher population densities. Increases in population would trigger the need for improved or new community facilities and services such as schools and police protection. In short, without careful analysis, one *implementation action* taken by a municipality can have unexpected and often undesirable effects.

To achieve growth and development goals and to establish the community's planning process for the future, this *Plan* makes the following overall recommendations:

- Evaluate all public and private actions with the goal of preserving open land as a viable part of community character.

- Direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas and conserve large blocks of open land.
- Identify areas for growth within and adjacent to existing developed areas.
- Require adequate community facilities for new development.
- Carefully consider any sewer extensions to assess effects on stimulating development.
- Plan for transportation improvements to minimize traffic congestion and maximize safety.
- Provide for sound housing and all types of housing.
- Provide for sufficient parks and recreational facilities.
- Promote historic preservation.
- Promote the idea of growth management - an effort to manage the location, type, and timing of future growth.
- Encourage increased local, intermunicipal, and regional cooperation for comprehensive planning and land use control implementation; and overall local municipal administration and management.
- Encourage a mix of business and commercial development in appropriate locations in the planning area.

### **Community Vision**

This *Comprehensive Plan* outlines a vision for the future of the Borough and Township and recommends a course of action to achieve growth and development goals. However, the effective implementation of the *Plan* is necessary to make the planning program a success. Many of the resources, programs and techniques available for implementing the comprehensive plan are not within the direct control of local government. For example, although zoning and subdivision ordinances, the chief tools for land use control and land use plan implementation, are the purview of local governments, the funding, construction and maintenance of major roads and improvements have historically been the responsibility of the state and federal governments. Demand for housing in the Planning Area is generated in large part by external market forces, that is, residents of the larger region who choose to relocate to the Planning Area. The implementation of the *Plan* and the creation of an on-going planning process, must be a community-wide effort fostered by local municipal officials.

### **Community Involvement**

It is obvious that the implementation of the *Comprehensive Plan* will require broad-based community involvement and coordination and cooperation among various federal, state, and local agencies. Plan implementation will require both a commitment of financial resources and human resources. The human resources can include both volunteer and paid staff and professional assistance. Many of the recommendations identified in the *Plan* could require increased staff support and demand for volunteer services.

**Community Partnerships**

Cooperation among community organizations will also be critical to the future success of the community. The dedicated work of community non-profit, service and similar organizations add considerably to the quality of life. Emergency service providers and the Borough Recreation Board are prime examples. All of these organizations should plan and work together to accomplish community goals and objectives.

**Implementation Strategies**

A variety of implementation strategies have been recommended in this *Plan* and are oriented to developing long-term policies for growth management, strengthening land use management programs, anticipating capital improvement needs and facilitating inter-governmental cooperation to accomplish local and regional goals. The key implementation strategies in this *Plan* include:

- Reviewing this *Plan* at least annually to evaluate new development and regional issues which warrant plan changes.
- Developing a short-term and long-term capital improvements program to prioritize needed improvements and allocate funds to those improvements; with annual progress evaluations and adjustments in capital project timing and capital equipment purchases.
- Continuing education for local officials via seminars and workshops.
- Diligent updating of land use management ordinances to effect the land use plan, provide environmental protection, preserve open land, maintain rural and historic character, and achieve community facilities and services and housing objectives.
- Focusing limited municipal resources on those community facilities and services which are most critical to meet resident needs.
- Monitoring community facilities and services provided by the county, state, and federal government to ensure such services are adequate and the Planning Area is obtaining its *fair share*.
- Participating in all county, state and federal entitlement and grant funding programs, not solely for the sake of participation, but only if such programs can be sensibly used to achieve valid community development objectives.
- Reviewing all subdivision and land development proposals and all zoning actions and changes for consistency with this Comprehensive Plan.

By focusing the available resources on implementation of the this *Plan*, and the continuance of the *planning process* with an eye to preserving open land and rural small town character, the Borough and Township can achieve sustainable growth and development into the future and maintain the quality of life in the community.