

HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP LAND USE SUMMIT FORUM II
Friday, February 25, 2005
9:30 AM- 12:30 PM

The Hilltown Township Land Use Summit Forum II was held on Friday, February 25, 2005 from 9:30AM-12:30PM at the Pearl S. Buck Foundation located on Dublin Road in Hilltown Township.

Those in attendance included: Kenneth B. Bennington, Chairperson
George C. Egly, Jr., Vice-Chairperson
Richard J. Manfredi, Supervisor
Lorraine E. Leslie, Township Treasurer
Lisa A. Faust, Administrative Assistant
Lynn Bush, Bucks County Planning Commission
Kris Kern, Bucks County Planning Commission
Tim Kohler, Bucks County Planning Commission
Leo Janas, Bucks County Planning Commission

Other attendees from the general public and invited participants included the following: Dan Kell, Jon Apple, Nick Lupinacci, and Jane James – members of the Hilltown Park and Recreation Board, Mike Beatrice, Kenneth Beer, Chuck Kulesza, D. Brooke Rush – members of the Hilltown Planning Commission, Joe Marino, Charlie Moyer, and Sandy Williamson – members of the Hilltown Open Space Committee, C. Robert Wynn, Township Engineer, James C. Groff – Hilltown Authority, Alice Kachline – Township Tax Collector, Robert H. Grunmeier – Bucks County Planning Commission, Chris Canavan – W.B. Homes, Tom Kelso – Castle Valley Engineering, John Kachline – Resident, Thomas Lowden – Silverdale Fire Company, William Devlin-Hilltown Fire Company, Pete Henning – TH Properties, Jack McIlhinney – Hilltown Landowners Association, Doug Sanders – Barness Organization, Henry Rosenberger - Resident, Paul Callahan – McGrath Homes, Robert Showalter - Showalter Associates, Cindy and Lawrence Owen, and Sue Clauser – members of Neighbors for Responsible Land Use and Development/Residents, Jerilyn Covert - News Herald, Greg Rees- Wawa, Inc., Jackie Walker- Stone Ridge Farm Bed & Breakfast, and Wally Rosenthal- Resident.

A. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: The Land Use Summit Forum II was called to order by Supervisor Manfredi at 9:45 AM, at which he welcomed those in attendance and thanked them on behalf of Supervisors Bennington and Egly. Supervisor Manfredi explained the format for the forum, which includes presentations and discussion groups.

B. PRESENTATIONS: The following presentations were made –

- Mrs. Lynn Bush, Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission presented “Issues Facing The Township”
- Review results and recommendations of Land Use Forum II.

- Review of issues facing the Township
- Participants- Additions to list of Township issues

C. DISCUSSION GROUPS: The invited guests were assigned to participate in roundtable discussion groups. Teams assigned as noted below:

Yellow Team: Pete Henning, Robert Grunmeier, Doug Sanders, Wally Rosenthal, Charles Moyer, and Kris Kern.

Blue Team: Sandy Williamson, Mike Beatrice, Bob Wynn, Ken Beer, Jon Apple, Jim Groff, Tom Kelso, and Tim Kohler.

Pink Team: D. Brooke Rush, Tom Louden, Dan Kell, Chris Canavan, Joe Marino, and Leo Janas

Green Team: Nick Lupinacci, Jack McIlhinney, Chuck Kulesza, Bill Devlin, Jane James, and Lynn Bush.

Challenge 1- Development in the RR District:

Issues for discussion include: Protecting community character. Concern about loss of farmland and open space. Protecting the environment. Decisions about extensions of public water and wastewater

Suggested Responses:

1. Separate density and lot size from public water considerations. Provide for public water where it makes sense, without affecting allowable density.
2. Follow Act 537 Plan (Sewage Facilities Plan) for wastewater facilities. The Act 537 Plan identifies areas to be served by public wastewater.
3. Provide conservation subdivision option that would preserve open space and allow for development at the same or slightly higher overall density as the larger lot development.
4. Incorporate better open space standards to ensure that open space set aside serves a purpose (protects natural features, provides areas for recreation or protects farmland). Open space should be usable and not exist to augment private lots.

5. Continue efforts to preserve farms and open space through Township action. This will require Township officials and their committees to set up a system to preserve land. Identify willing landowners and areas worthy of preservation; approach landowners.

Consensus of Discussion by:

Pink Team - Option #1 discussed.

Fire Safety.

Conservation subdivisions

Question the long-term service of on-site sewage systems.

Funding sources for opens pace and long range plans.

Yellow Team – Developers are looking for a unified voice from the Legislature.

Sketch plans are valuable tools.

Rural Residential area needs to be revisited regarding development versus saving natural characteristics.

Blue Team - Density and water

Concerns regarding public water extension and protection of groundwater supplies.

Planning Commission needs better tools available, including base mapping, etc.

Eliminate the word “cluster” because of its negative connotation.

Option #5 – more realistic monetary offers required for purchasing farms.

Green Team- In 100% agreement with Option #5.

More formal process needed regarding open space direction.

Challenge 2- Protecting Historic Resources and Historic Character of Hilltown:

Items for Discussion include: Municipalities Planning Code requires protection of historic resources. The Township has distinctive areas and buildings that are worthy of preservation to help protect the character of the community.

Suggested Responses:

1. Create a new Zoning District to protect the Blooming Glen area. Study completed in 2003 (Award-winning analysis of Blooming Glen) recommended that the area be protected. Expand to other villages.

2. Encourage older buildings to be used by allowing for additional uses for historic structures and barns, i.e. – bed and breakfast, museums, small businesses and trade, for example.
3. Require that plans for new development address any existing structures on the property and create zoning that provides incentives to retain and use existing structures that contribute to the Township's appearance.

Consensus of Discussion By:

Pink Team- Supported all three suggestions.
Preserve Village of Blooming Glen
Do not encourage development
Support use of older buildings but with concern for surrounding environment.
Pre-sketch plans are important.

Yellow Team- Create an inventory of historic structures.
Incorporate site visits
Encourage pre-sketch plans.
Create Historic Review Board to determine significance of property, not to dictate color or style schemes.

Blue Team- Consensus on all three suggestions
Some opportunity for extension of the Village of Blooming Glen
Provide alternate uses to help preserve old structures

Green Team- Preservation is important, especially in the Village Center
Bypass around Village of Blooming Glen.

*11:35AM - Congressman Michael Fitzpatrick arrived and addressed those in attendance, thanking them for their participation and service to the community. Discussion took place concerning the land preservation program in Bucks County. Congressman Fitzpatrick offered his assistance to Hilltown Township whenever possible.

Challenge 3- Assuring the Quality and Appearance of New Development:

Issues for discussion included: Site design and layout. Protection of the landscape and natural features. View of new development from the road. Where sidewalks are needed. How new development relates to its surroundings and to existing or proposed development nearby.

Suggested Responses:

1. Protect natural features by encouraging low-impact development (minimize grading and site disturbance, protect trees, slopes, wetlands and floodplains).
2. Protect vegetation along the road. Require that roadside vegetation be protected and preserved. (Note: this is not possible where sidewalks and road improvements are required).
3. Provide buffers along perimeter roads and between new development and existing development.
4. Require site analysis and conservation plans with new development plans – applicant to assess the site, topography, natural features, surrounding land uses, and historic resources as part of development process. Plan development that fits into the site and the community.
5. Make sidewalks and roadway improvement decisions by considering in systematic way what is happening around the development; proximity of other facilities.
6. Limit reverse frontage lots; or provide extensive buffering so that new residents have privacy and so that the view from the road is preserved.
7. Consider/encourage pre-submission sketch plans.

Consensus of Discussion By:

Pink Team- Pre-submission sketch plans are important
Site specific designs are favorable, but could be troublesome (pro-growth/anti-growth).
External improvements are necessary for developments.
There needs to be a balance between preservation and improvements.

Yellow Team- General support for all the suggested items.
Buffering from the roads (road improvements) may create a problem

Blue Team- Items #1 through #7 are generally supported.
Certain roadways will require improvements, which will curtail road buffering.
Encourage replanting with other than street trees (return it to natural)

Sidewalks are a concern.
Developments need to be designed to provide a feeling of Township residency, not just residents of a development.
Traffic calming devices necessary

Green Team- Impervious surface requirements present a problem
Buffering should be addressed to be more natural
Concern with site disturbance of land, which would destroy natural characteristics.

Challenge 4 – How should future trails, parks and recreation facilities be developed?

Issues for discussion included: The Township has a mandatory dedication of recreation land or fee in-lieu-of Ordinance. Planning Commission now refers plans to the Park and Recreation Board for comments. Is there or should there be a philosophy for parks and recreation? Does the Township want tot lots/small parks or larger recreation areas?

Suggested Responses:

1. Developers should take the trail plans into account. Township reviewing bodies should be aware of trail plans and attempt to implement during plan approval process.
2. Pedestrian links are important and can be accomplished by creating macadam paths along perimeter roads of new developments. This looks less urban than sidewalks; can be implemented with at no Township expense and can be provided in lieu of sidewalks, so there is no additional developer expense.
3. Park and recreation philosophy needs to be clear to all reviewing boards. Is it the Township's goal to create many neighborhood parks through the Township or to create a few centralized areas?

Consensus of Discussion By:

Pink Team- General consensus on #1
Appropriate width and design of trails, as well as maintenance of trails is very important and necessary.

Yellow Team- Tot lots are not preferred, centralized park and recreation facilities are more desirable, as are front yard trail systems.

Trail maintenance is very important.

Blue Team- Trail facilities and plans should be revisited.
Existing roads should be considered as linkage.

Green Team - General consensus on #1.
Support development of regional parks.

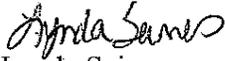
D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Mr. Robert H. Grunmeier, Bucks County Planning Commission suggested that a report or minutes of this Land Use Summit be posted on the Township's website. Supervisor Manfredi advised that the minutes would be posted on the website.
2. Mr. Robert Showalter, Showalter & Associates noted that conservation is important, and would like to see a viable Cluster/Conservation Ordinance in place. Further, Mr. Showalter suggested that a sliding scale for lot size versus density be considered. While he believes the pre-sketch opportunity provided with Township staff is valuable, Mr. Showalter feels that the Township should offer a 4-6 month window of guarantee that no zoning changes will take place to affect the plan in question. Mr. Showalter noted that design flexibility should be built into the Subdivision/Land Development Ordinance.
3. Mr. Daniel Kell of Hilltown Park and Recreation Board commented that it is important to get to know your neighbors and participate in the community.
4. Mrs. Jackie Walker of Stone Ridge Farm Bed & Breakfast stated that Hilltown Township is fortunate to have an historic site such as the Pearl S. Buck Foundation on the historical register. She feels that the country atmosphere of Hilltown Township must be preserved, and stated that planting of buffer trees is very important to achieve that goal. Mrs. Walker noted that Hilltown Township is located in what is considered the Lake District of Bucks County, where tourism is extremely important.

Supervisor Manfredi commented that today's Land Use Summit Forum II was a positive step toward responsible growth management for Hilltown Township. He thanked the Pearl S. Buck Foundation for use of their facilities, WaWa for providing coffee, and those in attendance who had given generously of their time to participate in this event.

E. ADJOURNMENT: The Land Use Summit Forum II was adjourned at 12:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynda Seimes
Township Secretary

(*These minutes were transcribed from notes and tape recordings taken during the meeting by Mrs. Faust and Mrs. Leslie).