

Chapter 4

Policy Statements

Introduction

A “policy” is the official position of a municipality on a given issue. Ideally, policy statements will promote the region’s vision in light of the opportunities and limitations revealed by the SWOT analysis and survey results. The policies are the basis for the more precise goals and objective statements that will be developed in succeeding chapters. For ease of use, the policy statements presented here are grouped according to the topics of the following plan chapters. However, by their nature, policy statements do not necessarily lend themselves to discrete classification: a single policy may support several aspects of the municipalities’ visions. It should be noted that the “Region” includes both Shippensburg Borough and Shippensburg Township.

Policy statements are intended to serve as guidelines. For each topic, the list of policy statements is preceded by a paragraph describing their overall intent. We note that there may be instances where the municipalities may take an action that does not fit any of the *specific* policy statements, yet remains consistent with intent of the policies as well as the municipalities’ vision. This should be considered an acceptable course of action.

Within this text, please note that the policy statements are permissive rather than directive; that is, they suggest actions that the municipalities *may* take rather than *must* take. The specific action plan is provided in Chapter 11. Further note that a municipal indication of “support” for a given policy does not necessarily imply a financial commitment by the Borough or Township. As governmental agencies, their support for a policy may be expressed in a variety of ways, not merely financial contribution. Again, specific actions are provided in the Action Plan.

Land Use Policies

Land use policies are critical to the impressions municipal officials wish to project in their municipality. It is important that new growth respect the scale and character of the built environment. Future growth areas should encompass the region surrounding existing developed areas. They must follow the natural service areas of existing or proposed sewer and water systems, which can accommodate higher densities and greater variety of housing. Medium to higher density development will reduce the amount of land needed, while taking advantage of existing infrastructure. As development density increases, it is important to provide adequate open space as well. Innovative design techniques and flexible land use regulations will create compact mixed use communities that promote quality of life, community character, and social interaction, while preserving natural and historic resources.

1. New development within the region should be directed to areas designated by the Future Land Use Map.
2. Growth areas should be located where public sewer and water services are available or readily accessible and expandable in a cost-effective manner.
3. Future land use should reflect and compliment the current character of the municipalities.

4. Future land use should respect natural and historic features of the region.
5. There should be a balance between residential and non-residential uses in the region.
6. New non-residential development should be properly buffered as to not conflict with existing residential uses.
7. The Borough should promote infill development and re-development, especially within the downtown business district.
8. The municipalities will explore innovative open space development techniques, where appropriate.
9. Commercial development is appropriate within the region; however strip commercial will be discouraged.
10. The municipalities will encourage pedestrian friendly mixed-use development where appropriate.
11. Expansion of Shippensburg University should be coordinated with the Borough and Township to prevent land use conflicts.
12. The Borough, Township, and University should cooperate to ensure logical future development patterns.

Economic Development Policies

The competitiveness of a community in attracting economic development is directly proportional to the quality of life it enjoys. Municipal officials must recognize and promote the strengths of their community, while finding ways to lessen the impacts of their weaknesses. The stability and vitality of the downtown business district is not only important to the economic well-being of the Borough, but of the Township as well. A failed downtown would encourage commercial development within areas of the Township more suitable for preservation, resulting in a loss of the rural character that is so important to the Township. The Township must promote the development or reuse of vacant properties and structures located within existing commercial and industrial areas.

1. The municipalities should work together to identify economic development opportunities for the region.
2. The municipalities should encourage a balance of residential and non-residential uses to allow for economic development.
3. All new commercial and industrial development should be attractive, environmentally sound, and compatible with surrounding land uses.
4. Strip commercial development should be avoided.
5. Business owners and municipal officials should cooperate to make the downtown business district a destination for students, residents, and visitors.
6. Adequate parking in commercial areas should be provided.

7. Traffic congestion in the Borough must be alleviated to ensure convenient access to the central business district.
8. Public, private, and non-profit organizations should cooperate to improve the economic development climate of the region.
9. The Borough and Township should identify all potential brownfield sites, and determine the feasibility of their cleanup and/or reuse.
10. The municipalities should encourage the development of technological infrastructure as a means for economic development.

Transportation Policies

A growing community will undoubtedly face increased traffic volume and congestion at some point. While traffic issues are not serious in the Shippensburg area at the present time, the municipalities should be proactive in their approach to transportation and circulation policy. The number one priority for a transportation system in any area is that it functions safely and efficiently. Congestion, gridlock, and unsafe roads are detrimental to quality of life as well as to economic development. In the Shippensburg area, the focus must be on the efficient movement of vehicular traffic with minimal impact on the character of the region. The best way to accomplish this is by the construction of alternative routes around the Borough.

1. The municipalities should explore an inter-municipal approach to traffic circulation throughout the region, including the construction of an inner and outer loop around the Borough.
2. The municipalities should seek private sector assistance in the planning and construction of the proposed inner and outer loops.
3. The municipalities should identify and correct dangerous or poorly designed intersections.
4. Non-motorized modes of transportation should be encouraged and accommodated for in the region.
5. Public transportation, while not economically feasible at this time, should be a long range goal of the municipalities.
6. The municipalities should require developer assistance for direct transportation improvements as well as impact studies.
7. The existing road system should be maintained and improved.
8. The Township should limit the number of highway access points in commercial areas.
9. The Borough should discourage the use of neighborhood streets as shortcuts by through traffic.

Housing Policies

The availability of a safe, affordable, and diverse housing stock is vital to the economic health of any community. Housing is influenced by environmental, social, economic, and cultural factors. Municipalities must seek to maximize existing housing and guide efficient and compact residential development into areas served by public facilities. Housing provision should emphasize the total living environment. Neighborhoods should contain a mix of dwellings as well as a combination of cultural, open space, recreational, and commercial uses that enhance the character of the region that make it a safe and enjoyable place to live.

1. Provide a wide range of housing opportunities that meet the needs of current and future residents.
2. Provide a variety of housing densities.
3. Encourage mixed-use development that includes residential, neighborhood commercial, and recreational uses.
4. Provide a fair share of safe and affordable housing in the region.
5. Discourage conversions of single family homes to multi-family dwellings in established residential neighborhoods.
6. Encourage innovative design techniques for new housing where appropriate.
7. Direct new housing development to growth areas.
8. Provide efficient and aggressive code enforcement.
9. Encourage re-use of existing housing stock as apartments and/or student housing where appropriate.
10. Recommend new or accessory uses to be architecturally consistent with surrounding uses within the historic district.
11. Encourage housing styles that are compatible with the character of existing neighborhoods.
12. Provide housing for the special needs population.

Community Facilities Policies

Community facilities and services are needed to provide the basic everyday needs of Borough and Township residents. They include public sewer and water, solid waste, recycling, emergency services, educational facilities, and stormwater management. The challenge to municipal governments is the efficient provision of these services in the most fiscally responsible manner. Currently, the region enjoys a high level of community and emergency services, but understands that the costs of those services may rise in the future.

1. Provide efficient and aggressive code enforcement.
2. Continue to provide a high level of emergency services.

3. Seek private sector assistance to maintain a high level of emergency services in the future.
4. Update municipal Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans, and provide sewer and water services to growth areas where necessary.
5. Discourage public sewer and water extension into agricultural and open space areas.
6. The municipalities should re-evaluate the potential of a regional police department with adjacent townships or portions thereof.
7. Enact cooperative agreements with the school district and University regarding sharing of facilities.
8. Establish inter-municipal agreements to continue to work together to provide public services efficiently.
9. Maintain the existing park systems in the Borough and Township.
10. Enact and maintain stormwater management regulations.
11. Encourage community events and social services.
12. Provide efficient solid waste disposal.
13. Maintain Borough recycling program and explore a joint recycling program between the municipalities.

Natural and Historic Resource Conservation Policies

Agricultural areas, open space, and historic sites are important assets to a community. The preservation of these non-renewable resources is important to the heritage of the region, as well as the quality of life it enjoys. The rural areas of the Township should be protected from large scale development for both environmental and economic reasons. The Borough's rich and diverse history is reflected in its architecture and character. These historic and natural assets make the Shippensburg Area a unique and special place to live.

1. Work cooperatively to identify and to protect natural and historic resources.
2. Preserve remaining agricultural lands, particularly those characterized by soils of state-wide importance.
3. Work cooperatively to protect water resources.
4. Consult with local historic preservation groups to develop consistent policies on preservation.
5. Maintain and enhance existing parkland.
6. Employ appropriate design techniques in environmentally sensitive areas.
7. Promote the use of non-motorized modes of transportation.

8. Adopt open space development guidelines consistent with the Cumberland County Open Space Preservation Plan.
9. Strongly discourage the provision of public sewer and water supply to critical agricultural and open space areas.