

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

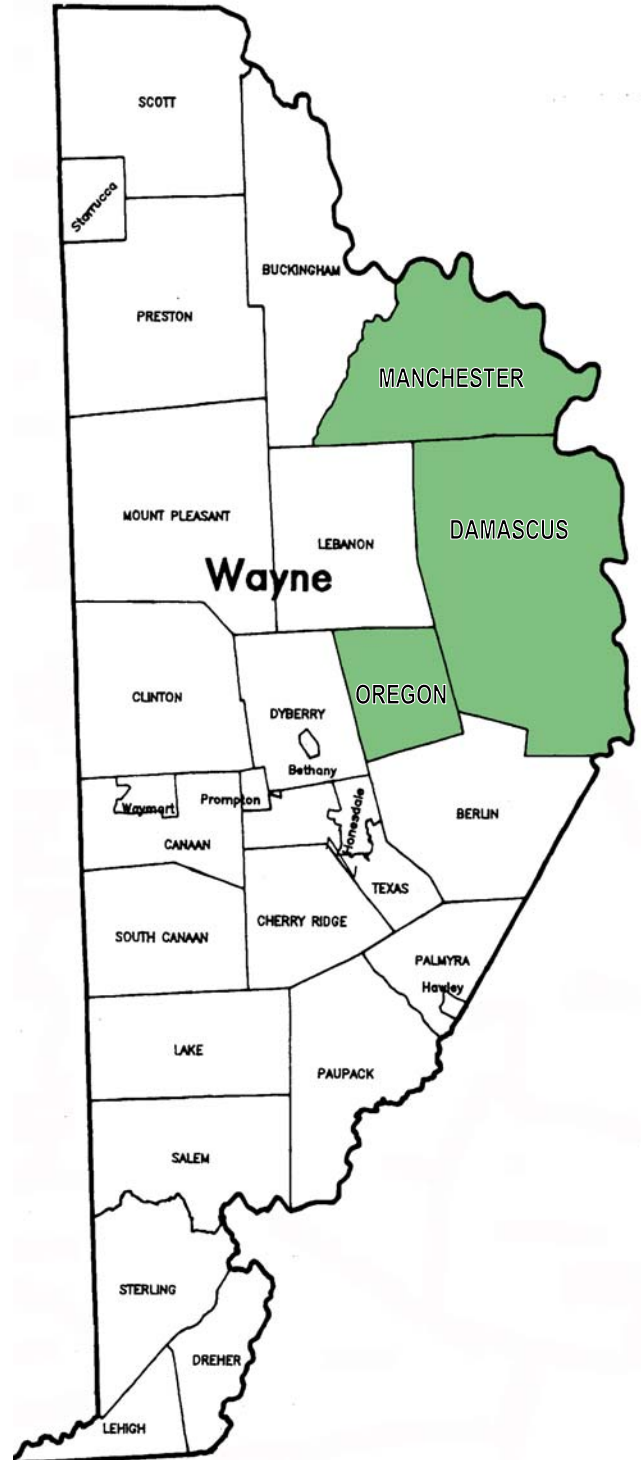
Planning Needs

This *East Central Wayne County Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the local officials of the three participating Townships, Damascus, Manchester and Oregon, in recognition of a number of important community needs:

- to identify and inventory the changes which have taken place in the Townships over their development history, and particularly over the last ten years;¹
- to establish a framework for the conservation of the area's historic character, residential neighborhoods, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- to provide a base for the evaluation of land use management tools, principally zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development regulations, to ensure current growth and development issues are addressed;
- to organize for the most efficient administration of township government and the delivery of community facilities and services; and,
- to fully explore the possibilities and benefits of inter-municipal cooperation for providing facilities, services and administration.

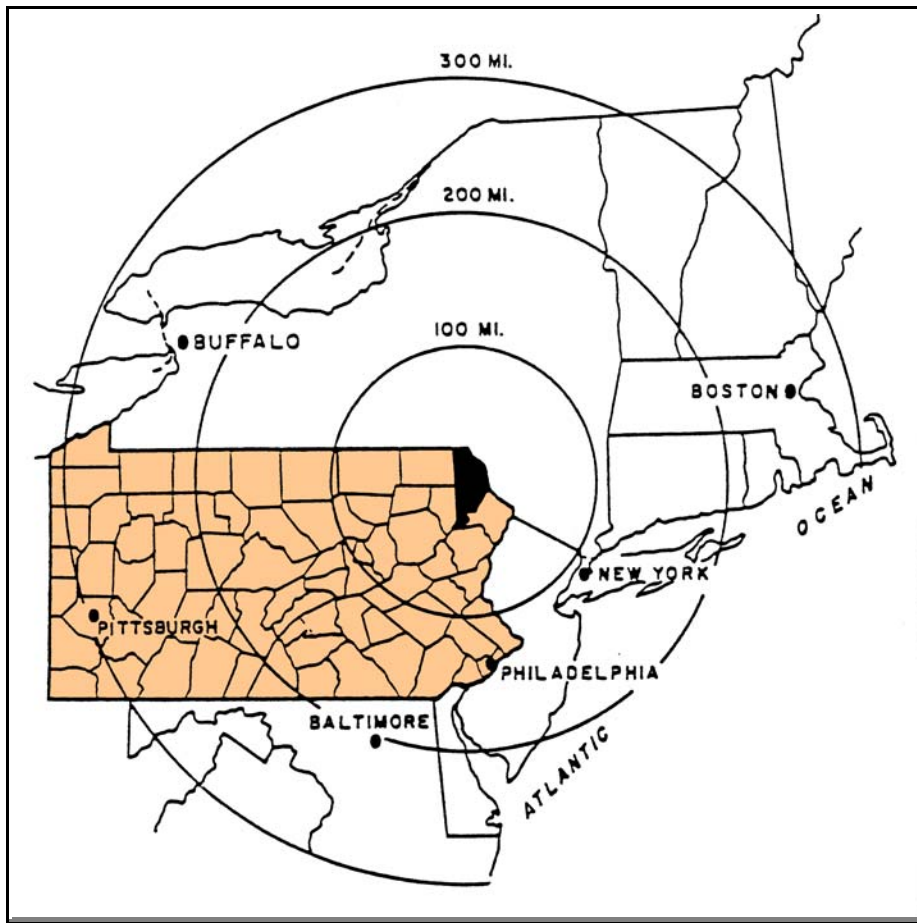
Planning Issues Overview

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns. Geographically, the East Central Wayne County Planning Area lies somewhat beyond the rapidly growing areas of Northeastern Pennsylvania directly affected by the relocation of permanent residents from metropolitan areas of New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. The Planning Area remains largely undeveloped with scattered residential dwellings, some planned residential subdivisions, and limited commercial development. Although not increasing in the numbers



East Central Wayne County Planning Area

¹Damascus Township adopted its Comprehensive Plan in 1975 and updated it in 1995, Manchester amended its 1978 Plan in 1995, and this Multi-Municipal Plan is the first comprehensive plan for Oregon Township.



County Location Map

of new residents to the extent experienced by some municipalities in Wayne County, Damascus Township, Manchester Township and Oregon Township, between 1990 and 2000, increased in population at rates of nineteen percent, thirty-four percent and twenty-three percent, respectively.

While agriculture has declined in both extent and economic importance, it remains an important element of the rural working landscape. Timber harvesting also continues to be an integral part of the productive use of open lands. Given the amount of undeveloped land in the area, the attractive lifestyle associated with the rural character, and the Townships proximity to Honesdale, continued growth in population and number of housing units is expected. Many of the soils in the Townships which have historically supported agriculture are also suitable for development in terms of suitability for subsurface sewage disposal and construction of dwellings.

Clearly, Damascus, Manchester and Oregon Townships are poised to become one of the most changing areas of Wayne County. This anticipated change presents to the Townships the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. Concurrently, the Townships are responsible to ensure that the growth and development occurs in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character, while at the same time encouraging economic development to provide jobs for residents and increase the overall tax base. In short, the citizens and public officials of East Central Wayne County must resolve the land use conflicts which result from the necessary balance between new development and need for facilities and services, and economic development and environmental protection and community character and open land conservation.

This combination of growth and development issues clearly demonstrates the critical need for this *Comprehensive Plan* and consideration of new and innovative land use management techniques in the Townships. A subdivision and land development ordinance and a zoning ordinance can play a vital role in the growth and development planning program by directing residential and commercial development to the areas best suited for such development and requiring adequate community facilities and infrastructure. Each individual Township must choose its direction, and continue to work cooperatively within the area to accomplish the goals of the *Plan*.

Planning Process; Key Questions

The East Central Wayne County planning process is one of several multimunicipal planning efforts in Wayne County to be conducted under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which governs land use planning and land use management in the Commonwealth. The three Townships, recognizing the changes occurring in the area, came together and organized the inter-municipal planning effort. The East Central Wayne County Planning Committee, comprised of representatives from each of the three participating Townships appointed by the respective Board of Supervisors, conducted the planning process. Community Planning and Management, LLC, of Paupack, Pennsylvania, provided professional assistance.

Citizen participation included a community survey distributed in the three Townships, a series of community meetings, and the Planning Commission meetings and Supervisor hearings required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code prior to the adoption of the *Plan*.

In short, the planning process involves finding the sometimes complex answers to four simple questions:

1. *Where are we?*
2. *Where do we want to be?*
3. *How do we get there?*
4. *How are we doing?*

Where are we? – Background Studies

The initial step in the process is the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community characteristics and concerns aimed at defining the existing condition of the community and identifying planning implications. This data is compiled in the following sections which are included in the *Background Studies* element of the *Plan*:

- *Community Character and Development History*
- *Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use*
- *Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns*
- *Demographics and Economic Base*
- *Financial Analysis*
- *Community Facilities and Services*
- *Highways and Transportation*
- *Planning and Development in Wayne County, the Region and Contiguous Municipalities*

Where do we want to be?

Goals & Objectives/ Plans

The *Plan Goals and Objectives* are a vision of how residents and local officials expect the community to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the Planning Committee based on the community survey, community meetings, and the findings of the background studies. Based on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, the Planning Committee formulated the various plans to guide the future growth and development of the East Central Wayne County Planning Area including:



- *Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection Plan*
- *Community Facilities and Services Plan*
- *Transportation Plan*
- *Housing Plan*
- *Capital Improvements Program*
- *Official Map*
- *Regional Planning and Intermunicipal Cooperation*
- *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies*

How do we get there? – Implementation Strategies

The specific means to effect the various plans are also included, and are detailed in the *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies* section and discussed at various points in the various specific plans. In addition, and to facilitate on-going use of the *Plan*, the actions and the responsible entities required to carry out the plan's expectations are summarized in a matrix titled *Implementation Strategies And Specific Actions*. Examples of *implementation strategies* include zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, historic structures preservation, and capital improvement budgeting.

While the ultimate responsibility for each Township lies with the Board of Supervisors, much of the work of implementation, assessment of the accomplishment of goals and objectives, and periodic Comprehensive Plan review can be accomplished by the Planning Commission and citizen volunteers who are appointed to special committees or task forces along with Township officials. These groups can provide evaluations and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for action.

How are we doing? – Need for Continued Planning

It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. The *Plan* should be

used by the community when important decisions are made and its goals and objectives and prioritized actions should be reviewed at least each year to assess the community's accomplishments or the need to shift priorities for action.

Simply stated, a comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the three-township area and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the area's residents. It will require public support and positive action by the Township Boards of Supervisors.

State Mandated Plan Review

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (§301,c) requires local municipal comprehensive plans to be reviewed at least every ten years. The change suggests a greater Commonwealth emphasis on planning and the need for local municipalities to incorporate the planning process into normal functions. However, the ten-year review window is certainly far too long. Planning, that is, assessing how decisions and community changes fit into the plan, should be practiced continually.