

## Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code Interface

Correlating planning recommendations with certain requirements of the Municipal Planning Code (MPC) underlies the entire process associated with updating the Cambria County Comprehensive Plan. In essence, the “layering” process employed in the collection, review, interpretation and application of data is central to meeting the spirit and intent of various MPC requirements [citations in brackets]. In addition, the consistent use of the *Sustainability Triad* of economy, environment and community shapes and incorporates the interrelationships inherent in the planning process.

### Land Uses Relating to Important Natural Resources/Minerals [301(a) (7) (i)]

The Natural and Historic Resources Chapter of the *Background Conditions* compendium is replete with references to important geological, soils and other physiographic features, including information of remaining coal reserves/mined areas (page 18) and the Marcellus Shale formation (page 23). Other critical natural heritage resources are identified as well (page 40). The above and other information from this Chapter was used to develop the *Developmental Constraints Map* (page 56), which is a critical component of the planning process, which *summarizes and applies* physiographic information, constraints and limitations. This was used to develop future land use recommendations and to define and refine the Growth Areas during the planning process, which comprise the major future land use conceptual framework.



### Land Uses of Regional Impact and Significance [301(a) (7) (ii)]

The Economic Base Chapter of the *Background Conditions* compendium includes a subsection entitled *Local Economic Activity Areas* (pages 161-163), which describes the regionally significant land uses narratively and graphically. The economic activity areas embrace major commercial, governmental, recreational and institutional uses of regional significance to the County, and to the larger region. These areas and uses help refine land use recommendations including the Growth Areas.



### Preservation and Enhancement of Agriculture [301(a) (7) (iii)]

The Natural and Historic Resources Chapter of the *Background Conditions* compendium graphically depicts the location of Prime and Statewide Important agricultural soils, agricultural easements and other land currently in agricultural use. Land use related recommendations within the *Environmental* component of the

*Sustainability Triad* encourages maintenance and expansion Agricultural Conservation Easements as funding permits and the use of Agricultural Security Areas, as well as encouraging the adoption of or revisions to existing Subdivision/Land Development regulations that include concepts such as the *conservation subdivision approach* as a method to guide the development of new housing in appropriate locations and away from areas that are best left for agricultural preservation and open space. In addition, the *Economic* component reinforces agriculture as a component of the economic base embracing agri-tourism, the sale of locally produced products and the continuation of agriculture in general. Conceptually, the Growth Areas were defined in a manner not to infringe with agricultural activities, however, the general lack of land use controls in much of the sections sustaining agriculture may be the proverbial two-edged sword. In essence, many in the agricultural community may not feel comfortable with land use regulations yet without these regulations there are no local controls that could protect agriculture within agricultural zoning districts and minimize infringement by other types of development.



#### Historic Preservation [301(a) (7) (iv)]

The Natural and Historic Resources Chapter of the *Background Conditions* compendium includes an extensive review of historic resources, on-going heritage promotion efforts and allied organizations (pages 43-54), including a map of heritage resources (page 52) that embraces natural and cultural heritage resources. The County Plan applauds and supports the many activities of private and public groups, agencies and communities that are involved with the broad concept of “heritage”. Fortunately, agencies and residents within Cambria County have recognized and now relish the rich industrial, recreational, cultural, religious and ethnic heritage of the County, as evidenced by the museums, discovery centers, historic districts/structures and events/festivals. Thus, the Plan calls for no new agencies or approaches but recommends greater coordination and communication among the agencies, officials and communities involved.



Recommendations are made reinforcing heritage as part of the County economic base, with a role in the proposed *Economic Partnership* that seeks to coordinate not duplicate developmental activities within Cambria County and inclusion in centralized marketing efforts recommended for the *Partnership*. Several counties or promotional efforts have incorporated Smart Phone Apps and QR Codes as a part of their marketing and tourism



promotion efforts, something recommended in this planning effort. The Plan encourages a greater focus on the County's many natural heritage resources including greater public access to water resources and the Growth Areas that balance more concentrated development in many of the historically developed and cultural centers of the County and less intense development and preservation in the historically rural sections of the County.

### Planning and a Reliable Supply of Water [301 (b)]

Section 301(b) of the MPC requires comprehensive plans to include a plan for the reliable supply of water, considering current and future water resource availability, uses and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources. Various Chapters of the *Background Conditions* compendium identify and review findings affecting water supply. The Natural and Historic Resources Chapter details water resource conditions (pages 24-30) and pays special attention to waters impacted by coal mining (pages 31-34). The Public Utilities/Infrastructure Chapter provides considerable detail on water supply (pages 168-184, including public water service areas and providers, water sustainability and protection considerations, an abundant industrial water supply and an overview of issues, concerns and constraints. Regionalization of public water suppliers is noted and supported in the County Plan.



- ❑ The Growth Area concept in major land use/development recommendations encourages concentrated development in and around the service area of the public systems and away from the sensitive regional water supply facilities. In addition, the proposed update of the County Sewer and Water Plan keyed to regional approaches, highway access and developmental opportunities is an effort to better understand the public water and sewer issues within the County, especially as the impact future development.
- ❑ A number of the water suppliers in the County have a reserve capacity of potable and industrial water. Protection of the water sources have been incorporated into land use and infrastructure recommendations especially within all facets – Community, Economy and Environmental components - of the *Sustainability Triad*.
- ❑ Information available from the State Water Plan has been (page 177) reviewed and either incorporated into the appropriate sections of this Plan or used to corroborate and verify other secondary source data.
- ❑ In addition, groundwater recharge areas, high quality surface waters and related resources are identified in the Natural and Historic Resources Chapter (pages 24-26) and comprise some of the constraints identified on the *Developmental Constraints Map* (page 56) that was taken into account in the preparation of land use and developmental recommendations.

The issue of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) is found at various places in this Plan. AMD from past deep mining affects water quality, recreational water use and community life in general. Changing attitudes, practices and enhancements have minimized impacts on water supply from AMD resulting from past mining. Present and proposed mining proposals and permits typically cause public concern especially related to individual wells, however, mining activities are now governed by statutes, outside of MPC, regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restriction of water supplies affected by such activities.



MPC requirements note that Comprehensive Plans must state that commercial agricultural production may impact water supply sources, and that lawful activities such as mineral extraction may also impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by other statutes that specify replacement and restoration of affected water supplies. These factors are recognized in this Plan and any land use/land development regulation evolving from it. The County has a long and diverse heritage in agriculture and mineral extraction and local residents seem to understand the economic role and environmental responsibilities of these types of industries. However, there is concern that long-standing negative impacts should be rectified and the best available technology be employed in current or future extraction and agricultural uses to assure that these impacts will not be replicated or exacerbated.

#### Statement of Compatibility with Development in Adjacent Communities [301 (a) (5)]

The regional perspective is critical for all forms of planning and especially in County planning in that Cambria County abuts communities in the counties of Bedford, Blair, Clearfield, Indiana, Somerset and Westmoreland. While the approximate twenty-five (25) municipalities in these six counties vary considerably, several general statements can be made in relation to the matter of compatibility of recommendations of this Plan:

- ❑ Cambria, Blair and Westmoreland are the most urbanized of the counties, although the most urbanized sections of Blair and Westmoreland counties are located at some distance from Cambria County boundaries. However, the Johnstown Urbanized area in Cambria County essentially straddles Cambria and Somerset counties and is relatively close to relatively rural Indiana County and Westmoreland County communities.
- ❑ With the exception of several northern Somerset County communities, many of the neighboring communities in surrounding counties are relatively rural, most with little intense development and minimal land use/development regulations near the Cambria boundaries.
- ❑ In most cases, the neighboring communities are essentially identical to those communities in Cambria County with which they adjoin. Simply stated, except for PennDOT signage one may not know when one crosses into or from Cambria County.

With the above as a general background context, the recommendations associated with the Economy, Community and Environmental components of this Plan are seen as essentially a continuation of existing patterns and a focusing of development in areas determined to be most suitable, compatible with present land use patterns and County Plan objectives and recommendations of the respective six neighboring counties. A summary of likely compatibility impacts of proposed land use and related recommendations in Cambria County on these neighboring communities is summarized as follows:

- *Growth Areas:* Development centered on Growth Areas is expected to have minimal impacts on neighboring communities, with two possible exceptions. First of all, development in several of the Growth Areas near County lines may encourage development in Cambria County that otherwise may have occurred in the neighboring county, although it may also have a side benefit of preserving community life, agriculture and low density development in the other county. Secondly, the Prince Gallitzin/Rock Run Growth Area will likely impact neighboring sections of Clearfield County. Impacts may include increased seasonal traffic and supportive recreational/commercial development in neighboring areas. The type of growth this Growth Area would likely encourage is essentially the day- or weekend-visitor, the nature/recreational tourist and not necessarily the year round resident.



- *Transportation/Access Enhancements:* Recommendations that seek to resolve access issues that affect economic and community life in Cambria County face certain obstacles from adjacent counties as well as creating potential impacts. While these recommendations, obstacles and impacts vary, they share a common cause in the location of the beneficiary in Cambria County but the proposed solution in an adjacent County.



- The County Plan makes certain short- and long-term recommendations related to PA Routes 403 and 56 West, an area that includes several communities in the counties of Cambria, Indiana and Westmoreland. Short-term direction signage recommending trucks use Route 403 rather than Route 56 will require coordinated signage planning and implementation in three counties and three PennDOT Districts. Funding and coordination among counties, PennDOT Districts and transportation planning agencies provide challenges to this recommendation. The long-term recommendation for a Route 403/56 Connector reflects the results of past discussions that essentially failed to move forward on enhancements to PA Route 711 in Indiana County that may have served as this connector. However, the Connector closer to the beneficiary (i.e. Johnstown)

can be accomplished without extensive improvements to Route 403 in either County and by involvement of fewer actors, essentially one MPO, one PennDOT District and one community.

- Recommendations for enhancement to Route 56 East face similar challenges since Cambria County is the beneficiary while the problems are in the counties of Somerset and Bedford, neither of which have the incentive to spend dwindling transportation funding on projects that are perceived of having minimal benefits for the hosting counties, since the envisioned improvements are seen as only addressing southern Cambria County's relative inadequate access to I-99 and I-76.
- Generations of Cambria residents have been born and matured during the discussion about improving US Route 219, north and south. The segment between the Carrolltown area and Somerset is a four-lane limited access highway built incrementally since the 1960's. Progress is being made on Route 219 South in Somerset County, but the prospects for Route 219 North are dim at best. Long-term recommendations for the planning, programming and eventual construction of this road will also likely be incremental, but will require coordination and creativity among a multi-county swath of north and northcentral Pennsylvania. Positive economic impacts have been touted throughout the long debate on Route 219; however, all would agree that it would improve access and economic opportunity to any area underserved by a modern highway infrastructure.



Addressing the above challenges will require focus, coordination and creativity by all involved in Cambria County, even though all agree that approaches to enhance access should not be limited by county or administrative district lines.

## Interrelationship among Plan Components [301(a) (4.1)]

Plan components may be directed towards certain specific functional ends, such as the extension of utilities or other community facilities or the enhancement of the local economy via redevelopment activities. These improvements address certain problems or issues, such as providing a basic community infrastructure, addressing economic base issues and improving access to/from certain facilities respectfully. However, they also have relationships and impacts on other planning components, such as making a newly served community more developable, creating pressures for new demands on municipal governments and enhancing the developmental potential of presently undeveloped land.

The planning process consists of the analysis of certain categories of community factors. The conventional planning process analyzes these factors separately for the sake of undertaking a manageable community planning process, even though the relationships and impacts of each factor on the others are recognized. This Plan follows a variation in which conventional planning categories (i.e. transportation, land use, community facilities, housing, etc.) are



addressed in data collection and analysis, but goals, objectives, recommendations and strategic actions are synthesized from the function categories into the *Sustainability Triad – Community, Environment and Economy*. Thus, the very underpinning of relationships among planning components is addressed in the approach and the body of this Plan.

Recommendations identified earlier on matrices in this Chapter are categorized into the *Sustainability Triad*, although the *functional category* related to component of the *Triad* are cross-referenced. In this way, the recommendations transcend yet reflect their functional area. The matrix on the following two pages summarizes these relationships with the recommendations in the horizontal column affecting the areas displayed vertically.

## SUMMARY OF PLANNING COMPONENT INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Functional Category	SUSTAINABILITY TRIAD		
	Community <i>The quality of life in Cambria County communities</i>	Environment <i>The physical and natural feature base of the County</i>	Economy <i>Balancing, coordinating and linking development in the County</i>
<b>Land Use</b>	Growth Area concept focuses development and reinforces existing communities – development in urban/infrastructure area with preservation and less intensive development in rural areas	Growth Area delineation and refinement takes significant environmental features into account	Land use/land development planning and implementing regulations focused on Growth Area communities.
<b>Transportation</b>	Short- and Long-Range recommendations on major highways affect public safety	Short-Range recommendations on major highways are environmentally neutral; Mass-transit and rail service recommendations reinforce environmental resources	Short- and Long-Range access recommendations have positive impacts on economy
<b>Housing</b>	Multi-pronged housing recommendations reinforce existing community life	Focusing higher-density housing in Growth Areas and use of conservation subdivision option addresses environmental considerations in site development	Multi-pronged housing recommendations reinforce housing stock alternatives critical in attracting and retaining residents
<b>Public Utilities and Infrastructure</b>	Prioritization of infrastructure in Growth Areas reinforces community life and traditional development	Prioritization of infrastructure in Growth Areas reinforces traditional development and downplays sprawl	Strategic infrastructure investments in Growth Areas reinforces major local economic activity areas
<b>Economic Base</b>	Support of regional cost-effective delivery of public services reinforces sustainability of existing communities; <i>Economic Partnership/Point of Contact</i> recommendations add centralized focus that also addresses community sustainability	<i>Economic Partnership</i> recommendations includes greater emphasis on nature tourism as part of the economic base while preserving unique natural features and resources	<i>Economic Partnership/Point of Contact</i> recommendations add focus and coordination to economic marketing message, approach and visibility
<b>Natural and Historic Resources</b>	Natural resource recommendations especially related to resolving AMD issues and preserving agriculture, and cultural and historic resource appreciation and preserve all work to enhance existing communities	Resolution of AMD and sanitary sewer overflows addresses environmental enhancement and sustainability and reinforces recommended water access enhancements	Resolution of AMD and sanitary sewer overflows enhances natural resources, an economic asset, and emphasizes nature tourism as part of the County economy; <i>Economic Partnership/Point of Contact</i> recommendations add focus and coordination to nature tourism marketing message/approach
<b>Public Services and Recreation</b>	Support of regional cost-effective delivery of public services reinforces sustainability of existing communities; Countywide Recreation Plan recommendations seek to equalize recreational opportunities countywide	Countywide Recreation Plan recommendations reinforce environmental appreciation and active nature-related recreational, particularly related to water and land trails	Support of regional cost-effective delivery of public services facilitates economic development efforts; <i>Economic Partnership/Point of Contact</i> recommendations provides a point of contact to service providers seeking to enhance services