

The Township staff and its planning consultant began an extensive outreach program in the first phase of the for the comprehensive plan update. The program included of an outreach webpage citizens and several group interviews with business leaders, educational partners, recreational organizations and faith-based leaders. This outreach resulted in a list of more than 20 issues and opportunities in the Township's future. The list is presented below, followed by the results of a citizen ranking survey used to prioritize the concerns to be addressed in the comprehensive plan update.

Issues and Opportunities Raised During 2015 Outreach

1. **Ensure opportunity for affordable housing options for young and first-time home buyers and renters.** Young adults and young families have few housing options particularly as access to financing has been more controlled.
2. **Increase housing and services for seniors.** The aging population could be a target market for the development of more senior housing options and services.
3. **Complete streetscapes in communities with sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees, and lighting where feasible.** Certain pedestrian facilities within communities are incomplete, inconvenient and feel unsafe.
4. **Interconnect communities with walking/biking trails.** Communities within the Township are connected by roads but are largely disconnected for pedestrians and bicyclists.
5. **Address traffic bottlenecks with physical and operational improvements where feasible.** Several narrow streets/highway segments, bridges and traffic signals cause congestion and delay.
6. **Make select streets bicycle friendly through designated lanes, wider shoulders, and/or improved signage.** Public interest in bicycling as transportation (commuting) and recreation has been on the rise due to social, economic and health factors.
7. **Increase public transportation service.** Public transportation routes are few, serving only limited areas.
8. **Coordinate development and associated transportation improvements of open parcels.** A few large parcels are zoned and marketed for development. The size of these lots suggests that significant traffic could be generated by developed uses.
9. **Coordinate a community vision and partnership for growth with Central Penn College and Geisinger-Holy Spirit Hospital.** These institutions have grown the number of facilities they operate and services they offer over the past decade.
10. **Encourage commercial growth and re-use/re-development for quality jobs and services.** The Township's many commercial office and retail areas are compatible with its residential neighborhoods and contribute to the tax base; the Township has very little industrial activity. The Township should work with interested businesses to fill vacant commercial locations and add quality local jobs and services.
11. **Encourage better storefront and façade design, landscaping, and screening of heating and cooling equipment.** Building need to be attractive to customers in order for businesses to capture their patronage and compete with new commercial services in other locations.

12. **Emphasize consistent code enforcement.** Property maintenance, parking and other Township regulations require consistent enforcement to protect community values.
13. **Revitalize West Fairview to leverage its location at the confluence of the Susquehanna River and Conodoguient Creek and visibility from and access to US 11/15.**
14. **Create an East Pennsboro business organization as a voice for local businesses.** There is no local chamber of commerce or organization that supports business in their perspective on Township regulations and services.
15. **Improve perception of school district's value/reputation.** East Pennsboro Area School District is perceived as having a lower quality or value than other West Shore school districts. This deters prospective residents and businesses.
16. **Improve the Township's sense of community and community pride.** The Township is comprised of multiple (even separate) communities that developed independently, e.g. each with its own fire company, post office, etc. While services are increasingly provided township-wide, there is still a lack a sense of Township-wide identity and pride that many other West Shore townships have.
17. **Improve maintenance of local infrastructure: sewer collection system, streets, bridges, drainage features, etc.** Without functional, reliable infrastructure, the Township is not a desirable location for residents or business.
18. **Develop a strategy for long-term public safety service, including facilities, equipment and personnel.** Public safety costs have been steadily rising. Declining firefighter volunteerism suggests that volunteer-based companies (under a paid department Fire Chief) will be insufficient for fire protection service and for capital fundraising within the next few decades.
19. **Improve long-range budgeting for Township services and equipment replacement.** Maintenance and operations of various Township departments often must focus on the current crisis, reducing time and resources for preventative maintenance, planned improvements, and needed equipment replacement.
20. **Make parks fully accessible for the elderly and persons with disabilities.** Portions of the parks are universally accessible but not all.
21. **Explore regional recreation programming.** Requests for more varied recreation programs increase as residents gain new interests. The recreation department is not able to meet all requests but may be able to share programming with other nearby recreation providers.
22. **Develop a facility for indoor, year-round recreation activities, sports leagues, and sports training.** Such a facility could be used by the Township for recreation programs and public use, as well as by Central Penn College and the East Pennsboro Area School District, and therefore jointly developed. Lower Paxton Township's Friendship Center on the East Shore is the nearest example and is popular among area residents.
23. **Build a community pool and community gardens.** There is no community swimming pool in the Township. Residents can pay for membership at area swimming pools only at non-resident rates.
24. **Rehabilitate (renew) parks and improve park maintenance.** Some major facilities in the Township parks are in need of rehabilitation or replacement. These needs have not been inventoried or prioritized. In addition, park maintenance has not kept pace with increasing and changing facility use.

25. **Address cultural barriers within the community.** Increasing diversity can spur stress and conflict in a community. It can also be viewed as an opportunity to learn about cultures and places that some residents may never visit or learn to appreciate.
26. **Seek to expand natural gas service.** Only certain portions of the Township have natural gas service. Natural gas has become an affordable utility for home and hot water heating and cooking, particularly since the gas industry has expanded in Pennsylvania.

Ranked Community Issues

The 2015 survey was developed for citizens to rank the most important issues and opportunities that should be guided by our 10-year comprehensive plan update. The list of 26 issues and opportunities was generated by local residents, business owners, and Township staff. The survey was open October 14 to October 31, 2015 (18 days). The survey notice and link were distributed directly to the 35 citizens who participated in the summer 2015 outreach sessions and posted on the township website. Of the 327 viewers who accessed the survey, 145 completed the survey.

Top 10 Priorities for the Township's Future	Response Percent
1. Develop a facility for indoor, yearround recreation activities, sports leagues, sports training, etc.	41%
2. Build a community pool and community gardens	32%
3. Improve perception of school district's value/reputation	25%
4. Encourage commercial growth and reuse/redevelopment for quality jobs and services	23%
5. Interconnect communities with walking/biking trails	19%
6. Improve streetscapes in communities: sidewalks, crosswalks, street trees, lighting, etc.	17%
7. Improve maintenance of local infrastructure: sewer collection system, streets, bridges, drainage features	16%
8. Develop strategy for long-term public safety service, including facilities, equipment and personnel	12%
9. Address traffic bottlenecks	11%
10. Rehabilitate (renew) parks and improve park maintenance	11%

Findings

1. There is no 1 single issue/opportunity of majority concern. Only 2 issues received more than 25% of the priority vote; both were new recreation facilities.
2. While 100 survey respondents value some aspect of recreation, they have a balanced view of wider community priorities: education, local jobs and services, walking/biking, infrastructure maintenance, public safety, transportation. Only 8 of the 145 respondents (5.5%) selected recreation priorities exclusively.

3. 1 in 4 respondents equate Township quality of life, at least in part, with the reputation of the local school district.
4. 23 percent of respondents expressed support for commercial growth and re-use/re-development; in addition, comments reflected property tax benefits of higher commercial occupancy and commercial growth.

Community Issues for Township Planning

Based on the citizen survey results and in conjunction with the perspective of interviews with Township officials and staff, the following list of issues was selected and approved by the Board of Commissioners as the issues that the comprehensive plan update should address:

1. Need for a community vision for township community and economic development. Central Penn College and Geisinger-Holy Spirit Hospital should be incorporated as elements of the community's identity and partners in its development vision.
2. Need for modern housing and neighborhoods attractive and affordable to young adults, young families and seniors and for quality local jobs and services. Opportunities for these outcomes in the current zoning and through potential incentives should be assessed.
3. Need for walking/biking trails that interconnect the Township neighborhoods with the Township park system.
4. Need for complete pedestrian facilities and streetscapes within the villages.
5. Need to address traffic bottlenecks and recurring congestion. This issue should be addressed with consideration for facility improvements and modal alternatives. It should also consider the impact of development of the remaining open parcels that are zoned for development.
6. Need to explore the feasibility of a facility for indoor, year-round recreation activities, sports leagues, sports training. Opportunities to partner with the educational institutions in the Township should be considered.
7. Need to evaluate the access, use and maintenance of Township parks. In particular, reasonable access for the elderly and persons with disabilities and the use of facilities by an increasingly diverse resident population should be evaluated. Playground equipment, pavilions and other park features should be assessed for needed maintenance or replacement.
8. Need to maintain local infrastructure (sewer collection system, streets, bridges, and drainage/stormwater facilities) to maintain their functionality and reliability and maximize their service life.
9. Need to assess long-term service provision and funding strategy for public safety services, including facilities, equipment and personnel.