

Public Participation

Preparation of the comprehensive plan included opportunities for residents and officials to offer their ideas, concerns and perspectives on the current state of the Township and its future opportunities and challenges. The public participation program included a Steering Committee, an online survey (also available in paper format), interviews with Commissioners and staff, additional outreach to external organizations and agencies, and an open house to present the draft plan for additional comments (*planned for Spring 2016*).

Findings *as of December 2, 2015*

1. Residents are opposed to more warehousing and the associated truck traffic and safety concerns along “local” roads. North Union Street, PA Route 441 and Rosedale Avenue were mentioned.
2. Residents view the local tax rate as high. Some distinguish school district taxes from Township taxes. Since local taxes are billed and collected together, the total rate is the easy comparison to make. The allocation among Township, county and school district is not always examined.
3. Residents are interested in redevelopment of the PA Route 230 corridor.
4. Residents view Penn State Harrisburg as an asset with the potential to spur economic development.
5. Residents would like housing options for retirees and seniors in the Township.
6. Residents appreciate open space – land that is not developed for housing, business, or industry. This includes public parks, private farms and private woodlands.
7. Residents appreciate parks and recreation services. They are interested in park improvements, such as equipment replacements and additions, and new amenities.
8. Residents would like walking/biking paths or trails in the Township. There is little to no interest in bike lanes on local roads.
9. Residents see a lack of safe, convenient sidewalks especially between shopping areas and nearby neighborhoods.
10. Residents are interested in public transportation options.
11. Residents express a need to maintain infrastructure before building more.

Online Survey

Was also made available in paper format

What Should Change? What should stay the same? What's missing...in your local quality of life?

We're looking for meaningful ideas that will sustain or improve quality of life for business and residents. It's a 10-year plan, so think about big ideas that could really affect the Township and maybe its surrounding region.

- I appreciate the need for ball fields but there are too few park areas for other outdoor activities.
- We don't need more truck traffic and warehouses. (3)
- More focus on **improving land that has already been developed** instead of taking away even more undeveloped land. For example, **the 230 corridor between Highspire and Middletown** is a complete eyesore. It would be nice to have more local retail shops, restaurants, etc. in that area instead of vacant parking lots and dilapidated buildings. Some progress has been made but much of the development has been stagnant for many years now.
- **Strites Orchard** is one of the best things about living here. I wonder if there was a way to help them advertise to people that are just passing through since their success translates into jobs for the township.
- **Sidewalk infrastructure**
 - that provides safe walking (instead of driving) to **local convenience stores, shopping areas, and local restaurants**, i.e., Sharp Shopper/CVS area, Turkey Hill and Highspire restaurants, and Souders/Dairy Queen. Perhaps these businesses could be encouraged to assist with the expense in exchange for the added foot traffic to their establishments.
 - **between developments** are many times incomplete or missing entirely.
- **Public transportation** seems to be lacking in most of the suburbs of Harrisburg. There are a few buses that run here and there but no routes that run in the township except the airport. It might help commuters if there was a route that ran down Fulling Mill or Spring Garden into the city. I know CAT is outside the township but maybe we could work with them to add a route.
- We need to **preserve our open space**. No more trucks, we have enough of them.
- I feel very strongly that we need to **preserve the farmland** that we have. No more trucking terminals/warehouses.
- We need to **preserve our open space**.
- We need **housing for the over 55 or retired group**.
- I would hope to see a better connection to Penn State Harrisburg as this branch campus continues to grow. **Great opportunity for Middletown/Lower Swatara to become a college town** which in turn can spurn new local businesses and help current businesses attract new customers.

- We have the Swatara Creek. We have beautiful farmland that will be for sale. We need to take advantage of what is right here in Lower Swatara Township and **create more recreational areas for people to walk, bike, canoe, picnic, or have community events.**
- One thing that needs to change is the **tractor trailer traffic on the east end of Rosedale Avenue.** Instead of turning onto Meade Ave from Rt 230 to go to the warehouses near Penn State campus, many of them are turning onto Rosedale from 230. The road is being destroyed and walking here is **extremely dangerous** with the addition of tractor trailers as well as extra Rosedale traffic that wants to avoid the red lights on Meade Ave at 230. The police told us they cannot do anything because it is a zoning issue. Between the extra traffic and now tractor trailer traffic as well, it is extremely **unsafe to try to walk at this end of Rosedale** and it was risky before all this started. There is no reason tractor trailers should be using this road unless they have a local delivery and that is not the case.
- We need to **improve our tax base.** LST has almost the highest taxes (all combined taxes, meaning total millage) of any township in the county. Compared to Swatara, Lower Paxton, Derry and Susquehanna, we are much too high with our taxes. Why? Look around, what do we have to generate tax revenue without increasing cost. Residential is fine but it doesn't pay for itself. Too many streets etc. to maintain, too many children to educate.
- Amen on the tax issues! We voted to eliminate the nuisance tax for higher tax rates and every year the tax we voted to abolish gets bigger. Kinda feel like we were baited and switched.
- **LST taxes are extremely HIGH compared to surrounding areas!** One of the highest! This is a major factor in the current real estate market values in LST. No question, we have many GREAT businesses/places to work right within our township - TYCO, Phoenix Contact, Fed Ex, etc. but do these employees choose to live in our township or elsewhere?? It would be beneficial to pole those who work at these businesses: do they commute to work and choose to live where it is more affordable? Look at the **average length of time for a home sale in LST, you will find it is incredibly long compared to other communities-** and it shouldn't be. It's the **taxes that are a big deterrent to bringing in new residents;** not the opportunity for work, the location, or the beauty of the area.
- Taxes lowered. Senior citizen center.
- Our family moved to LST in 1996. We love the area, its close proximity to major highways, its (as yet) uncongested roads, and its suburban/rural atmosphere. However, we have watched the **truck traffic increase quite a bit during the last 10 years** and feel that any more trucking companies would be a detriment. It certainly doesn't seem as though increasing the number of trucking companies would reduce our already very high taxes. I realize that some farm land may have to be used for other purposes but think **housing would be a better solution than trucking companies.** I travel 441 to work and often follow big trucks, sometimes the ones with two cars, trying to navigate the road. Why can't LST force them to use 283 and the interchange that we built for them!

- Let's **not have any more business which increase truck traffic**. We already have a serious **air quality/air pollution/air particulate issue** here. Let's not add any more!
- Other than Angie's and fast-food places, the **Township is devoid of restaurants**. Any action that would entice a higher level of eating establishment would be welcome.
- **Narrow roadway shoulders** leave no choice but for bicyclists to impede traffic in the travel lane.
- Our police to **patrol River Drive for speed violations**. This little sleepy street has become a race track.
- Instead of all these truck terminals, perhaps a good grocery store, which could still help with employment. Streets need repaving in Woodridge.
- On rentals, homeowners should be responsible for **maintaining property in acceptable/good condition**.

Is there a transportation project, a development, or an open space preservation effort that you believe should be accomplished in Lower Swatara Township in the next 10 years?

Share what project would make a difference in traffic flow, safety, new business opportunities, resource protection, or other meaningful benefit.

- **Sidewalk infrastructure**
 - Hoping that when the new **Nissley Drive bridge** over the turnpike is completed, there will be a sidewalk to safely cross over without walking in the traffic lane. (2)
 - For example, one could focus on roads like **Rosedale Avenue, North Union Street, Lumber Street, 441, Fulling Mill Road, and Spring Garden Dr.**
 - **on Rosedale from Lumber Street to 230**. There is a small area just before the sharp shopper over a bridge that has sidewalks and other sections here and there. I would suggest a completed sidewalk on Rose Garden.
 - Build a **pedestrian bridge across the Swatara Creek**.
- It would be good to **add bike paths/lanes** in the twp and to **have them tie into other bike paths with a pedestrian/bike bridge across the Swatara Creek**.
- I would also like to see more open space development for the community. I would love a **greenbelt walking/biking area** and a **community garden**.
- **More biking trails connecting to Harrisburg and Hershey**. Instead of more warehouses create a park along the Swatara Creek.
- Biking trails are fine but we need **road repair in Bryn Gweld** also. It hasn't been done for many years.
- **441 has become a major trucking route** between Fulling Mill Rd. and 283. Why, when there is an interchange named after Frank Linn that connects all of the major routes in and out of Harrisburg. When you see large semi-trucks going around the curves between Longview drive and Swatara St. It gives me the chills because sometime there will be a head on accident.

Draft December 2, 2015

- **More policing on the trucks taking short cuts in local neighborhoods** where it is already posted. North Union is one of those streets. Every day large trucks come through.
- We need to keep a check with current **truck traffic along Fulling Mill and Oberlin Roads**. It has become an issue.
- **Public transportation** seems to be lacking in most of the suburbs of Harrisburg. There are a few buses that run here and there but no routes that run in the township except the airport. It might help commuters if there was a route that ran down **Fulling Mill or Spring Garden into the city**. I know CAT is outside the township but maybe we could work with them to add a route.
- We need more **public transportation** in Middletown Borough and Lower Swatara Township. Penn State Harrisburg Campus continues to grow and students need transportation alternatives. Also, residents who are physically challenged would benefit with a centrally based public transportation system.
- Would like to see bus service in township.
- We do need **housing for the over 55 or retired group**.(2)
- It is nice so **many of the neighborhoods have swaths of green space** through them.
- As a senior citizen, I would like to see more information on **rides for the elderly** if one cannot drive anymore.
- Some sort of **transportation for senior citizens**, or CAT transportation for the area.

What park or parks do you and your household use most?

How often do you go? What facilities do you use? How many stars (out of 3) would you give each park? What does each park need to be more useful?

- **Shope's Garden (3)**
 - While the Township does a great job maintaining the grass and trash receptacles ... the **equipment is in need of repair/update**. Some investment in **tan bark replacement** would significantly help with poor drainage and weeds. Further, perhaps those utilizing the picnic areas could pay a small deposit fee, to be refunded **ONLY** after the event when trash is put into the proper receptacles and the site is restored to its original condition. Thanks.
- We use the park area around the high school and middle school (Greenfield Park). I would rate it only 2 stars but we use it regularly **for walking** since there are not enough other walking trails.
- I **do not currently use the parks** because we enjoy walking in wooded areas like a state park.
- I **don't use the parks**. I don't have small children and not yet a grandmother. I also hike a lot in state parks/forests. Once I have grandchildren, I would probably use the park in **Shopes Gardens** at the Lions Club building.
- I live in **Woodridge** and my children use the **neighborhood park** regularly. This playground is very active, especially during baseball season. As a "watchful" mom/parent, I would LOVE to see some benches placed around the perimeter of

the playground so I could sit and still keep a close eye on my little ones. I think MANY other parents would support this too. Currently, you can only sit under the pavilion for shade; but from there, you are out of sight from the swing area. A few other benches would be a GREAT addition!

- We use the **Old Reliance neighborhood park** when the grandkids visit. The basketball rims and backboards could use replacing. We've also used the **Memorial** tennis courts and the **Middletown HS** courts when they were available.
- The parks used most frequently by our family are the **Highspire Reservoir Park**, the **Swatara Township Schiavoni Park**, and the **Hummelstown Hummel Trail**. These parks allow a connection with the natural world and nature not available in any Lower Swatara Township Park.
- We have no occasions to go to a park.
- No bike lanes!! How about speed bumps on Woodridge Drive to present all this unnecessary speeding?

Are there other kinds of parks, recreation areas or public open space that Lower Swatara Township should have?

Walking and biking trails? Bike lanes on streets? More access points to Swatara Creek and/or the Susquehanna River? Where would you place these public spaces?

- **More biking and walking trails in the Township.**
 - Between communities, subdivisions, work areas and parks.
 - Along farmer's fields.
 - Too many street don't even have sidewalks. In my opinion, this is unacceptable for suburban area.
 - Too many sidewalks have overgrown shrubs and you can't even walk on them without getting into the streets.
 - That could connect to the Green Beltway in Harrisburg or to the Jonathan Eshenour Memorial Trail in Hummelstown/Hershey would be a big plus (2)
 - Along the Swatara Creek connecting to the Hummelstown trail (meet with M&H railroad to help with the easement issues)
 - Roughly parallel to I-283, US-283, the Turnpike or the Airport Connector.
 - That tie into other bike paths with a pedestrian/bike bridge across the Swatara Creek.
- Lower Swatara is a beautiful area to live. We need to continue to **preserve the farmlands** in LST to keep our township beautiful. Also a **"town square"** to help **identify LST**; perhaps located at a major intersection.
- **Parks concentrating on nature** and not athletics would be an asset to the Township. Additionally, parks that would allow dogs would be welcome. Control of dogs could be ensured by requiring dogs to be on a leash no longer than six feet in length, and assigning a significant fine (several hundred dollars) could reduce the fai lure of dog owners to collect dog waste.
- No hiking and especially bike.

Parks Planning Meeting and Survey

The Township Recreation Board held a public meeting on June 3, 2015 to solicit suggestions for park development and improvements. A survey was prepared for use at the meeting and made available on the Township's website. Results of the meeting were expected to help shape the parks and recreation element of the comprehensive plan and to program Township funds and grant opportunities for park improvements.

Public attendance at the meeting was light—only 15 in addition to Township Board members, Recreation Board members, and staff. Discussion was documented and one survey was completed. Results of the meeting and the survey are shown below.

As a result of the limited participation, two parks questions were included in the online survey for the comprehensive plan.

You and Your Township Parks

How far from your home	How you get there	How often you visit			How long you stay at each visit
		Spring	Summer	Fall	
Park: Shopes Garden					
<1/2 mile	Walk, 1	Daily	Daily	Daily	<1/2 hr
½-1 mile, 1	Bike, 1	Weekly, 1	Weekly, 1	Weekly, 1	½-1 hr, 1
1-3 miles	Drive	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	1-2 hr
3+ miles	Other _____				>2 hr
Park: Kunkel Elementary					
<1/2 mile, 1	Walk, 1	Daily	Daily	Daily	<1/2 hr, 1
½-1 mile	Bike	Weekly	Weekly	Weekly	½-1 hr
1-3 miles	Drive	Monthly, 1	Monthly, 1	Monthly, 1	1-2 hr
3+ miles	Other _____				>2 hr

Your Activities At The Park

Park	What features you use most	What features you use least
Shopes	Playground, sandbox	Baby swings
Kunkel	Playground, fields	

Rate Each Park/Recreation Area

Park Name	★	★★	★★★	Why this rating?
Shopes			1	Close by, well-kept, not busy
Kunkel		1		Wish it had more

What Does Each Park/Recreation Area Need?

Greenfield	ADD: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional parking for soccer games
Memorial Park	REPAIR/UPGRADE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking lot ADD: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessible path from upper parking area to lower ▪ Walking/bike trail around park ▪ Concrete tables with checkerboards

- Concert in the park, plays, kids' events

Kunkel**Market****REPAIR/UPGRADE:****Street, near**

- New playground

Highspire's**ADD:****Reservoir**

- Connection to Highspire's Reservoir Park
- Concrete tables with checkerboards

Park**Shopes****FIX:**

- Fencing
- Clean basketball court

REPAIR/UPGRADE:

- Bigger slide

ADD:

- Water fountain
- Rock climbing
- Sign against graffiti on pavilion and tables
- Concession stand
- Large shed with plumbing and electricity

Woodridge**ADD:**

- Additional parking for baseball games

General/All**REPAIR/UPGRADE:**

- Signage at each park, perhaps with a geo-cache; a potential Boy scout project

ADD:

- Automated external defibrillator (AED) for ball fields
- Add bocce ball to a park (four horseshoe pits and bocce at Sunset Park, two bocce at Bressler)
- Concrete tables with checkerboards

What Other Kinds Of Parks, Recreation Areas or Public Open Spaces Should The Township Have?

Additional softball field

- Current field used at Glad Tidings has poor parking and small spectator area – safety concerns
- Softball field cut from high school project due to current funding
- Locate it at Greenfield? Partner with Middletown Area School District, Lower Swatara Township, and Lower Swatara Township Athletic Association on funding

Universal access to parks and facilities

- Handicapped parking spaces, accessible route to the fields and special seating (when and where provided)

Improved connectivity between parks and neighborhoods. Walking and biking trails? From where to where?

- Yes! Not sure where (maybe near Kunkel), but something like Tyco has would be wonderful!
- Rail with trail, e.g. a Middletown-Hummelstown Railroad trail or other heritage rail trail
- Greenwood Hills to Greenfield Park
- Require pedestrian/bicycle connectivity through the land development ordinance

New Park at Jednota Flats

- Utilize Hazard Mitigation Grant Program open space (properties acquired through the program) for passive recreation; purchase neighboring properties to fill in property gaps and develop park amenities on non-HMGP properties, keeping HMGP properties as open space

New Park Location Selection

- Need a Township destination park like George Park (Lower Paxton Township)
- Seek potential Township landowner interested in donating/selling land to Township
- Identify target properties to strategize ideal locations for future recreational use

Dog park

- Low priority

More access points to Swatara Creek? Where?

- East end of Fulling Mill Road

Bike lanes on the streets and roads? From where to where?

- No discussion/response.

More access points to the river? Where?

- No discussion/response.

Survey Comment

- By the way, my family loves the movie night every summer in the park – please continue this!

Interviews

The following summarizes the opinions and perspectives shared during the interviews.

What do you like (or in what ways do you brag) about Lower Swatara Township?

- Location and climate; seasons.
- Stability, safety.
- Natural beauty.
- Diversity across the community; the Township has farmland, residential neighborhoods, business centers, and parks.
- Parks.
- Professional Township staff.

How should the Township be better or different in 2025? What opportunities should be pursued?

- Residential growth
- Quality housing for retirees. Current housing has a range but misses housing options for retirees.
- Responsible growth that respects residents and their neighborhoods.
- Balance community (residential) and economic (commercial/industrial) development.
- Good economic projects, including high end retail.
- Value-adding economic development for the PA 230 corridor. An economic vision and plan should include Penn State-Harrisburg (as an economic asset and as a market of faculty, staff, and students) and the airport; quality services (not just dollar store, fast food) to attract a professional office/business park; a conference center (hotel and services) near the airport along PA 230.
- Development, associated transportation improvements, and water/sewer extensions along N Union could improve travel safety, emergency response times, and utility availability for future development
- Existing development in flood zones needs to be removed and restored as open space
- Address transportation safety, e.g. pedestrian and truck use of North Union Street, dog-leg on PA Route 441.
- Ensure access to and development opportunities for health care and ambulance service.
- Existing infrastructure must be maintained – cleaned, inspected/evaluated, and fixed, replaced, and/or upgraded – to maximize the lifecycle of each facility before constructing new facilities.
- Develop parks and recreational facilities for sports
- Stabilize quality of police service in the area.
- Parks can support greater use by residents and community events; parks need better marketing.
- Trails that connect everything – residential neighborhoods, corporate campuses, parks, schools, etc.
- Communicate, invite input, and work closer with adjacent municipalities, Dauphin County, and the Middletown Area school district.

- Strengthen effective communications with residents.

Concerns and Barriers to a better Township in 2025

- Retail can be a burden on police.
- Growth will increase infrastructure maintenance demands.
- School district value for tax influences property values and is a barrier to residential growth. A new school board was elected in November 2015.
- Little to no capacity for student enrollment growth in current school district facilities.
- Potentially more student housing in the area.
- Stormwater will require fees for maintenance of community facilities.
- Lack of consensus among citizens on future land use.
- Volunteer fire fighters are declining number. Paid fire fighters may be needed within 5 years to maintain current levels of fire protection.
- More parks will mean loss of taxable land revenue and more maintenance demands.
- Funding. There will never be enough money to do it all. The Township needs to spend wisely.
- Effects (burdens) of state and federal policy on local government.
- Lack of services (providers) for some desired uses, e.g. retirement housing
- Sewer treatment capacity controlled by other municipal treatment plants

Additional Outreach

The following agencies were contacted throughout the planning process for their perspectives on future community, economic, and recreational development in the Township.

- Susquehanna Area Regional Airport Authority
- Penn State Harrisburg
- Agricultural land owners
- Highspire Borough, Manager
- Middletown Borough, Manager
- Manada Conservancy
- Dauphin County Office of Economic Development
- Hershey-Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau
- Dauphin County Conservation District
- Dauphin County Planning Commission/Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Open House

To be drafted after the event.