

**Potter County Comprehensive Plan –
Preserving and Enhancing the Quality of Life for Current and Future Residents of Potter County**

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Purpose of Planning

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247)

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, act 247, (Act 247) defines a County Comprehensive Plan as “a land use and growth management plan prepared by the County Planning Commission which establishes broad goals and criteria for municipalities to use in preparation of their comprehensive plans and land use regulations.”

The County Comprehensive Plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following basic elements:

1. A statement of objectives of the county concerning its future development, including the location, character and timing of future development.
2. A plan for land use, which includes provisions for the amount, intensity, character and timing of land use proposed for residence, industry, business, agriculture, transit facilities, utilities, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, preservation of prime agricultural lands, floodplains and other areas of special hazards.
3. A plan to meet the housing needs of present and future residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the county.
4. A plan for the movement of people and goods.
5. A plan for community facilities and utilities.
6. A statement of the interrelationships among the various plan components.
7. A statement indicating that the existing and proposed development is compatible with existing and proposed development and plans of contiguous municipalities.
8. A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources to the extent not preempted by federal or state law.
9. Identification of land uses as they relate to important natural resources and appropriate utilization of existing minerals.
10. Identification of current and proposed land use which have a regional impact and significance, such as large shopping centers, major industrial parks, mines and related activities, office parks, storage facilities, large residential developments, regional entertainment and recreational complexes, hospitals, airports and port facilities.
10. Development of a plan for the preservation and enhancement of prime agricultural land and encouraging compatibility of land use regulations with existing agricultural operations.
11. Development of a plan for historic preservation.

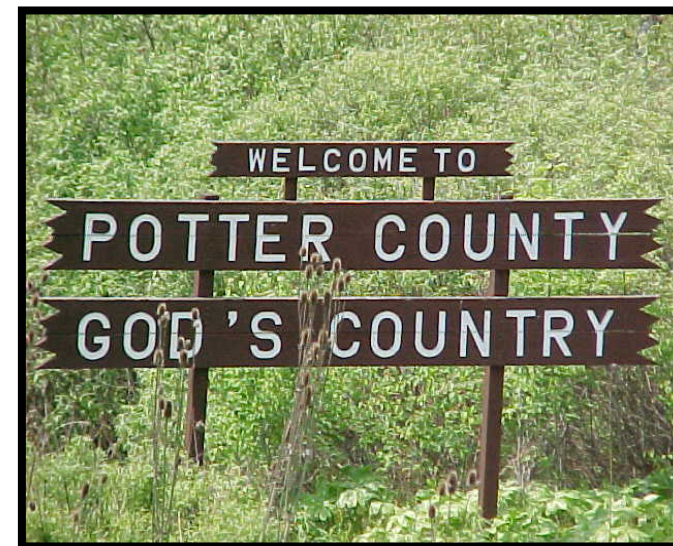
12. A plan for the reliable supply of water, considering current and future water resources availability, uses, and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources.

Comprehensive Community Planning is not required for local municipalities; however, Act 247 mandates that all counties in Pennsylvania prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan that establishes broad goals and criteria for municipalities to use in preparation of their plan and land use regulations.

Following the adoption of the Potter County Comprehensive Plan, any proposed action of the governing body of a municipality or school district, its departments, agencies and appointed authorities shall be submitted to the Potter County Planning Commission for its recommendation at least forty-five days prior to the execution of such proposed action if the proposed action relates to:

1. The location, opening, vacating, widening, narrowing or enlargement any street, public street, pierhead or watercourse.
2. The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structures located within the municipality.
3. The adoption, amendment or repeal of any comprehensive plan, official map, subdivision or land development ordinance, zoning ordinance or provisions for planned residential development.
4. The construction, extension or abandonment of any water line, sewer line or sewage treatment facility.
5. Location, demolition, removal, sale or lease of any school district structure or land.

Previous County Planning Activities



Comprehensive Community Planning is not new to Potter County. The value of establishing broad goals was recognized as far back as 1984. Potter County, in the truest sense, is a rural county with a strong sense of family and guiding values, and is also home to some of the most pristine environments in Pennsylvania. These natural and man-made environments have been summarized by lifelong residents and visitors with two words – **God’s Country**.

In 1998 the county initiated an update to its 1984 Comprehensive Plan; unfortunately, it was not adopted by the Potter County Board of Commissioners. Therefore, the 1984 plan is still in effect. A review of the 1984 plan revealed that although the plan has served its purpose, it is

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outdated in form and function. It is important that Potter County has a set of mutually supportive policies that will guide the county through the next decade. This plan should not be considered an update of the 1984 Plan since the strategies and recommendations presented in this plan has been developed around input received from county residents through a series of focus group meetings and surveys.

Objectives of the Plan

On November 11, 2003, the Potter County Planning Commission conducted a project kick-off meeting. The Commission established the following overriding objective of the Plan:

“Preserving and Enhancing the Quality of Life for Current and Future Residents of Potter County”

Secondary objectives of the plan as stated by the Planning Commission are:

1. Preparing and maintaining a uniform set of subdivision and land development regulations and consistency in zoning definitions and districts.
2. Establishing sound land use strategies that preserve the county’s natural environment and resources and promote coordinated residential and non-residential growth.
3. Ensuring a fundamentally sound transportation network for both motor vehicles and pedestrians.
4. Establishing an increased spirit of cooperation among the county’s thirty municipalities, school districts, and the county itself.
5. Maintaining data vital to forecasting and recommendations made regarding transportation improvements, economic development activity, demographics, community facilities, and land development.
6. Identifying opportunities for multi-municipal planning based on similarities, such as transportation, land use, economic development, and community facilities.
7. Identifying opportunities with the Potter County Visitors Bureau to increase tourism opportunities within the county.
8. Develop a system to track building permits throughout the county that can be used to identify development trends and growth areas.



Elements of the Plan

As part of the county’s selection process, the Planning Commission developed a request for proposal which outlined the project’s scope of work. This process was extremely important to ensure consistency with the vision of the project and establish a schedule for completion. The planning process associated with this plan involved several important steps including:

- Reviewing existing Planning Documents
- Conducting a Road Tour of the County
- Citizen Participation
- Creation of a Vision Statement and Goals and Objectives
- Preparation of a Historic Preservation Plan
- Preparation of a Natural Resources Plan
- Population and Demographic Analysis
- Preparation of a Housing Plan
- Development of a Future Land Use Plan
- Preparation of a Transportation Plan
- Preparation of a Community Facilities/Utilities Plan
- A Plan for the Reliable Supply of Water
- Development of Implementation Strategies

Potter County recognized the importance of public participation by taking a proactive approach to engaging the public. The county developed a survey that was distributed by the staff to 1/3 of the resident households in the county during the fall of 2002. In addition to the survey, the Potter County Planning Commission, with assistance from the Penn State Cooperative Extension, conducted six community forums throughout the county in 2002 and 2003. The results of the survey and community forums will form the foundation for the plan’s land use strategies and ultimately, the future land use plan.

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The Need for County Community Planning

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide for decisions and for the orderly development of the municipalities within Potter County. The plan's primary mission is to promote and improve the quality of life, health, safety, and conveniences for county residents. It is intended to organize and coordinate the interrelated collection of people, ideas, land facilities, services, infrastructure, land uses, and environmental elements that comprise the county as a whole. Thus, the term "comprehensive" is used to express the scope of the plan content.

The plan charts the course for growth and change by:

- Expressing the aims and ambitions of the county's residents and businesses
- Being responsive to change
- Providing a framework for continual review and revisions
- Delineating the region's form and the character it seeks to achieve

Planning as a Concept

The Comprehensive Plan is not a solution for all the problems and concerns of the community, nor is it a finished project only to be reviewed and updated every decade or so. Rather, it is an on-going process which municipal governments may use as a roadmap or blueprint to guide them through future decisions. It should be noted that when changes and conditions evolve within the county, the Comprehensive Plan should be modified to address these changes and demands.

In part, the Comprehensive Plan is a factual report that examines how the past has led to the present; it is a report that can be used to chart the county's future, as well as a report of the plans and actions necessary to achieve its objectives in the future. Often the value in a community's Comprehensive Plan is in the **process** of preparing and implementing the plan.



Potter County Planning Commission

The Potter County Planning Commission is a seven member commission created by the Potter County Board of Commissioners. Members of the commission are residents of the county and are appointed by the Board of Commissioners to represent the Commissioners in dealings of land use. All municipalities fall

under the Potter County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance; therefore, the commission's role in Potter County is much more important than in other counties in Pennsylvania. Day to day operation of the commission is currently managed by a Planning Director and an assistant. The Planning Commission meets on a monthly basis to conduct business, which includes subdivision and land development plan review and approval, sewage planning review, permitting, and administration of the County's Comprehensive Plan.