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Wednesday, August 12, 2020

SUBJECT: Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan – Proposed Scope of Work

TO: Lower Providence Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Members

FROM: John Miklos, Community Planner

Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan Proposed Scope of Work

Nearly two decades have passed since the current comprehensive plan of Lower Providence was adopted by the township. In that time, the Lower Providence has grown and changed, and so too have the community's needs. Creating an updated comprehensive plan for Lower Providence will help the township prepare for the future and serve as the township's long-range community vision, guiding policies for land use, infrastructure investments, and community facilities.

The formation of a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, including representatives from both the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission, and other key municipal stakeholders within the community, will help to facilitate the planning process. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee will provide guidance to staff and review draft plan chapters. Our role would be to work alongside you and your staff as a team to complete specific sections of the plan and assist with public outreach and engagement.

Below we have compiled a possible scope of work for your review and feedback. Summarized below are the major elements of a comprehensive plan that are required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), as well as research items, possible public engagement strategies, and intermediate deliverables.

Phase 1: KICKOFF – Spring 2020-Summer 2020

The purpose of this phase is to establish a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, review the MPC requirements, and inform the community about the planning process. This scope of work and schedule will be reviewed and revised based on feedback from the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will guide staff in brainstorming preliminary issues and goals for the community and guide the identification of focus areas.

Possible Public Outreach Strategies:

- Create a logo for the Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan
- Create a webpage on the Township website with a calendar of events and space to post draft documents
- News release, write-up in the township newsletter
- Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, emailing lists

Phase 2: ANALYSIS – Summer 2020-Spring 2021

This phase represents the bulk of the planning process including extensive data collection, analysis, and mapping. As needed, coordination with partners such as SEPTA, DVRPC, and adjoining municipalities will be done to gather the pertinent information. MCPC will meet regularly with Township Planning staff to prepare draft chapters and mapping and review work to be presented at Steering Committee meetings.

Data Analysis Categories:

- Demographic Data (e.g., current and projected population, demographics, trends, health data)
- Current Land Use (e.g., current land use, trends) **MPC Required Land Use Element**
- Natural Resources (e.g., geology, hydrology, wetlands) **MPC Required Natural Resources Element**
- Transportation (e.g., traffic volume, bus service, walkability) **MPC Required Transportation Element**
- Homes & Housing (e.g., housing density, affordable housing) **MPC Required Housing Element**
- Infrastructure (e.g., water/sewer, energy) **MPC Required Utilities and Water Supply Elements**
- Community Facilities (e.g., schools, libraries) **MPC Required Community Facilities Element**
- Cultural Resources (e.g., arts and culture) **MPC Required Historic Resources Element**
- Open Space and Recreation (e.g., municipal parks, trails)
- Economy & Employment (e.g., unemployment, average commute, forecasts)

Phase 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PART 1 – Spring 2021

This phase of public engagement will introduce the public and stakeholders to the planning process and solicit their input in developing a vision statement, guiding principles, and identifying possible focus areas. The township may want to consider a survey of residents and business owners regarding possible planning goals for the township, concentrating upon portions of the township with distinct issues and opportunities. MCPC and Township Staff may also conduct interviews and/or presentations to major stakeholders as identified by the Steering Committee.

Public Engagement Strategy:

One or more public workshops will be conducted to generate ideas and brainstorm issues to be addressed in the comprehensive plan. The workshops could include an exercise in goal development, a mapping component to identify neighborhood-specific concerns and applicability of improvement strategies, and/or a visual preference survey (asking the public to identify which physical design alternatives are more appropriate for their unique section of the township).

A draft community vision statement and revised list of issues and goals will be presented to the Steering Committee at the end of this phase.

Focus Area Planning:

As an organizing structure for the plan, the township should identify specific focus areas. Focus areas, such as the Park Pointe business park, the central Ridge Pike corridor, or Audubon village center, will allow the plan to tailor future land use and implementation strategies to the unique needs of certain key areas. This method of analysis and planning recognizes that the township is made up of many distinct parts. Each focus area has its own set of issues and opportunities and will require specific strategies that may not be as appropriate or effective in other portions of the township. Past planning used a similar approach, focusing upon several specific road corridors. We feel this strategy can be expanded beyond a more narrow “road-frontage” perspective and consider a broader look at key areas that should evolve on a larger, more integrated scale.

Phase 4: SYNTHESIS & PLANNING – Summer 2021-Spring 2022

Based on the data compilation and analysis done in Phase 2, the public engagement done in Phase 3, and with the guidance of the Steering Committee, a synthesis and reorganization of the information will clarify focus areas and primary themes for the township’s comprehensive plan.

The Plan can be organized into two primary components: Background and Existing Conditions and Policies and Recommendations.

Background and Existing Conditions Plan Component:

The Background and Existing Conditions component will factually update past community plans by looking in-depth at multiple, interrelated components of the Township’s demographics, economy, transportation, parks and open space, infrastructure and community facilities. This Component would include numerous pictures, charts, and diagrams, serving as a stand-alone document depicting the township’s current amenities and strengths.

Policies and Recommendations Plan Component:

The Policies and Recommendations component will highlight each focus areas, including the analysis, recommended strategies, and action items for each area. Below is a list of the concepts that may be considered as part of the analysis for each focus area:

- Mixed Use and redevelopment opportunities
- Diversity of uses for a resilient economy
- Streetscape
- Traffic calming
- Public gathering space
- Building façades and signage
- Parking distribution and availability
- Walkability, bikeability, and access to transit
- Natural resources: floodplain, wetlands, tree canopy, steep slopes, riparian areas, etc.
- Impervious cover and stormwater management
- Solid waste management and recycling
- Existing housing stock and neighborhood preservation
- Character of new residential development
- Public open space and parks

The concept of sustainability will also be considered throughout the plan, focusing upon mobility, water management, sustainable development, healthy living, ecological stewardship and waste reduction.

While the focus areas provide a way to organize the plan, it is essential to tie-together the focus areas into an overall Future Land Use Plan and strategy. Therefore, the final element of this component will integrate the specific policies and recommendations of each focus area to provide the township with a clear path forward, including any zoning ordinance updates needed to encourage the community's desired future land use.

Phase 5: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PART 2 – Spring 2022

The second phase of public engagement will focus on presenting the draft issues and recommendations. Revisions will be made based on the feedback received.

Public Engagement Strategy:

One or more open houses to allow the public to review the findings of the planning process. Participants could be asked to provide feedback on preferences on individual topic presentation boards, or in another interactive format.

Phase 6: DRAFT FINAL PLAN – Spring 2022-Summer 2022

During this phase, staff will compile all background research, narrative language, issues, recommendations, and strategies/policies into a full plan with the guidance of the Steering Committee. The final plan will include short- and long-range implementation strategies, an analysis of interconnections between Focus Areas within the plan, and a description of how the proposed

plan is consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan and the comprehensive plans of adjacent municipalities.

Phase 7: ADOPTION – Fall 2022

The process of adopting the final comprehensive plan is governed by the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Section 302) and includes the following general steps:

1. The draft comprehensive plan (once approved by the Steering Committee) will be presented to the Township Planning Commission at a public meeting.
2. Pending any revisions requested by the Planning Commission, the draft comprehensive plan will be forwarded to the County Planning Commission, Upper Merion School District, surrounding municipalities, and the Center for Local Government Services for their review and comment.
3. The draft comprehensive plan must also be available to the public (e.g., on the Township website, at the public library) during this 45 day public comment period.
4. Pending any revisions requested through the public comment process, and after the 45 day public comment period, the comprehensive plan can be adopted by Board of Supervisors at a public hearing.

Proposed Comprehensive Plan Timeline

2020			2021				2022			
Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
1: Kickoff										
2: Analysis										
			3: Public Engagement 1							
			4: Synthesis & Planning							
							5: Public Engagement 2			
							6: Draft Final Plan			
							7: Adoption			