

# *Allen Township, Northampton County, PA Comprehensive Plan Assessment Report*

## **Section 1: Project Overview**

### **1.A: The Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan represents the community vision of a municipality by establishing goals, objectives and policies for: natural features and resources; land use; housing and community development; historic and cultural resources; community facilities and services; parks, recreation and open space; fiscal impact and economic development; stormwater management; sewer, water and utility services; and transportation. The recommendations and action plan for these functional components should provide overall guidance for a ten (10) to twenty (20) year planning period.

Comprehensive planning is a continuous process that requires evaluation periodically to insure that the plans and policies of the community reflect the current events, philosophies and theories of the municipal officials, residents, landowners and businesses within the community. This reflection is vital to Allen Township since there is significant development activity on a local and regional level, which could change the landscape of Allen Township and Lehigh Valley over the next twenty (20) years.

The Allen Township Comprehensive Plan Update of 1999 was based upon the foundation that guidance should be provided on a municipal and regional level in an effort to implement the goals and objectives, which have been developed by the Allen Township to reflect the overall needs of the community.

### **1.B: Allen Township RFP**

Allen Township has determined that the Comprehensive Plan Update of 1999 should be reviewed and updated in order to consider current and future conditions. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued by Allen Township on September 30, 2016. As a result, Allen Township received Proposals from qualified consultants to: conduct a community assessment; prepare a complete comprehensive plan update; and to coordinate efforts with Allen Township as stipulated by the RFP.

### **1.C: Professional Planning Consultant**

Hawk Valley Associates (HVA) in conjunction with CHPlanning (CHP) were selected by Allen Township to prepare a Community Assessment Report and to prepare the Allen Township Comprehensive Plan Update of 2017 in accordance with their Proposal issued on November 2, 2015. The project schedule will be twelve (12) months, which has commenced on February 24, 2016 and should conclude by February 28, 2017.

**1.D: Comprehensive Plan Task Force**

The Project Team (HVA and CHP) shall coordinate all efforts with the Allen Township Comprehensive Plan Task Force (ATCP Task Force), which shall include the Allen Township Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission and Manager. Additional support may be provided by the Allen Township Solicitor and Engineer as well as the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and other agencies designated by the ATCP Task Force.

**1.E: Purpose of this Report**

The Project Team shall thoroughly review and become familiar with the Allen Township Comprehensive Plan of 1999. Allen Township has received a significant amount of background studies and reports that were utilized as part of this planning effort. The Project Team shall prepare and issue a written Report to summarize, critique and evaluate the 1999 Comprehensive Plan, which shall include recommendations and an outline for modernizing the new implementable strategy for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan.

**Section 2: Comprehensive Plan Review**

**2.A: Past Comprehensive Planning Efforts**

This Comprehensive Plan Assessment Report (Report) shall provide primary focus on the Allen Township Comprehensive Plan Update of 1999 (1999 Plan). This Report shall also consider the Allen Township Comprehensive Plan of 1968 (1968 Plan) and the Lehigh Valley Comprehensive Plan (LVPC Plan).

**2.B: Goals and Objectives (1999 Plan)**

The 1999 Plan included seven (7) community goals with supporting objectives, which are contained within the following chart along with a post adoption assessment.

Community Goal	Supporting Objectives	Post Adoption Assessment
Preserve and enhance the diverse character of our Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize desires of the residents</li><li>• Protect rural and natural areas</li><li>• Accommodate growth with quality development</li><li>• Identify and preserve historic structures and sites as aesthetic and cultural assets</li></ul>	This goal has been implemented through the adoption of municipal ordinances. Allen Township should consider more specificity or direction in the future.
Provide a variety of residential development types and density levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow for higher density affordable development adjacent to the neighboring Boroughs where public sewer and water is available</li><li>• Accommodate but limit on-lot sewer residential development to minimize “sprawl”.</li><li>• Limit residential development in the rural and natural features areas</li></ul>	This goal has been implemented through the adoption of municipal plans and ordinances. Allen Township has provided for significant growth and affordable development options within undefined growth areas.

Community Goal	Supporting Objectives	Post Adoption Assessment
Provide for diverse, well placed and quality commercial development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit large commercial users to areas where public sewer and water and an adequate road system are located.</li> <li>• Allow limited commercial development in some areas to accommodate the needs of the residents.</li> <li>• Develop adequate development standards for commercial uses.</li> </ul>	This goal has been implemented through the adoption of municipal plans and ordinances. Allen Township should provide more specificity for commercial uses and its supplemental development regulations.
Encourage well placed and environmentally friendly industrial development as an employment base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit industrial/employment uses to areas where public sewer and water and an adequate road system are located.</li> <li>• Buffer quarry areas from residential development with industrial areas.</li> </ul>	This goal has been implemented with some success through the adoption of municipal plans and ordinances. Allen Township should define and distinguish the intensity of various types of industrial uses in order to direct industrial development within designated districts.
Preserve open space and areas of the Township for agricultural use and protect, conserve, and preserve our natural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve agricultural areas both for open space and our economy.</li> <li>• Protect large woodland areas.</li> <li>• Protect destruction of the Township natural environment, such as flood plains, wetlands, steep slopes, and woodlands.</li> </ul>	This goal has been implemented through the adoption of municipal plans and ordinances. Allen Township may consider effective agricultural preservation zoning techniques and conservation management strategies.
Provide for a diversity of parks and recreation facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue development of existing park lands.</li> <li>• Expand property of Howertown Park.</li> <li>• Acquire and protect Lehigh Canal properties.</li> <li>• Provide for passive recreation areas.</li> <li>• Acquire and develop a riparian trail system.</li> <li>• Require adequate land dedication and/or monies from development.</li> </ul>	This goal along with its detailed objectives has been implemented in a variety of ways. Allen Township is in the process of preparing a park and Recreation Plan that will provide direction to implement this community goal and consider others.
Provide infrastructure to accommodate existing Township residents as well as future growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expend public water and public sewer to existing residents when economically feasible.</li> <li>• Encourage development in areas adjacent to public utilities to allow developers to help with the costs of utility extensions</li> <li>• Study the need for Traffic Impact Fee to be placed on new development.</li> <li>• Continue to plan and follow an adopted five-year road maintenance/reconstruction plan.</li> </ul>	This goal has been implemented with some success through the adoption of municipal plans and ordinances. Allen Township should consider more specific goals and objectives that can be implemented as part of the functional components for the 2017 Plan..

The 1999 Plan also included a list of “Alternatives” that were evaluated as well as a summation of the goals and objectives that were considered as part of the 1968 Plan and the LVPC Plan, which shall be considered as part of the 2017 Plan.

## 2.C: Functional Components (1999 Plan)

The 1999 Plan included a section designated as “The Comprehensive Plan”, which accounts for the following function components:

**Projected Growth and Development:** This component included projections for population forecasts through the year 2020 and related land use need that should be considered to accommodate the projected growth and development. According to the projections issued by the LVPC for the 1999 Plan, the population was to increase by 50.1 percent or an average rate of 2.1 percent per year between 1996 and 2020. The 1999 Plan did account for how much residential land would be required to accommodate this population increase. However, the actual population has exceeded the projected values and the current population forecast issued by the LCPC now reflects a population increase at an average rate of 3.1 percent per year through 2040.

**Land Use Plan:** This component provided future land use classifications for residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural uses. The Future Land Use Map considered “buildable areas” and designated growth boundaries” that were utilized to consider the projected growth and development within Allen Township. Given the current population projections issued by the LVPC, Allen Township will need to evaluate future land use and development options to accommodate the future housing demands of the new residents. The 2017 Plan will need to address these issues.

**Natural Resources Preservation Plan:** This component provided direction for the preservation and/or protection of woodlands, floodplains, steep slopes and wetlands. The Natural Resources Preservation Map identifies these areas of Allen Township. If the growth boundaries are expanded to accommodate future growth and development, the natural features and resources of Allen Township may be impacted. Therefore, more emphasis will be required for preservation and protection in the 2017 Plan.

**Community Services Plan:** This component provides direction for: parks and recreation; municipal buildings and facilities; safety facilities (police, fire ambulance); education; sewer, water and utility services; and other community services. A Future Community Services Map identifies where these community facilities and services are located within Allen Township. If the population and housing projections are correct, there will be a significant impact on community facilities and services, which must be accounted for in the 2017 Plan.

**Transportation Plan:** This component provides direction for the highway network, public transportation services and non-motorized transportation facilities. A Future Transportation Map identifies the functional classification of roads, existing facilities, proposed road improvements and intersection deficiencies. If the population and housing projections are accurate, there will be a significant impact on the local and regional transportation network, which must be accounted for in the 2017 Plan.

The functional components of the 1999 Plan were intended to be inter-related components. The specific recommendations and assignments for implementation were included as part of the Action Plan, which has been examined under Section 2.D of this Report.

## 2.D: Implementation Efforts (1999 Plan)

The 1999 Plan included an action plan that featured seven eight (8) focus issues, which are contained within the following chart along with a post adoption assessment.

Focus Issues	Action Plan for Implementation	Post Adoption Assessment
Municipal Ordinances and Building Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map</li> <li>• Complete a comprehensive update of the Subdivision/Land Development Ordinance</li> <li>• Complete a comprehensive assessment and update the building, fire and plumbing codes</li> </ul>	A comprehensive review and update of the Zoning Ordinance, Zoning Map, Subdivision/Land Development Ord., and Building Codes was completed. Further review and updates will be required to implement the 2017 Plan.
Official Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate efforts to prepare and adopt an Official Map in accordance with the MPC.</li> <li>• Designate areas for: transportation; utilities; surface water; stormwater management; parks and recreation; and other public uses.</li> </ul>	The Official Map was prepared and adopted as an implementation effort of the 1999 Plan. Further review and updates will be required to implement the 2017 Plan.
Water Supply Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a study to designate areas that should be served by public water.</li> <li>• Incorporate results as part of the 1999 Plan and the Act 537 Plan.</li> </ul>	The Water Supply Plan was completed by Allen Township in 1999. Further review and updates will be required to implement the 2017 Plan.
Capital Improvements Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to establish a program to plan, schedule and finance certain projects.</li> <li>• Prioritize projects based upon need, desire, importance and ability to secure financing.</li> <li>• Schedule the projects over 3 to 5 year</li> </ul>	The Capital Improvements Program has been implemented and modified by Allen Township. Further review of this program shall be required to implement the 2017 Plan.
Traffic Impact Study and Traffic Impact Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting the required background studies, plans and ordinances to collect impact fees for future transportation improvements.</li> <li>• Consider accessibility and mobility issues.</li> <li>• Focus efforts along the Route 329 corridor.</li> </ul>	This effort was evaluated by Allen Township. Traffic Impact Studies were conducted but an impact fee was not established for new developments. Further evaluation shall be considered as part of the 2017 Plan.
Stormwater Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and adopt plans and ordinances to comply with state and federal laws.</li> <li>• Coordinate efforts with the local and state agencies as prescribed by Act 167.</li> </ul>	Provisions relating to stormwater and floodplain management have been reviewed and updated to comply with state and federal laws.
Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update to Parks and Recreation Plan to consider current and future needs.</li> <li>• Evaluate open space policies to implement conservation management.</li> </ul>	Allen Township is in the process of preparing a Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The 2017 Plan shall be consistent with this planning effort.
Continuous Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate local and regional planning, growth and preservation efforts with the LVPC and agencies with jurisdiction.</li> <li>• Review and update the 1999 Plan</li> </ul>	Allen Township coordinates all of its planning projects with the LVPC and agencies with jurisdiction. The policy will be continued with the 2017 Plan.

## **2.E: Other Planning Efforts**

In addition to the 1999 Plan, Allen Township participated in or was considered as part of the following planning efforts.

- Lehigh Valley Comprehensive Plan (2030)
- Lehigh Valley Sustainable Communities Plan (1LV)
- Lehigh Valley Return on Environment
- Lehigh Valley Regional Housing Plan
- Lehigh Valley Regional Climate and Energy Plan
- Lehigh Valley Long Range Transportation Plan (MOVE LV)
- Lehigh Valley Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Lehigh Valley Rail Freight Study
- Lehigh River Recreational Enhancement Study
- Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Management Plan
- Livable Landscapes, An Open Space Plan for Northampton County
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation 12-Year Improvement Plan
- Stormwater Management Plan (PA Act 167)
- Allen Township Sewage Facilities Plan (PA Act 537)
- Allen Township Water Supply Plan
- Allen Township Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (2017)
- Lehigh Northampton Airport Authority (LNAA) Master Plan
- Lehigh Valley International Airport (LVIA) Long Range Plan

These past and present planning effort shall be considered as part of the 2017 Plan

## **Section 3: Community Vision, Issues and Needs**

### **3.A Community Vision**

As part of the 2017 Plan, Allen Township shall formulate a Vision Statement to serve as the foundation for establishing new community goals, objective and policies that will guide the functional planning components through the year 2030. The Project Team shall collaborate with the ATCP Task Force on this effort.

### 3.B: Comprehensive Plan Survey

In order to gather information to prioritize community issues and needs, Allen Township has determined that a Comprehensive Plan Survey should be distributed to the residents, landowners and businesses of Allen Township. The Comprehensive Plan Survey will be conducted between March and June of 2016. A copy of the Comprehensive Plan Survey has been included as Appendix A of this Report.

### 3.C: Community Issues and Needs

In addition to gathering information through the Comprehensive Plan Survey, the Project Team shall conduct interviews with the members of the ATCP Task Force in order to establish, organize and prioritize a list of issues confronting Allen Township. A draft list of community issues that have been initially collected by the Project Team has been summarized in the following chart:

<b>Community Issues and Needs: Initial Draft March 23, 2016</b>	
<p><b>Group A: Land Use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classification of Commercial Zoning Districts</li> <li>• Classification of Industrial Zoning Districts</li> <li>• Projected residential and housing growth</li> <li>• Local and regional allocation of land uses</li> <li>• Fair share analysis</li> <li>• Agricultural sustainability and preservation</li> <li>• Conservation management and rural preservation</li> <li>• Autonomy between the northern region versus the southern regions</li> <li>• Historic and cultural resources</li> <li>• Mix of non-residential and residential development</li> <li>• Future development projects</li> <li>• Implementation of the approved land development plans (industrial development)</li> <li>• Minimizing non-conformities</li> <li>• Natural features and resource protection</li> <li>• Quarry revitalization and re-use opportunities</li> <li>• Route 329 corridor development and impacts</li> <li>• Development opportunities adjacent to Northampton Borough and North Catasauqua Borough</li> </ul>	<p><b>Group C: Economic Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a sound tax base</li> <li>• Fiscal impact assessment and strategies</li> <li>• Corridor and village overlay development</li> <li>• Adaptive reuse and redevelopment opportunities</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Group D: Transportation and Circulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North to South Traffic Flow Patterns relative to transportation improvements</li> <li>• Traffic/Circulation Flow Patterns from Route 22 to Allen Township; the Weaversville Curve area; and Route 329 to Airport Road Connection.</li> <li>• Transportation improvements from Route 22 and ABE Airport to Allen Township</li> <li>• Route 329 accessibility and mobility issues</li> <li>• Truck traffic to serve warehouse developments</li> <li>• LVPC Transportation Plans and Projects</li> <li>• Mass transit opportunities to serve Allen Township</li> <li>• Capital Improvement Program: 5-year road maintenance and reconstruction plan</li> <li>• Non-motorized modes of transportation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group B: Community Facilities and Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police protection</li> <li>• Fire, ambulance and emergency services</li> <li>• Administration and Public Works</li> <li>• Park, Recreation and Open Space</li> <li>• Education and Library</li> </ul>	<p><b>Group E: Utilities and Stormwater</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreements with Northampton Borough</li> <li>• Sanitary sewer plans and extension projects</li> <li>• Public water supply plans and extension projects</li> <li>• Topographic and hydrological constraints</li> <li>• MS4 compliance issues</li> <li>• Green Stormwater Infrastructure</li> </ul>

The ATPC Task Force in conjunction with the Project Team shall prioritize the list of issues and then select four (4) issues that will be part of an “issues-based planning effort”, which will become the theme or foundation of the 2017 Plan. This effort will avoid identifying “vague topics” that ultimately produce “minimal results”. The “issues-based approach” is designed to achieve the goals, objectives and policies for this Comprehensive Plan Update. The remaining issues shall be incorporated into the functional components of the 2017 Plan.

### **3.D: Workshop Meetings and Public Hearings**

The ATCP Task Force and the Project Team has scheduled a series of workshop meetings that will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Allen Township Municipal Building. The workshop meeting and required public hearings shall be advertised in accordance with the requirements established by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

The workshop meeting agendas, project notes and documents relating to the 2017 Plan can be obtained at the Allen Township Municipal Building or viewed on the Allen Township Website at [www.allentownship.org](http://www.allentownship.org).

## **Section 4: Recommendation for the Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)**

### **4.A: Draft Outline for the Comprehensive Plan Update (2017)**

Allen Township has determined that the 1999 Plan should be updated to consider its past, current and future issues. Through the preparation of this Report, the Project Team has agreed that the 2017 Plan should be initiated in order to provide Allen Township with direction through the year 2030. A draft outline for the 2017 Plan has been prepared by the Project Team, which has been included as Appendix B of this Report.

This Report is just the starting point. The ATCP Task Force and the consultant will be confronted with numerous challenges over the twelve (12) month project schedule. The planning process should be fluent, evolving and complete. The ATPC Task Force and Project Team accept this invitation.

### **4.B: MPC and LVPC Compliance**

The overall focus of this comprehensive planning process is to provide guidance on a municipal and regional level in an effort to implement the goals, objectives and policies, while complying with the guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Codes (MPC) and Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC). The Allen Township Comprehensive Plan Update of 2017 shall be prepared to comply with the basic planning elements and requirements, which are further specified by the MPC and LVPC.