

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Plum Borough is a growing suburban residential community located on the eastern edge of Allegheny County approximately 13 miles east of the City of Pittsburgh. It is bordered on the northwest by the Allegheny River, on the northeast by the Westmoreland County municipalities of Upper Burrell Township and the City of Lower Burrell; on the west by Oakmont Borough and Penn Hills Township; on the south by the Municipality of Monroeville; and on the east by the Municipality of Murrysville, which is in Westmoreland County.

The borough has convenient access to two exits of I-76 (the Pennsylvania Turnpike), and an exit of I-376 (the Parkway East) in Monroeville. The Parkway East provides a direct link with the City of Pittsburgh and the region's retail and employment centers, medical facilities, and cultural and recreational amenities.

Plum's quick and easy access to the City of Pittsburgh and other areas via the interstate highway system has led to continued (but slowing) single-family residential development. The borough seeks increased non-residential development to augment its tax base and reduce the property tax burden of its residents.

Plum Borough has prepared this comprehensive plan to produce a blueprint for actions that will retain and attract businesses and jobs, improve its housing stock, preserve and protect its natural and manmade environment, improve its transportation network, and enhance the quality of life for its residents and businesses.

Nature and Function of a Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan identifies, assesses, and integrates a wide range of socio-economic, demographic, environmental, and other issues that impact community development and growth. The overarching intent of a comprehensive plan is to provide a framework from which policy makers can act to manage, enhance, and preserve the natural and man-made environments within a municipality.

Comprehensive plans serve numerous functions. Their two primary functions are as:

1. An expression of what a community wants, i.e., a statement of community goals, objectives, and vision.
2. A guide to public sector and private sector decision making

This comprehensive plan will also serve as a basis for zoning and other land development review and approval criteria and procedures.

Comprehensive plans are not cast in stone. Rather they must be reviewed and revised to reflect changing conditions, resources, priorities, and other circumstances. In fact, the

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that comprehensive plans be updated at least every 10 years to insure that they address a community's current and future needs.

The Comprehensive Planning Process

Planning is an ongoing process intended to identify and evaluate community development issues, formulate alternative solutions to those issues, and select a best alternative on which to base a course of action.

The preparation of this comprehensive plan began in January 2009. It was guided by the borough's planning department staff and a thirteen-member steering committee whose members represented various sectors and interests in Plum Borough. The plan thus reflects input from a variety of sources, including the following:

- Steering committee monthly meetings
- US Census Bureau and Southwest Pennsylvania Commission data
- Key stakeholder interviews
- Review of previous reports and studies
- Field surveys to determine existing conditions
- Public meetings and a public hearing
- Penn State University community survey (2007)

The Penn State University community survey was conducted in April 2007. There were two types of surveys---residential and small business. The purpose of these surveys was to determine the importance and satisfaction levels of respondents concerning issues (previously identified by stakeholder focus groups) that affect residency or business operation in Plum.

All 10,000 households in the borough received a letter inviting them to participate in the survey. A similar letter was sent to approximately 1,000 people who operated small businesses in Plum. Based on 2,259 residential survey responses (a 23% response rate) and 31 small business survey responses (a 3% response rate), the following needs were identified as priorities for improvement:

1. Transportation and infrastructure issues
2. Availability and quality of healthcare services
3. Outdoor recreational activities

A copy of the executive summary of the Penn State University survey report is in the Appendix of this plan. Full copies of the survey report are available from Plum Borough.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation

The implementation of a comprehensive plan requires a multi-faceted strategy and widespread community support. It entails cooperation and collaboration between and

among many public sector and private sector entities. Implementation is usually accomplished in phases over a period of three to ten years.

Municipalities have two primary tools for implementing comprehensive plans---zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances. Zoning divides a municipality into districts within which land uses are regulated by type, density, lot dimensions and setbacks, and other standards. Subdivision and land development ordinances regulate the conversion of land into building lots for various types of development.

The Plum Borough 2011 Comprehensive Plan

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247 of 1968, as amended) governs the preparation of comprehensive plans, and the Plum Borough Comprehensive Plan has been prepared in accordance with this code. The plan has also been prepared in accordance with a number of the principles promoted by the Smart Growth movement and the Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation promulgated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The following Smart Growth Principles and Keystone Principles are reflected in the plan:

- Mix land uses
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Provide a variety of housing choices
- Redevelop first
- Concentrate development
- Increase job opportunities
- Restore and enhance the environment
- Enhance recreational and heritage resources

The Plum Borough Comprehensive Plan will serve as a guide to both the public and private sectors concerning the borough's development and growth. As a general plan, it is intended to provide policies and principles that can be applied to address the borough's needs, while also being consistent with *Allegheny Places* --- Allegheny County's comprehensive plan.