



MIFFLIN COUNTY 2035: *A Decade of Progress*

MIFFLIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





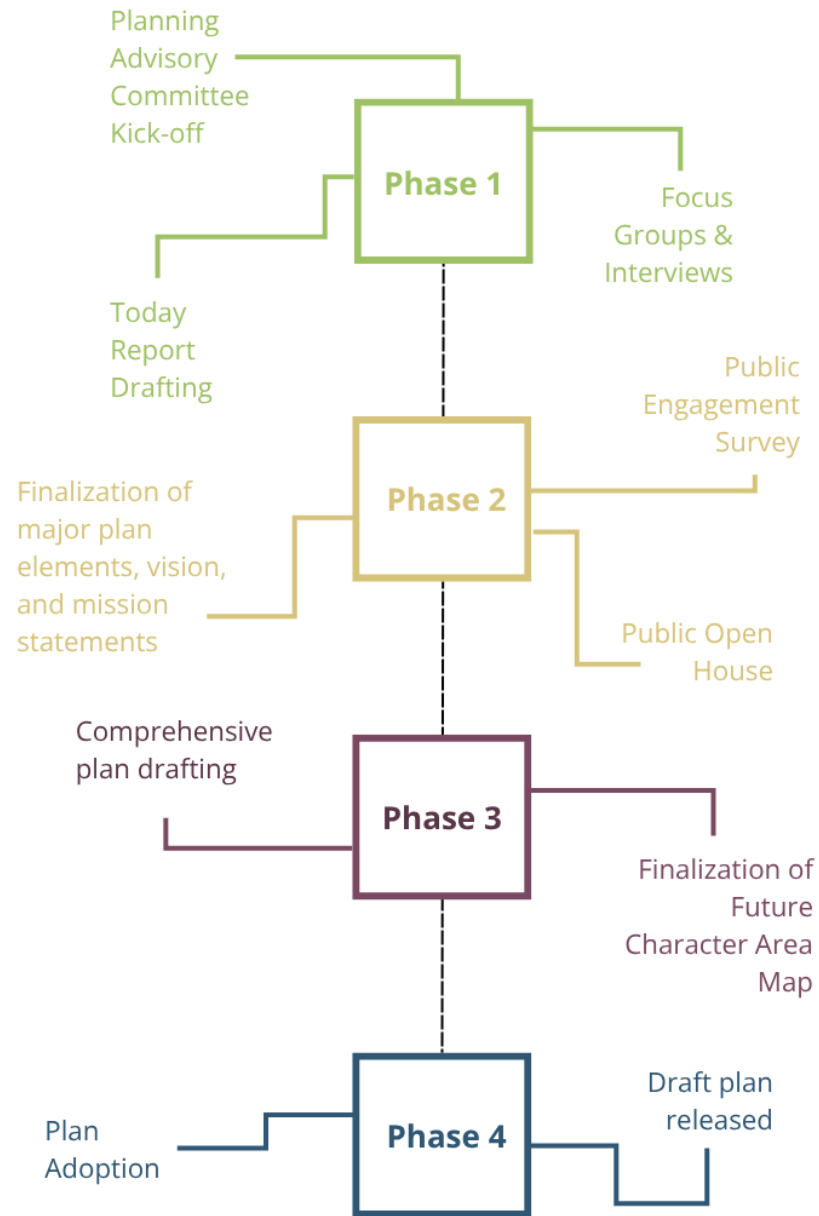
Why We Plan

By formal definition, a comprehensive plan is a land use and growth management plan that establishes broad goals and criteria for municipalities to use in land use regulation. In other words, it is a formal strategy that helps to identify challenges, weaknesses, and opportunities that should be addressed over the next decade within a county, municipality, or multi-municipality. In compliance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (Act 247 of 1968), county comprehensive plans must be updated every 10 years.

While comprehensive plans enable legislation, they are not absolute check lists. Rather, they set the intention and provide priorities and recommendations. Plans are not adopted by ordinance and are not legislative in nature; instead, they are adopted by Resolution. A resolution is a formal statement by the governing body supporting the components in the plan.

The planning process provides the public with the unique opportunity to have a direct impact or say in the future of their community. *Mifflin County 2035: A Decade of Progress* celebrates the successes of yesterday while embracing the challenges of tomorrow. It's a time to ask ourselves: what do we want to take with us into the next decade... and what do we want to leave in the past?





Planning Process

Mifflin County 2035: A Decade of Progress is the product of perspectives and shared feedback. Over the course of 15 months, diverse stakeholder collaboration and robust public engagement identified concerns, ideas, and solutions that were integral to the development of this plan. Collaboration between the County and the public fosters trust, understanding, and an overall united community.

The creation of this plan was broken into eight tasks. Task one officially began in July 2024 at the Mifflin County Comprehensive Plan 10-Year Update Kick-off Meeting. Here, the project team met with the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) for the first time and discussed the planning approach, key milestones and deliverables, and a project timeline. PAC meetings would continue throughout the lifecycle of the plan development to ensure that the plan's evolution aligned with the County's and the PAC's intentions.

Mifflin County's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) joined together for the sake of steering the comprehensive planning process for *Mifflin County 2035: A Decade of Progress*. The committee comprised individuals from various relevant organizations and groups, including the Juniata River Valley Chamber of Commerce (JRVCC), Mifflin County School District, Mifflin County Conservation District (MCCD), and local municipalities. The committee's diverse representation of stakeholder groups was key to properly advising Michael Baker International, Inc. throughout the planning process.



Vision Statement

Mifflin County will be a place known for its preserved history and rural character; its outdoor recreation, healthy communities, and vibrant economy achieved through collaboration

Mission Statement

Mifflin County will offer an inviting and favorable environment by:

Redeveloping and restoring old or blighted homes and neighborhoods in the local communities for housing and other uses, rather than building on agricultural land or open space

Promoting access to attainable housing by allowing for the construction of more diverse housing types, such as duplexes, townhouses, and small (4-8) unit apartment buildings

Supporting local businesses over national chains to encourage growth in the local economy by devoting more resources to educate and guide residents and entrepreneurs to start their own business in the County

Investing in transportation to create an environment that supports alternative modes such as walking or bicycling

Connecting municipalities to sustainable funding sources to support the provision of basic services to residents



THE FIVE CONNECTIONS



MUNICIPALITIES CONNECTED TO SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Boroughs and townships in the county can adequately provide basic services to residents and fund infrastructure improvements through a mixture of regional cooperation, long-term fiscal planning, and support from state and federal sources.



WORKERS, FAMILIES, AND SENIORS CONNECTED TO ATTAINABLE HOUSING

The county will incentivize the creation of new housing for seniors, young families, and the local workforce through regional land use planning, incentivizing redevelopment, and developing partnerships to meet local housing needs.



RESIDENTS CONNECTED TO THEIR NEEDS THROUGH BETTER MOBILITY

The county will work to create a vibrant multi-modal transportation network that serves all residents by working with local and state partners to address traffic safety issues, build out sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure networks, and improve public transit services.



RESIDENTS ARE CONNECTED TO THE COUNTY'S ABUNDANT NATURAL RESOURCES

The county will work to create additional opportunities for residents and visitors to experience local natural resources by coordinating with state agencies and local governments to invest in trails and other infrastructure, develop information about local recreation resources, encourage tourism, and the development of recreation-oriented businesses.



ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESS OWNERS CONNECTED TO THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO SURVIVE

Boroughs and townships in the county can adequately provide basic services to residents and fund infrastructure improvements through a mixture of regional cooperation, long-term fiscal planning, and support from state and federal sources.

CRITICAL ISSUES

OUR COMMUNITIES LACK SUFFICIENT FUNDING

Many municipalities in Mifflin County have small budgets and can sometimes struggle to provide basic services to residents, in addition to being unable to provide local matching funds for the state or federal grants key implementing the recommendations of this plan.

OUR HOUSING IS OUT OF REACH

Housing in Mifflin County has become unaffordable for many residents. The shortage of housing for seniors, workers, and young families is especially acute, impacting the ability of local companies to hire and retain employees and making it challenging for older and younger residents to stay in their communities.

OUR TRANSPORTATION NETWORK DOESN'T WORK FOR EVERYONE

Many municipalities in Mifflin County have small budgets and can sometimes struggle to provide basic services to residents, in addition to being unable to provide local matching funds for the state or federal grants key implementing the recommendations of this plan.

OUR NATURAL RESOURCES ARE NOT ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

Mifflin County's abundant natural resources are challenging for some residents and visitors to enjoy due to lack of developed infrastructure, incomplete information about access points, and unrealized potential for recreation-oriented businesses and services.

OUR ENTREPRENEURS NEED MORE SUPPORT

Mifflin County has an active and growing scene of small businesses and entrepreneurs, but residents currently have few and inconsistent resources to help guide them through the challenges of starting new enterprises or expanding existing ones.



ACTION STRATEGIES AND THEIR RELATED CONNECTIONS

The action strategies listed below were developed in support of the identified critical issues and plan goals. While goals tend to be broad aspirations, action strategies are specific tasks that lead to the accomplishment of a goal, and therefore, the vision statement.

-  Work with municipalities to explore opportunities to share the costs of providing basic services at a regional level.
-  Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development to help municipalities develop long-range fiscal planning programs.
-  Provide direct assistance to municipalities with applying to state and federal grant programs by helping to complete applications and providing funding to meet local match requirements.
-  Communicate and collaborate with state economic development agencies to identify barriers and needed investments to take advantage of future economic growth opportunities.
-  Further assist with the expansion and implementation of broadband services to underserved areas and communities within the County.
-  Conduct zoning and subdivision ordinance desk-top audits with volunteering municipalities to ensure local codes strive to meet the goals of the comprehensive plan.
-  Provide technical assistance and support to municipalities looking to adopt the County's model Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
-  Encourage municipalities to provide incentives through their zoning ordinance to reduce regulatory barriers to housing construction.
-  Coordinate resources through a County Redevelopment Authority to address blight and encourage residential and commercial construction in existing developed areas.

-  Develop partnerships among municipalities, county and state agencies, and local non-profits to assemble additional resources for residents who lack stable housing.
-  Work with regional, state, and local partners to implement the recommendations, especially the six pilot projects, of the Mifflin Moves County Active Transportation Plan.
-  Work with municipalities and property owners to identify key gaps in local sidewalk networks and assist with assembling the funding needed to address them.
-  Coordinate with local, regional, and state partners to develop improved transportation services in key areas.
-  Continue to actively participate in the transportation planning process by continuing to engage with SEDA-COG and other agencies.
-  Update the Juniata/Mifflin County Greenway, Open Space, and Rural Recreation Plan to identify needed improvements to local trail networks, water access points, parking areas, restrooms, and other key infrastructure in local parks and recreational areas.
-  Continue to work with local and regional partners to develop comprehensive guides and promotional materials to trails, watercourses, parks, and recreational areas in the County.
-  Coordinate with state and local economic development agencies to identify opportunities for and encourage the growth of businesses.
-  Coordinate with local economic development agencies and state organizations to connect local businesses entrepreneurs with information and resources.
-  Work with local and regional tourism organizations to create promotional guides and materials for local businesses and locally made products.



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA MAPPING (FCAM)

The Future Character Area Map (FCAM) was developed in collaboration with the PAC and included feedback from the public open house. It is also accessible through an interactive web app, visualizing land use for the entire county over the next 10 years. The map sorts character areas into two categories: planned development areas and planned conservation areas. Mifflin County 2035 balances growth and preservation; planned development areas are expected to see residential, commercial development, or investment. Planned conservation areas aim to protect Mifflin County's charming rural character.

PLANNED CONSERVATION AREA DESCRIPTIONS



NATURAL RESOURCE AREA

Areas are often permanently preserved and designed to recharge groundwater, reduce flooding, filter air, offer recreational opportunities, and protect important plant and animal habitats. These areas include parks and nature preserves, wooded steep slopes, stream corridors, and privately owned woodlands (such as state parks, state forests, and state game lands). Growth in these areas is typically very limited to protect sensitive natural ecosystems and maintain a rural feel. It mainly consists of infrastructure and development that support open spaces and recreation, like parking lots, restrooms, pavilions, and off-road trails. There is also allowance for additional growth on private land, which can include timber harvesting, farming, and standalone single-family homes or seasonal cabins.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Primarily agricultural landscapes with limited infrastructure, characterized by scattered low-density residential and commercial development. Development opportunities focus on sustaining farmers and the agricultural economy, including farm support businesses and retail stores selling agricultural products. Rural areas can only accommodate very low-density development with limited residential and commercial growth, due to the lack of water and sewer infrastructure and the predominance of agricultural land uses. Any new development should be carefully planned to avoid compromising the rural quality of life.





PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AREA DESCRIPTIONS



VILLAGE CENTER

Areas that feature a development pattern combining residential and commercial uses. These areas include both older neighborhoods and main streets built prior to the creation of zoning codes that mandated the separation of land uses. Additionally, new construction has been constructed in these areas to introduce more walkable and/or transit-friendly development patterns into previously suburban areas. Village Center areas feature connected sidewalk infrastructure, parking behind buildings or in parking structures, and parks or community gathering spaces. This character area can be found in the boroughs of Lewistown, Juniata Terrace, McVeytown, Newton Hamilton, and Oliver and Union Townships.

VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL

Residential areas that are pedestrian-friendly with smaller setbacks and served by public infrastructure. Residential uses are on smaller lots and include a wider variety of housing types, like duplexes and rowhouses. They also feature some neighborhood-scale commercial uses, like corner stores and barber shops, integrated into predominantly residential streets in mixed-use buildings. Small institutional uses, like churches, are integrated into this area. Streets have more complete sidewalk networks and are more comfortable for use by pedestrians and bicycle users. These areas tend to be in downtown areas.



SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Primarily residential, low-density areas served by public infrastructure, built adjacent to larger population centers. Detached single-family homes with larger setbacks are the main building type here, though there are neighborhood-scale institutional uses like churches integrated into this area. Transportation infrastructure is designed around the automobile and often lacks consistent infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycle users. Future growth is expected to be limited, mainly consisting of small-scale uses, such as home-based businesses and accessory dwelling units. These areas can be found on the outskirts of downtown areas in higher populated areas.

COMMERCIAL

Areas that feature a concentration of commercial uses, served by public infrastructure, oriented towards meeting the daily needs of residents, such as grocery stores, banks, and big-box retailers. The development pattern here is strongly oriented towards single-use, low-rise retail buildings featuring large setbacks from the street and surface parking lots. These areas are designed to be accessed primarily by automobile, with infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycle lacking.

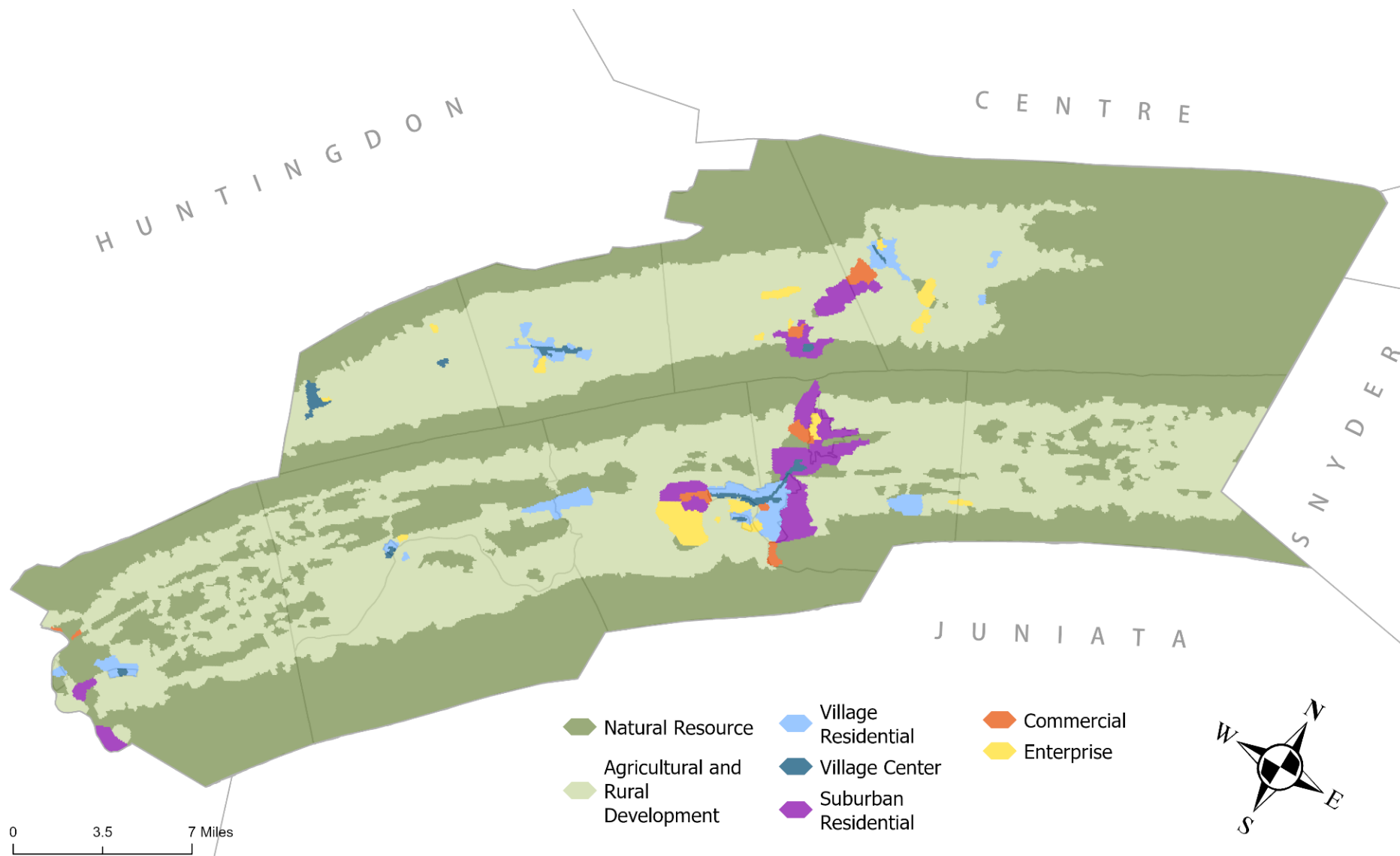


ENTERPRISE

Areas tailored to support a diverse range of enterprises, from manufacturing and light industrial operations to commercial and hospitality uses. Designed to encourage investment and job creation, and respond to the evolving needs of businesses, ensuring that the area remains competitive and attractive to new ventures. Older properties can be, depending on location, candidates for redevelopment into residential or mixed-use. Future growth will include expansions of existing facilities and the redevelopment of old vacant properties with similar uses and updated infrastructure, as well as new development concentrated along U.S. 322. Older locations adjacent to major population centers will also be candidates for redevelopment into residential or mixed-use properties.



FUTURE CHARACTER AREA MAP





COUNTY OF MIFFLIN

20 North Wayne Street, Lewistown, PA 17044

mifflincountypa.gov