

Work Program Narrative—Project Primarily Funded Through The Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP)

Project: **Shenango Valley multi-municipal comprehensive plans**

Duration: 12 months

Applicant: Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

The Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) is facilitating the development of multi-municipal comprehensive plans for six municipalities within the Shenango Valley meeting the criteria of Article XI of the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Two multi-municipal comprehensive plans will be prepared utilizing this grant. One plan will focus on Farrell City, Hermitage City, Sharon City, and Wheatland Borough. The second plan will focus on West Middlesex Borough and Shenango Township. Both plans will be coordinated with each other and with a multi-municipal comprehensive plan recently completed for the Boroughs of Clark and Sharpsville and the Township of South Pymatuning, so as to result in coordinated planning for the greater Shenango Valley region. The plans will address several objectives:

- Develop shared and coordinated courses of action to improve and sustain the long-term vitality of the Shenango Valley community.
- Outline a cooperative program for making capital improvements to water systems, sanitary sewer systems, and community and economic development for the long-term benefit of the community.
- Encourage coordination in municipal regulations for land use and development to promote quality development throughout the community.
- Position all participating municipalities to be able to utilize the tools and incentives afforded to multi-municipal plan participants in accord with Article XI and other sections of the MPC.

Two distinct comprehensive plans will be prepared, though closely coordinated. Each plan will contain all required elements of a comprehensive plan as prescribed by the PA MPC. The following work elements will be addressed for each plan.

A. Vision & Community Development objectives

This section will produce a vision for the community's future and community development objectives in the form of policy positions on important issues of land use, development, economic vitality, community facilities and services, and more. It will define the end state towards which the plan's recommended actions, strategies, projects, and capital improvements must endeavor.

Both plans will bring together community leaders, representatives of diverse interests, and the general public to work with professional planners to define a vision for the future and frame the important issues. The goal is to produce a plan that resonates with a mix of sound thinking and public aspirations and excitement towards the future.

The visioning process will strengthen the plan by:

- End-state emphasis – The community creates a clear and consensus “picture” of what it should be and become in 10-20 years.
- One size does not fit all – Visioning steers the plan to fit the community’s specific political, social, and physical make-up, resulting in more workable, accountable strategies.
- Ownership – When community leaders and the public participate in building the vision, they become “owners” of the plan and will more readily support its implementation.

B. Data & background information

The plan will present a variety of data and information which depict the character of the community and conditions and trends in the community:

- Demographics – population, age, sex, households, minority status, education
- Economics – income, poverty, jobs, businesses & industries
- Prospects for future growth

This information will: 1) help assess changing demands for community facilities and services, housing, business goods and services, jobs, etc.; 2) be used to compare Shenango Valley’s “performance” as a community to other areas; 3) provide an understanding of the local market so development targets may relate to actual market demand and not encourage shifting from one location to another; and 4) help local agencies understand and meet needs, and help businesses understand their markets to start-up and grow.

C. Land use analysis & plan

This section will present background information and a plan for long-term land use and development. Sub-elements are:

- Data, survey, mapping

The plan will gather by field survey and map land use data at an appropriate community scale. Data will be produced in a GIS format of accepted standard. The products will be both maps of existing land use and analysis of trends in various land use categories.

In addition, the plan will examine other land use trends indicated by subdivision or building permit activity, farmland or open space loss, or other available public data. Land use trends will be analyzed for interrelationships with trends in other areas of study (demographics, housing, economic conditions, etc.).

- Plan & target areas

The plan will outline areas best suited and desirable for residential, commercial, industrial, public, agricultural, conservation, and other land uses. It will also define target areas, in accord with MPC Article XI, for growth, potential future growth, and rural resources (and possible sub-targets). It will provide a land use plan map and specific recommendations for achieving the recommended development pattern.

Recommendations will include revisions to existing land use control ordinances or new ordinances. Priority will be given to creating a win-win scenario of both promoting development that will enhance the community's economic vitality and promote quality development in terms of design, attractiveness, and compatibility with the existing built and natural environment.

D. Plan to accommodate uses

This section will present a plan for the accommodation of all categories of land uses within the entire area of each of the comprehensive plans with all uses not necessarily to be provided in each participating municipality. Recommendations will be made for revisions to each municipal zoning ordinance to achieve said plan.

E. Plan for Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs)

The plan will identify current and proposed land uses which have a regional impact and significance, such as large shopping centers, industrial parks, residential developments, and other uses identified in the MPC Section 301(7)(ii). The plan will also recommend a process for review and approval of such land uses and developments so that such individual municipal actions can be coordinated within the context of the land use plan.

F. Housing analysis & plan

This section will present a plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and those of individuals and families anticipated to reside in the community. Sub-elements are:

- Data, survey, mapping

The plan will present and analyze housing data including total supply and historic trends, types, tenure, and availability. Information will be presented on housing conditions to identify concentrations of deteriorated housing. Local realtors will be interviewed to determine current housing market conditions.

- Housing improvements plan

The plan will identify needs for new owned or rented housing, and will identify any strategies for public involvement in housing development, if deemed necessary to supplement the private housing market, to provide affordable housing or housing for special groups such as senior citizens. Municipalities will evaluate potential partnerships

with agencies like the Mercer County Housing Authority and Mercer County Community Action Agency and investigate funding sources that may assist public sector housing development.

The plan will also identify recommended improvements for existing housing, such as conservation efforts through code enforcement or rehabilitation efforts through public funding programs, and make recommendations for capital improvements or programs that promote improvements in neighborhood conditions.

G. Transportation plan

This section will present a plan for the movement of people and goods in and through the community. Sub-elements are:

- Data, survey, mapping

The existing transportation system will be identified on map. Data will be presented and analyzed on street types, traffic counts, and safety hazards. Field surveys will be performed to identify any transportation system deficiencies.

- Improvement projects

Based on the analysis and deficiencies observed, capital improvement projects will be recommended and a funding strategy proposed. It is anticipated that street and/or signal improvements may be needed to correct safety problems or reduce congestion. New or relocated streets may be needed to facilitate development proposals or ensure free traffic flow for the future.

H. Community facilities plan

This section will present a plan for long-term provision of community facilities and utilities. The focal point will be presentation of capital improvement projects for sanitary sewer service and water service. Existing capital plans, such as Act 537 sewage facilities plans, will be incorporated in the comprehensive plans, compared with land use and development targets, and supplemented where necessary to ensure coordination of development and provision of infrastructure.

I. Natural, historic & agricultural resource plan

This section will present maps and information describing existing natural, historic, and agricultural resources. Information will be presented in order to: 1) understand the implications of said resources for development and potential development target areas; and 2) understand where said resources are assets which enhance the community and its aspects as a unique place. As much as possible, said information will be provided in GIS format compatible with the land use data. Recommendations will be made regarding preservation of

natural, historic, and agricultural in a manner not inconsistent with existing state governing laws.

J. Implementation strategies

Both plans will emphasize implementation which, in addition to implementation aspects already mentioned, will include:

- Capital improvement project priorities

Both plans will articulate agreed high priority capital projects of many types – water/sewer infrastructure, roads and highways, housing, neighborhood infrastructure like sidewalks, lighting, etc., and economic development proposals – so that such projects may be actively pursued by participating municipalities and their partner government agencies and may be presented for state and federal investment.

- Funding and schedule scenarios

Both plans will present realistic scenarios of funding support that may be sought or generated for implementation measures, including priority capital projects, and realistic time schedules over which measures may be implemented.

Overall, both plans will address interrelationships between the various plan elements and the compatibility of proposed development, recommendations, etc. with neighboring municipalities. Also, education efforts will be incorporated in the various plan elements so that municipal officials, community leaders, and citizens who participate in the plan process are well informed of the basic concepts of planning and of the proposals eventually included in the plan.