

COVINGTON TOWNSHIP

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



COMMUNITY PLANNING
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COVINGTON TOWNSHIP

LACKAWANNA COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TOWNSHIP REVIEW DRAFT
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Prepared By

COVINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
COVINGTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
5	<u>Conservation Easements</u> - Consider the purchase of conservation easements with local funds to preserve agricultural and other open land.	Supervisors	2 - 5 years
6	<u>Land Conservation Organizations</u> - Support the efforts of local land trusts.	Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
7	<u>Cooperation</u> - Recognizing that continued area wide strong growth and development will have significant effects on the Township, strengthen coordination and cooperation with other municipalities.	Supervisors	ongoing
Environmental Protection			
8	<u>Environmental Standards</u> - Periodically review and update local environmental standards to ensure the most effective protection. The range includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impact analysis requirements for large scale and environmentally problematic uses. • Soil stabilization and landscaping. • Stream, lake and wetland buffers. • Stormwater best management practices including quality treatment and infiltration. • Floodplain management. • Hydrogeological studies for proposed uses with large groundwater consumption. • On-site sewage disposal system management. • Limitations and special standards for development on steep slopes. 	Zoning Officer Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
9	<u>Sewage Disposal</u> - Discourage the use of non-soil based sewage disposal methods in order to match development to the carrying capacity of the land, and carefully consider any expansion of the existing public sewer system in terms of stimulating development.	SEO Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
10	<u>Sewage Plan</u> - Review the Township Sewage Facilities Plan Update to ensure it is consistent with current Township planning and to address any identified problem areas.	SEO Planning Commission Supervisors	1 -2 years
Residential Development			
11	<u>Sewer District</u> - Evaluate setting a higher residential density in the sewer service area and setting lower density in other areas.	Planning Commission Supervisors	1 -2 years
12	<u>Conservation Design</u> - Continue to apply the conservation subdivision design standards in the zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance and update as necessary.	Zoning Officer Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing

LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
13	<u>Transferable Development Rights</u> - Promote TDR as permitted by the zoning ordinance.	Zoning Officer Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
14	<u>Residential Protection</u> - Continue to provide protection for residential areas by maintaining separate residential and nonresidential zoning districts, applying environmental, development and operational performance standards to commercial and industrial uses, and establishing increased lot sizes, setbacks, and buffers where such uses adjoin residential development.	Zoning Officer Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
Nonresidential Development			
15	<u>Standards</u> - Monitor the effectiveness of zoning ordinance performance standards to ensure community and environmental protection and update to meet changing needs	Zoning Officer Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
16	<u>Commercial/Industrial Areas</u> - Provide adequate area for commercial and industrial development.	Supervisors	ongoing
17	<u>Design Guidelines</u> - Maintain up to date design guidelines for commercial, industrial, and institutional development to encourage the most efficient use of commercial land and development consistent with community character.	Planning Commission Supervisors	1 -2 years
18	<u>Conservation Design</u> - Apply the conservation design process to nonresidential development.	Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
19	<u>Economic Development</u> - Cooperate with area economic development groups to broaden the local economy to provide more local jobs, but in keeping with the rural character of the Township.	Supervisors	ongoing
20	<u>Natural Resources</u> - Provide for the economic use of available natural resources with good conservation and management practices while complying with Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which limits local restriction of forestry, and mineral extraction.	Supervisors	ongoing

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Municipal Buildings			
1	<u>Maintenance</u> - Maintain existing facilities in current conditions.	Supervisors Staff	ongoing
2	<u>Support</u> - Continue financial support of local emergency services.	Supervisors	ongoing
3	<u>Paid Services</u> - Monitoring the need for paid emergency services.	Emgcy Serv Providers Supervisors	ongoing
4	<u>Need</u> - Monitor need and funding capability for expanded police protection services.	Supervisors	ongoing
5	<u>Regional</u> - Consider the use of regional departments if police protection is determined to be necessary	Supervisors	as needed
6	<u>Groundwater Protection Program</u> - Consider developing a groundwater protection program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve the community by organizing a committee of interested individuals from the community, and neighboring communities Determine sources and uses of the community's water supply and define the proposed groundwater protection areas. Identify possible contamination sources-past, present, and future-in the groundwater protection areas. Establish goals and priorities based on an evaluation of the groundwater threats. Implement appropriate management measures, including plans for future needs. 	Citizens Watershed Associations Planning Commission Supervisors	3 - 5 years
7	<u>Sewage Enforcement</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the strict enforcement of the on-lot sewage disposal program. Evaluate the benefit of an on-lot sewage system management program. 	SEO's Supervisors	•ongoing •1 - 3 years
8	<u>Stormwater Management</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require stormwater infiltration as the option of choice to maximize groundwater recharge. Address stormwater quality (nutrient and pollutant removal) along with quantity. 	Part of SALDO Planning Commission Elected Officials Wyoming County	1 year

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Water Supply			
9	<u>Well Construction and Protection</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the need for a well siting and construction ordinances. As a means of building a data base, require well drillers to submit copies of the state <i>Water Well Completion Report</i> which includes details about new wells – depth, depth to water bearing zones, static level, yield, and type of aquifer. Require bacterial testing for all new wells with a report submitted to the Township. Sponsor an annual well water testing program and compile and map the results. Adopt well head protection standards that limit potential contaminating activities in zones around community wells. 	Well Drillers Planning Commission Supervisors	1 - 3 years
Sewage Disposal			
10	<u>On-Site Sewage Systems</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the functioning of existing on-lot sewage disposal systems and order corrections when malfunctions occur. Ensure that all new systems meet DEP regulations. Update sewage facilities plans as needed. Consider on-lot sewage systems maintenance program in areas where malfunctions are occurring or are likely (e.g., poor soils, concentrated numbers of small residential lots). 	SEO Supervisors	•ongoing •ongoing •ongoing •1 - 3 years
11	<u>Sewage Collection and Treatment</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the use of soil based sewage disposal methods to match development density to the land's carrying capacity. Diligently monitor the operation of all sewage collection and treatment systems to ensure compliance with DEP effluent discharge criteria. Carefully consider proposed construction or expansion of any sewage collection and treatment system for potential stimulation of development. 	SEO Planning Commission Supervisors Sewer Authority	ongoing
Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling			
12	<u>Solid Waste</u> - Continue current system of County Planning, regional landfills and private hauler collection.	Supervisors	ongoing
13	<u>Recycling</u> - Continue operation of Township Recycling Center.		

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
Recreation			
14	<u>Recreation Committee</u> - Support and work with the Township Recreation Committee.	Supervisors	ongoing
15	<u>Existing Facilities</u> - Continue to pursue completion of the Moffat Estate facilities and plan for continuing improvements.	Recreation Committee Supervisors	ongoing
16	<u>Planning and Maintenance</u> - Ensure improvements at existing facilities are made in accord with an overall plan and all facilities are maintained.	Recreation Committee Supervisors	1 - 3 years
17	<u>Site Identification</u> - Identify potential sites for additional recreation facilities and amend the comprehensive plan to include these sites.		
18	<u>Funding Plan</u> - Develop a funding plan to include: • use of fees assessed for residential development under the subdivision and land development ordinance. • solicitation of private contributions. • grants. • direct municipal contributions. • a special fund for land acquisition and capital improvements		
19	<u>Technical Assistance</u> - Obtain technical assistance from County and State agencies.		
20	<u>Community Organizations</u> - Cooperate with area wide community recreation organizations to improve recreation facilities and programs.		
21	<u>Official Maps</u> - Show planned recreation facilities on an Official Map to ensure that the land can be acquired.		
Community Facilities for New Development			
22	<u>SALDO Enforcement</u> - Continue the enforcement and update as necessary of the current subdivision and land development ordinance.	Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing
Private Residential Communities			
23	<u>Communication</u> - Recognize and communicate with private residential communities about common needs.	Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing

TRANSPORTATION			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	<u>Inventory</u> - Maintain an accurate inventory of all vehicles and equipment.	Road Supervisor	ongoing
2	<u>Liquidation</u> - Liquidate obsolete vehicles and equipment.	Supervisors	as needed
3	<u>Capital Improvements Plan</u> - Include planned purchases of vehicles and equipment on a capital budget to better plan for large expenditures.	Supervisors Road Supervisor	1 - 3 years
4	<u>Township Roads</u> - Focus on the maintenance and improvement of existing local municipal roads.	Road Supervisor Supervisors	ongoing
5	<u>Width and Alignment</u> - Monitor the need and ability to correct specific width and alignment problems which would require reconstruction as traffic volumes dictate and available funds allow.	Road Supervisor Supervisors	ongoing
6	<u>Road Inventory</u> - Use the <i>Road Inventory and Evaluation Form</i> and projected municipal revenues to plan for the improvement of local roads over the next five to ten years within the normal budget process.	Road Supervisor Supervisors	1 year
7	<u>Capital Improvements</u> - Include any reconstruction projects in a capital improvements program.	Road Supervisor Supervisors	1 year
8	<u>Road Task Force</u> - Work with area municipalities to form a <i>North Pocono Road Task Force</i> as a means of addressing area wide transportation issues and road improvements.	Area municipalities Supervisors	1 - 2 years
9	<u>State Roads</u> - Work with Road Task Force, PennDOT, and the Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission to identify the most critical state route improvement needs and work to have the improvements programmed by PennDOT.	Planning Commission Supervisors LCRPC	ongoing
10	<u>Ordinances</u> - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an up-to-date road dedication ordinance setting standards for construction of public roads and establishing procedures for dedication to the public. • Maintain an up-to-date road occupancy ordinance setting standards for driveway access to Township roads and stormwater and utility improvements within the Township road right-of-way. • Review road construction standards to assure adequacy for public safety and eliminate excessive requirements to minimize the consumption of resources for construction and long term maintenance. 	Planning Commission Supervisors	ongoing

HOUSING			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	<u>Housing Programs</u> - Work with the County to ensure that the housing needs of low-income and elderly households in the Township are being addressed.	Elected Officials Co. Housing Authority	ongoing
2	<u>Land Use Ordinances</u> - Review land use ordinances in terms of standards not directly linked to public health and safety which increase housing costs.	Planning Commission Elected Officials	ongoing

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	Prioritize local municipal community facility and service needs and adopt a capital improvements budget to financially plan for large expenditures for buildings, equipment, roads, etc., by setting aside funds in accord with the programmed budget.	Planning Commission Supervisors Staff	1 - 2 years

HISTORIC PRESERVATION			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	<u>Historical Society</u> - Encourage the creation of a local Historical Society to focus attention on historic preservation and work on preservation.	Planning Commission Supervisors	1 - 3 years
2	<u>Design Guidelines</u> - Prepare and adopt design guidelines for commercial and institutional development to encourage development consistent with areas of historic character.	Historical Society Planning Commission Elected Officials	1 - 2 years

OFFICIAL MAP			
#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	Consider the adoption of an official map as needed public facilities are planned to reserve the location for public acquisition - parks, road improvements, buildings, etc.	Planning Commission Elected Officials	2 - 3 years

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Any community conservation and land use control effort by its very nature, must include goals. Without goals, there would be little direction to the future of the community. In the case of planning for a rural community like Covington Township, goals establish the framework for change and growth management, and the foundation for maintaining key community characteristics. Goals pronounce the community's expectations and provide a vision of how the community is expected to evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. Effecting objectives improves the physical condition of the community and sustains and enhances the overall quality of life.

The goals of all residents of the community will not be the same. Some residents will favor increased economic development, while other residents demand environmental protection. Some residents will demand more community facilities and services, while others prefer lower taxes. Some residents will strive for land use diversity, while others would prefer to live in a bedroom community. One function of the community conservation and land use control process is to strike a balance between these varied expectations to meet the overall goals of the community.

Rural communities and residents of rural communities are characteristically unique from their more urban counterparts, and have the opportunity to directly mold their communities. *The rural community is seen as the conservator of its own resources, habitat, and culture. Local citizens are directly involved in the control of community assets as they plan for the retention, enrichment, and equitable use of those assets for present and future generations.*

Along with the community's goals, specific objectives must be identified; actions and methods

for achieving the goals. Some objectives will be the direct responsibility of local elected and appointed officials. Others will require the cooperation and participation of other levels of government and the private sector.¹

Shared Vision

Every successful business, organization, or individual has a plan for the future. Communities are no different. If nothing else, a community needs to agree on a shared vision of what it wants to become. This vision should address the full range of local concerns: schools, housing, economic development, neighborhoods, parks and open space. Creating a shared vision is important because it provides a blueprint for the future of the community. People may differ on how to achieve the community's vision, but without a blueprint nothing will happen.

Source: Balancing Nature and Commerce in Gateway Communities, Howe, J., McMahon, and Propst, L., Island press, Wash., D.C., 1997, p. 48.

Another key factor in formulating a local municipality's goals and objectives is any planning conducted at the County and regional level. The Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners have developed a county-wide comprehensive plan which establishes a broad framework for the future growth and development of the County. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, at §301.4, states, *Municipal comprehensive plans which are adopted shall be generally consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan.*

This comprehensive plan is intended to serve as a means of addressing the future growth and development of the Township by identifying key

¹ P. Lusk, J. A. Rivera, F. O. Sargent, M. Varela, (1991) *Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities*, Island press, Washington, D. C., p. 5

issues and establishing goals and objectives; and is further intended to be consistent with the Lackawanna County Comprehensive Plan. The community planning process also is aimed at fostering cooperation between the County and the Township as envisioned by §306 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which states, *both the county and the municipality shall each give the plan of the other consideration in order that the objectives of each plan can be protected to the greatest extent possible.*

The following goals and objectives were developed by the Township Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors based on the planning process and resident opinions and expectations expressed at public meetings conducted as part of the process. The goals and objectives are intended to serve the Township as a guide for land use control decision making. Any significant action taken by a local municipality, be it the adoption or revision of a zoning ordinance or the improvement of a municipal building, should be evaluated in terms of the community's goals and objectives. In addition, community planning and land conservation and development control is an on-going process, and the Township must periodically evaluate its goals and objectives to assure that they adequately reflect current community conditions and the expectations of Township residents and officials.

General Community Development Objectives

This statement of the Community Development Objectives is included under the authority of Section 606 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The Community Development Objectives include, but are not limited to the following:

- A. **Land Use** - To achieve the best use of the land within the Township, insuring that varying use of land and water bodies will complement one another and thus improve the economic, social, and aesthetic character of the community.



- B. **Population Density** - To establish realistic population densities in order to insure health standards, privacy and open space and in order to provide utilities, police protection, and community services and facilities in the most convenient and efficient manner.
- C. **Road System** - To maintain and improve the road system for better internal circulation and movement of through traffic, which will facilitate the efficient and safe movement of people and goods.
- D. **Facilities and Services** - To provide the necessary community facilities and services to meet the needs of the growing population.
- E. **Sewage Disposal** - To assure that adequate sewage disposal is provided to maintain the public health and protect water quality, and consider the impact of central sewage on development.
- F. **Environmental Protection** - To guide the location of future development and establish developmental standards in such a way that negative impacts on the natural environment and natural resources are minimized, and to minimize existing and future water, air, land and noise pollution.

- G. **Variety of Housing** - To provide the opportunity for a wide-range and variety of housing types at reasonable densities to meet the needs of all Township residents; newly-formed households, growing families and senior citizens.
- H. **Monitoring** - To update and revise planning goals and objectives, and the operational tools necessary for implementation, in light of new data and changing conditions.
- I. **Economic Development** - To expand local commercial enterprises and strengthen the area economy by encouraging well-planned

commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational growth which will provide for local employment, shopping facilities, and recreational opportunities which in turn will strengthen the local tax base.

- J. **Internal Coordination** - To strive for coordination between policies, plans, and programs in the community through cooperation among governing officials, community interest groups, and the general populace.

GOAL 1

Maintain the township's existing rural-residential character and quality lifestyle; and, conserve agricultural land and forest land as important elements of the local economy and character.

The Township's physical environment, regional location and past development practices have shaped and maintained its character as a rural-residential community with limited heavy commercial development. Residential dwellings and residential subdivisions are interspersed with agricultural land and forest land. Commercial uses are largely concentrated at business/activity centers at key road intersections in the Township with some minor intrusions into residential areas.

Open land was the cornerstone of the foundation of the area when its earliest settlers arrived, and has played a key role in the growth and development of the Township. Without this open land and the natural resources it offered the character of the Township would be dramatically different. Maintaining open land and the quality lifestyle associated with it is key to the future of the area.

Covington Township is perceived as an attractive community offering a high quality of life. Future development must be controlled and managed with an overriding concern to sustain the Township's community character while broadening the tax base with controlled

commercial development.

Objectives:

- A. Preserve agricultural land, forest land, open space, significant natural features, and sensitive land areas.
- B. Develop local land use controls including flexible zoning performance standards to control density and minimize conflicts between existing and future development, and update the controls periodically to address changing conditions.
- C. Use of *conservation design development* zoning to shift residential development away from important natural, scenic and cultural features, and preserve the resulting open space.
- D. Allow the use of *transferable development* rights to direct development to locations with adequate infrastructure and enable conservation-minded landowners to preserve their properties.

- E. Encourage the use of *Act 319 Clean and Green* and other tax incentive programs as a means of forestalling development.
- F. Do not overly restrict forestry with unnecessary zoning regulations.
- G. Evaluate, in cooperation with the Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission, more progressive means of open land preservation including open land zoning, purchase of easements, and transfer of development rights, especially in cooperation with conservancy and land trust organizations.
- H. Assure that adequate community facilities including sewage disposal and water supply are provided for new development.
- I. Encourage the use of soil based methods for sewage disposal; that is, on-site subsurface disposal and land application, instead of collection and treatment facilities with a surface water discharge.
- J. Work with the Township Sewer Authority to carefully consider the development of community facilities such as central water supplies and central sewage collection and treatment facilities in terms of stimulating unwanted development in areas with important natural, scenic and cultural features, and agricultural areas.
- K. Direct higher density development to areas already served by the central sewage collection and treatment system.
- L. Carefully control the location and scale of commercial establishments while recognizing the importance of such development to the convenience of local residents and the tax base.
- M. Limit heavy commercial uses and industrial uses by establishing performance standards to control noise; outdoor manufacturing, processing and storage; lighting; and other potential effects.
- N. Control common law nuisances and threats to public health and safety due to, among others, noise, lack of property maintenance, poor building practices, junk accumulation, odors and uncontrolled burning.
- O. Cooperate with local business development organizations to promote commercial and industrial development which will not compromise the qualities of the Township which make it so attractive.
- P. Support the efforts of local land trusts to work with willing landowners to place conservation easements on open land.

GOAL 2

Conserve natural resources and open space in Covington Township and use the resources in a way to sustain the area's economy.

Exploitation of the natural resources and sensitive environmental areas in the Township can lead to the decline of the attractive rural character of the area and the quality lifestyle it affords, with eventual direct threats to the environment and public health and safety. Of special concern are soil and surface and ground water resources.

Objectives:

- A. Identify sensitive natural areas such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, steep slopes, poor soils and flood plains, and adopt regulations to protect such areas.

- B. Evaluate and develop Township land use controls in terms of effects on open space with the goal of maintaining open space to the greatest extent possible.
- C. Maintain up-to-date standards in Township ordinances for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- D. Consider the use of land use control incentives, such as a density bonus, for the preservation of large sensitive natural areas.
- E. Use of *conservation design development* zoning to shift residential development away from important natural, scenic and cultural features, and preserve the resulting open space.
- F. Allow the use of transferrable development rights to direct development to locations with adequate infrastructure and enable conservation-minded landowners to preserve their properties.
- G. Encourage home occupations and small businesses as a means of allowing the owners of large parcels to realize economic gain thereby forestalling the development of open land.
- H. Use land use controls to direct new residential and commercial development away from floodplain to areas where land is adequate to provide facilities necessary to support development and flood damage is minimized.
- I. Require as part of the land use control process the assessment of impacts of residential and nonresidential development on water quality.
- J. Maintain up-to-date standards in Township ordinances for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- K. Support the efforts of local land trusts to work with willing landowners to place conservation easements on open land.

GOAL 3

Encourage commercial and industrial development located and designed to be compatible with existing land use and community character.

A healthy economy fosters a healthy community by providing business development and employment opportunities. Given the historical development pattern of the Township with limited commercial development, residents historically relied on the greater Scranton/Lackawanna County area for employment, shopping and personal services. More recent commercial development, primarily in the retail and service sector, has somewhat reduced the economic importance of the larger region.

Local government may choose to not take a direct role in economic development, but can institute land use control and development policies that have a positive effect on the local economy and tax base, while addressing community

conservation concerns. Recreation and tourism and forestry enterprises continue to be important to the Township economy and steps should be taken to sustain these activities.

Objectives:

- A. Direct new commercial development to areas of existing commercial development and where community facilities are adequate.
- B. Welcome new commercial and industrial development to areas of existing similar development and where community facilities are adequate so that the development is compatible with existing land use and community character.

- C. Support the continued development of the industrial park and other businesses providing local employment and contributing to the tax base.
- D. Promote local economic viability by allowing home occupations and home businesses consistent with residential districts and small businesses consistent with recreation and tourism and the overall community character.
- E. Develop guidelines for commercial building design, landscaping and parking that will ensure high aesthetic quality and while meeting basic needs.
- F. Adopt, monitor and update commercial and industrial development standards to protect the public health, welfare and safety, to preserve community character, and to minimize conflicts with the tourism-recreation trade by controlling such activities as noise, outdoor manufacturing, processing and storage, lighting, and other potential effects.
- G. Recognize the importance of the regional economy and monitor and participate in county and regional business development activities.
- H. Encourage compact commercial development based on conservation design to avoid commercial strip development.

GOAL 4

Provide for a variety of housing types and densities.

Families and individuals of all income levels reside in the Township and need continued access to decent and affordable housing with proper community facilities. The special needs of young families looking for their first home and senior citizens on fixed incomes must be addressed.

Objectives:

- A. Allow residential development of various types (single-family, two-family, multi-family, mobile home parks) in certain areas at a density sufficiently high to moderate the increasing cost of housing, yet assuring adequate water supply and sewage disposal.
- B. Direct higher density residential development to areas served by the existing central sewage collection and treatment system.
- C. Encourage the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing older homes which typically are larger and more difficult to maintain, especially for individuals on fixed incomes.
- D. Investigate and encourage participation in all county, state and federal housing rehabilitation and assistance programs to assure Township residents have the opportunity to receive full benefit from such programs.
- E. Require all residential development to meet adequate design standards and provide proper community facilities via the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
- F. Require in the Subdivision Ordinance the continued ownership and maintenance of all improvements and facilities associated with residential development.
- G. Foster a housing market affordable to younger and fixed-income residents by carefully evaluating the affect of land use controls on the cost of housing.
- H. Consider the adoption of an ordinance to regulate nuisances and safety hazards associated with dilapidated and dangerous structures.

GOAL 5

Ensure that community facilities and services will be adequate to meet expected needs.

Township residents rely on community and public facilities and services to meet their transportation, educational, water supply, sewage disposal, police protection, emergency response, recreation and other daily living needs. The Township does not, and cannot, provide all the facilities and services demanded by its residents, many such services being provided by other levels of government or volunteer organizations. Nevertheless, without diligent and ongoing attention to the operation and maintenance of existing facilities and services, and planning for new facilities and services, a municipality can fall short in adequately serving its residents. In addition, the Eagle Lake Recreation Community is an important part of the Township and Township Officials must recognize that the needs of that community may be somewhat different than the needs of permanent residents.

Objectives:

- A. Systematically identify local municipal community facilities and services needs, including useful life replacement of existing facilities, and develop a capital budget to meet the needs.
- B. Provide necessary maintenance of existing Township community facilities to extend the useful life and forestall unnecessary capital expenditures.

GOAL 6

Establish and maintain a road system adequate to safely and efficiently move goods and people through the Township

Safe and well maintained roads are vital to all communities, serving not only as the means of travel within the community, but as the direct link to the region and beyond. Interstate Route 380 runs north and south through the western third of the Township and one interchange at Route 307 is situated in the Township. I-380 provides connection to I-84 and I-81 to the north and I-80

- C. Encourage and continue to support volunteer fire, ambulance and other public service organizations.
 - D. Assure that an adequate and safe water supply system, sewage collection and conveyance system, well designed and constructed roads and other facilities are provided by developers as part of any residential development.
 - E. Manage all Township facilities and services efficiently and effectively.
 - F. Participate in any area intergovernmental cooperation efforts for community facilities planning and economies of scale for joint purchasing, recreation and other facilities and services.
 - G. Work with the Eagle Lake Association to identify specific needs for that community.
 - H. Maintain up-to-date standards in Township ordinances for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- to the south. Arterial routes in the Township include State Routes 307 and 435 which run north to Scranton and south toward Stroudsburg, and Route 502 which runs west to Moosic. In short, the interstate and state routes serving the Township provide easy access to and from the Township, and hold great potential for fostering development, both residential for citizens who

commute to work and for commercial development as the greater Scranton area demands. The Township has direct jurisdiction over 23.13 miles of the roads in the community, being responsible for improvements and maintenance, with the more heavily traveled routes owned and maintained by the State totaling 25.23 miles and I-380 adding about six additional miles of roadway. Land use controls must take into consideration the capacity of roads, directing commercial and higher density development to areas served by roads capable of carrying increased traffic and the trucks necessary to serve commercial establishments.

Objectives:

- A. Inventory and classify according to function all public roads in the Township and assess maintenance and improvements needed.
- B. Identify key intersections and other problem areas, and plan for improvements.
- C. Maintain the adequacy of roads by requiring adequate off-street parking and loading, limited curb cuts, well defined access points, and standards for dedication of roads to the Township.
- D. Limit higher density and higher traffic impact development to areas with adequate highway capacity to accommodate such development.
- E. Develop a road and intersection maintenance and capital improvements program.
- F. Maintain an up-to-date Township road ordinance setting standards for construction of public roads and establishing procedures for dedication to the Township.
- G. Actively participate in all County and PennDOT highway planning programs.
- H. Encourage intermunicipal cooperation as a means of addressing regional highway needs.
- I. Require as part of zoning approval for new or expanded uses, the issuance of a highway occupancy permit by the Township or PennDOT, as appropriate.
- J. Maintain an up-to-date Township road occupancy ordinance setting standards for driveway access to Township roads and storm water and utility improvements within the Township road right-of-way.

GOAL 7

Protect historic resources as an important part of the character of Covington Township.

Many historic structures are found in Covington Township, ranging from farm residences and outbuildings, to the older homes in villages, to old schools and churches. These buildings were merely erected as part of a growing community, and although many of the early structures are now gone, the many which remain add tremendously to the character of the area. In addition to buildings, stone walls and fences are significant historic features throughout the Township. Originally an integral part of early agricultural practices, stone walls and fences are now being incorporated into home design and as the prime feature in landscaping. The preservation of historic buildings and other features, and

encouraging new development to be consistent with the existing historic character are critical to the future of the community.

Objectives:

- A. Develop an inventory of historic resources in the Township.
- B. Based on the historic resources inventory, create a local historic register and consider nomination of qualifying structures and places to the National Register of Historic Places.
- C. Include in development design standards the

consideration of historic features. For example, use conservation residential subdivision design to preserve farm residences and stone walls.

- D. Develop guidelines for residential and commercial development to encourage historically sensitive design. These guidelines would be recommended to developers in areas not included in a formal historic district where specific architectural design standards can be applied by ordinance.
- E. Allow the *adaptive use* of large older homes to enable owners to adequately maintain the structures. For example, allowing the inclusion of an apartment unit would or a bed and breakfast business would generate income for overall building maintenance.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Regional Location

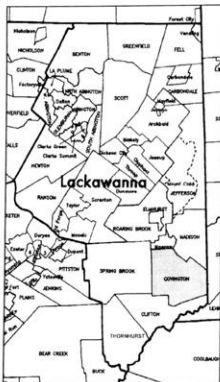
Covington Township lies in southeast section of Lackawanna County, bordered on the north by Moscow Borough and Madison Township, on the west by Springbrook Township, on the south by Clifton Township, and by Sterling Township, Wayne County on the east. With good access to the interstate highway system, Covington Township is situated in the heart of an attractive rural area lying between the Scranton metropolitan area and the northern reach of the Pocono Mountains, and within a reasonable travel time to the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia areas of Pennsylvania, and metropolitan areas of New Jersey and New York. (See Figure I-1, Regional Location Map.)

The Township is bisected north-and-south by Interstate Route 380 which connects to Interstate Route 84 and Interstate Route 81 a short distance to the north and Interstate Route 80 about twenty-five to the south. These routes, along with Route 307, Route 435 and Route 502, the other major state routes in the Township, serve to provide the easy access to the Township. See Section VII for a detailed discussion of highways and transportation.

General Characteristics

A community's character evolves from, and is defined by, a variety of interrelated factors. Covington Township's regional location, physical characteristics (geology, topography, soils), early settlement patterns, the area transportation network and the regional economy have been synthesized into the existing community character of the Township and its context in Lackawanna County and the larger region.

Covington Township can best be characterized as a suburbanizing rural community comprised of a mix of residential and retail/service development interspersed with large tracts of forest and other open land. A more recent development is the industrial park off Route 435 in the eastern end of



Regional Location

the Township which has added considerably to the tax base and provides employment for area residents.

Little agricultural land remains, much having been converted to residential and commercial use while much previously farmed land lies idle, in the process of reverting to brush and forest land. While there is no state forest or state game land in the Township, hundreds of acres of forest land are owned by the Theta Land Corporation. Historically part of watershed lands associated with drinking water supplies developed by the

Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company, this land has long remained open land and has added to the rural character of the Township. A recent change in company structure and policy has changed the status of this land which may now become available for development.

The Township is relatively sparsely populated for lying so close to the Scranton metropolitan area. The 2000 Census reported 1,994 permanent residents in the Township, or eighty-five persons per square mile, compared to the county-wide population density of 470 persons per square mile. Given the attractive rural character of the Township and its proximity to the City of Scranton, the recent completion of the sewer system serving part of the Township, and the development of the industrial park, increased population growth is expected.

Development History

Covington Township was formed in 1818 from Wilkes-Barre Township and included all the land obtained by Henry Drinker in the southern part of the original Luzerne County. The Drinkers were an old and prominent Philadelphia family, descended from one John Drinker who emigrated from Exeter, England, and settled on the banks of the Delaware River at Philadelphia in 1679 before the arrival of William Penn. Colonel Henry W. Drinker was the man who opened for settlement and development the whole eastern part of Lackawanna County. The land holdings of Colonel Drinker were once known as *Drinker's Beech*, so called for the predominant beech timber on the tract. It was named Covington at the suggestion of Henry Drinker's son, in honor of Brigadier General Covington, who died in the War of 1812. Covington Township originally covered the whole eastern half of Lackawanna County, but now is divided into nine municipalities.

Securing a charter from the Pennsylvania legislature in 1819, Drinker began the construction of the *Philadelphia and Great Bend Turnpike* in 1821. Serving as the first major highway through the region and later known as

the *Drinker Turnpike*, owing to the Colonel's contribution of personal funds and energy, the toll road ran from Mount Pocono, through Tobyhanna, Daleville, Moscow, Dunmore, Providence, Chinchilla, Clarks Green, Waverly, Fleetville, Glenwood, Lenox Corners, Harford, and New Milford, terminating at Great Bend. In 1926, Drinker obtained a charter for the *Delaware and Susquehanna Canal and Railroad Company*, envisioning a connection between the two rivers to carry coal and iron ore to eastern markets. It wasn't until the involvement of the Scranton Brothers with their iron industry that the railroad became viable, with the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad being formed in 1853 from two smaller railroad companies, the Leggett's Gap Railroad and the Delaware and Cobbs Gap Railroad.¹

Daleville, the principal village in the Township, was first settled in September 1819 by Edward Wardell, a native of Yorkshire England who purchased 250 acres of land from Colonel Drinker at \$5 per acre. David Dale was the next settler, arriving a week later, with Matthew Hodson, Robert Roseman, John Fish and Frederick Raish arriving soon thereafter. The first frame house was constructed in 1826, the first hotel and first tavern in 1827, and the first store in 1831. By 1880, Daleville was comprised of two churches, a steam sawmill, a school, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a wagon shop, a store, and some 150 residents.²

Timbering and agriculture served as the base for the initial settlement and early economic development of the Township and Lackawanna County, with coal becoming important in later years. However, over the years these basic activities have lost significance to the local economy. Many acres in the region which once were forested or in agriculture are now subdivided into residential lots. Improvements in

¹William P. Lewis, Executive Director, Lackawanna County Historical Society, April 1980.

²History of Lackawanna County, Munsell, 1880.

transportation, initiated by railroad access and culminating in modern road improvements and the completion of the interstate highway system, transformed Lackawanna County into the community of today. More recently, changes in the quality of life and cost of living in urban areas are reflected in the changing character of the more rural areas of the County to a bedroom communities where residents commute to work outside of their home municipality. Given the large private land holdings, the Township holds great potential for development should the demand for housing be stimulated by a revitalized home market or by an increased pace of the relocation of nearby urbanites to full-time residency in the Township. The direction plotted by this *Comprehensive Plan* and the land use control and growth management actions taken by the municipal officials of Covington Township, along with the private development decisions made in response to demands for housing and commercial development, will shape the community's character over the next ten to twenty years.

PLANS

The individual plan elements included in this *Comprehensive Plan* are intended to reflect established goals and objectives, to consider the findings of the background studies, and to set the overall growth and development direction for Covington Township. Having stated this, it is important to note that municipal planning must be

considered an on-going process, and a community's goals and objectives will change with changing conditions in the community. Therefore, the basic planning tenet of this *Comprehensive Plan* is the continual review of the Township's goals and objectives with adjustments made to the associated plans and policies.

LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN

Existing Land Use Controls and Environmental Regulations

Based on earlier plans and policies, the Township adopted a number of land use control ordinances including a subdivision and land development ordinance and a zoning ordinance. These two types of ordinances are the principal land use control ordinances available to local municipalities in Pennsylvania.

SALDO

The subdivision and land development ordinance, first adopted in 1982 and comprehensively updated in 1992, provides standards for the development of residential and non-residential projects assuring the provision of adequate community facilities such as roads, water supply and sewage disposal, utilities, proper highway access, and storm water control. The 1992 update was amended in 1994 to include provisions for storm water management in the Lackawanna River Watershed and in 1998 to revise plan filing and review requirements. In 2006, provisions for conservation subdivision design were included. In order to make the subdivision ordinance more *user friendly* the Township periodically publishes ordinance compilations which incorporate all amendments into the body of the original ordinance.

Zoning Ordinance

Initially adopted in early 1972, the zoning ordinance was completely revised in 1989, with a number of subsequent amendments to address

specific types of land uses such as drive-through restaurants, adult businesses, commercial communications towers, wind farms and treatment centers/clinics. Conservation subdivision design and transfer of development rights were added in 2006 to encourage the preservation of open space while allowing landowners to capture the full density of development parcels.

All of the amendments were consolidated and reenacted into a complete zoning ordinance in early 2007. Now, in addition to the typical regulations governing lot size, setbacks and building height, the zoning ordinance includes specific standards for a broad range of land uses including for example: parking, signs, junkyards, solid waste facilities, mobile home parks, recreational vehicle parks and multi-family dwellings, and other general community development and environmental performance standards.

Other Ordinances

In addition to these two principal land use and environmental control ordinance the Township has adopted a number of other ordinances addressing such concerns as floodplain management, outdoor burning, sewage disposal, building construction and fire prevention, and junked vehicles.

Future Land Use

Covington Township's proximate location to

metropolitan areas, coupled with the area's attractive rural/residential character, is expected to continue to stimulate residential development, with continued progression to a *bedroom community* character involving permanent residents who commute outside the Township to work. This trend will be tempered somewhat by the strong retail service development in Daleville and increased occupancy in the industrial park.

An additional factor which is expected to stimulate residential development is the central sewage disposal system serving the core area of the township. The effect of this key community facility must be considered in terms of residential density and the Township zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance must be evaluated to adjust minimum lot sizes within the sewer district and coordinate connections to the system in accord with the requirements of the Covington Township Sewer Authority.

Concurrently, increased demand for retail and service establishments will be generated by the residential development, and suitable areas for commercial areas must be identified. The need to provide improved employment opportunities in the community is also recognized, as is the importance of maintaining existing businesses. In short, it is the intent of Township officials to conserve the community's rural character, while concurrently encouraging economic development and job opportunities consistent with the rural character. Higher density residential development and commercial development should be directed to the core area of the Township where the central sewer and better highway access is available.

Land Use Planning Approach

The basic land use planning approach of this *Plan* is outlined as follows:

- providing incentives for good design and open space preservation as property is developed
- protecting residential neighborhoods and subdivisions from incompatible development

- providing well-situated and appropriate development areas to accommodate projected growth
- relying on the larger region to supplement local business in meeting retail and service needs and providing employment
- carefully controlling the expansion of public water and sewer service areas

Current Zoning Districts Affirmed

Based on this philosophy and on this *Comprehensive Plan*, and the Township Supervisors and Planning Commissioners recognize that the continued enforcement of the zoning ordinance and the subdivision and land development ordinance, continued planning by consulting, reviewing and updating this *Comprehensive Plan*, and periodically updating the ordinance to address changing conditions are the most critical actions required to manage the growth and development which is inevitable for the Township.

The existing zoning districts in the Township as delineated by the current zoning map are affirmed as the future land use plan for the Township. The zoning districts are listed below.

RR	Rural Residential District
R-1	Low Density Residential District
R-2	High Density Residential District
C-1	General Commercial District
C-2	Highway Commercial District
M-1	Manufacturing District
SC	Special Conservation District
MP-RV	Mobile Home Park - Recreational Vehicle Park District

Sewer Service Area Overlay District

The current service area of the Covington Township Sewer Authority includes several different zoning districts which permit a variety of residential and commercial uses. Single-family and two-family dwellings are permitted at a density of one unit per acre whenever off-site sewage is provided, and townhouses and garden

apartment density is set at two units per acre, and apartment buildings at three units per acre.

By allowing higher densities within the sewer service area, and setting a single-family, two-acre minimum in the balance of the Township regardless of the type of sewage disposal and coupled with mandated land conservation development, several important goals may be realized. First, the Township will meet its *fair share* of higher density (and more affordable) housing. Second, more intense development will be centered in the core area of the Township where facilities and services are adequate. And finally, much of the critical open space in the Township will be preserved.

One option to provide for higher residential densities is to create a *sewer service area overlay district* which would coincide with the boundary of the service area and would permit higher density development. The underlying zoning districts, the range of allowed uses, and other performance standards would otherwise remain intact. This option also enables the overlay zone to extend along with any expansion of the sewer service area. The details of density and mechanism for implementation should be determined based on the normal zoning ordinance amendment and public participation process.

Rural Character and Open Land Preservation

Open land is a key ingredient of the Township's attractive rural character, and Township officials should encourage the conservation of open land. The Township is fortunate to include thousands of acres of privately owned open. However, many of the area's unique land features have already been platted into traditional single-family residential subdivisions. Continued unabated, all areas of undeveloped land in Covington Township which are not wetlands or are not extremely steep could be developed, using central sewage disposal if necessary. Taken to the extreme, the entire area of the Township which is suitable for development would be platted into lots meeting the minimum one or two acre lot size. This scenario does little to preserve the character of

Covington Township which is so dependent on open land.

Conservation Subdivision Design

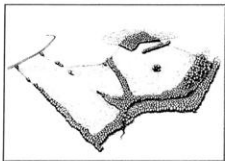
Conservation subdivision design allows the same number of units on a parcel as a typical subdivision but with a reduction in minimum lot size, provided the remainder of land needed to maintain the density established by the ordinance is set aside as permanent open space. In addition to maintaining open land, conservation design reduces development costs (and commitment of resources) given shortened road and water and sewer line length, minimizes long term maintenance costs of such improvements, and limits environmental affects such as soil disturbance and storm water.

The Natural Lands Trust, Inc., a nationally known land conservation organization suggests that the land conservation concept be taken to a higher level by providing incentives (or disincentives) to encourage the conservation of open land and establishing specific techniques for the design of open space subdivisions.

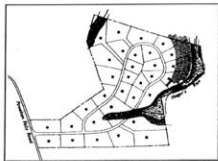
The process is presented in detail in the handbook, *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*, published by the Natural Lands Trust. Incentives could include allowing higher density for open space design; a disincentive would be the reduction in density if a traditional lot layout is used in place of the open space design. In fact, some communities have mandated the use of open space design for all development. The conservation design process involves the following steps: (See the following illustrations from *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*)

1. Yield Plan - the number of units which could be developed on the site using the traditional subdivision approach.
2. Identification of all potential open space areas including primary conservation areas such as
→ Soils suitable for on site sewage systems
→ Water bodies

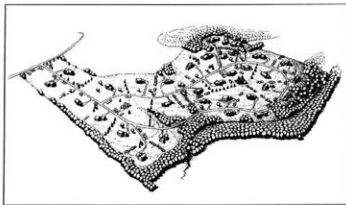
- Floodplain
 - Wetlands
 - Steep slopes
 - and secondary conservation areas such as . . .
 - Mature woodlands
 - Prime farmland
 - Significant wildlife habitats
 - Historic, archeological, and cultural feature
 - Views into and out from the site
 - Aquifers and recharge areas
3. Identification of potential development areas -- Where should the houses be logically located on the site?
4. Location of potential house sites -- Where should individual units be located within the development area?
5. Design of infrastructure -- How is access, water supply, sewage disposal, and stormwater management best provided with the least impact on conservation areas?
6. Drawing in the lot lines at the reduced lot size results in the conservation of the designated open land.



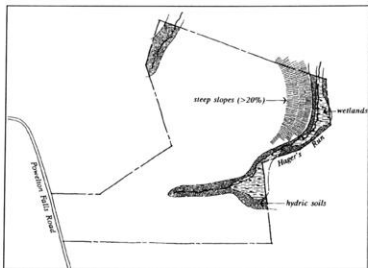
Before Development



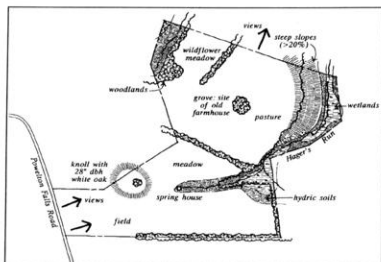
Yield Plan



With Conventional Development



Identifying Primary Conservation Areas



Identifying Secondary Conservation Areas