

### **Mercer County Board of Commissioners**

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## Acknowledgements

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Mark David - West Middlesex  
Tracy Thompson - West Middlesex  
Bob Davis - Wheatland  
Robert McGhee - Coolspring  
Donald Kremm - Delaware  
Caroline Stoyer - Delaware  
Nancy Givens - East Lackawannock  
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Bert Weston - Jefferson  
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John Martin - New Vernon  
Richard Straub - Otter Creek  
Paulette Young - Otter Creek  
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Fred Brenner - Pine  
H. Thomas Paxton - Pine  
Richard Whitten - Pymatuning  
Walter L. Weir - Pymatuning  
James Eakin - Shenango  
Michael Nashtock - South Pymatuning  
David Lapikas - South Pymatuning  
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Judy A. Hassler - Springfield  
Charles Garrett - Wilmington  
Jeff Hoy - Wilmington  
Ray Penland - Wolf Creek  
James L. Hogan - Mercer County  
Jean Hodge - Mercer County  
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Jeff Fiedler - Mercer County  
James Hughes - Mercer County  
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Robert G. Kochems - Solicitor  
Dave George - Borough's Association  
Robert Birtciel - Supervisor's Association

### **MCRPC Staff**

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## Acknowledgements

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Doug Riley  
Doug Thomas  
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Mark Bodamer  
Larry Robinson

### **Consultants**

Gannett Fleming, Inc., Camp Hill, PA

## ***To the Citizens of Mercer County:***

In 1995/1996 the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission prepared the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan, Planning for Livable Communities. Its theme was making Mercer County communities a better place to live, work and play. This 2005 Mercer County Comprehensive Plan is an update to the 1995/96 Comprehensive Plan and recognizes that much has occurred in the intervening 10 years. The 2000 Census data is now available, major changes were made to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code in 2000, and much progress has occurred in Mercer County.

This Updated Comprehensive Plan renews the vision for Mercer County – a vision that integrates our rural character with sound community development, a healthy economy, and coordinated public and private resource management to sustain and enhance our quality of life.

The Comprehensive Plan has incorporated many innovative techniques during the plan development process. Community indicators have been used to measure the community health and well being. Public involvement sessions have identified and prioritized community planning concerns and issues, as well as an updated vision for the future. The plan also incorporates a new Long Range Transportation Plan for Mercer County, as well as a Target Location Assessment for identifying potential economic development sites in Mercer County.

The Comprehensive Plan includes action strategies that touch on every aspect of community life in Mercer County. These strategies create an agenda for creating change and managing future growth in the County. The Plan also provides strategies for protecting our natural resources and preserving the rural character of the County.

We hope you will find the Comprehensive Plan visionary and inspiring. As we look to the future, we believe it is filled with opportunities for the residents of Mercer County. We look forward to working with you to implement this plan and continue the theme of making Mercer County a better place to live, work and play.

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## ***The Role and Purpose of Comprehensive Planning***

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide for the future development of Mercer County communities. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended, requires the Comprehensive Plan to consider many factors that influence a community, such as location, character and timing of future development and events.

The Comprehensive Plan evaluates existing land use, transportation systems, housing, community facilities and services, and natural and cultural resources of Mercer County; primarily, within the County boundaries but also in the context of the broader region, where relevant. The Plan projects future growth trends based on these analyses and proposes the best possible land use and implementation tools to accommodate expected growth while protecting the County's vast and precious resources.





The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No. 247, as reenacted and amended empowers local municipalities, including County governments...

...to plan for their physical development,

...to develop a “blueprint” for housing, transportation, community facilities and utilities, and for land use.

...to establish community development goals and objectives that guide future growth and development.

### **What the Comprehensive Plan does:**

- Focuses on current trends and issues in Mercer County and addresses these with innovative solutions.
- Provides the best possible projection on future conditions based on current patterns and strategies to create a more desirable and sustainable future.
- Directs future change through a vision of community potential.
- Establishes the framework for consistency between future land use policies and land use regulatory measures.
- Assists State, County, and Township officials in their decision making processes.

### **What the Comprehensive Plan does not do:**

- Does not affect regulations of individual properties.
- Does not determine land development, neither public nor private.
- Does not preclude future analysis or decision making.

Ninety years ago, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., renowned designer/planner of several communities in Pennsylvania including the first planned industrial town designed to be sold to its workers, urged municipalities to “...create or acquire statistical databases on the physical, social, economic and financial environment; compile information on relevant legal and administrative matters and draw up accurate topographical maps.” To this end, a comprehensive plan entails such an inventory and makes recommendations regarding policies designed to guide future development thereby avoiding costly unwise development. Olmstead also noted that “prevention is cheaper than the cure.”

## **Relationship between the Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans**

The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan gives policy guidance and direction to Township regulations and codes. The Plan makes policy recommendations to update the following plans and regulations to provide residents of Mercer County with the best possible quality of life;

- Mercer County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance
- Municipal Zoning Ordinances
- Municipal Subdivision & Land Development Ordinances
- Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans
- Parks and Recreation Plans

### ***Local Municipal Comprehensive Plans***

The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the local goals of the municipalities while making broad recommendations appropriate for the County.

## **FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***Why is the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan being updated?***

The most effective comprehensive plans are living documents. In other words, they are regularly reviewed and updated to accommodate inevitable changes. In addition, the MPC recommends that county Comprehensive Plans be updated every ten years.

### ***How will the Plan be used?***

The Plan will be used by County and local officials, citizen volunteers, land owners, and developers to evaluate proposed changes against the Plan's vision and goals.

### ***Who is in charge of making this Plan work?***

In order to make the plan successful, a number of partners will be called upon to implement the recommendations. In addition to the County Commissioners, the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, the Shenango Valley MPO, and local municipal officials, the county's private landowners, businesses, and citizens will need to work together to reach the vision established through the planning process.