

Policy Statements

Introduction

A “policy” is the official position of the Township on a given issue. Ideally, policy statements support the Township vision in a realistic way, acknowledging the opportunities and limitations revealed by the SWOT analysis. The policy statements are the bases for the more precisely worded goals and objective statements that will be developed in succeeding chapters. For ease of use, we have grouped the policies presented in this chapter according to the topics of the following plan chapters. However, by their nature, policy statements do not necessarily lend themselves to discrete classification: a single policy may support several aspects of the Township vision. We have organized them here according to which aspect of the vision is most directly supported by the policy in question.

Policies are not actions, but provide guidance for local decision-makers as they evaluate potential actions and opportunities, enabling them to stay focused upon the most critical needs of the community as they allocate resources. For each topic, the list of policy statements is preceded by a paragraph describing their overall intent. We note that there may be instances where the Township may take an action that does not fit any of the *specific* policy statements, yet remains consistent with intent of the policies as well as the Township vision. This should be considered an acceptable course of action.

Within this text, please note that the policy statements are permissive rather than directive; that is, they suggest actions that the Township *may* take rather than *must* take. The specific action plan for the Township is provided in Chapter 13. Further note that indications of Township “support” for a given policy does not necessarily imply a financial commitment by the Township. As a governmental agency, Township support for a policy may be expressed in a variety of ways, not only financial. Again, specific actions are provided in Chapter 13.

Land Use & Housing Policies

The arrangement and intensity of land uses are the most immediately obvious characteristics of the Township and are therefore largely responsible for the impression people get as they travel through the Township. With few developable lots left, land use issues are largely concerned with maintaining the current character of the Township, particularly as lots are re-developed. The Township is comprised of distinct neighborhoods, and the policies here are intended to preserve and to enhance the existing qualities of these areas. The Township should not support any action that would result in radical change to the character of the community - which will almost certainly require revision to current development regulations. Note that policies concerning open space and recreation are found in the sections on resource preservation and community facilities, respectively, rather than the section immediately below.

1. Any new development or redevelopment in the Township will respect the character of the surrounding community.

2. The area north of the by-pass along with the area bound by Orange Street, Media Borough, Baltimore Pike, Ridley Creek, and the by-pass are to be maintained as the least intensely developed portions of the Township. Any development of property in these areas will be environmentally appropriate, with particular consideration of preservation of woodlands, surface water features, and steep slope areas. Streetlights may be provided where necessary for public safety (e.g., at hazardous intersections), but shall be the exception rather than the rule.
3. The remaining residential areas of the Township shall have a more suburban quality with a higher density of development, sidewalks or paved paths to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel (including use by the handicapped), street lights where desired, and other amenities as may be conducive to a high quality of life. Development will respect environmentally sensitive features, but the overall character of these locations will be more clearly that of a developed community rather than a naturalistic setting.
4. Non-residential uses will be accommodated in a manner consistent with their neighborhoods and shall be designed to respect nearby residential uses.
5. Commercial areas shall include professional services and office uses as well as retail operations. These uses shall be limited to the portion of the Providence Road corridor between the by-pass and the Media borough line and the State Road corridor, which is consistent with the current zoning provisions. The Township shall facilitate structural and aesthetic improvements to these areas that will support commercial enterprises, including but not necessarily limited to, improved pedestrian accommodations, improved street lighting, traffic calming measures, streetscape improvements, and the provision of centralized and/or on-street parking areas as appropriate to the specific location.
6. Residential uses within the commercial areas are acceptable, particularly as a residential/commercial mix is compatible with the “village” character desired for these parts of the Township.
7. While automobile traffic may be accommodated in commercial areas, the creation of automobile-oriented “commercial strip” type development will be strongly discouraged.
8. The Township should be supportive of innovative land use practices and regulations insofar as they are consistent with the Township vision and the policies expressed in this chapter.
9. New housing shall be accommodated insofar as it is not in conflict with the other policies found in this chapter.
10. Accessory dwellings (such as “in-law suites”) within the structure of existing dwellings or as an architecturally compatible addition to an existing dwelling may be permitted where there will be no adverse impact upon the overall quality of the surrounding neighborhood.
11. Multi-unit dwellings may be accommodated in the more suburban areas of the Township in forms that are compatible with their surroundings.

Transportation Policies

Traffic and the closely related issue of growth management are, by far, the most prominent

concerns of Township residents. While the Municipalities Planning Code requires that the Comprehensive Plan include “a plan for the movement of people and goods,” this does *not* mean that motor traffic must be accommodated to the detriment of quality of life. The overall policy here is that the transportation systems in Upper Providence must function safely. While congestion is a valid concern, we have determined that a degree of congestion is preferable to wide, multi-lane roads that would be detrimental to the character of our community. Since the congestion problem exists throughout metropolitan Philadelphia, we expect that the construction of wider lanes or additional lanes on Township roads would *not* relieve congestion, but would simply attract more traffic from other, also congested roads. Even if this assumption would prove incorrect and this strategy *did* ease congestion, then higher vehicle speeds would be the likely result. Either way, the outcome is a diminished quality of life for Township residents.

12. The Township may support multi-municipal and regional efforts to develop long-term solutions to issues of traffic volume and congestion.
13. The Township may support road improvements that are designed to enhance safety and congestion. Improvements to increase capacity may not be supported, unless there is a clear benefit to public safety. Improvement of the Rt.252/Rt.1 interchange is an example of such an exception.
14. The Township will not be limited to construction projects as a means to enhance road safety, but will explore other means to this same end. One possible example of this policy would be more aggressive enforcement of speed limits.
15. The Township supports strategies that reduce reliance upon motor vehicles, including enhancements to the public transportation system and provision of the physical infrastructure necessary to support alternate modes, such as pedestrian and non-motorized trails in less intensely developed areas and sidewalks in more urban areas.
16. The Township supports the provision of facilities for inter-modal transfer, particularly where they improve access to and usefulness of the public transportation system. Examples include improved pedestrian access to the train station and bus stops and the provision of secure bike racks at these same locations.

Community Facilities & Services Policies

Municipal services and public facilities are critical aspects of quality of life. Upper Providence has done well to date: the police department, fire protection services, and the public schools all received high marks from the community in our survey. However, this is also an area with some looming challenges as the cost to the Township of providing these services is likely to rise faster than municipal revenue. The guiding principal here is to assure residents of the highest quality of life possible while managing expenditures in a fiscally responsible manner.

17. The Township will maximize the efficiency of its administrative operations and staff utilization, revising procedures as necessary to improve service and to support the quality of life in the Township.
18. The Township will give high priority to enforcement of its codes and ordinances, as these are critical tools in maintaining the character of our community.

19. Any changes to sanitary sewerage provisions shall be consistent with the duly adopted Act 537 Plan, as may be revised from time to time.

20. The Township desires co-operative arrangements with other municipalities or agencies where it is clear that such an alliance will enhance the provision of some service, increase efficiency, or generally improve the quality of life in the Township.

21. The Township will maintain supportive, cooperative relationships with emergency service providers (police department, fire companies, ambulance service, etc.), and the Rose Tree Media School District to facilitate continued provision of their services in an efficient manner to the benefit of Township residents.

22. The Township may seek grant funding to supplement its other revenue where such funding may be used to promote the Township vision and/or any of the policies in this chapter.

23. The development of recreational facilities - for both active and passive use - will be designed to respect and to protect environmentally sensitive areas.

24. The Township will pursue the development of additional facilities for active recreation (such as improved playing fields, courts, and other support infrastructure), seeking out opportunities to partner with like-minded public and private organizations, including the Delaware County Parks Department regarding utilization of Rose Tree Park.

25. The Township will strengthen its relationships with and support for local recreational organizations, particularly those that provide recreational opportunities for our youth.

Resource Preservation Policies

Despite the “green” feel of much of the Township, the fact remains that Upper Providence is very nearly built out. Considering how little of it remains - and that much of it is environmentally constrained - these lands constitute a precious resource.

26. Township development regulations may include provisions to preserve, protect, and enhance environmentally sensitive areas.

27. The Township may develop and enforce regulations that will assure that development is executed in an environmentally sensitive manner.

28. The Township may seek funding to assist with the preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive areas, including but not necessarily limited to funding to conduct studies supporting environmental preservation policies, site-specific plans, and acquisition.

29. The Township desires to protect its water resources particularly and may implement regulations and/or seek funding as appropriate to develop plans and regulations to protect groundwater, wetlands, and stream corridors, as well as regulations to assure proper flood control, stormwater management, and maintenance of flood control and stormwater management facilities.

30. Public access and recreational use of public open spaces will generally be subsidiary to the environmental preservation function.

