





Colonel Denning State Park, Lower Mifflin Township

Public Participation Program Components

Land Partnerships is rooted in public participation and outreach. Determining the needs, concerns, and ideas of the community is the foundation for the Plan's vision. The public participation and outreach process to develop Land Partnerships was comprised of multiple components. The main components included a steering committee, project website, public meetings and a public opinion survey.

Land Partnerships Steering Committee

A steering committee was formed consisting of nine members representing various Cumberland County organizations. The committee members were appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The committee met six times and provided guidance, direction and insight over the duration of the project.

Committee Members:

- Geoffrey Clymer, Member, Cumberland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
- Shireen Farr, Director, Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau
- Bill Forrey, Former Chief, Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks
- Robert Fisher, PLS, PE, President, R.J. Fisher Associates, Inc.; Member, Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Harrisburg Government Affairs Committee
- Larry Hatter, Government Relations, Greater Harrisburg Association of REALTORS
- Jay Schreibman, Regional Advisor, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Kim Williams, Environmental Planner, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Jeff Williams, Director, Silver Spring Township, Park & Recreation Department
- Anna Yelk, Executive Director, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Rebecca Yearick, Downtown Coordinator, Cumberland County Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Project Website

A project website was established at the onset of the project to ensure vital information was publically accessible. The website included information from the 2006 plan, meeting schedules/notes, maps, presentations, draft documents and links to the project surveys and other data. The website was regularly updated throughout the course of the project as new information emerged.



LAND PARTNERSHIPS

Public Meetings

In spring of 2012, two public meetings were held in the eastern and western areas of the County to introduce the plan update and determine the key issues and concerns of citizens in Cumberland County. Approximately 40 individuals attended the meetings. The meetings were also live streamed over the internet and recorded for review by those who could not attend in person. Over 250 people viewed the meetings online.

Following a brief overview presentation, attendees cycled through four stations engaging in separate and focused discussions on farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trails & greenways and livable communities – the organizing elements of the 2006 Land Partnerships. Each station contained background information including updated demographic data, current tallies of preserved land, updated maps and other relevant information. Each station was staffed by experts from the County Planning department and consultants to field questions about each element of the plan. Ideas, issues and recommendations were recorded and consistent themes emerged to shape the outcome of the plan update. A summary of the feedback from the spring public meetings is provided in Appendix 3-1.

Public meetings were also held in the fall of 2012 in eastern and western Cumberland County, with approximately 40 individuals attending the meetings. The meetings were also videotaped and made available on YouTube for individuals who could not attend. Approximately 15 additional individuals viewed the meetings online.

Attendees were provided an overview of the plan and were given the opportunity to review and comment on the strategies presented in the plan. Overall feedback on the draft plan was overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, attendees were provided an opportunity to prioritize strategies by voting on their top three recommendations. A summary of the fall public meetings and results of the public prioritization of strategies are provided in Appendix 3-1.

Countywide Public Opinion Surveys

Public opinion surveys were conducted in 2012 using both random sample and user selected survey methods. The goal of the surveys was to assess the opinion of the public regarding farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways. The questions of both surveys were kept identical so results could be compared.

Random Sample Survey - This survey was mailed to 1,500 random households in Cumberland County and was conducted according to accepted survey methodology. 55 questionnaires were completed



Public Meeting, Silver Spring Township

3. Public Participation

and 105 surveys were returned undeliverable or vacant, resulting in an overall return rate of about 4 percent.

The number of responses to the random sample survey was less than the 47 percent response rate achieved with the 2006 random sample survey. The lower response rate is attributed to the change in survey methodology. The 2012 survey included a single postcard mailer directing you to an online survey, while the 2006 survey included 3 methods of correspondence: 1) pre-survey postcard 2) paper survey packet with pre-paid envelope and 3) post-survey reminder.

User Selected Survey – This survey was available to each household in the County and was conducted according to accepted survey methodology. The survey was publicized through newspaper articles, township newsletters, the project website and stakeholders meetings. These invitations produced 844 completed questionnaires yielding an overall return rate of about 4 percent of the County’s total population or 9 percent of total households (assuming one response/household).

The results of 2012 random and user selected surveys were not identical, but recorded similar trends allowing both surveys to be combined for sake of analysis.. The 899 combined survey results are summarized below. The 2012 results are also compared to the results of the 2006 survey to evaluate changes in opinion for similar questions posed 5 years ago. Questions in the 2012 random sample and user selected surveys and the 2006 survey were intentionally kept similar in order to identify changes in opinion. The full results of each survey, as well as combined results, are detailed in the Appendix 3-2.



Public Meeting, Silver Spring Township



Combined Public Opinion Survey Results

1) What best describes the amount (not enough, about the right amount, too much) of farmland, natural areas, parks and trails in Cumberland County?

Majority responses:

- Farmland: About the right amount - 54%
- Trails: Not enough - 67%
- Natural Areas: Not enough - 62%
- Parks: Not enough - 50%, About the right amount – 48%

Interpretation - The majority of respondents indicate the current amount of farmland in the County is adequate. A strong need for more trails and natural areas was identified. The need for parks was nearly divided between not enough and about the right amount.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: The question was reworded in 2012 to clarify the different types of open space. In 2006, respondents indicated the following: 46% not enough open space, 46% about the right amount of open space, 2% too much open space.

2) What is your opinion on the amount of growth in Cumberland County?

Majority responses:

- Too much development - 67%
- About the right amount of development - 29%
- Not enough development - 4%

Interpretation - The majority of respondents feel that there is too much development.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: The number of respondents that feel there is too much development has increased 6% from the 61% in 2006.

3) Is enough being done to address the following issues (farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trails & greenways and creation of livable communities) in Cumberland County?

Majority responses:

- Natural Resource Protection: More needs to be done - 70%
- Parks, Trails & Greenways: More needs to be done - 69%
- Farmland Preservation: More needs to be done- 67%
- Livable Communities: More needs to be done– 57%



Public Meeting, Silver Spring Township



Steering Committee Meeting

Interpretation - The majority of the respondents feel that more needs to be done to address farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trails & greenways and creation of livable communities.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: The question was reworded in 2012 to clarify types of open space planning. The results were relatively unchanged from 2006 results of 70% that felt more open space preservation planning needs to be done. The livable communities category was not included in the 2006 survey.

4) How important are the following (farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trails & greenways and livable communities) to you?

Majority responses:

- Natural Resource Protection: Very Important or Important - 90%
- Farmland Preservation: Very Important or Important - 84%
- Parks, Trails & Greenways: Very Important or Important - 83%
- Livable Communities: Very Important or Important – 71%

Interpretation - The majority of respondents feel all of these issues are very important or important. Natural resource protection was identified as the most important. Farmland preservation and parks, trails & greenways were ranked of similar importance.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: The question was reworded in 2012 to combine a lengthy list of types of open space into 4 categories of resources. Additionally, the levels of importance were reduced from 5 to 4 options. 2006 results contained a similar majority view (87-95%) of important throughout all categories. Variations occurred on level of importance from 2006 to 2012, but are likely attributed to the change in format of the question, specifically reducing the number of options for ranking importance. Importance of farmland decreased from 94% to 84%. Natural resource protection changed from 87-95% to 90% important. Parks, trails & greenways decreased from 88-90% to 83%. The livable communities category was not included in the 2006 survey.



5) Do you think the following (farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trails & greenways and livable communities) are an appropriate use of public funds?

Majority responses:

- Natural Resource Protection: Yes, an appropriate use - 88%
- Parks, Trails & Greenways: Yes, an appropriate use - 83%
- Farmland Preservation: Yes, an appropriate use - 75%
- Livable Communities: Yes, an appropriate use – 59%

Interpretation - The majority of respondents feel it is appropriate to use public dollars to fund all four categories. Natural resource protection ranked first as most appropriate use. Second, was parks, trails & greenways, followed by farmland preservation.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: More people today feel that it is appropriate to use public dollars to fund the four main categories than in 2006. Previously, natural resource protection was seen as an appropriate use of public funds among 79% of respondents. Farmland preservation came in at 63% followed by parks, trails & greenways with 71%, 60% and 54%, respectively. The livable communities category was not included in the 2006 survey.

6) Would you be willing to pay an additional amount to preserve farmland, natural areas, parks, trails & greenways and help create livable communities in Cumberland County?

Responses:

- Yes, another \$10/year – 19%
- Yes, another \$20/year – 18%
- Yes, another \$35/year – 7%
- Yes, another \$50/year – 31%
- No – 16%
- Other – 9%

Interpretation - 75% of respondents are willing to pay additional dollars (between \$10-\$50/per year) to preserve these resources in the county. The majority of “yes” respondents indicated a willingness to pay another \$50/year.

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: A higher majority of residents are willing to pay more to preserve these resources today than the 66% recorded in 2006.

7) If we could do one thing to improve the quality of life in Cumberland County through farmland preservation, natural resource protection, parks, trail & greenways and creation of livable communities what would you want that one thing to be?



Public Meeting, Silver Spring Township

Respondents provided hundreds of responses to this open ended question. The comments were recorded verbatim and then grouped by topics that emerged. The full responses are detailed in Appendix 3-2.

Interpretation - The parks, trails and greenways topic was the most commented area. Within that theme, the majority of respondents indicated a strong desire for connected walking and biking trails. The second most commented area was related to overdevelopment and the proliferation of warehousing and truck traffic. The need to redevelop and utilize existing vacant structures was also strongly articulated within this topic area.

8) Demographics of Public Opinion Survey Respondents

Age:

18-24	2%
25-49	44%
50-64	37%
65+	17%

Gender:

Female	47%
Male	53%

Residency:

Eastern Cumberland County	52%
Central Cumberland County	35%
Western Cumberland County	12%

Comparison to 2006 Survey Results: Age and gender distributions were very similar to 2006 survey results. From a residency perspective, 2012 results more representative of all regions of the county. In 2006, response rate from western Cumberland County was very limited.

Livable Communities Public Participation Results

One observed survey trend was a consistently lower ranking for the creation of Livable Communities category even though these fundamental ideas are inherent to the other higher ranking categories. It is unclear if these elements were least desired or if they were simply not clearly understood by survey respondents. In an attempt to more clearly focus the goals and objectives of the plan, the Livable Communities category was removed as a separate element of the 2013 Land Partnerships Plan. Relevant issues previously found in the separate Livable Communities element were consolidated into one of the remaining three elements. Additionally, some of the Livable Communities topic areas, such as historic preservation and transportation, are already adequately addressed in the County Comprehensive Plan.



Overall Public Participation Findings

The following public participation findings are derived from a comprehensive analysis of all of the public participation components:

- Farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways remain important issues for the residents of Cumberland County.
- More needs to be done to address farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways.
- Natural resource protection ranks as the number one priority among the three topic areas of the plan. Farmland preservation and parks, trails and greenways rank similarly as a second priority area.
- Water quality is a critical issue underlying the natural resource protection element.
- There is a strong demand for additional walking and biking paths that connect people with destinations. Trails should be designed for transportation, recreation and fitness.
- The need for additional parkland varies by community. Some communities have adequate facilities, while others are underserved. Maintenance of existing facilities is critical.
- The current amount of farmland in the county appears adequate, but there is a concern about future loss of farmland and agricultural heritage to development pressures. Access to local food is an important issue.
- Respondents indicate there is too much development, particularly warehousing and trucking facilities, and emphasis should be placed on redevelopment and reuse of vacant or underutilized sites.
- Respondents support public financing of farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails and greenways and indicate a willingness to pay more to finance these initiatives.
- Education on the benefits and threats to agriculture, natural resources and parks, trails and greenways must be continually conveyed to the residents, stakeholders and government officials.



Steering Committee Meeting