

HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP LAND USE SUMMIT

Friday, July 30, 2004

9:00AM

The Hilltown Township Land Use Summit was held on Friday, July 30, 2004 at 9:00AM at the Pearl S. Buck Foundation located on Dublin Road in Hilltown Township.

Those in attendance included: Richard J. Manfredi, Supervisor
George C. Egly, Vice-Chairperson
Lynda S. Seimes, Township Secretary
Lynn Bush, Bucks County Planning Commission
David Sebastian, Bucks County Planning Commission
Kris Kern, Bucks County Planning Commission
Tim Koehler, Bucks County Planning Commission
Steve Brown, London Grove Twp. Manager

Other attendees from the general public and invited participants included State Representative Katharine Watson, Harry Mason - resident, Bob Grunmeier - Hilltown Fire Company, Dan Kell - Hilltown Park and Recreation Board, Jack Fox - Hilltown Planning Commission, Dave Shafkowitz - Elliott Building Group, Jim Sensinger - resident, Robert H. Grunmeier - Bucks County Planning Commission, Chris Canavan - W.B. Homes, John Kachline - resident, Mike Beatrice - Hilltown Planning Commission, Ralph Carp - resident, Thomas Lowden - Silverdale Fire Company, Frank Beck - Hilltown Authority, Jim Groff - Hilltown Authority, Jane Thompson-Smith - Morning Call Newspaper, Tony Bellitto - North Penn Water Authority, Pete Henning - THP, Mark Phipps - Deep Run Valley Sports Association, Chuck Kulesza - Hilltown Planning Commission, Joe Marino - resident, Jack McIlhinney - Hilltown Landowners Association, Frank Buschman - Buschman and Johnson, Kenneth Beer - Hilltown Planning Commission, Doug Sanders - Barness Organization, Sam Costanzo - Van Cleef Engineering, Marilyn Teed - resident, Timothy Browning - Hilltown Zoning Hearing Board, Richard Kirk - Realtor, Charlie Moyer - Hilltown Open Space Committee, D. Brooke Rush - Hilltown Planning Commission, Ann Wright - resident, Dave Callahan - McGrath Homes, Sandy Williamson - Hilltown Open Space Committee, Pat Lester - Intelligencer Newspaper, Mark Funk - resident, Wayne Johnson - Pickering, Corts and Summerson Engineering, Scott and Jeanne Brickajlik - residents, Phyllis Antunes - resident, Rohert Bender - Heritage Building Group, Cindy and Lawrence Owen - residents, Carolyn Jom - resident, Terence Ostrowski - Borton-Lawson Engineering, and Joe Miketta - resident.

A. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: The Land Use Summit was called to order by Supervisor Manfredi at 9:08 AM, at which time he welcomed those in attendance and introduced the facilitators and guest speakers. Supervisor Manfredi provided the format for the day, which included presentations and discussion groups, followed by a recap of the days events. Remarks were then made by State Representative

Katharine Watson and Lynn Bush, Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission.

B. PRESENTATIONS: The following presentations were made –

- Mrs. Lynn Bush, Executive Director of the Bucks County Planning Commission presented “Hilltown’s Future – Facts and Success Stories.”
- Mr. David Sebastian, Bucks County Planning Commission presented “Tools and Techniques for Good Development.”
- Ms. Kris Kern, Bucks County Planning Commission presented “Hilltown Township Development Examples.”
- Mr. Steve Brown, Manager of London Grove Township, presented “Conservation Development Methods: The Municipal Perspective.”

C. DISCUSSION GROUPS: The invited guests were assigned to participate in the discussion groups with respect to developing vision and identifying community assets; teams assigned as noted below:

Yellow Team: Chuck Kulcsza, Tom Lowden, Frank Beck, Doug Sanders, and Frank Buschman

Blue Team: Jack Fox, Charles Moyer, Tim Browning, Dave Shafkowicz, and Bob Grunmeier.

Pink Team: D. Brooke Rush, Henry Rosenberger, Dan Kell, Jim Groff, Mark Phipps, and Chris Canavan.

Green Team: Ken Beer, Pete Henning, Sandy Williamson, Mike Beatrice, Bob Grunmeier, Jr., Bob Bender, and Jack McIlhinney.

Each team was provided with the following scenario: “It is the year 2020. During the past 15 years, the Township has undergone significant changes as more people move into the Township. Which of the following would best describe your ideal vision for the shape of the community in 2020?”

- a. New development is concentrated in the northwestern quadrant of the Township, around Silverdale, Perkasio, Sellersville, and Telford. Development includes single family housing as well as some other housing types in a suburban density and setting.

Outlying areas have remained open in traditional farming, natural areas, or new types of agriculture (sod, nursery crops, etc.) that are economically viable. No "open space" is contained within the new developments although recreation areas are provided in proximity to residents.

- b. New development occurs throughout the Township in the form of new subdivisions. Housing is single-family detached. Lots are between 1 and 3 acres in size. All the land is contained within the individual lots, with mowed lawns and recreation provided on each homeowners' property. Developments are scattered.
- c. New development occurs throughout the Township in the form of new "conservation subdivisions." Open space is provided within each development to achieve a specific goal. Open space could be to protect critical natural features (streams, hillsides), to preserve views from the roads, to protect historic areas and buildings, to provide recreation, or to preserve farmland for viable agriculture. Open space would be substantial and meaningful, not leftover slivers of unusual land.
- d. New development would be concentrated in a new community in an area (or areas) designated by the Township. It would be in the form of a traditional neighborhood development. A mix of housing types would be provided, along with community services and facilities typical of a downtown (think Newtown, Perkasie, Doylestown). There would be a Main Street, sidewalks, activities, a town center. Development could occur only if development rights were transferred into the new community, so that rural landowners could get the value of their land.

1. Blue Team – The Blue Team recommended conservation development and town center development. They felt that the current Ordinance requirements in Hilltown Township are not effective. The group believes that planning, not density, should drive decisions, and that clear direction from the Township with regard to the planning process is required for the Township and developer to work together. Their recommendation for development would be to configure a development site plan so that dwellings are blocked from view of the street.

2. Pink Team – The Pink Team recommended conservation development and town center development to protect natural resources. They also recommended promotion of more regional planning and transferring development to other areas of the

municipality. The Pink Team felt that promoting open space, greenways, and affordable housing were important. They believe that better cooperation and communication between the Township and the developer should be encouraged during the development process, and stressed the preservation of Hilltown Township's unique natural resources.

3. Yellow Team – The Yellow Team favored conservation subdivisions in order to protect the Township's natural, historical and agricultural resources. They expressed safety concerns with the conservation development with respect to emergency resources access to cul-de-sac streets. The Yellow Team felt that there needed to be a shared commitment once the vision of the Township has been agreed upon, and every effort should be made to implement that vision in all levels of municipal government. They also felt that option b was desirable for privacy, however they felt it would not be a wise choice for long-term planning. With respect to option d, the Yellow Team wondered if this type of development would be appropriate for Hilltown Township and felt that the areas around Silverdale and Dublin could be explored for possible mixed use development. The Yellow Team felt that the Township needed to identify its resources and determine their prioritization for protection.

4. Green Team – The Green Team favored a mixture of option c and d, with a more defined resource protection area. They suggested that perhaps more intense development should occur near the villages and Silverdale/Dublin Boroughs. The Green Team expressed concern with property values versus good community development, and hoped to retain value for both. They also agreed with the concepts as presented by Mr. Brown concerning conservation development, and felt that more flexible regulations with regard to impervious surface regulations for individual lots should be considered. The Green Team suggested additional input from emergency services would be helpful during the planning process.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Mr. Mike Beatrice of the Hilltown Planning Commission felt the Land Use Forum was an informative event, and suggested that newer Hilltown residents, those who moved to the Township within the past 5 to 10 years, should be represented so that their perspectives could be considered.

2. Mr. Dan Kell of the Hilltown Park and Recreation Board asked Mr. Brown if London Grove Township experienced any difficulties with changing their planning process to a conservation development design permitted by right, with conventional development only permitted by Conditional Use. Mr. Brown was not present during the time of the change in the planning process, however it appears that there were no major difficulties experienced, and developers seem to be very receptive to the idea of conservation development as the norm.

3. Mrs. Marilyn Teed of Mill Road commented that many new residents have "little city" attitudes, which tend to foster more regulations imposed by the Township. She suggested that studies be conducted as to how people are affected by their environment and way of life. It appears to Mrs. Teed that conservation development places greater importance on trees and other natural resources, rather than on people

4. Mr. Jim Sensinger of Rt. 113 noted that Hilltown Township has no plan in place for addressing the development and subdivision of a large tract of land with a few lots at a time over several years, rather than the development of the entire parcel at one time. Mr. Sensinger believes the Planning Commission should be more willing to compromise with respect to granting waivers for certain requirements in order to make it more economically feasible for residents to subdivide on a smaller scale.

5. Mr. Dan Kell of the Hilltown Park and Recreation Board feels that the Township recently experienced a steamroller effect when it comes to development and suggested that the development process somehow be slowed to become more manageable.

6. Mr. Dave Shafkowitz of the Elliott Building Group commented that the development process in Hilltown Township is painstakingly slow, noting that it recently took almost 2 ½ years for his firm to go through the development process for a 10-lot subdivision.

Supervisor Manfredi suggested that it might be helpful for Supervisors and other Township boards to actually walk the site along with the developer prior to a subdivision being submitted. Mr. D. Brooke Rush of the Hilltown Planning Commission disagreed, noting that being a member of a volunteer Township board or commission has become a thankless job, and he would not be willing to add another meeting to his already busy schedule, which would take additional time away from his family.

7. Mrs. Phyllis Antunes suggested that the Township make it easier and more economically feasible for an average citizen to go through the subdivision process for a small development.

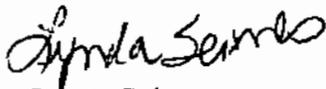
8. Mrs. Marilyn Teed of Mill Road stated that since 1995, Township residents have supported the implementation of a Traffic Impact Study Committee, however it does not appear that the Supervisors are willing to do so. She also noted that many of the comments expressed today have been made to the Board time and time again with no response. She commended Supervisor Manfredi for scheduling this Land Use Summit and hopes that the Supervisors will continue to move forward with more public involvement in the municipal process.

9. Ms. Sandy Williamson of the Hilltown Open Space Committee encouraged the Township to move forward with Supervisor Manfredi's suggestion for a Town Meeting to discuss in greater depth the dialogue that was generated from today's summit, and suggested that a Town Meeting be vigorously promoted through the Township newsletter, website, and local media.

10. Mr. Joe Marino of Redwing Road feels that the reason the Township is being developed so rapidly is because of the philosophy promoted by several past and present Township boards, committees and commissions that Hilltown Township wants to halt development. Because of these statements, Mr. Marino believes many residents do not trust that they will be able to develop their property in the future. He encouraged the Board of Supervisors to leave their personal agendas regarding development out of the decision making process.

E. ADJOURNMENT: Supervisor Manfredi felt that the Land Use Summit was a positive step toward responsible growth management for Hilltown Township. He thanked the Pearl S. Buck Foundation for the use of their facilities, thanked Wawa for providing lunch, and thanked those in attendance who had given generously of their time to participate in today's events. The Land Use Summit was adjourned at 1:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynda Seimes
Township Secretary