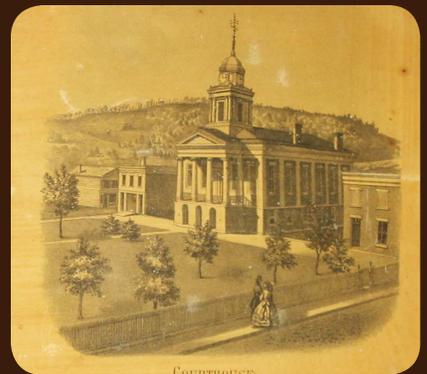


Interrelationship of Plan Components



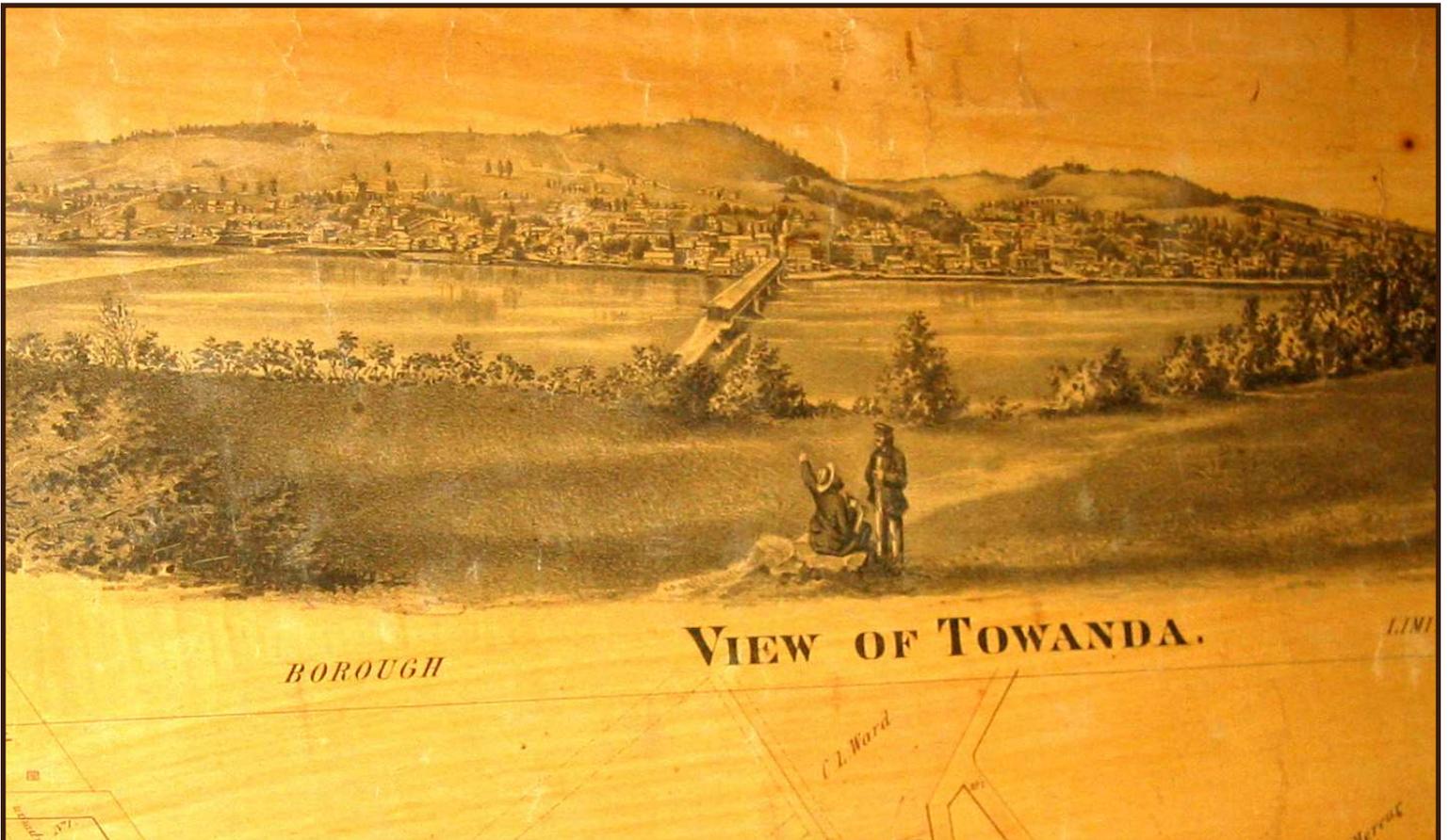
Interrelationship of Plan Components

Each of the plan components of the Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use, Future Transportation, Community Facilities and Services Plan, Housing Plan, Natural and Historic Resources Plan, the Plan for Economic Development, Plan Effect on Adjacent Municipalities and Plan Implementation has been drafted with consideration of their interrelationship. Each plan component has been created from the Goals and Objectives statements and based upon history and identified community assets. Taken individually the plan components can be implemented to some extent. However, collectively they can create the maximum benefit for the region.

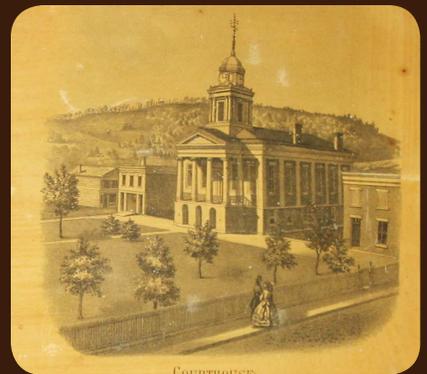
The details enumerated under the preceding plan components in many cases overlap, thus providing perspective from land use, transportation, community facilities, natural, cultural and historic and economic viewpoints. When considered in total they make up a comprehensive outlook on the future of the Central Bradford region.



Advisory Committee Work Session in Towanda Township Building



Plan Effect on Adjacent Municipalities



Plan Effect on Adjacent Municipalities

A review of the land use recommendations in place for adjoining municipalities was conducted as part of the Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan. Those municipalities included Asylum, Monroe, Franklin, Burlington, Ulster, Sheshequin and Wysox Townships. In addition a review of the future land use recommendation of the Bradford County Comprehensive Plan will be provided.

Asylum Township

Asylum Township developed a Comprehensive Plan during 2003. The portion of the western border of this Township adjoining Towanda Township is designated as either Forested or Agriculture in their plan. The adjoining portion of the Central Bradford region includes the designations of Agriculture or Rural Residential. This area, known as Tip Top or the Ellis Hill and Kingsley Hill Road area is suitable for either low density residential, agriculture or forest land use depending on local soil conditions and topography.

Monroe Township

Monroe Township has its northern border in common with Towanda Township's southern boundary. Although there is no township comprehensive plan, an indication of future land use can be obtained from the Bradford County Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2004. The majority of the boundary area for Monroe Township is Rural Resource Production in the County Comprehensive Plan, a designation which is essentially the same as the Agriculture designation which predominates along the southern Towanda Township Boundary. However, an exception does apply for that portion of Towanda Township between Route 220 and the railroad. This area, designated as Manufacturing/Commercial /Services in Towanda Township meets the Rural Resource Production in Monroe Township. However, existing land use is typically commercial in nature in this portion of Monroe Township.

Burlington Township

Burlington Township, its eastern border adjoining the western boundary of both Towanda and North Towanda Townships, has the same Rural Resource Production category derived from the County Comprehensive Plan as does Monroe Township. This category is compatible for the entire common boundary with the Agriculture designation in the Central Bradford County Comprehensive Plan.

Ulster Township

Ulster Township lies to the north of North Towanda Township. The Township adopted a comprehensive plan in 2004 that includes the same Rural Resource Production concept in common with the County Comprehensive Plan. For North Towanda two designations are

found along its northwestern boundary, including Agriculture and Rural Residential. These categories closely align with the Rural Resource Production concept found in the Ulster Township Comprehensive Plan.

Sheshequin Township

Sheshequin Township lies to the northeast of North Towanda along their common boundary at the Susquehanna River. As the river forms a major natural barrier the issue of future land use compatibility is somewhat diminished. However, the designations in North Towanda (heading north to south) include Rural Residential, Commercial & Services and Agriculture. On the eastern bank of the river the designations Conservation/Natural Resource Preservation and Residential Growth are found. The topography greatly influences these designations on both sides of the river. The “development” categories for North Towanda are on high bluffs overlooking the river. Likewise, the Residential Growth area in Sheshequin is a river bluff area that is readily accessible via the James Street Bridge crossing of the Susquehanna River. The North Towanda side also includes the mouth of Sugar Creek and associated floodplain areas.

Wysox Township

Wysox Township shares frontage along the Susquehanna River with all three Towandas. Its land area opposite North Towanda and the northern 2/3's of the Borough is a cliff that runs abruptly to the river. This land feature is part of the picturesque natural setting of the Towanda area. The future land use designation from the County Comprehensive Plan in this area is Rural Resource Production. The cliff terminates in the vicinity of the old Towanda river bridge at which point the designation from the County plan changes to the Town category. Wysox Township has significant commercial, industrial and residential land uses along this portion of the Route 6 corridor leading to and from the Borough. The portion of Towanda Township that is opposite Wysox Township is a major floodplain area that includes the mouth of Towanda Creek. The future land use designation for this area is Agriculture.

Compatibility with the Bradford County Comprehensive Plan

The County Comprehensive Plan uses the designations Town, Rural Resource Production and Resource Preservation in the Central Bradford region. The future land uses designations for Central Bradford align to the county designations as follows:

Town - includes Central Bradford designations:

- Central Business District
- Manufacturing/Commercial/Services
- Industrial
- Residential

Rural Resource Production – includes Central Bradford designations:

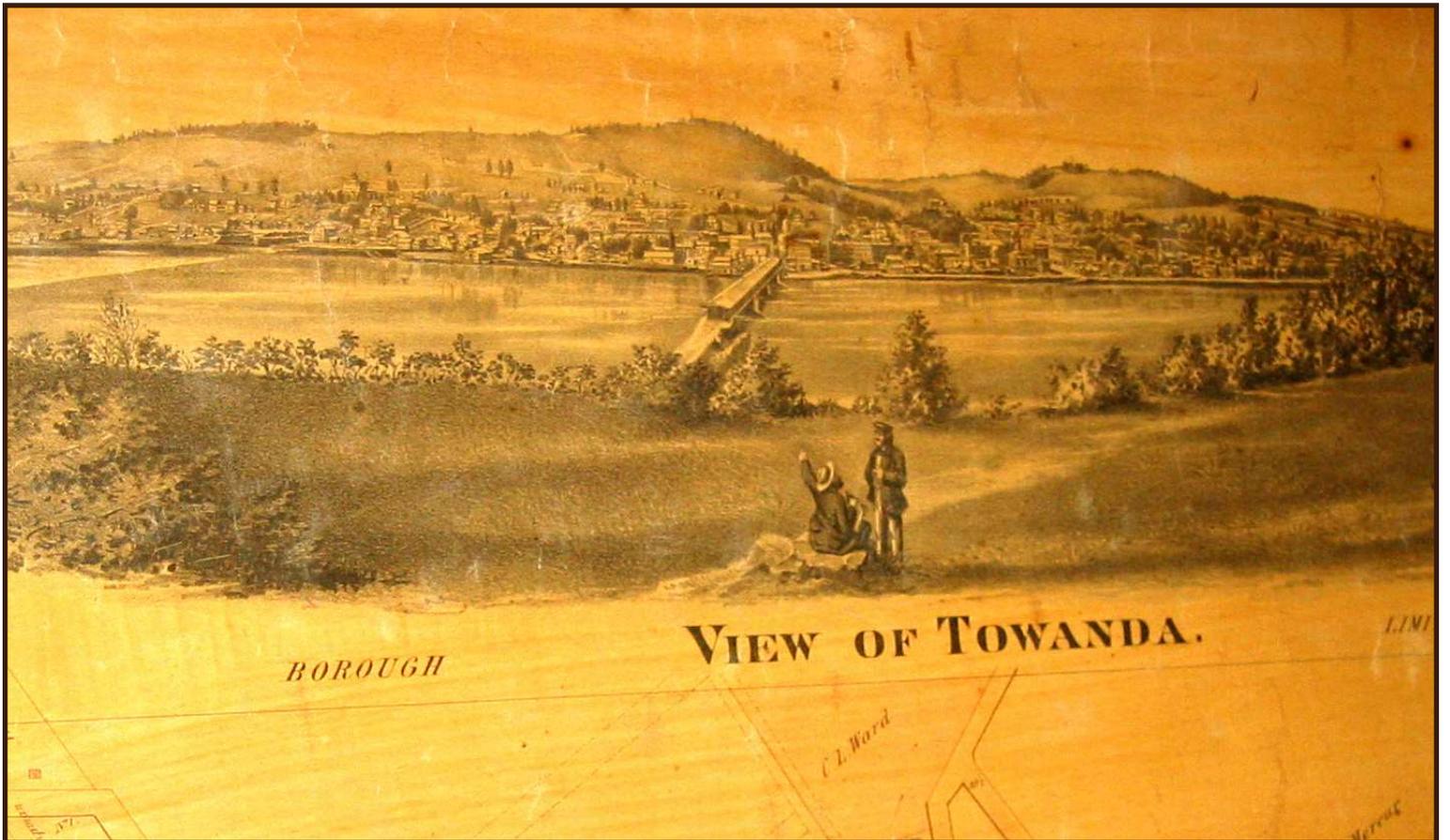
Rural Residential
Agriculture

Resource Preservation – includes Central Bradford designation:

Agriculture



Sugar Creek Floodplain, North Towanda Township



Plan Implementation



Plan Implementation

The preparation and adoption of a Comprehensive Plan is only the first step in the municipal planning process available to Pennsylvania municipalities under Act 247 (Municipalities Planning Code). The Comprehensive Plan is principally advisory in nature and does not have an enforcement mechanism in a legal sense. Additional steps in the planning process are involved in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

The foregoing plan components have an extensive list of policies and actions that can be pursued by the region. However, this section on implementation will focus on several priority planning initiatives.

Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan

The municipalities of the Central Bradford region should proceed with adoption of the Comprehensive Plan which involves the following steps:

- Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is by the governing bodies of the regions three municipalities. The legal authority for plan adoption is found in § 302 of the Municipalities Planning Code.
- Prior to plan adoption the planning agencies (Planning Commission or Planning Committee) shall hold at least one public meeting on the proposed plan.
- Prior to acting on the plan the governing body shall consider the comments of the county planning agency, contiguous municipalities, school districts within the region as well as the public meeting comments and recommendation from the planning agency. The county planning agency, contiguous municipalities and school districts waive their right to comment if they do not respond within 45 days of receipt of their copy of the plan.
- The governing body shall hold at least one public hearing pursuant to public notice.
- In the event there are substantial revisions to the plan as a result of the public hearing or based on input received from the county planning agency, contiguous municipalities or school districts another public hearing shall be required.
- Adoption of the comprehensive plan shall be by resolution carried by the affirmative votes of not less than the majority of the members of the governing body.

Subdivision and Land Development Regulations

The municipalities of the Central Bradford region are encouraged to prepare and adopt or update the land use regulation known as subdivision and land development. Article V of the Municipalities Planning Code authorizes a municipality to enact this type of regulation which governs the creation of new lots (subdivision) and site plans for commercial development (land development).

A Subdivision and Land Development (SLD) Ordinance affords the municipality the opportunity to insure that new development is achieved consistent with sound engineering design and proper survey and land records. The procedures involved in SLD regulations insure that developers satisfy their obligations to the municipality and to future lot owners concerning development related improvements. SLD Ordinances typically contain standards for lots, easement, streets, curbs, sidewalks, storm water facilities, landscaping, sewer and water utilities.

An important feature of SLD controls is for the developer or property owner to understand the municipality's expectations of him prior to initiating project construction. This allows the developer to plan a budget for the project in advance, thus avoiding development related pitfalls which may adversely impact both the developer and the municipality. Poorly planned development will frequently cause long term problems for the property owner and the municipality and are frequently expensive to correct.

The following are the Pennsylvania definitions for Subdivision and Land Development. They are unique to Pennsylvania based on the Municipalities Planning Code.

Subdivision: The division or re-division of a lot, tract, or parcel of land by any means into two or more lots, tracts, parcels or other divisions of land including changes in existing lot lines for the purpose, whether immediate or future, of lease, partition by the court for distribution to heirs or devisees, transfer of ownership or building development: Provided, however, that the subdivision by lease of land for agricultural purposes into parcels of more than ten acres, not involving any new streets or easements of access or any residential dwelling, shall be exempted.

Land Development: (1) The improvement of one lot or two or more contiguous lots, tracts or parcels of land for any purpose involving:

(i) a group of two or more residential or nonresidential buildings, whether proposed initially or cumulatively, or a single nonresidential building on a lot or lots regardless of the number of occupants or tenure: or

(ii) the division or allocation of land or space whether initially or cumulatively, between or among two or more existing or prospective occupants by means of, or, for the purpose of streets, common areas, leaseholds, condominiums, building groups or other features.

(2) a subdivision of land.

In Bradford County there is an existing county Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. When this type of regulation is adopted at the municipal level the county ordinance is superseded by the local municipal ordinance which is the case in North Towanda Township and Towanda Borough. There are pros and cons to handling this authority at the local versus county government level. Typically the local government planning commission is involved in ordinance administration resulting in a meaningful role for this body. A municipal planning commission is comprised of citizen members from the community who would be expected to have extensive knowledge of their area, a plus to enforcement of the regulations. However some municipalities may not welcome the responsibility of enforcing another set the regulations, they may prefer to leave this responsibility at the county level.

Zoning Regulations

The other fundamental type of land use regulations available to Pennsylvania municipalities is the authority to regulate how land is utilized. This authority is granted under Article VI of the Municipalities Planning Code. Typically a zoning ordinance will divide the municipality into zones based on land features and past development trends. Zoning regulations establish the variety of uses or development options available for the lots situated in a given zoning district. Zoning regulations are perhaps the best tool available to help guide the future growth and development of a municipality and are the chief method for implementing a Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Plan recommendations outlined in the front of this chapter can serve as a framework for updating or developing zoning districts for the Central Bradford region. The future land use categories include:

- Agriculture
- Rural Residential
- Residential
- Town Residential
- Public Lands & Parks
- Central Business District
- Commercial & Services
- Manufacturing

Joint Municipal Zoning

A recent amendment to the Municipalities Planning Code authorizes the development of zoning regulations on a multi-municipal basis. Article VIII-A – Joint Municipal Zoning is the enabling legislation for this approach. The two principal advantages to the municipality under joint municipal zoning deal with manpower and the distribution of land use across the region. If the three municipalities of the Central Bradford Region were to establish such an approach the manpower (zoning hearing board, solicitor and

zoning officer) required to administer the program could be spread across the three municipalities. Section 815-A of the MPC authorizes either the use of a joint zoning hearing board or individual zoning hearing boards for each of the participating municipalities under the joint ordinance.

The second advantage under joint municipal zoning is the ability to distribute land uses across the entire region. Under conventional (single municipality zoning) a municipality is expected to accommodate each land use that would be reasonably expected to occur in the municipality including such unpopular uses as landfill or quarries. With joint municipal zoning the land use distribution could be across the entire region rather than in each municipality, potentially reducing exposure to the unpopular uses. This feature may especially be an advantage for a region with a great variety in terms of land use character as is the case in the Central Bradford region. For example a municipality with significant rural land area may be a more logical location for a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). With joint municipal zoning the remaining municipalities of the region would not be required to plan for this use. A model cooperative agreement is included in the Appendix.

The joint municipal zoning approach offers significant advantages as well as one chief disadvantage. The joint municipal zoning concept can falter in the event that the land use policy goals of one municipality become inconsistent over time with the regional plan or should personality conflicts arise. Section 808-A of the MPC does allow a municipality to withdraw from or repeal a joint municipal zoning ordinance, but only after a minimum of 3 years has passed following enactment of joint municipal zoning.

Historic Districts

A specialized planning tool, Historic Districts are of particular interest to the Borough due to their exceptional resources in this regard. Under Pennsylvania and Federal law there are two authorized approaches to Historic Districts.

National Register Historic District

Towanda Borough has been granted this status by the U.S. Department of Interior. The land area of the district is shown as an overlay on the Future Land Use Map. The concept of a National Register district is largely honorary or advisory and does not involve regulations or restrictions on property owners of buildings within the district. A possible advantage of the National Register district may involve federal income tax credits or accelerated depreciation benefits for commercial property owners. At this time there are no similar benefits available for owners of residential structures.

Undoubtedly the chief value of a National Register Historic District is to instill pride in owners of the Borough's historic structures and to motivate building maintenance and alterations in appropriate historic character. In this regard an ideal role for the Borough is to develop educational resources for property owners who are dealing with maintenance and restoration issues. Examples of such resources could include design guidelines,

modern building material suggestion lists, sources of materials and contacts for renovation specialists and contractors.

Historic Architectural Review Board District (HARB)

A specialized application of the zoning authority under the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), an Historic Architectural Review Board District utilizes a zoning ordinance map overlay to stipulate that all exterior building alterations within the overlay area be reviewed and approved by the municipality. The specific provisions of the MPC that authorize this approach include Sections 603(a)(2) and 605(2)(vi) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, July 31, P.L. 805, No. 247, Art. VI, as amended [53 P.S. §§ 10603(a)(2) and 10605(2)(vi)].

A HARB district involves a regulatory approach as compared to the advisory nature of the National Register District. The regulatory mechanism is an Historic Architectural Review Board that considers the proposed building alteration as part of the zoning and building code process and issues a “Certificate of Appropriateness” for the proposal. The HARB board is usually comprised of an architect, a building contractor, a realtor and additional borough residents with historic preservation expertise. In some municipalities the Borough Council has maintained a final approval authority with the Certificate of Appropriateness. However, the HARB is the body primarily responsible for screening applications and hearing presentations from property owners. This advanced level of regulation also requires close coordination with the other municipal code departments.

Design Guidelines

A previous reference to Design Guidelines was mentioned in the paragraph concerning the National Register Historic District. Increasingly municipalities are undertaking an approach involving design guidelines that may have a broader application to the Central Bradford region beyond the Borough’s Historic District. Residential district or commercial district design guidelines could be prepared for inclusion in a municipal zoning ordinance. These guidelines would typically be less specific and have broader application than historic district design guidelines. The goal of any design guidelines is to promote compatibility and good building design to the benefit of the overall community. Guidelines that are unique to the community based on the existing building character are utilized in this approach.



Gateway Sign at East End of Veterans Memorial Bridge

Community Gateways

Providing attractive “gateways” to the community is not a new idea, although it is a concept that is increasing in popularity in communities all over Pennsylvania. The Borough has already employed the concept at the north east corner of the intersection of Main St. and Route 6. A community gateway plan could employ similar gateways

typically involving signage and landscaping on a regional basis at appropriate “front doors” to the community to promote a greater sense of community identity.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

Intergovernmental cooperation is a long established idea that is being enthusiastically supported by our state government as a solution to the high cost and fragmentation of government services. When set up properly this concept has great potential to yield benefits from the economies of scale while still maintaining adequate local management and influence. Cooperation can occur in many areas of governmental operations including joint purchasing, equipment sharing, utility systems, recreation and emergency services. In the context of this Comprehensive Plan, the idea of regional plan implementation is an intriguing idea that has advantages as touted under the Joint Municipal Zoning section above. As development patterns frequently extend across municipal boundaries, and the Towanda region is an excellent example of this, a regional approach can result in a better overall community development pattern. There can also be the advantage of shared administration of land use regulation administration.

The tool of intergovernmental cooperation has recently been sharpened up by state government with amendments to both the Municipalities Planning Code and the Intergovernmental Cooperation Law. The Central Bradford Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee expended a substantial amount of time exploring this concept although no definitive conclusion was reached regarding its application. However, a model agreement, including guidelines and an authorizing ordinance are included in the Appendix.