

ACTION PROGRAM

The following table summarizes the major recommendations of this Plan. Certain items are recommended as high priorities. The timing of each recommendation is listed, as well which agencies should have the primary responsibility to carry out the recommendation.

NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at end of this table)
Encourage landowners to join Agricultural Security Areas to make more land eligible for easement purchase and to protect farmers against nuisance challenges.		Short-range	Supervisors, PC, property-owners, Conservation District.
Encourage additional landowners to apply for the County for purchase of the right to develop their farmland. Link individual property-owners with persons who can provide advise about ways to use tax incentives to help keep land open.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC, property-owners.
<i>To promote voluntary land preservation, strongly encourage the School District to approve use of State Act 4 of 2006. This law allows the real estate taxes to be frozen by the School District and the Township if the land has been permanently preserved. (Forks Township and Northampton County have already approved this program, but approval is needed by the School District before the freeze can become effective). If this program moves forward, Forks Township should then publicize its availability to encourage property-owners to consider preservation options.</i>	✓	Short-term	Supervisors, School Board.
Seek additional sources of funding to supplement the existing State-County agricultural preservation program, including to preserve land that is less likely to be funded under the existing program, or to provide funds to supplement County offers. This could include asking Township voters to approve an 0.25% increase in <i>the earned</i> income tax, with all of the proceeds used for land preservation.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors and PC
Apply for State grants that can be matched with County open space acquisition funds to preserve key areas of open space or public recreation land.		Continuous	Supervisors, PC, Twp. Staff

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at end of this table)
<p>Refine the FP zoning district provisions to place a stronger emphasis on maintaining productive agricultural land. Consider an optional transfer of development rights to have developers pay to permanently preserve large areas of land..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote use of the cluster option in the FP district. Near active farms, where proposed open space would not be suitable for agriculture, then use it as a buffer between new homes and farms. - Make sure that any preserved open space is designed to serve a valuable public purpose, as opposed to being leftover land of little value. 	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC, property-owners.
<p>In agricultural areas, continue to permit a range of accessory activities that allow opportunities for supplemental income for farmers on larger tracts of land. These are known as “Farm-Based Businesses.”</p>	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, & PC, Property-owners
<p>Maintain reasonable controls on very intense Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, particularly to include large setbacks from creeks feeding into public water supplies and concentrations of existing homes. Recognize that State law limits the ability of a township to over-regulate agricultural activities.</p>	✓	Continuous	Supervisors and PC
<p>Use development regulations to protect important natural features, particularly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limit the intensity of development of steeply sloped lands. - Require building and paving setbacks from streams to protect water quality and fishing habitats, and encourage landowners to maintain thick vegetation and trees along creeks. - Carry out the Best Management Practices in stormwater management, including to protect water quality and encourage recharge into the groundwater. - Maintain a minimum setback from wetlands and require wetland studies whenever a development site is suspected of including wetlands. - Continue to minimize sinkhole risks. 	✓	Continuous	Supervisors and PC
<p>To protect water quality and fish habitats, carefully enforce State regulations on erosion control through on-site inspections.</p>	✓	Short-range	Supervisors, PC
<p>Minimize unnecessary removal of trees during construction, and make sure temporary fencing is used to avoid damage to tree trunks and root systems.</p>	✓	Short-range	Supervisors, PC

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at end of this table)
Continue to prohibit most new buildings from the 100 year floodplain along the river and creeks, and require studies by developers where there is any question that an unmapped floodplain may exist.		On-going	Supervisors, PC, property-owners
Seek Federal Floodplain Mitigation funds to offer to buy and remove the most flood-prone buildings and turn the land into permanent open space. In some cases, this may open up opportunities to reduce sharp curves in roads and reduce the costs of public sewage extensions. This type of action may also help implement a set of greenways throughout the County.		Mid-range	Supervisors, PC, property-owners, business owners, LVPC
Continue to use mandatory dedication provisions in the subdivision ordinance to require dedication of open space or payment of recreation fees as part of major new residential developments.		Short-range	Supervisors, PC, property-owners
Establish a volunteer Environmental Advisory Council to recommend ways to preserve the environment, such as ways to increase recycling.		Short-range	Supervisors

LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at end of this table)
Emphasize business development in the Employment Center zoning district and seek major road improvements to make business areas more accessible to major employers.	✓	Short-term	Supervisors, PennDOT.
Seek the permanent preservation of most of the environmentally sensitive lands along the Bushkill Creek and Delaware River, with the eventual conversion of existing commercial parking into public parking and access points along the Bushkill Creek.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at end of this table)
Continue to use zoning regulations to provide disincentives and incentives that direct most housing away from areas planned for agricultural preservation and important natural areas.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC.
Avoid the creation of new strip commercial areas along major roads. Concentrate most commercial uses within existing commercial areas or within business parks with interior access.		Continuous	Supervisors, PC
Periodically review the zoning ordinance to make sure that all desirable types of businesses are allowed in appropriate business zoning districts. Hold requirements for special zoning approvals to a reasonable minimum, minimize business lot sizes, and minimize setbacks between adjacent businesses. These steps are important to promote economic development, increase tax revenues to the school district and widen choices for close-to-home employment.		Short-range	Supervisors, PC.
Continue to carefully control the types and locations of intense business uses near neighborhoods. This particularly includes gas stations, 24 hour stores, adult uses and similar uses that may cause nuisances for neighboring homes.	✓	Short-range	Supervisors, PC
Carefully control heavier industrial uses through zoning ordinance requirements. Require "special exception" approval by the zoning hearing board for industrial uses that may generate significant hazards or nuisances.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC, ZHB
Work with adjacent municipalities to ensure that compatible land uses and road patterns are in place across municipal borders. Provide adjacent municipalities with an opportunity to comment upon proposed zoning amendments and major development plans that may have impacts across municipal borders.		Short-range	Supervisors, PCs, Adj. Mun.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
<p>Work with developers, realtors and economic development groups to publicize opportunities for new business development in designated areas of the Township, particularly to attract employers that will provide wages and benefits that can support a family. Appoint a Township representative to serve as a liason to businesses considering a location in Forks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take advantage of the Wall Street West initiative to encourage back office space and backup facilities for businesses located in the New York metropolitan area. 	✓	Continuous	LVEDC, developers, property-owners, Supervisors, Chamber of Commerce
<p>Encourage residents and businesses to “buy local” and make local businesses aware of opportunities to bid on Township purchases.</p>		Continuous	Merchants, Chamber of Commerce, Twp. Staff.
<p>Prepare an information package and webpages that stress the advantages of locating a business within Forks.</p>		Continuous	Twp. Staff, LVEDC.
<p>Make sure that the development approval process for allowed businesses in business areas is as streamlined as is reasonable, while avoiding unnecessary delays.</p>		Continuous	Supervisors, PC, Twp. Staff.
<p>Review development regulations to make sure they do not overburden businesses with any unnecessary costs, and to minimize the need for special approvals that may create excessive opportunities for legal challenges.</p>		Continuous	PC, Property-owners, Chamber of Commerce

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Identify the most important historic buildings that are worthy of preservation. Enact zoning provisions to require special zoning approval by the Supervisors or zoning hearing board before demolition is allowed. This alternative would not regulate architecture or routine changes to buildings.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC, Historical society
Provide information to owners to older buildings to promote sensitive rehabilitation and to increase their awareness of the significance of their buildings. Promote greater interest in the region's history and historic buildings.		Continuous	Twp. Staff, Historical society
Add zoning incentives to promote the preservation of historic buildings. This could include allowing certain uses within restored historic buildings that otherwise would not be allowed in the zoning district. For example, a restored historic building in a residential district might be allowed to be used as an office or bed and breakfast inn.		Short-range	Supervisors, PC

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Work with PennDOT to resolve traffic congestion bottlenecks and traffic safety problems (as described in plan text). Seek funding through the 12 Year Plan to resolve traffic problems in the region.	✓	Continuous	PennDOT, Co. Planning, Supervisors.
Design residential streets to discourage use by through-traffic, limit truck traffic on residential streets where feasible, and improve major roads to relieve congestion so traffic will not be diverted to residential streets.		Continuous	PennDOT, Supervisors, PC, Adj. Mun.
Adopt an "Official Map" to design locations where additional land will be needed to improve existing roads or to build new road connections. This type of Official Map allows a municipality to reserve land for improvements for a limited period of time.		On-going	Supervisors, PC
Require developers to improve immediately adjacent segments of roads, road widening, turn lanes and providing shoulders. Emphasize well-marked shoulders improvements along heavily traveled roads to: provide a safety factor (particularly in snowy and icy conditions), provide for mail deliveries, allow room for bicyclists and pedestrians, and allow room for farm equipment.		Continuous	PennDOT, Supervisors, PC
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access and encourage greater use of public transit, and construction of additional park and ride lots to promote carpooling.		Continuous	PennDOT, LVPC, Supervisors, Adj. Mun.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Improve existing parks and playgrounds, particularly to develop the new Township Park on Newlins Road East. Seek to make best use of school district facilities, and investigate opportunities for parks next to schools that can be shared by the public and school students. Concentrate most active recreation at a few sites.		Continuous	Supervisors, Recreation Commission
Provide trail links that will connect to regional trails along the Bushkill Creek (which is planned to connect to the Appalachian Trail and the Lehigh River trails in Easton).		Continuous	Supervisors, PC, Recreation Commission
Emphasize high-quality police, emergency medical and fire protection services, with joint training and cooperation between providers, including those in adjacent municipalities.	✓	Continuous	Emergency providers, Supervisors, Adj. Mun.
Continually explore ways to minimize local government expenses, particularly through sharing of services or staff among municipalities. Aggressively seek Federal and State grants to address local needs.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, Twp. Staff
Implement the Trails Plan, particularly to require developers to construct segments when they develop adjacent land.	✓	Continuous	Supervisors, PC, Twp. Staff, Recreation Commission
Regularly communicate with the School District staff to inform them about new residential developments and their phasing.		Continuous	Twp. Staff
Seek to extend public sewage service along southern and central portions of Delaware Drive/Route 611 to replace failing septic systems. Work with Lower Mt. Bethel Twp. to develop a long-term solution to sewage needs along the northern segment of Delaware Dr.		Continuous	Supervisors, Twp. Staff, L. Mt. Bethel Twp.
Avoid extending public sewage service into the FP zoning district, which includes most of the remaining prime farmland in the Township.		Continuous	Supervisors, PC.

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Protect public water supplies along the Delaware River from contamination and seek that alternative supplies are available in case a source is no longer suitable.		Continuous	Easton Suburban Water, Supervisors, PC.

Abbreviations of Responsible Agencies/Groups:

- Supervisors = Forks Township Boards of Supervisors
- PC = Forks Planning Commissions
- ZHB = Zoning Hearing Board
- Adj. Mun. = Adjacent Municipalities
- LVPC = Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and Staff
- LVEDC = Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation Staff
- PennDOT = Pennsylvania Department of Transportation