

## A New Garden Township Community Conversation, September 30, 2009



Ticket to  
Tomorrow



A Partnership Program of  
CC2020 and the  
New Garden Township  
Supervisors and Planning  
Commission

### Community Conversations and Productive Partnerships

Community Conversations are Chester County 2020's "branded" approach to encouraging and supporting community cooperation at many levels. Conversations are especially helpful in creating understanding among residents of diverse interests who may not readily find common ground easy to identify. A major strength benefit of Community Conversations is the unexpected agreement on many issues that emerges during the shared evening. This agreement on "what should be done" becomes evident in the findings, conclusions and recommendations. CC2020 has found that when any number of individuals of varied backgrounds and experience come together, the dynamics are always surprising and productive. An additional community bonus is recognition of the value of exploring issues that, in one way or another, affect everyone's daily lives. The participants of the New Garden Community Conversation confirmed expectations of shared wisdom, movement toward consensus and the value of dedicating an evening to exploring issues important to preserving the most valued qualities of New Garden Township.

Community Conversations are often centered on municipalities. Conversations may also serve regions, organizations, or address a defined topic such as transportation, housing or protection of water quality. In 2010, water issues will be the focus of a CC2020 countywide initiative.

*Landscapes* and its updated version *Landscapes2* are the County's Comprehensive Plan to manage growth. The products of any Conversation relate to concerns for growth management and preservation strategies. Although much has been accomplished to the fulfillment of *Landscapes'* goals, critical and challenging planning issues remain. Since 2000, more than 50,000 new residents have chosen Chester County as their home. Increased development with accompanying costs to existing homeowners, traffic and safety issues, resistance to density, higher taxes and stormwater problems are difficult issues for municipalities to address. The *Landscapes2* Steering Committee undertook addressing these countywide issues all of which relate directly to the issues that the New Garden residents raised for discussion.

## Setting the Scene

Chester County 2020's Program Coordinator, MaryAnna Ralph, set the scene for New Garden's Community Conversation by reading a greeting from CC2020 President Nancy Mohr:

"All of us who live and work in this region of Chester County share a mutual interest in and support for a healthy sense of community and economic stability. These shared concerns are the important investment you all are making to your community by joining this Conversation this evening. We all struggle with schedules that are full and overflowing, but you all deserve to be commended for having set aside the time and energy to be here – to not only identify the issues that must be faced to strengthen the growing sense of community, but more importantly to find solutions that will contribute to New Garden's bright future. The work you produce tonight will serve as a tangible planning resource. The solutions that surface this evening will be your solutions. Each of us benefits from the amazing resources of expertise, creativity and energy that is present in this region of Chester County. This Conversation offers an opportunity for you to say thank you, by contributing your ideas in return."



MaryAnna Ralph was the facilitator for the New Garden Township Conversation. CC2020 staff member William Stevens and Board member William Reynolds were available to offer assistance to the breakout groups.

An important note brought out in the initial discussion was a reminder that all municipal planning in Pennsylvania is guided by the State's Municipal Planning Code (MPC). The MPC sets the standards for municipal Planning Commissions and Supervisors. Inevitably, suggestions will surface that sound appealing but cannot be implemented by officials because of the limitations of the MPC.

The September 30th Conversation offered New Garden Township residents the opportunity to discuss a variety of challenging topics ranging from open space to traffic to noise and light pollution within a single forum: 120 residents responded to the invitation.

The Conversation began with identification of the issues that would become the basis for discussion in the work groups. In New Garden the suggestions were plentiful and the participants were enthusiastic in refining them. Many issues that were closely related and needed to be addressed as "units" were combined. It became evident to the participants as the evening progressed that few planning, environmental or quality of life issues stand alone. The interrelationships speak to the essence of community and the need for understanding and cooperative action.



Work groups of 8-10 were pre-assigned to achieve a mix of experience and representation, and also to introduce newer residents to their neighbors. The work session produced an abundance of exciting ideas and anecdotal material.

### Rating the Issues

After the issues list was refined, printed, and displayed, participants were invited to select the five issues they considered most important by placing colored dots next to their choices. Each issue had its supporters, but six highly interrelated issues/topics attracted the largest concentration of dots. Substantial common ground surrounding the selected issues continued to evolve during the breakout session.

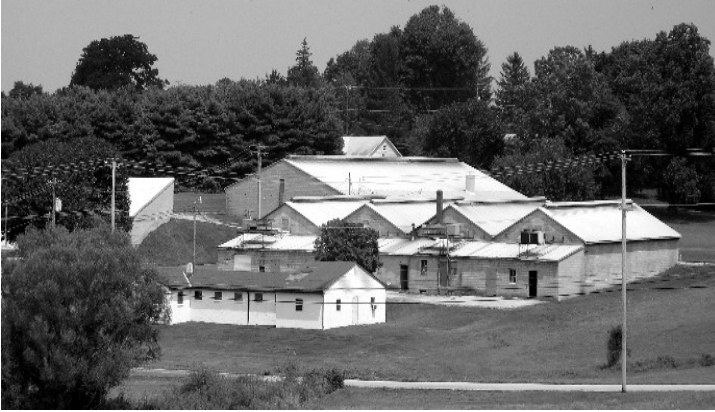
| Issues  | Ratings |
|---|---------|
| • Open space preservation through willing landowners and active trusts to maintain rural character and values | 49      |
| • Traffic safety – traffic signal and intersection upgrades and signage for critical spots                    | 49      |
| • The pace of development vs. need for balance – comprehensive plan update                                    | 35      |
| • Rising taxes/Local Taxes and School Taxes   | 27      |
| • Route 41; is there a plan for its future development and traffic planning?                                  | 26      |
| • Need for coexistence and respect between residential, agricultural, commercial communities                  | 22      |

All the issues with their ratings appear in the Appendix at the end of the report (Page 18). The highest ranked issues served as focus points for discussion in each work group. The Table Report work sheet organization addresses 1) regional & local trend, issues and concerns, 2) priority values and preferred future, 3) important players, 4) opportunities to work together, 5) anticipated accomplishments and benefits, 6) potential barriers and how to deal with them.

As common ground emerged in discussion, there was predictable integration of issues that were not designated highest priority into the discussions. Participants came to appreciate that no issue exists in a vacuum; overlap is inevitable, as the reports demonstrated.

## Overview

New Garden is the center of the mushroom agribusiness in southeastern Pennsylvania with a higher concentration of composting, mushroom growing, packaging, and shipping businesses than in any other municipality in the area.



The population of New Garden Township was just over 9,000 at the 2000 census. The township as projected in the Chester County Comprehensive Plan, *Landscapes*, is changing from a rural community to a semi-rural/suburban community. Chester County population forecasts predict that between the years 2005 and 2035 New Garden Township's population will increase by almost 6,000 residents. New Garden's growth rate is 3 times that of Chester County in general.

The increase in population already requires and will continue to require additional services, schools, recreation areas and facilities to meet the needs of all the residents new and old. Residents voiced concerns about loss of open space and agricultural lands as a result of increased development with its accompanying traffic and safety issues and higher taxes to existing homeowners. These are significant trends, and emotional response to the varying "sound bites" makes it difficult for residents to evaluate the complex issues. Misconceptions about these issues and what local government can do to preserve the status quo can create a contentious environment where it is difficult for residents and officials to discuss and resolve concerns.

Even with strong support from *Landscapes* and the County's Vision Partnership Program, multi-municipal planning has historically encountered resistance from municipal leaders. It is only recently that regional or multi-municipal planning has become more appealing because amendments to the Municipal Planning Code by the PA General Assembly have allowed more flexibility for strategies. Cooperating municipalities have been given realistic alternatives to "just letting things happen;" as a result of good leadership, New Garden Township is an active member of the Kennett Area Regional Planning Commission (KARPC).

The New Garden Conversation individual table reports were notably consistent in their assessment of the important local and regional trends and issues. The topics and lists presented in this report are an amalgamation of the discussion topic that carried through on almost all table reports and are a strong indicator that community concerns are consistent in their focus. The following lists are clearly indicative that the principal concerns of the individual tables were interconnected in relationship to the overall discussions.

## Regional and Local Trends, Issues or Concerns

- Rapid increase in percent of residential development regionally and within the township.
- Population growth and commercial traffic has increased road construction needs.

- More traffic leading to safety problems: need traffic signals for peak periods of use at intersections with Route 41.
- Inadequate infrastructure and insufficient road capacity
- New residents cost more in school and infrastructure expenses than provided by their property taxes
- Unbalanced development not maintaining the semi-rural character of township
- Insufficient neighborhood walkable destinations such as community centers, or shopping areas
- Bad economy is hurting commercial and residential development
- Large developments dictate traffic patterns
- Need for comprehensive and regional planning

## Responses to selected regional and local trends

Establishing a clear plan:

1. Probably the most complex and provocative topic in local planning is zoning. Among the topics key to successful zoning is the relationship of the community's zoning to the comprehensive plan. Key components that were discussed in the New garden Conversation were:
  - a. PA Municipal Planning Code requires zoning for all uses
  - b. Zoning changes that do not overdevelop land
  - c. Regional planning cooperation
  - d. Public awareness of pending zoning changes
  - e. Planning for recreational and open space opportunities
2. Traffic Planning was clearly a high priority. Participants were concerned that the increase in development in New Garden and surrounding townships has increased local traffic to the point where it is a safety hazard. One suggested solution was that developers should have some responsibility for traffic circulation improvements beyond the immediate access to their development.

Energy Conservation and responsible energy consumption were repeated in most of the discussions about development and increased traffic. The question was raised as to whether developers should take more responsibility for impact to the environment and use of resources. Suggestions considered alternative energy sources and promotion of energy efficient buildings and transportation alternatives to reduce traffic and fuel consumptions.



The White Clay Creek Corridor provides unique opportunities for both recreation access and historic interpretation with the former railroad line that passes through this valley.

## Priority Values Translate into Common Ground

The table reports continued to reveal considerable common ground. The participants exhibited strong agreement about the following priorities:

1. A desire for smart, balanced, and paced growth/intelligent planning
2. Preservation of open space and agricultural lands
3. Accountability on the part of developers
4. Regional planning and cooperation on infrastructure and services
5. Need for coexistence between residential and agricultural uses
6. Traffic flow and signal improvements and safety on the township roads
7. Consideration of all types of transportation (public, cars, biking, walking)
8. A higher level of communication between township officials and residents
9. Concern about the burden represented by taxes
10. Personal safety: adequate police and fire personnel

Priority values are easy to suggest, but challenging to accomplish. A Community Conversation marks a beginning rather than a conclusion. The Conversation participants were clearly concerned about the impact of development and the related loss of open space, agricultural lands, and a sense of community. They also voiced concern about increasing traffic, road safety and higher taxes.



Loss of open space was consistently referenced as a concern by Conversation participants. New Garden Township's Comprehensive Plan provides a thorough description of the Township's existing land uses and their planning implications. Agriculture and Woodlands comprise the highest percentage of land area (36.6%) within the Township, with Residential (35.2%) and the Mushroom Industry (14.7%) rounding out the top three. Residential land uses are predominantly single family detached dwellings indicating a pattern of suburban sprawl. Residential and agricultural land

uses are evenly distributed throughout the Township, while the Mushroom Industry lands are generally located nearest the adjacent Borough of Avondale and along Baltimore Pike. Recognizing the current trend toward sprawl, future land use planning could encourage denser residential development and infill around existing villages and providing resource protection areas nearest the most sensitive natural resources.

Regional planning is one strategy to address development-related concerns. There is much to be gained in handling the challenges of growth through joint planning, but the exercise should be initiated with full understanding that success relies upon the zoning ordinances that support the plan. Too often, good plans remain unfulfilled because of a reluctance to create the necessary, cooperative ordinances. The key factors are determining effective compromises, i.e. location of high impact land uses, cooperation with administration, and enforcement of zoning and other codes.

Traffic safety was also a major issue. There is a valid concern about increasing traffic spilling over

onto secondary roads. This is an unwelcome reality which is being encountered across the County. In addition, there was agreement that several secondary roads in New Garden are straight enough to tempt the speeder – but at the same time are hilly and interrupted by access roads. Residents concur that these roads are inappropriate for the coexistence of traffic, walking and biking.

Participants articulated the following traffic planning questions:

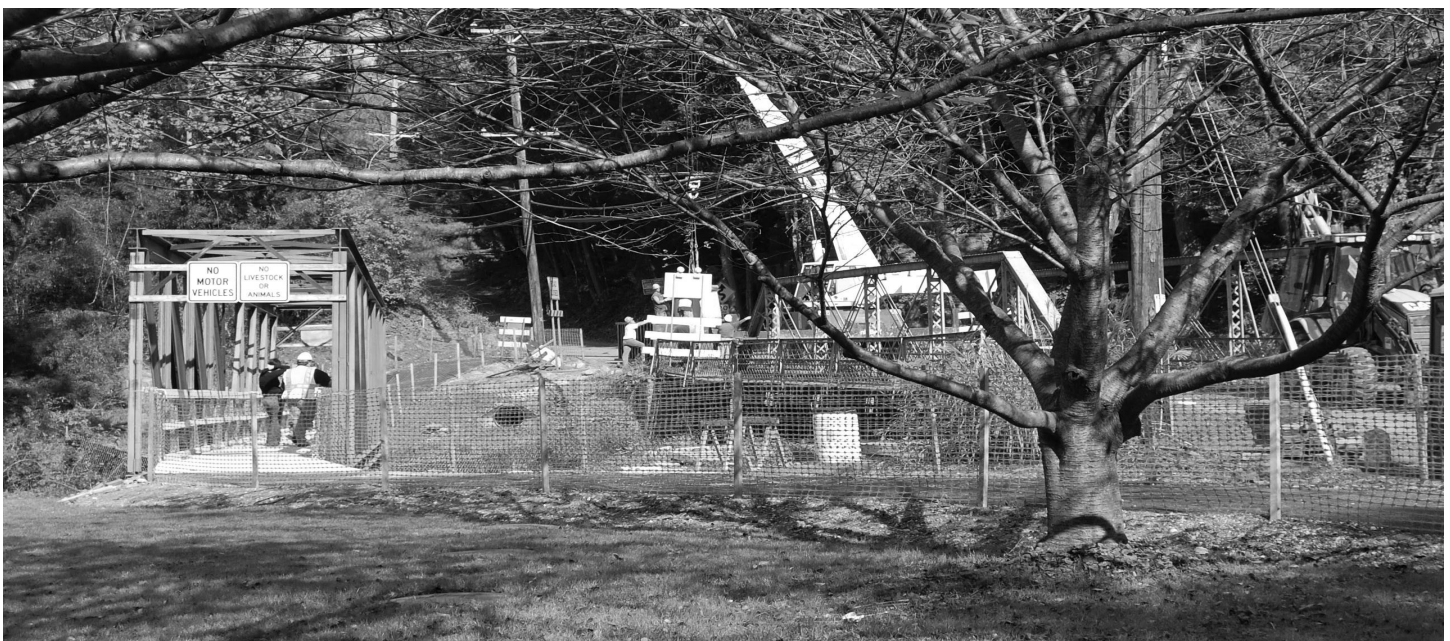
1. Is the functional road classification system sufficiently developed in the comprehensive plan?
2. Is it a function of the land use plan and resulting development?
3. Does Zoning do the full job?
4. How is the functional classification system reflected into the township codes and ordinances?
5. What is the status of multi-municipal planning that would address traffic impacts from outside the township?

Conversation participants observed that large trucks use the township roads to avoid congestion in other areas. This situation may well be intensified in light of PennDoT's plans to improve Route 41.

Two questions that came up were:

1. Can township roads be restricted from non-local truck traffic?
2. Does the circulation element of the comprehensive plan address this?

There was also discussion about the impact of the Landenberg Road Bridge Replacement Project. This concern echoed the general concerns about speed and increased traffic on secondary roadways and the negative effect on safety and rural character of the township's roadways. The bridge project is replacing the currently closed single-span, 18'-4" wide pony truss bridge over the East Branch of White Clay Creek with a 20'-0" wide single-span bridge; incorporating the original truss lines into the new bridge as ornamental features and only minimally increasing road width in order to preserve the character of the area. This bridge replacement project has been a long time coming. After construction of the new bridge, ownership will be turned over to New Garden Township. The roadway through the area has been closed for many years and area residents voiced concerns about new traffic patterns and potential speeding issues related to the bridge reopening. Limiting traffic through the area and traffic calming planning were among suggested options.





A budgetary concern to the township imposing restrictions to public access to township roads could be a reduction of the Township Liquid Fuel reimbursements for road maintenance. The state refunds a portion of the Liquid Fuels Tax to local governments according to their miles of eligible highway and population. The Township uses these proceeds to fund or pay down debt on eligible road and bridge construction and maintenance projects. Limiting public access to township roadways could lessen the amount of eligible roadways.

Participants indicated that they felt that the township was left to handle development related infrastructure and traffic problems. They were looking for help, but found that impact fees are not available for these problems because the MPC limits impact fees to performance bond and escrow.

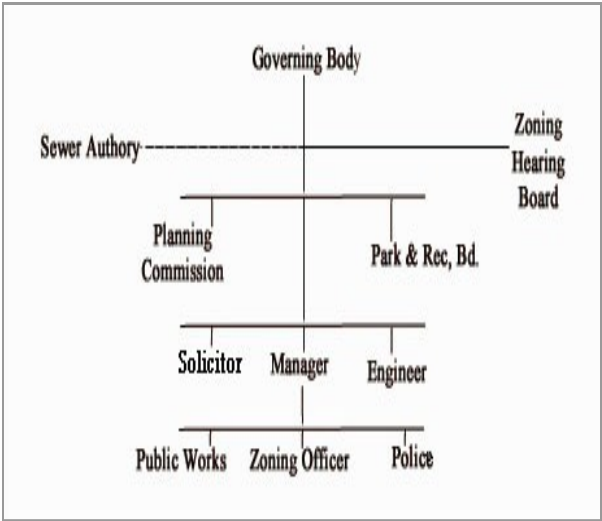
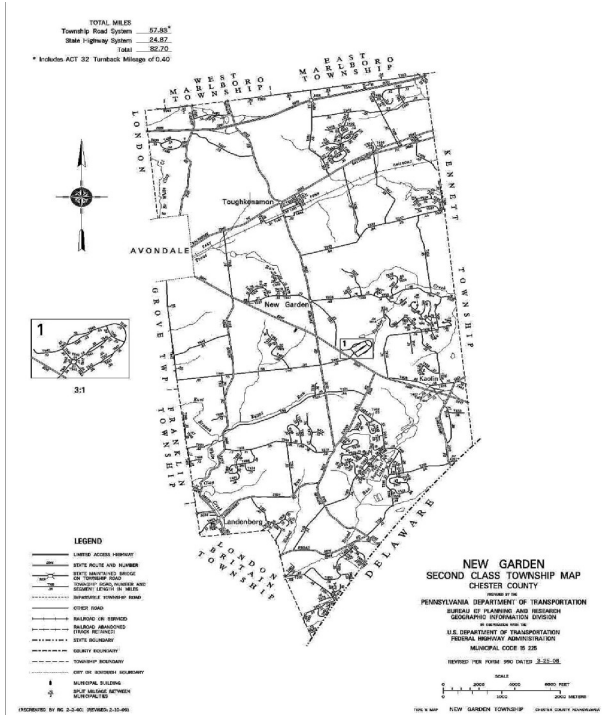
Property taxes were mentioned as being a heavy burden on township residents. Residents may not be fully aware that there are three different taxing authorities; school, county and township, The township can only influence the school tax by planning and controlling the amount of residential vs. commercial development and working for a successful open space program.

Lessening pollution and energy consumption also appeared repeatedly in the priority values. Zoning incentives for green buildings and impervious paving were suggested ways that the Township could encouraging responsible development options. Seeking alternative transportation opportunities was also a suggested approach to conserving resources.

Although not high on the list of issues, there was also repeated reference made in the reports to a lack of affordable homes and senior housing. The participants also indicated that there was a need for family, youth and senior oriented activities.

There were positive observations that the Supervisors need to hear from citizens more frequently. Following up on this point, there was enthusiasm around the suggestion that there should be more town meeting type sessions utilizing the Community Conversation format so that all opinions can be heard, respected and considered.

During discussions and table reports there appeared to be some misconceptions by a few participants about the process of municipal government, planning and code enforcement. It is not unusual that some residents are unsure of “who is responsible for what,” but not knowing the players can leave residents



Sample Municipal Team Flow Chart



unclear about where they should turn for answers. Residents who can't find answers to their concerns may become frustrated and simple concerns can become controversial issues that are counter-productive and damaging to the community.

Inevitably in almost every Conversation a “close the gates” vision appears as one solution or having a referendum for each development application. The reality is that the MPC does not provide an option for referendum to approve/disapprove or put a stop to future development. The luxury of just saying no to development does not exist. It is useful if residents understand that even if this was an allowable process, a vote by the whole of the electorate on every development application would be hugely expensive for the township. Municipal governance is a representative board, elected by the electorate to make decisions on their behalf. It was positively noted in several reports that the tasks required of Supervisors are never easy and municipal officials are rarely given the respect they deserve for stepping up to accept very demanding responsibilities on a nearly volunteer basis.



### **Preferred future/Personal vision regarding best solution:**

The preferred “vision” was consistent in wishing that all remaining open space could be preserved and the township could keep a rural atmosphere. There was also an unanimous desire for New Garden to have less noise and light pollution and less traffic. The participants suggested developing land trust ties for acquisition of land and maintenance of open space.

The reports proposed slow, well-planned and directed growth with limited development and more open space. The reports were uniform in suggestions to segregate industrial and commercial uses from agricultural areas to lessen the impact on the rural character of the community. The participants encouraged incentives for specialized activities such as wineries, cheese production, etc. Although most reports proposed preserving more open space, some reports suggested that there was still a need for convenient shopping, possibly walk-able destinations.

There was a universal acknowledgement of the need for respect and coexistence between housing, farming, commercial and light industrial activities. Going forward, the participants want planning and zoning for residential, commercial and industrial development to include open spaces and buffering between these varied uses. Future development should provide adequate stormwater and sewage plans to ensure that the township preserves and maintains clean water resources and also include more parks, playground areas, baseball/ soccer fields near developments .

The residents feel strongly about saving the rural character of their township and suggested prioritizing the open space that is left. They want more public parks and more open fields dedicated to agriculture. One recorded solution was to establish a “Fee in lieu of” from developers for purchasing and maintaining open space and purchase development rights.

The preferred future also considered health and safety issues with better traffic control through better signalization and traffic patterns, a 24 hour police force and community block watches.

### **What would it be like if the vision was fulfilled:**

1. Maintaining township character and small town atmosphere. A better New Garden Township; a nicer friendlier place to live where incoming residents and long time residents live harmoniously and there is more integration of cultures.
2. Bucolic environment, a pleasant rural greenway community with a small town feel, interconnected with walkways, and trails to travel through the township. A walkable community with safe pedestrian access to shopping, schools, and recreation.
3. A community with successful business, quality housing and education facilities, but with affordable taxes. Living in harmony and balance with more respect and interaction between neighbors.
4. Better traffic flow and fewer commercial vehicles (non-local). Better traffic enforcement with less traffic congestion, safer and slower traffic for the safety of the children.
5. Low impact on environment resulting in clean air and water. Less pollution and resource and energy consumption.
6. Slower development pace, saving remaining land with long term plan for permanent open space.
7. Reciprocal respect between agricultural areas and activities and residential areas.
8. More balanced development through better planning and good compromises.
9. New commercial development strategically placed at Airport or Route 41 with infrastructure. completed with lower taxes and low impact on environment.
10. Involved residents. Increased communication with residents and supervisors.



## Perceived Barriers/ Obstacles:

If effective, consistent and open communication forms the basis of initiatives, a number of the barriers may not materialize.

1. No money, no desire, no commitment to upgrade infrastructure, which is already behind in the balance of development vs. funding, no impact fees, misallocation of the tax receipts.
2. Need for shared view of key stakeholders; some stakeholders/players have limited imagination.
3. Limits of current zoning and infrastructure; high expectations, over regulation, too strict guidelines and little compromise.
4. High taxes: burden for home owners..
5. Leadership concerns, lack of coordination and planning; insufficient accountability of zoning committee.
6. The Municipal Planning Code; zoning and the distribution of densities.
7. People unwilling to compromise and learn about their community, intolerance of diversity.
8. Resistance to change: long held attitudes of who was here first, many political interests and lobbyists for special interest groups and Individual needs.
9. New residents needing to understand and be informed of the agricultural needs.
10. Apathy, indifference, inaction, long held attitudes.
11. Incentives to keep land open. Individual needs vs. community needs.
12. Financial costs of parks and trails.
13. Finding willing contributors to fund land trusts for property preservation.
14. Insufficient police presence, need larger coverage, i.e. 24 hours.

In general, the greatest barriers to progress can be the failure of both elected officials and citizens to seek knowledge and understanding about planning and development issues. This can result in too little citizen involvement and too much expectation that “someone else” is responsible for doing the job.

## How to get there/ Overcome the obstacles/Suggested action items:

1. Comprehensive Planning, try to focus growth and accommodate affordable housing opportunities and businesses reflecting the community's needs.
2. More productive dialogue around planning. Communicate with residents, frequently and with clarity; i.e. Community Conversations. Include residential and business renters.
3. Actively pursue more open space. Purchase through land trusts (good models for public private partnerships have evolved in recent years.)
4. Strengthen multi-municipal cooperation to address traffic and infrastructure.
5. Explore opportunities for shared municipal services.
6. Develop ordinances that are fully consistent with *Landscapes2*.
7. Work to develop compatible zoning across municipal borders.
8. Facilitate funding from the state.
9. Reduce costs by multi-municipal cooperation of traffic circulation improvements.
10. Promote intercultural and neighbor to neighbor respect and understanding.

## The Players

The Key players include: Municipal officials (elected, appointed, enforcement staff and volunteers), as well as State and County officials, PennDot, and representatives from major residential areas and from the agricultural and commercial communities. Other players include land trusts and conservation organizations, the school boards, and adjoining, cooperative municipalities

There was wide agreement that the important players in making decisions and determining the future of the township are the elected officials. However, residents acknowledged that attending planning commission and supervisors' meeting or hearings about specific projects could contribute to the process. Participants agreed that too frequently residents tend to appear only when the work has been completed, the required hearings have been held and it is time to render a decision that they believe they oppose. It is indeed rare to have a major turnout to support rather than object to an issue.

## Observations and Suggestions Generated by the Conversation

1. Garden Township is rich with many water-based natural, and scenic resources and potential recreational opportunities within the Red Clay and White Clay watersheds. The township has a total area of 16.2 square miles, of which 16.1 square miles of it is land and 0.1 square miles of it (0.31%) is water. The area is a desirable place to live but this is a Catch-22 because the appeal can lead to the demise of the community character. An increase in population may be good for the community's economy and businesses but can lead to deterioration of the community's natural and historical resources and unique character.

2. Stormwater management concerns were repeatedly linked with concerns about development. Participants noted that projected growth for New Garden Township will reduce the amount of woodland and agricultural lands. An increase in the amount of impervious cover (including paved areas, rooftops and other land cover) will not allow rainfall to directly infiltrate into the soil. Participants also identified stormwater as contributing to a loss of water quality and increased pollution of the township's streams, noting that stormwater systems carry pesticides and herbicides as well as road and yard litter and pollution directly into the streams. The excessive and debris filled stormwater flows are also eroding stream banks and polluting streams that provide habitat for fish and wildlife.



3. New Garden's dramatic increase in population is part of the county wide population increase in recent years. This trend brings development pressures too severe to be handled solely under the current limitations of the Municipal Planning Code (MPC). There is usually insufficient time or

resources to effectively assess the impact of sprawling new construction upon the road systems, storm water run-off, schools or the financial impact upon existing taxpayer-residents. The quality of life that attracts new residents is vulnerable to destruction by over-development. The Township's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning coupled with the township's Act 537 process are of value in addressing these issues but these tools must be kept current to address the increased pressure.

4. Relying just on zoning, subdivision regulations and building code is not adequate, as each has its own purpose and limitations. *Landscapes2* is Chester County's updated comprehensive policy plan which suggests growth management and preservation strategies to help municipalities, developers, preservationists, and others set priorities for where and how smart growth, including revitalization of urban areas and protection of natural, rural, and historic heritage, should occur. Like *Landscapes*, *Watersheds* sets the horizon for Chester County's water resource planning. The *Watersheds* Compendium serves as the reference document and tool that municipalities and others can use to assist in better planning for water resources. The Chester County Planning Commission also provides an excellent "toolbox" to support municipal planning commissions and supervisors. There is a tool for nearly every challenge. It is likely that New Garden officials have already explored these useful options, but they are well worth revisiting.



5. The Master Planner Program sponsored by CC2020, CCATO, the CCPC, and West Chester University is another source of information and support for understanding and utilization of the MPC. The courses may be taken by anyone interested in municipal planning; they offer associated continuing education credits. Go to CC2020's web site [www.cc2020.org](http://www.cc2020.org) for details.

6. Larger tracts offer more flexibility and opportunity to gain open space. There are positive benefits to establishing a fee in lieu of dedicated open space in each land development. This can be coupled with County and State sources of funding for open space acquisition.

## Specific Suggested Action items

Determine the extent of your potential contributions to strengthening your community. There are always ways to find time for the things we really want to do. Try these for a start:

- Attend one township, planning commission or school board meeting a month.
- Organize a local continuing education program for training in planning, not just a "once and done," perhaps a follow up to this community conversation.
- Seek township support for local citizen training, and planning courses.
- Learn what the limits of the MPC are in Pennsylvania, who is responsible for what.
- Invite a new neighbor over for coffee or potluck supper. Share the ride to work.
- Tour your township web site
- Volunteer for an open space task force or the township park committee.



- Join a clean-up day.
- Subscribe to the local or county newspaper and read hometown news.
- Don't rely on "sound bites" when you weigh in on an issue. Take the time to get the facts.
- Say "good morning" to a neighbor you don't know– and smile.

## Discussion and Recommendations

1. Traffic lights repeatedly surfaced as a discussion topic. Consult with traffic engineers before taking steps. Three-way and four-way stop signs can be more efficient, creating less back up. Ride the E. Marlborough roundabout and see how it could work at the Route 41 intersection. Use a circulation plan to address design of roads related to intended use of road segments. It appears from discussion that road functions vary; thus some are overused and dangerous.
2. Address stormwater in a more comprehensive manner than traditional stormwater management. Technical justification and a rationale plan are needed for effective, stormwater management. Township Planning must consider reducing the volume of stormwater generated, and maintaining "open-meadow" runoff and infiltration conditions, as well as protecting ground water recharge. Stormwater management must also consider removing pollutants prior to the release of stormwater into streams, and re-establishing stable geomorphology and stream channel processes, by reducing flood peak runoff rates and volumes, and insuring long-term operation and maintenance of stormwater facilities. Stormwater management plans must protect adjacent lands from direct stormwater discharges, and plan for establishing forested riparian corridor networks, and protection of wetlands and floodplains
3. Consider green building requirements that promote sustainable building practices. Comprehensive green building programs with their own set of green building guidelines can be developed to apply to different types of buildings depending on use (residential or commercial), size, or type of development (new construction or renovation). Township programs could be mandatory or voluntary and promoted through use of incentives. Programs could require or encourage certain types of development to qualify for "green" ratings under third-party guideline and certification programs such as LEED or ENERGY STAR.
4. As the region continues to experience growth, New Garden will be the target for increased development. But a window of opportunity still exists. This is a good time to think about using the County's Vision Partnership grants for township planning and mapping projects. Township planning maps, showing open space, preserved lands, traffic patterns, current and proposed development, historic structures (especially if on the Historic Registry) are excellent visual planning tools to use in reviewing projects and especially when revising the comprehensive plan.





5. Review the township's Comprehensive Plan on an average of every 5 years. The Plan should also be revisited each year by the planning commission to allow for review and establishment of priorities for items to be accomplished. The planning commission should report yearly to the supervisors on the status of each activity and review. Does the plan reflect the priorities?

6. Nationally, one small airport closes each week. New Garden Airport will not be among the lost. The 2007 purchase of the New Garden Airport was a forward thinking and economically focused undertaking by the Township leadership. The airport and surrounding land was purchased primarily with state and federal grant money. The purchase ensured that the airport will remain an airport, but additionally the airport proximity to Route 1 makes it an ideal location for a business park. If the Township is successful in commercially developing this area the township should be able to shift the tax burden from a residential tax base to a commercial/businesses tax base to support the township's financial needs.



7. Make the most of non-profit land preservation organizations and the County's Agricultural Preservation Program. Encourage the participation in the Pa Clean and Green Assessment Act 319. Land placed in Act 319 or under conservation easement by donation bears no cost to the township. When development rights are purchased either by the county alone or in partnership with municipalities, the land remains in the ownership of the farmer. In both these instances, the owner is responsible for land stewardship that meets sound environmental standards. High quality soils are preserved to grow crops rather than houses, school taxes are not increased, nor does the township face the financial challenges of providing additional services. The township retains more of its rural character and the natural resource protection is forever.

8. Research the wealth of energy and expertise that lives in New Garden. Everyone can do something. Many small tasks add up and success in small things can provide the impetus to do more. Don't wait for volunteers. Enlist these good people in helping to plan and create the preferred future.

9. Reach out to all residents. Much of the mushroom growing workforce live in rented housing and are not reached by a tax parcel based mailing. Ask Community organizations to share lists. Combined voter lists are also helpful in compiling a more comprehensive township mailing list.

10. Maintain communication through all levels (legislators, township leaders, businesses, residents) via web, hardcopy, meetings, homeowners associations.

11. Accountability is important, but don't overload a committee. Make sure the end product is achievable. Choose change carefully. You do have choices. Don't just "let it happen," and then



complain. Often the hardest challenge is to leave the baggage behind; who did what when, and to whom. Re-examining the past should be a matter of learning lessons from history, not revisiting former roadblocks and letting them limit forward motion.

12. Recognize that over the years every municipality faces some contentious issues, but civilized discussion at township and planning commission meetings, respect for the elected officials and sincere concern about the future of the community can go a long way towards preserving the best qualities of this place where you live. You all know that you can do it!
13. As a follow-up to the Community Conversation, Chester County 2020 is available to conduct a planning seminar for all New Garden agencies and citizens at a time and place convenient for the township officials and our staff. Using the Community Conversation model to address projects with a potential for contention allows residents a chance to identify issues and prioritize their concerns and provides the township and the applicant an opportunity to provide answers in a non confrontational environment.
14. Maintain and nurture the momentum of the Conversation process. Publicize the results so that the community beyond this conversation knows that something is being done.
15. Encourage participation in the Master Planner Program. The three annual short courses in planning are invaluable for any municipal official, planning commission or zoning hearing member, municipal solicitor, zoning officer, township manager, interested resident or professional planner, engineer or real estate professional who wants a better understanding of the planning regulations of the PA Municipal Planning Code. The courses are a partnership offering from CC2020, the Chester County Planning Commission, West Chester University's College of Geography & Planning and the Chester County Association of Township Officials (CCATO). To find out about the course go to [www.ccc2020.org](http://www.ccc2020.org).

## CONCLUSIONS

New Garden like the rest of Chester County is growing more rapidly than ever. Not surprisingly, the steady arrival of new residents, businesses, workers, and development is changing the culture and landscape – and the reality is, *change is here to stay*.

Unfortunately, development pressure produces a lack of understanding that seriously fragments communities. As New Garden's demographics and culture continue to change, it is essential that diversity becomes a strength as you learn to understand, respect and live with one another. The alternative is not very appealing:

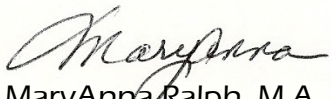
- Uncontrolled random growth and increased traffic
- An escalation of competing interests resulting in increased controversy
- Disregard for one's neighbors from which, ultimately, no one benefits
- Erosion of the natural and scenic resources that make this a special place

The good news is that you do have choices.. As individuals you can choose how to respond to the challenges of change. Your choices will determine the character of New Garden Township and the County tomorrow.

The New Garden Community Conversation set a new standard for enthusiasm and productivity, with an impressive level of excitement throughout the evening. Active participation produced a rich menu of issues, responses, and possibilities. We look forward to supporting the supervisors, planning commission and residents as they move forward with well considered ideas and choices.

We appreciate the opportunity to partner with your municipal leaders in bringing the community together to actively contribute to planning New Garden's future. It was a pleasure to facilitate your Community Conversation and we sincerely congratulate you, for participating. Your contributions have resulted in an impressive body of information and we hope that you will refer to it often and use it well,

Sincerely



MaryAnna Ralph, M.A.  
Urban & Regional Planning,  
Program Coordinator  
Chester County 2020



Nancy Mohr  
President/CEO  
Chester County 2020

## APPENDIX

### All Issues Rated

| Issues  | Ratings |
|---|---------|
| • Traffic safety – signal upgrade and signage for critical spots  | 49      |
| • Open space preservation through willing landowners and active trusts to maintain rural character and values | 49      |
| • The <i>pace</i> of development vs. need for balance – comp plan update                                      | 35      |
| • Rising taxes  | 27      |
| • Route 41! Is there a plan for its issues?   | 26      |
| • Need for coexistence and respect between residential, agricultural, commercial communities                  | 22      |
| • Uniform code enforcement – can it be streamlined?(ex: Kaolin/Rte 41 shopping center eyesore)                | 16      |
| • Landenberg Bridge – are there historic implications?  | 15      |
| • Noise/Light pollution – quality of life impact  | 12      |
| • Lighting vs. dark sky – zoning implications   | 10      |
| • Provision for <i>safe</i> alternative transportation – sidewalks and bike lanes                             | 9       |
| • Traffic burden relief   | 9       |
| • Resource conservation   | 9       |
| • Planning for public safety/law enforcement options – local; regional; other                                 | 8       |
| • Pollution: air and water quality  | 8       |
| • Zoning issues and impacts – need for education and understanding of the municipal code                      | 8       |
| • Township-wide traffic planning issues – residents' needs vs. new traffic patterns                           | 8       |
| • Affordable, accessible, diverse housing   | 7       |
| • Agricultural byproduct processing – air quality impact  | 7       |
| • Recycling opportunities   | 6       |
| • Road maintenance funding for pavement repair and tree trimming  | 6       |
| • Enforcement of existing traffic laws  | 5       |
| • Family-centered activities: facilities  | 4       |
| • Water treatment burden – should there be a sewer authority?   | 4       |
| • Defining and living with regional identity: airport responsibilities and opportunities                      | 3       |
| • Barking dogs – pet safety and animal control  | 3       |
| • State vs. local road issues   | 2       |
| • Energy conservation   | 2       |

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The Board of Supervisors meets the 1st (General) & 2nd (Subdivision/Land Development) Monday of the Month and 2nd Tuesday (Work Session) of the Month at 7:30.

The Planning Commission meets on the 4th Wednesday of the Month at 7:30



Natural lands in New Garden provide  
valuable habitat for wildlife.



## **Finding Common Ground with Uncommon Resolve**

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