

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.

10. Research the wealth of energy and expertise that lives in EFT. Enlist these good people in helping to plan and create the preferred future.

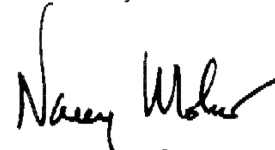
11. Choose change carefully. You do have choices. Don't just "let it happen," and then complain. Often the hardest challenge is to leave the baggage behind; who did what when, and to whom. Re-examining the past should be a matter of learning lessons from history, not revisiting former roadblocks and letting them limit forward motion. And yes, that can happen.

12. Over the years, East Fallowfield has gained an unfortunate reputation for contention; one occasionally hears the township referred to as East Battlefield. That doesn't mean that everything goes smoothly in other municipalities, but the name does lend itself to editing. So, how about turning it into East Friendlyfield? A little corny, but you get the idea. 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. And, yes, you can do it!

13. As a follow-up to the Community Conversation, Chester County 2020 is offering to conduct a planning seminar for all EFT agencies and citizens at a time and place convenient for the township officials and our staff. The instructor would be George Fasic, AICP, formerly an executive director of the Chester County Planning Commission. Some of you already know George as an instructor in the Master Planner Program and at West Chester University.

Thank you for the opportunity to help engage the residents of East Fallowfield in planning for the future. We look forward to supporting the township officials and the residents as they move forward with well-considered choices.

Sincerely,



Nancy Mohr
Executive Director
Chester County 2020

TICKET TO TOMORROW

An East Fallowfield Community Conversation

February 21, 2007



*A partnership program of Chester County 2020 and
the East Fallowfield Supervisors and Planning Commission*



Community Conversations and Productive Partnerships

Community Conversations are a hallmark of Chester County 2020's approach to supporting community cooperation at many levels, especially among diverse interests that may not have previously recognized the existence of common ground. A major strength of a Community Conversation is the element of the unexpected that emerges in the findings, conclusions and recommendations. When any number of individuals of varied backgrounds and experience come together, the dynamics are always surprising and productive. The participants in Ticket to Tomorrow 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 East Fallowfield Township.

Although as a non-profit organization, Chester County 2020 has no formal relationship with the County, Nancy Mohr and Advisory Board member Judy DiFilippo are among the appointed volunteers who serve as members of the Chester County Planning Commission. They and the others on the CC2020 Board are committed to involving residents in determining the future of their communities. The community conversations in the municipalities of Western Chester County are supported by grants to CC2020 for that definite purpose.

Setting the Scene

Chester County 2020's executive director, Nancy Mohr, set the scene for Ticket to Tomorrow by explaining the importance of the current, ten-year review of Landscapes, the county's award winning comprehensive plan. For all that the county's preservation programs, municipalities, land trusts and other non-profit entities have accomplished in contributing to the fulfillment of Landscapes, critical components still remain to be addressed. The most significant examples involve urban center revitalization, affordable homes, infrastructure, transportation, and long-term environmental outcomes – all of which relate directly to the issues that the East Fallowfield residents raised for discussion.

Every municipality has been changed in some way by population increases. Since 2000, more than 40,000 new residents have arrived in the county, considerably ahead of projections and increasing the financial challenges for municipalities, the County and school districts. In looking ahead to the revision of Landscapes, every county resident can participate in the review process by taking the survey found at www.Landscapes2.org or in hard copy at local libraries. This is a county-wide opportunity; Community Conversations represent smaller scale involvement, are most often municipality specific but may also be regional or involve a single topic such as transportation or housing.

Chester County 2020's director also was the facilitator for the East Fallowfield Conversation. CC2020 staff was available to offer assistance to the breakout groups. An important ground rule centered on recognition that all municipal planning in Pennsylvania is guided by the State's Municipal Planning Code (MPC). The MPC, by law, sets the standards for action by the Planning Commission and Supervisors. Inevitably, suggestions will surface that sound appealing but cannot be implemented by the elected and appointed officials.

This Conversation offered the opportunity to discuss a variety of challenges ranging from open space to traffic within a single forum; 185 residents responded to the invitation. Breakout groups of 8-10 were pre-assigned to reflect a mix of experience and representation, and also to introduce newer residents to other township residents. The format produced thought-provoking ideas as well as excellent anecdotal material.

Rating the Issues

The Conversation began with identification of issues that the audience considered important to the township's future – written on large sheets of paper. The participants were instructed to indicate the five issues they considered most important by placing colored dots next to their choices. Each issue had its supporters, but six highly interrelated items attracted the largest concentration of dots:

• Loss of farmland	67
• Too much development	64
• No developer responsibility for cost of infrastructure change/upgrade	48
• Property tax increases	48
• Road system is insufficient to support increased traffic	46
• Need planning for open space	46
• Need planning for open space	46
• Local government is too involved with the resident's personal life (This was targeted to the proposed maintenance ordinance.)	45
• Speeding on township roads	31
• More speeding with too few speed signs for control	
• Absence of planning for public water and sewer	22
• Need for expanded opportunities for walking and biking	23
• Increased stormwater problems	23
• Desire for comprehensive plan that says enough is enough	16
• Critical need for more information re township services and events	15
• Lots of litter and dumping of big items	15
• No gathering place for teenagers	13
• More truck traffic in township because of Rte. 30 congestion. Also, increasing nighttime truck traffic.	11
• Absence of recreational space within the housing developments	11
• Not enough funding for schools	10
• Limited public transportation	9
• Select zoning for political purposes	9
• Growth in emergency services is insufficient	8
• New need for disaster education/preparation	7
• Annoying helicopter traffic at night	6
• Lack of shopping opportunities closer than 20 minutes by car	5
• Increased airport noise levels	4
• Roads need to be expanded to accommodate traffic	6
• Escalation of housing prices pushing people out	2

The four highest ranked topics served as departure points for discussion in each breakout group. The breakout report organization revolved around 1) regional & local trends and their potential impacts on these issues, 2) priority values, 3) important players, 4) opportunities to work together, 5) anticipated accomplishments and benefits, 6) potential barriers and how to deal with them. Substantial common ground evolved around the basic issues.

Regional and Local Trends

The most significant trends – increased development with accompanying costs to existing homeowners, traffic and safety issues, higher taxes, stormwater problems – are difficult to address. Historically, the most effective option, regional planning, has also been the one to

and done, perhaps a follow up of this community conversation. Access grants for local citizen training, and planning courses. Learn what the limits 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. Read hometown news.
- Don't rely on "sound bites" when you weigh in on an issue. Take time to get the whole story.
- Say "good morning" to a neighbor you don't know – and smile.

2. Work to involve volunteers to provide activities that appeal to all ages, such as:

- A kite flying contest in the township park
- An Easter egg hunt
- A bicycle safety class on a Saturday morning
- A plan for student community service, followed by a picnic, a softball game – something recreational
- Setting aside space for community gardens. Perhaps ask Sally Green to be an advisor.
- Respond to the request for a place for teenagers to gather.
- And on and on...

3. Form a committee to create a Go Slow campaign. Authorize speed control assistance for Officer Pete Mango so he can establish "East Fallowfield is watching you" – and the township acquires a reputation for catching every speeder.

4. Traffic lights surfaced as a discussion topic. Talk to traffic engineers. Three-way and four-way stop signs can be more efficient, creating less back up. Ride the E. Marlborough roundabout and see if it might work at an E. Fallowfield intersection. Use a circulation plan to address design of roads related to intended use of road segments. It appears from discussion that all roads function the same; thus some are overused and dangerous.

6. As Coatesville's revitalization process moves ahead – and in spite of the past year's challenges, it will move eventually – East Fallowfield will be the target of increased development pressures. However, a window of opportunity still exists. This is a good time to learn more about the County's Vision Partnership grants for township mapping and other special planning projects. Generate a map of the township as it is today, showing open space (park, development parks etc.), preserved lands, traffic patterns, current and proposed development, historic structures (especially if on the Historic Registry). Get a good idea of what remains to be saved, and then research the highest priority areas/items. An excellent resource when you are ready to review and revise the EFT comprehensive plan.

7. Develop a set of specific actions for each identified issue.

8. Revisit the comprehensive plan if it is more than 5 years old. The Plan should be revisited each year by the planning commission to report on the status of each activity. Is it in accord with the plan? Revisit the Comp plan frequently to establish priorities for items to be accomplished

9. Make the most of the Brandywine Conservancy's land preservation program and the County's Agricultural Preservation Program. Land placed under easement by donation bears no cost to the township. When development rights are purchased either by the county alone or in partnership with municipalities, ownership stays with the farmer. In both instances, the owner is

6. Consider the definition of community: “a group of people living in the same locality under the same government.” That’s a pretty dry definition that fails to express what most people think of as “community:” friendliness; neighborhoods where people get to know one another, are there when help is needed; children visiting back and forth; pot luck suppers; waving as you pass by in a car or on a bike; being there, being an active part of the community. The more traditional aspects of community are increasingly difficult to enjoy in a society that is on the move, going to or from in a great hurry with too many personal responsibilities to stop and say hello. Today, you can’t take the sense of community for granted; if you want it, you have to invest something of yourself in it. On February 21st, a number of people mentioned that the Conversation had helped them discover a new sense of community, to meet neighbors from all over the township. They liked that.

7. EFT should utilize all the planning tools permitted by the MPC, from piecemeal planning to capital programs.

8. Under new provisions of the MPC, development can be phased. It is not necessary to open the entire township to a pace of development determined by the developers. The solution requires coordination of various planning tools including the ACT 537 plan.

9. Planning education for the supervisors and all ABC members (Authorities, Boards, Commissions) and citizen groups is the wisest possible investment. Funding should be set aside for this purpose.

10. Every person at Ticket to Tomorrow was there by choice. They also made the choice to live in East Fallowfield, whether as the latest in a multi-generational family or to write a new family chapter. These decisions are worth supporting by contributing personal energy and good will toward the maintenance of a healthy, friendly community.

6

General Recommendations

1. The Chester County Planning Commission has produced an excellent “toolbox” to support municipal planning commissions and the supervisors. There is a tool for nearly every challenge. It is possible that the EFT officials have already explored this rich collection of useful options, but it is well worth revisiting. 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. The details are available at www.CC2020.org.

2. Investigate a full range of planning tools for growth management, identify appropriate tools and use them to guide development. Relying just on zoning, subdivision regulations and building code is not adequate, as each has its own purpose and limitations.

3. Larger tracts offer more flexibility and opportunity to gain open space. Consider using fee in lieu of dedicated open space in each land development. Set up an open space task force to consider sources of funding for open space acquisition.

4. Re-think zoning regarding open space.

5. Develop a strategic plan for each issue or objective.

Specific Action items

1. Determine the extent of your potential contributions to strengthening the community. We always 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

encounter the greatest resistance. It is only recently that regional or joint planning has become attractive; multi-municipal planning allows far more flexibility under the MPC.

The following are the perceived trends in the township and immediate region. If some of them are not on target, that is an indication that information is not easily available, that conclusions are being made on the basis of sound bites, or that it is difficult to accurately grasp the wide-ranging changes.

- Locally – development relatively easy in EF
- Regionally – demand for housing (too expensive further east)
- Developers have been allowed to build substandard housing with impunity.
- Standards have become more lax.
- Home owners and township are left to pay for water problems, stormwater control etc.
- I.I.C.T.D. attempts and legal problems affecting them.
- Development being established with no voter referendum and no clear plan in place
- Traffic, due to the increase in development both in East Fallowfield and surrounding townships, has increased to the point where it is a safety hazard.
- Inspectors let too many things pass.
- Developer has responsibility for improvement.
- Insufficient road capacity
- Energy consumption (traffic, large houses)
- Developers don’t take responsibility for impacts.
- Regional planning cooperation
- Farmers selling
- Public awareness
- Changes in zoning (including clusters) that overdevelops land
- Taking advantage of declining real estate market
- Housing development leads to more cars, less safety.
- Township uses their position to make emotional decisions, not businesslike.
- Continued developing will destroy rural area and rural way of life.
- Large houses on small lots
- Ratio of open space for development
- Sewage plants have limited capacity

Responses to several selected Trends

1. Substandard housing. Whose standard?

- a. Township building code. Has the township adopted the new state wide code?
- b. Is a building code current in use?
- c. Is the code officer trained?

2. Standards are lax.

Fifteen to twenty years ago, E. Fallowfield did not have much in the way of standards. The township administration resisted planning and land use controls. The township is finally coming into modern planning, with citizens who are much more aware, just not well informed about how planning works

3. Need a clear plan.

Where is the Township Comprehensive plan? Is it institutionalized into the decision making activities of the township?

4. Inspectors are liberal.

- a. Are they adequately trained?
- b. Has the Township set the parameters for enforcement?
- c. Is enforcement political? Requires citizen backing.

3

Priority Values Translate into Common Ground

The reports uncovered considerable common ground, two segments of which have added comments below. The participants exhibited strong agreement about the following priorities:

1. A desire for smart growth/intelligent planning
2. Preservation of the views, wild life and natural areas
3. Accountability on the part of the developers
4. Regional planning and cooperation on services
5. Citizen input
6. Development that the township can afford in terms of impacts
7. Consideration of all types of transportation (public, cars, biking, walking)
8. Don't bring the city to the country.
9. Desire for competence and accountability on the part of the elected and appointed township officials
10. An effective level of communication between township officials and residents
11. Concern about the burden represented by school taxes
12. Importance of greater safety on the township roads

Findings

1. The residents of East Fallowfield are clearly concerned about the impact of development, increasing traffic, and the related loss of farmland and sense of community. They like the idea of passive parks and the one large, more active park. There was a desire to see some sort of gathering place for teenagers, and a village center with small shops and no big boxes. (Triple Fresh is appreciated as the "local general store.")

2. Within the township population there are misconceptions and half truths about nearly every element of municipal government, planning and "who is responsible for what." This does not indicate that anyone is intentionally bending the truth, but more likely that when everyone is bombarded with more information than they can handle, there are bound to be "short-circuits." These misconceptions too often lead to highly emotional contention that is counterproductive and exhausting for all concerned. One example of uninformed citizens is a request for referendum to approve or disapprove developers' applications. The MPC does not provide that option, and if it did, it would be hugely expensive for the township.

3. Traffic safety is a major concern. East Fallowfield offers several secondary roads such as Strasburg, Buck Run and sections of Route 82 that are straight enough to tempt the speeder – and at the same time are hilly, interrupted by numerous access roads and certainly not appropriate for the coexistence of traffic, walking and biking. Questions concerning traffic need to be addressed.

4. 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 the Route 30 by-pass. Township roads do not have to permit non local truck traffic. Does the circulation element of the comprehensive plan address this?

5. Homeowners and the township feel that they are left to handle stormwater problems and substandard construction. They are looking for help. They ask for impact fees which are not available for these problems.

6. Property taxes continue to be a heavy burden, especially in the Coatesville School District.

7. Municipal officials are elected by the residents of the township, but are rarely given the respect they deserve for stepping up to accept very demanding responsibilities on a nearly volunteer basis.

8. Regional planning is one viable solution. 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 the success relies upon zoning ordinances that support the plan. Too often, good plans remain unfulfilled because of a reluctance to create the necessary, cooperative ordinances. The key is determining effective compromises re location of high impact land uses, and cooperation with administration and enforcement of zoning and other codes.

9. Supervisors need to hear more frequently from the citizens, should hold more town meeting type sessions utilizing the Community Conversation format so that all opinions are respected and considered.

10. As far as the important players in determining the future of the township, there was wide agreement that decisions are the responsibility of the elected officials. However, too few residents attend planning commission and supervisors' meeting or hearings about specific projects to contribute to the process; they tend to appear only when the work has been completed, the required hearings have been held, and it is time to render a decision. Then they come to say "no." Can you remember a major turnout to support rather than object? Ever?

11. Other important players include the land trusts like the Brandywine Conservancy, the County Planning Commission, property owners, school boards, volunteers, and adjoining hopefully cooperative municipalities.

12. In general, the greatest barriers to progress can be the failure of both elected officials and citizens to seek knowledge about planning, too much finger pointing and expectation that "someone else" is responsible for doing the job.

Conclusions

1. The luxury of just saying no to development does not exist. The preference for that message came through loud and clear in the Community Conversation. The Municipal Planning Code, however, does not provide that option.

2. When there is frustration about changes beyond individual control, it is normal to look for someone to blame. The elected officials are easy targets, even though they function under specific legal constraints and guidelines.

3. East Fallowfield is a naturally lovely township that is experiencing heavy development pressures. For many years, this area of Chester County was considered too far from the centers of employment to become commuter territory. Isolation is hardly an option today. Housed residents benefit substantially from the voluntary conservation efforts that have preserved the majority of the land south of Strasburg Road. If all those King Ranch acres had been developed to their potential, East Fallowfield would have reached its present level of concern about quality of life many years ago. Add the farmland under the County Agricultural Preservation Program, and the conservation benefits increase.

4. There is an often-repeated term that should be stricken from any community's vocabulary: "those people." It surfaced in conversation before, during and after the Conversation. Those people could have been anyone in the room, at any time during the history of the township. The phrase usually surfaces in communities where there is a strong desire to limit further development.

5. Cooperation assumes a willingness to become well-informed about any given topic. Residents are far too vulnerable to the adult version of the childhood game, "whisper down the lane." One rumor feeds another, emotions run high, and no one wins. In a society where sound bites are a common source of information, it takes conscious effort to resist their influence. How many of us really wait to hear the whole story before we choose sides?