

Plumstead Forward Comprehensive Plan

WORKSHOP 1A FACILITATOR NOTES

Sustainability – 7 participants

We had a small/medium group of 7 people who were interested in sustainability but didn't really know what it was or how to explain their thoughts about it. There were a few topics I explained but it was difficult to pull out their thoughts. Before the group began, I gave the example of the "sustainability stool." Sustainability is often described as the 3 E's of Environment, Equity, and Economics which I referred to as the three legs of a stool and sustainability is the top of the stool that connects them together and makes them useful. However, if even one of the legs is weak or not working well with the others (like being angle wrong) then when you needed to put your weight on it, you would fall on your butt. Thus, the role of sustainability is to be sure that these three sectors work well together and fulfill their purpose.

Top-Five Community Values

1. **Our actions are sustainable, and we are stewards of the environment. (6)**
2. We're safe and secure. (0)
3. We are mentally and physically healthy. (4)
4. We have opportunity for education and lifelong learning. (1)
5. We have job and business opportunities. (1)
6. There's cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity. (3)
7. We are resilient to change in the world (2)
8. We engage with the process and come together to solve problems. (4)
9. **We value open space and a rural lifestyle (6)**
10. We're connected to the community. (1)
11. We have a sense of appreciation for history (2)
12. We value our privacy and property and respect our neighbors. (1)
13. We are open to new ideas and innovation. (4)

What does sustainability mean to you?

- Not stuck in ideas that are old.
- Being nimble and flexible
- Open Space funding and access to nature
- Well supported parks
- Sustaining the public sewer system and resilient stormwater management
- Safe and reliable electricity – new electricity poles helped a lot.
- Thinking ahead
- Looking at what resources are needed and available and deploying those resources wisely.

What do you feel is unsustainable in Plumstead?

- The amount of salt used. Residence have noticed excess salt killing what is in streams.

- High deer population causes car accidents and ecological problems with plant damage – needs to be dealt with at a regional level.
- Lots of parks and infrastructure require more infrastructure and the township can't keep up.
- Traffic and lack of pedestrian options.
- The increase of population brought traffic we are not designed for.
- Taxes are too low for services required. More people mean an increased need for services.
- The current stormwater system – feels unsafe and worry about flooding a lot.

What are obstacles to sustainability?

- Community alignment on what the issues are.
- Funding
- Problems leading to deer increases:
- Less hunting
- More development so deer don't have places to go
- Lack of natural predators

What are some Plumstead Sustainability wins or favorite things about Plumstead?

- Open space and preservation
- Scenic rural roads
- Trails, creeks, hiking, and general abundance of outdoor activities
- Tohickon creek
- Canal and toe path (though it needs better public access)
- Also like coffee with a cop event

What Infrastructure is needed to support Sustainability?

- Stormwater Management
- Denser zoning to provide walking opportunities to services
- Long-range planning

Miscellaneous Notes

In our discussions there was a significant worry about flooding. One resident felt strongly that the amount of rain/water they get now is much more / different than when they moved here 20 years ago. A lot more harder and heavier rains and the gullies and stormwater systems can't handle it. Many of the participants also felt like stormwater was a significant concern.

There was the feeling that the parks are not funded enough. Slow response on trash and vandalism, aging infrastructure. High rocks suffers from lack of funding. Poor road management and many state roads out there are last to be served when things like plowing needs to happen. Also that deer populations everywhere are out of control, not just here but region wide. Leaders need to increase funding for the many services we need even if it means raising taxes.

Traffic and traffic flow was also a concern. Cyclists don't have a place as the trails are more for families and cyclists don't have a safe place on the roads. Having no left-hand turn on 611 is a concern as well as the lumberville bridge being out for an extended period and river road being dangerous. Also the concern over lack of sidewalks.

The traffic comes from an increase in population and that comes with an increase in services required but that causes problems with Plumstead being volunteer based. Many don't know that many services they rely on are just volunteers and volunteer rates are lower in recent years right when the demand for these services are up. Lack of community awareness in these and similar issues. Population increase also causing an increase of cost of living.

The communication from the municipality was also troublesome as some residence said they didn't realize the sustainability survey was legitimate when they got it and those that did do the survey said that the survey did not let them know about this meeting so having follow up information on the survey itself would have been helpful.

Planning for Growth – approximately 20 participants

Top-Five Community Values

1. **Our actions are sustainable, and we are stewards of the environment. (8)**
2. We're safe and secure. (8)
3. We are mentally and physically healthy. (4)
4. We have opportunity for education and lifelong learning. (2)
5. We have job and business opportunities. (4)
6. There's cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity. (2)
7. We are resilient to change in the world (1)
8. We engage with the process and come together to solve problems. (1)
9. **We value open space and a rural lifestyle (26)**
10. We're connected to the community. (3)
11. We have a sense of appreciation for history (5)
12. We value our privacy and property and respect our neighbors. (16)
13. We are open to new ideas and innovation. (1)

What does "Planning for Growth" mean to you?

- Mindful planning for growth needs a renewed emphasis on zoning.
- Could a developer's "Impact Fee" be incorporated to account for future costs on infrastructure?
- Using a map (in the future) to identify areas for growth and areas for preservation will be important.
- Thinking about Plumstead as complementary to other municipalities. What role will Plumstead play in the regional landscape of neighboring communities. Will it be a bedroom community or a destination? Planning for growth in a smart way could help answer this question.
- An emphasis on the importance of future of proactively planning.
- Plumstead should be identifying areas to keep as open space, fields, farmland.

- Importance of a wider communication and understanding of township preservation policy through public involvement
- What should development look like in the historic villages?
- Assess the location of public utilities in terms of what is designated as a growth area.

What are some strengths and positives from growth?

- Growth has created economic activity and opportunities in some areas (e.g. Cross Keys)
- Ratables – understanding how the township financial structure works
- Must be a balance of public utilities, quality of natural resources against development impacts. Positive effects can be seen when balance is struck and existing infrastructure is maintained.
- Roadways must be in a condition to handle effects of development – an important factor in determining when/where growth is considered positive or effective.
- One obstacle to be mindful of is growth and development's relationship with nature and wildlife.

Transportation – 10 participants

Top-Five Community Values

- 1. Our actions are sustainable, and we are stewards of the environment. (8)**
2. We're safe and secure. (5)
3. We are mentally and physically healthy. (2)
4. We have opportunity for education and lifelong learning. (0)
5. We have job and business opportunities. (0)
6. There's cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity. (4)
7. We are resilient to change in the world. (0).
8. We engage with the process and come together to solve problems. (3)
9. We value open space and a rural lifestyle. (5).
10. We're connected to the community. (5)
11. We have a sense of appreciation for history. (5)
- 12. We value our privacy and property and respect our neighbors. (7)**
13. We are open to new ideas and innovation. (5)
14. Other. (0)

Hopes

- Make Roads Safer
- Bike Lanes and Walking Trails
- A municipal Trail System
- Walkable trails to connect communities
- More reliable public transportation to large cities and a DART connection
- Maintain the township's agricultural state and historic charm
- Redouble efforts to maintain the system we have

Concerns

- Traffic is jamming at intersections

- Local roads make Plumstead a throughway
- Roads don't benefit residents
- Lack of visibility at intersections
- Speeding within the township
- Noise pollution
- Roads are unsafe
- Intersection issues at 611, Curly Hill, and Harring Road
- Traffic and tailgating on 413, 313 and 611

Keys Points grouped by value

Our actions are sustainable, and we are stewards of the environment

- Impervious surface causing flooding and polluting waterways
- We have limited resources which is impacting wildlife and quality of life
- Township needs to live within its means and in harmony with nature

We are safe and secure

- Participants generally felt safe and secure within the township

We are mentally and Physically Healthy

- Township has Parks to experience wildlife and socialize
- Bike amenities need to be safer
- Township could benefit from dog parks

There's cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity

- There needs to be more housing variety and attainable housing
- We need to value all communities within the township including the elderly
- Need to provide mobility amenities for vulnerable populations

We value open space and rural life

- Many residents cited moving here to enjoy the more rural lifestyle and open space the township provides.

We are open to new ideas and innovation

- Township should consider greater emphasis on pedestrian friendly alternatives

Strengths

- 611 Bypass is very convenient
- Township is home to scenic roads
- Lots of great parks
- Enjoy the unlined back county roads
- The group felt weaknesses were covered by the concerns section, but the group would like to know what the breakdown of state and locally owned roads is for the township

Ideas

- Township needs to improve relationship and communication with PennDOT
- Township could benefit from the expansion of DART
- Pedestrian crossing features need to be developed for the township
- Regulations that require developers to construct pedestrian amenities as part of their land developments

Township Communication – 5 participants

We had a small group of 5 people who were all very engaged in the conversation. This allowed us to have a very productive, free-flowing conversation that stayed on topic throughout the discussion period.

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8. We engage with the process and come together to solve problems. (2)
9. **We value open space and a rural lifestyle. (5).**
10. We're connected to the community. (1)
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12. We value our privacy and property and respect our neighbors. (3)
13. We are open to new ideas and innovation. (0)
14. Other. (0)

Discussion Notes

- The group discussed the frustration of a lack of communication to residents and businesses that they are in Plumstead, even if they have a Doylestown address. There are plenty of Plumstead organizations that both businesses and residents could support, but do not think to look for them because they are considering themselves a Doylestown resident.
 - Example – GIANT donating to Doylestown Fire Company rather than Plumsteadville because they just associated their Doylestown mailing address to being a Doylestown business
- The group suggested there needs to be better communication from the Township to inform new residents and businesses about Plumstead so they understand that it is its own community outside of Doylestown
- Information about Crime/EMS and other services
 - the value of a place to have postings about any police/fire/traffic concerns in the township. They voiced concerns about misinformation spreading on Facebook/social media about things happening in the town. A resident will post in the group asking about police activity and others will respond either much later, or with an incorrect story about what happened.

The group discussed the benefit of having one place where this information could be posted for residents – could be helpful with road closures etc. or traffic accidents or if residents should avoid an area.

- Group did acknowledge that this would be something that needs to be manned all the time and understand that it would be a large task
- Another topic that was discussed related to this was the benefit of communicating plow schedules. If the Township could get ahead of the questions for plowing so that during snow storms the DPW does not have to deal with calls on top of their pressing needs of clearing the roads.
- The need for more available information about roads in the Township. Residents are unaware of whether their road is a state or local road and may call the township with a complaint about a road that the township does not have ownership of. It was also expressed that the township could help in this regard by reaching out to the state for residents when they have issues with the state roads
- The reverse 911 set up – this is not really used too much in the town, and there is the question of how much is too much information

Public Meetings

- The group discussed public meetings not being well attended and that residents are very unlikely to attend a meeting unless something is happening right next to their home.
- More communication and education about the Township's boards and committees may help with this. The group felt that many residents are not even aware of these committees or what they do, or that these meetings are all public meetings that anyone can attend, not just those directly involved with the agenda topics.
- Residents overall are unaware that they can utilize these public meetings as a more direct means of communication.
- Diversifying the means of communication
 - The need for more modes of communication to residents – they said that Facebook is not enough. They agreed that emails and the quarterly newsletter are a more effective mean of communication.
 - The idea of an electronic sign or sandwich board would be very helpful for the town to have to update with events or warnings of accidents or weather. The thought of one sign in a highly trafficked part of town could really add value to the township. Suggestions for uses of the sign included promoting events and warning of storms/bad weather or traffic concerns.
 - Along with the sign it would be helpful to have on centralized place people can go to get information – this will help with the concern about residents feeling overwhelmed with emails or texts about town news. Having one place that all residents know they can go find the information they need
- Website was discussed, and the group said it was helpful for more official business like permits and such, but not as helpful for more of the everyday information for residents.
- Equal access for groups in the town – the group would like to see smaller groups such as little league or volunteer groups be able to advertise more in town for events.
- Length of advertising – the group showed concern about events in the town not being advertised for long enough or across enough platforms to reach a good audience. They all agreed that this meeting

was advertised well and it showed by the attendance, and they wish that there could be more advertising for other events in a similar fashion.

Miscellaneous Notes

- One member of the group was unaware of the quarterly newsletter that everyone else was talking about as such a great resource. The concern was that there are residents who are not receiving this information
- The idea of a welcome packet for new residents and businesses was very well liked by the group.
- At the end the idea of having a group of residents to help serve as a communication group for the town would be helpful. It would also be helpful to have some younger residents help out who may be more social media savvy.