September 12th, 2024

Workshop 2B: Choices and Visioning

Workshop 2A and 2B – Choices and Visioning – These workshops will have facilitated discussions on each topic presented below (3 per workshop). The meetings will begin with an overview of Workshop 1 and survey results. The attendees will then proceed with a discussion and activities that are intended to advance issue development and help set a vision for the future.

Workshop 2B Topic Summaries

Route 611

Route 611 is the state highway that runs through the east side of Riegelsville Borough that over 5,000 vehicles travel on daily. Being that this is a state highway, the borough needs to work with PennDOT on any changes or improvements to the road. It is two lane road, with a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour, but cars tend to travel much faster through the borough, causing concern for residents.

What we heard…

At the workshop, multiple concerns with 611 were brought up including the need to slow down traffic and reduce the amount of heavy truck traffic and adding sidewalks and crosswalks to 611 to make it more walkable. The community survey showed similar concerns with respondents expressing the importance of reducing speed on 611, making town more walkable and filling in sidewalk gaps throughout the borough to enhance public safety.

What do we still need to learn…

- Are there specific areas of Route 611 that have issues that need to be addressed?
- How does the borough go about making changes to the road? (grant funding/PennDOT permitting etc.)
- What would an ideal Route 611 look like for you? What do we really want for this? What should our goals be?

Walkability/Bikeability

The ability to connect amenities throughout the borough by means of sidewalks and walking paths is an important component of a lively community. Riegelsville has a variety of amenities including the downtown area, access to the D&R Canal Path, and multiple parks and open space areas throughout the borough. Though the borough has many amenities in a small land area, there are currently issues with the connections between amenities, making it more difficult for residents and visitors to safely utilize everything Riegelsville has to offer.

What we heard…

Issues with connectivity in the borough were brought up both in the survey, and at the first public workshop. Respondents of the survey indicated that filling in sidewalk gaps throughout the borough to enhance public safety was of importance to them. At the first workshop multiple issues with walking paths were brought up, both along Route 611 in the form of missing sidewalks and cross walks, and throughout the borough with residents expressing the need to connect existing paths to the streets and existing sidewalks to create a more walkable borough. Residents at the workshop expressed the lack of connections between residences and Riegelsville Borough Park, and near the downtown and canal area. Overall, the lack of connectivity, and the current state of existing connections was an expressed concern.

What do we still need to learn…

- Do residents feel safe walking through the borough?

- Which areas, or specific places, are difficult to walk to?
- Are there any complete streets policies that can be implemented in the borough?
- What funding sources are there for sidewalks/trails/connection options?
- Are there obstacles (funding, topography, land availability?) to creating a more walkable borough?
- Should there be more connections to areas outside of the borough?
- What would be the ideal conditions for a well-connected Riegelsville?

Natural Resources/Parks and Recreation

Riegelsville contains many natural resources that add to its quality of life and sense of place. These resources include the Delaware River, its floodplains and wetlands, and the Delaware Canal. The borough also contains areas of excellent soil for farming. Some of these areas have underlying carbonate geology that could potentially cause sinkhole and groundwater pollution problems for future development. The borough's parks and recreation resources include the public park, the multi-purpose trail, and the Delaware Canal State Park. The *Riegelsville Borough Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan* was completed in 2013.

What we heard…

At the workshop attendees commented on the importance of preserving open space, planting trees, and preserving the sense of place. Needed improvements that were mentioned include additional sports fields/courts and river and towpath access. The "Preserve, Enhance, Transform" map exercise showed that residents were in favor of preserving the agricultural and open space land within the borough. Enhancements suggested on the map include adding active recreation to the park, a walking bridge to the canal, cleanup and enhancement of the canal, and a community garden near the bike path. Survey respondents rated protecting open space corridors and agricultural lands from development a 4.2 out of 5.0, tied for the highest rating. Providing improved or additional active recreation facilities was rated 3.0 and providing improved or additional passive recreation was rated 3.5.

What do we still need to learn…

- What are the most important natural resources to protect?
- Are there additional land use controls that could protect these resources?
- Is there community support to purchase lands for preservation?
- What funding is available for natural resource preservation?
- What types of active and passive recreation do you want to see at borough parks?
- Is there funding available for parks and recreation projects?

What is the vision and preferred outcome?

- How does the community envision the preservation of natural resources and the parks recreation system?
- What are the ultimate goals for both?

What's next?

Workshop 3 – Imagining Solutions – A draft community vision and the results of Workshops 2A and 2B will be discussed with participants. We will more narrowly focus on specific community issues (as identified through the process) and break into groups to analyze and discuss solutions. At this stage subject matter experts will be engaged to help guide the process and to develop realistic solutions. Subject matter experts from within and outside of the BCPC will be engaged to assist with the more specialized issues.