

Implementation of Multi-Municipal Plans in Western Pennsylvania

Twin Rivers COG – 2003

This plan involved some 14 municipalities. Of these, 12 were in Allegheny County and were contiguous, while two were in Westmoreland County. Published in 2003, the plan was effective in identifying the needs of constituent municipalities, primarily sewer and water issues. It also pointed out land use problems. The plan was awarded the 2004 Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence for Innovative Planning and Land Use Practices.

Phase two brought out a model zoning and subdivision and land use development ordinance (SALDO) with extensive annotations and comments.

Comments

This plan was early in the "multi-municipal" process and helped to set some regional infrastructure needs, but it had difficulty in achieving land use goals. However,

- ◆ A township did adopt the model SALDO
- ◆ A Specific Plan was prepared (not adopted, due to a change in Borough Council)

The Oil Creek Region – Two Phases (2000 and 2007)

This multi-municipal plan encompassed nine municipalities in Crawford and Venango counties, centering on the Titusville area. The area is typical for western Pennsylvania—an aging, declining, population and the loss of many good head-of-household jobs, primarily in the industrial sectors. No easy fixes. However, the area has assets: outstanding scenic values, low crime, modest cost of living, valuable hardwoods (oak and cherry), and a local hospital.

Plan recommendations included:

- ◆ A modest industrial park – continued revamping of a brownfield property
- ◆ Wood shipping center
- ◆ Improvements to Route 8
- ◆ Cooperative Housing Rehab Program (537 homes) (multi-jurisdiction)
- ◆ Land use – recommendations re: zoning and SALDO/land use sharing agencies
- ◆ Recreation – bike trail

What was done (we learned)

- ◆ Cytemp property – brownfield continued
- ◆ Some Route 8 highway projects
- ◆ Cooperative housing rehab (after a struggle with DCED!!)
- ◆ Phase 2 – Zoning and SALDO (three municipalities), land use sharing agreement

Central Crawford – 2007

This is an unusual “multi-municipal” plan. The City of Meadville, Vernon Township, Conneaut Lake Borough, and Sadsbury Township were participants. However, Meadville’s participation was limited to certain items. Specifically, they were interested in updating their downtown improvement plan. The primary interests of the other communities were twofold:

- ◆ Coordinated development of Route 6 through Vernon, Sadsbury, and Conneaut Lake—the Conneaut Lake Corridor
- ◆ Developing a regional approach to water and sewer extensions

To date:

- ◆ Vernon Township has adopted the “Conneaut Corridor” zoning.
- ◆ Conneaut Lake and Sadsbury are in the process of adopting concurrent new zoning and SALDOs, consistent with Vernon Township.
- ◆ A land use sharing concept has been approved and a draft agreement is ready.

The Borough of Edinboro-Washington Township, and Franklin Township – 2005

This three-community effort was a modest one. After the traditional background was completed, the primary issues resolved were:

- ◆ Sanitary sewer treatment. As a partial result of cooperation, agreements were signed, and most sewage will now flow to Edinboro’s plant.
- ◆ The Route 6N Corridor Study (complete)
- ◆ New or revised land use ordinances (two townships)
- ◆ Ongoing cooperation, especially between the two townships (monthly meetings)

Northwest Clearfield County – 2008

This was a five-municipality plan which centered on the City of DuBois/Sandy Township, Pennsylvania. It was quite a difficult undertaking. Sandy/DuBois had voted on consolidation at least three times over a 20-year period; and rather than acting as a basis for collaboration, it served to polarize everyone. A second element of division was sewer service. Unfortunately, the typical “possession” attitude held sway: This is our asset, period! However, agreements on future land use, some progress on zoning, and a beginning on a regional water and sewer system were at least discussed, but limited progress. Also, during this time, a second home community—Treasure Lake—began the process to become a borough (still in court). That complicated matters. Also, the Transportation Plan was a separate element which resulted in a plan “disconnect.”

The Key Rule: Find activities that communities want to do, and will do. Early, easy successes establish a positive foundation for action.