

HRG

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Duties of the Municipal Planning Commission

Today's Learning Objectives

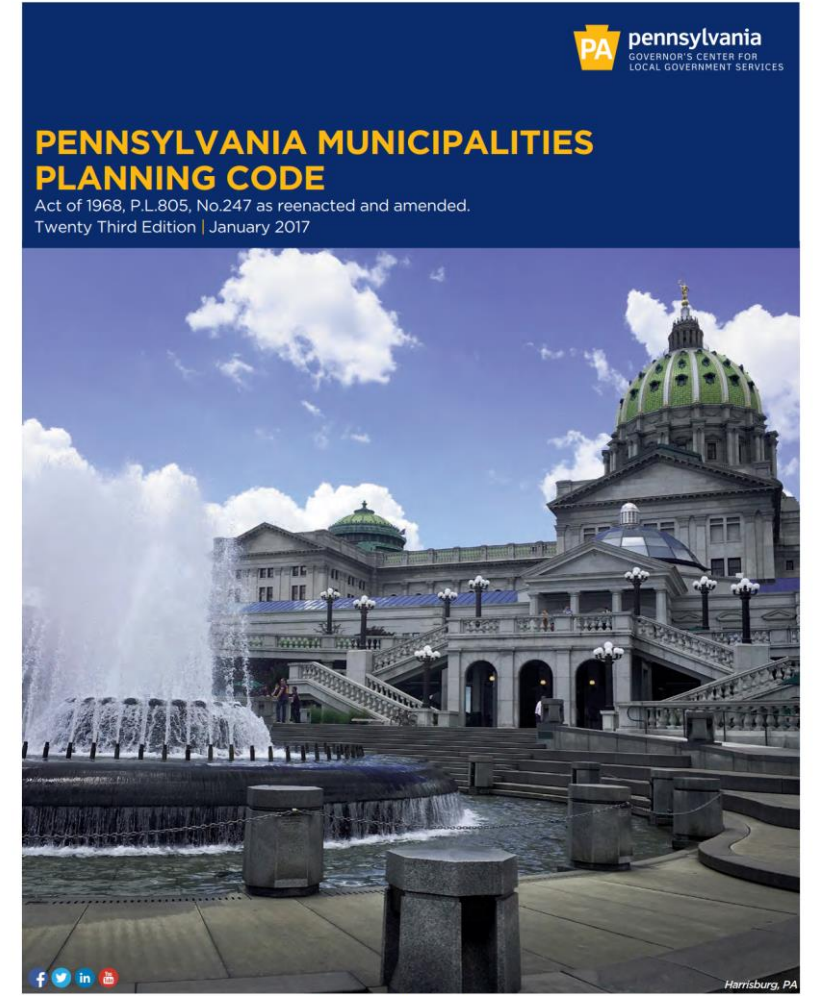
- > Brief review of the MPC
- > Discuss and learn about the various tasks and duties of the Planning Commission, as outlined in the MPC
- > Review various organizations and tools available to help guide and inform Planning Commission members to fulfill their duties



What is the PA MPC?

An act that empowers municipalities to:

- > guide their development according to the community's vision and best interests
- > govern it in a uniform and consistent way



What is the PA MPC?


The MPC provides regulations, processes, and procedures for the following:

- > Planning Commissions
- > Zoning Hearing Boards
- > Comprehensive Plans
- > Zoning Ordinances and Amendments
- > Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances and Amendments
- > Capital Improvements Planning
- > Municipal Impact Fees
- > Financial Security/Bonds for Improvements



With power comes responsibility ...

The MPC requires municipalities to follow certain processes and procedures so that applicants, whether a developer or a resident, know their requests will be considered fairly and in a timely manner.



What is a Planning Commission?

A planning commission is...

- > a planning agency authorized by the PA MPC
- > a group of “citizen planners”
- > comprised of anywhere from 3-9 members, and 1-3 alternate members
- > tasked with playing a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people’s lives
- > advisory to the governing body
- > “arm” of the municipality and not an independent body



How are Planning Commissions Created?

- > The MPC requires that the Planning Commission be created by ordinance enacted by the governing body
 - > The governing body can elect to create a planning commission, planning department, or both.
- > Members of the Planning Commission are appointed by the municipality's appointing authority, subject to the approval of the governing body (except where both are the same!)
- > Planning Commission members must be residents of the municipality.
- > Members serve a four (4) year term.



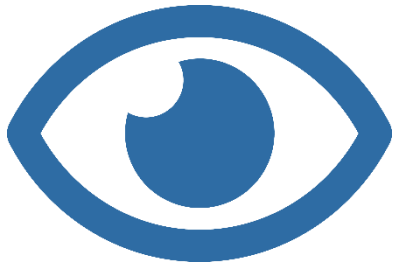
Specific Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

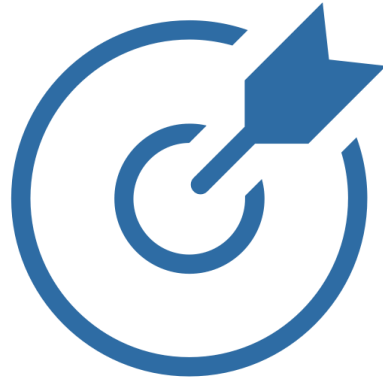
- > The Planning Commission's principal role, as defined in Section 209.1 of the MPC, is to **prepare a comprehensive plan** for the long-term growth, development, and well-being of the municipality.
- > Not only do Planning Commissions prepare comprehensive plans, but they are also challenged with the task of helping to promote the comprehensive plan and to implement the plan's goals and objectives.

Planning
helps
communities
to envision
their future.

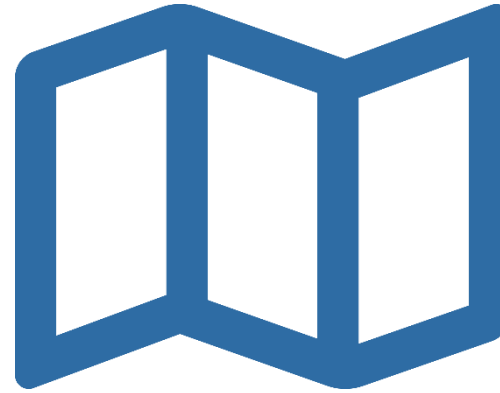
What is a Comprehensive Plan?



A community's **VISION** for what it wants to become and what it wants to look like in 10, 15, or 20 years



Statement of **GOALS** and **OBJECTIVES** related to economic development, growth, housing, transportation, preservation and conservation, infrastructure, etc.

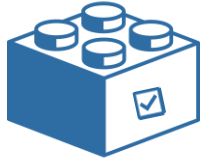


ROAD MAP for decision making and policy making for a municipality



Helps to get **FUNDING** for municipal projects: parks, trails, infrastructure improvements, etc.

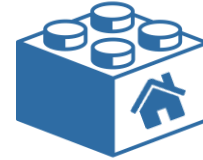
Basic elements of a Comprehensive Plan



Statement of
community
development
objectives



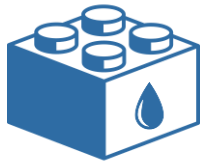
Land use plan



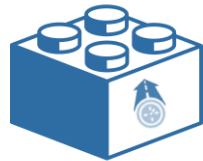
Plan for meeting
housing needs of
the community



Transportation plan
for the movement
of people and
goods



Plan for community
facilities and utilities
(including the
supply of water)



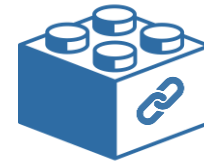
Short- and long-
range plan
implementation
strategies



Plan for natural,
cultural, and historic
resources



Parks, recreation
and open space
plan



Interrelationship of
plan components
and potential
impacts of
developments

Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

> Make recommendations to the governing body concerning the adoption or amendment of an **Official Map**.

Official maps are a combined map and ordinance that help municipalities plan and prioritize community investments in open space and public facilities.

What is an Official Map?

- > A combined map and ordinance that helps a municipality plan and prioritize community investments in open space and facilities.
- > Designed to implement elements of the comprehensive plan.
- > Identify existing and proposed transportation infrastructure and transit rights-of-way.
- > Designate open space for preservation such as recreation sites like parks, important resource areas, potential trails, and other public facilities needed to support the goals of the comprehensive plan.

What is an Official Map?

- > Despite their name, official maps are not meant to convey the exact locations of future public lands but instead are meant to serve as a point of negotiations between the municipality and the landowner or developer.
- > Official maps provide the development community with a clear framework for private investment.
- > They visually represent a community's long-term goals as articulated in the Comprehensive Plan.

Example of an Official Map



Legend

Proposed Facilities

- Proposed road/right of way
60' width to include 10' bikeway
- Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian Path

Existing Public Facilities

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Bike lanes | Existing Parks |
| Off-road Path | Recreation land owned by others |
| Expressway | Institutions |
| Expwy Ramp | Municipal Authorities |
| Arterial Street | College Township |
| Collector Street | State College Area School District |
| Local/Neighborhood Street | |
| Private Street or Alley | |

Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

- > Prepare and present to the governing body a **zoning ordinance** and make recommendations on proposed amendments to it.

Zoning ordinances are about more than just maps.

They are a tool for guiding growth, preservation, and development within a community.

Purposes of a Zoning Ordinance

- > To promote, protect, and facilitate the public health, safety, morals, and welfare
- > To encourage coordinated and practicable community development and proper density of population
- > To prevent overcrowding of land, blight, danger, and congestion in travel and transportation
- > To provide for various residential housing types
- > To accommodate reasonable overall community growth
- > To preserve prime agricultural and farmlands

Provisions of a Zoning Ordinance

- > Should be a reflection of the policy goals related to the statement of community development objectives (consistency with Comprehensive Plan)
- > Take into account the character of the municipality
- > Consider the needs of the residents
- > Take into account the suitability and special nature of specific parts and neighborhoods of the municipality



Adoption, Amendments, & Repeals

A governing body can take legislative action to adopt, amend, or repeal a land use ordinance at any time, provided the following occur:

- > Proper notice to the public
- > Required review by the County Planning Agency
- > Adherence to all procedures as prescribed in the MPC



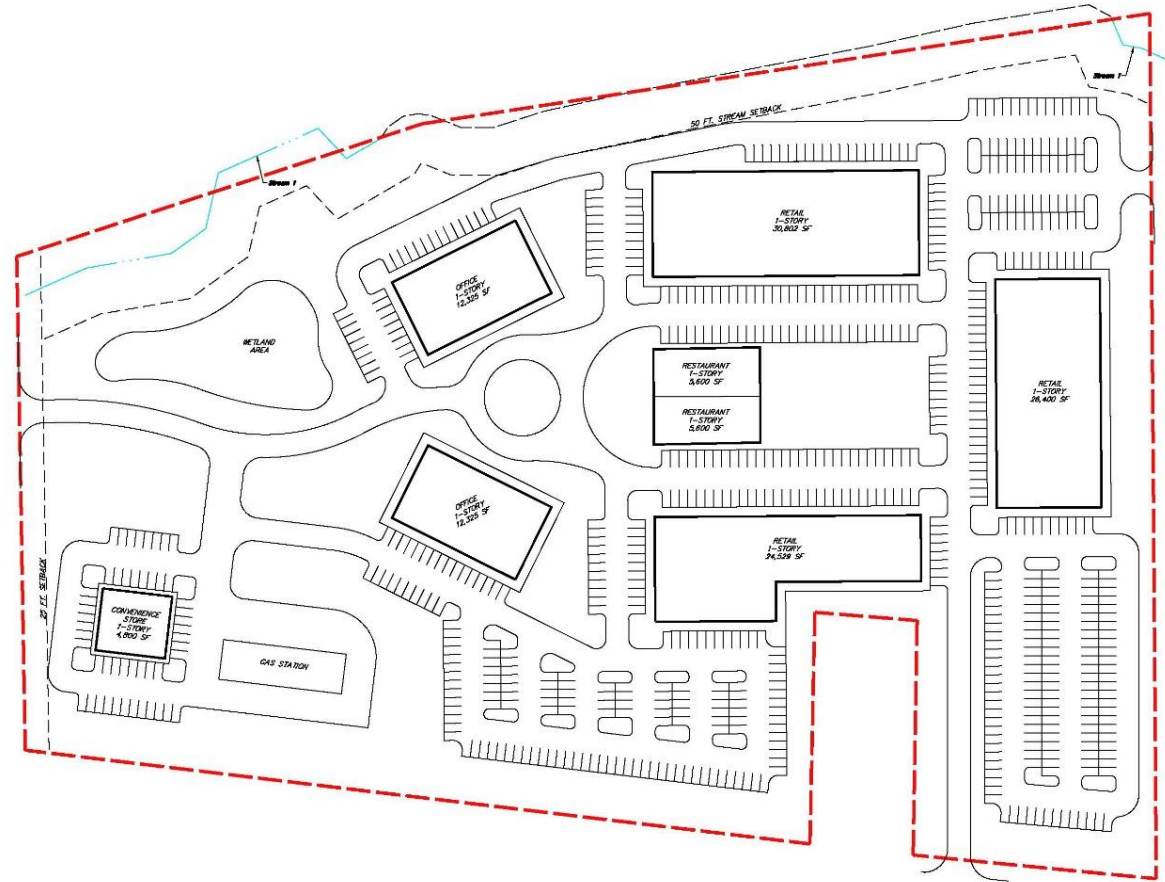
Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

- > Prepare, recommend, and administer subdivision and land development regulations.

SALDOs are a tool for helping to guide land development and subdivision patterns within a community and covers topic areas such as street design, sidewalks, landscaping, etc.

SALDOs

Using SALDOs as a tool, the MPC gives municipalities the **power** to regulate the development of individual parcels of land within its borders, but it also imposes various **obligations**.



SALDOs give municipalities the power to regulate

- > That **site layout and arrangement** conforms to the comprehensive plan, regulation, and maps
- > That **streets** within the development and bordering it are of sufficient widths, grades and locations to make sure they can accommodate anticipated traffic and facilitate fire protection
- > That adequate **easements and right-of-way** are set aside for drainage and utilities

SALDOs give municipalities the power to regulate

- > That **land subject to flooding, subsidence, or underground fires** is made safe for the proposed purpose or will be set aside for uses that do not endanger life or property (or increase the existing menace)
- > That **streets, walkways, curbs, gutters, street lights, fire hydrants, water and sewage facilities** are designed according to standard
- > That municipalities receive **compensation for the time it takes to review and approve** their applications and for any public improvements that will be necessary due to the impacts of the development.

SALDOs obligate municipalities to:

- > Ensure they review development applications in a timely manner
- > Make decisions in a fair, predictable and consistent way
- > Be flexible about requirements when warranted (via conditional uses, special exceptions, and modifications)



When does the SALDO apply?

Any time one lot or two or more contiguous lots, tracts or parcels are improved to include:

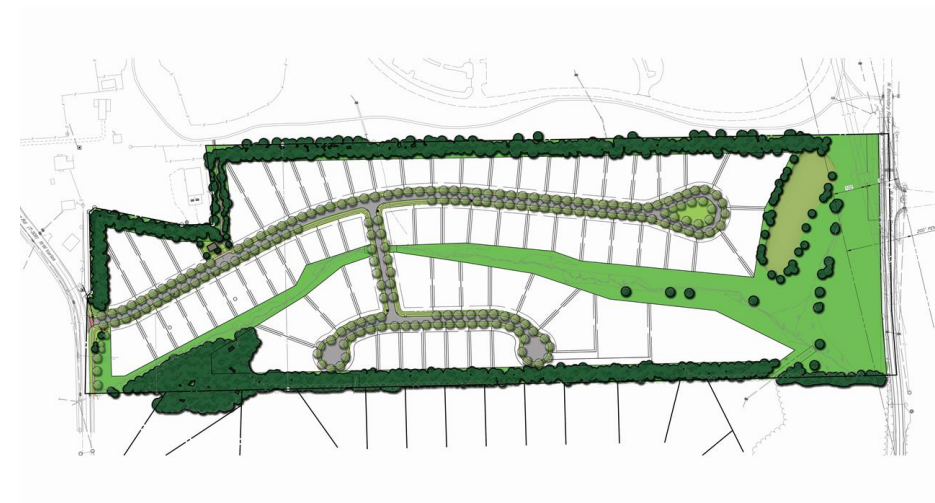
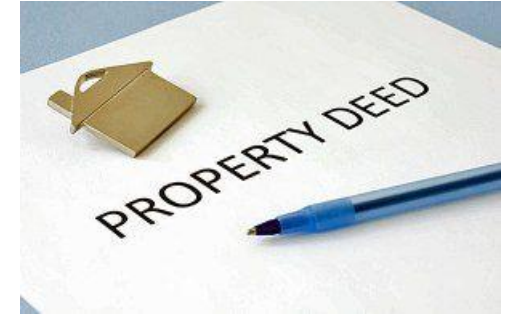
- > Construction of two or more residential **buildings** (whether proposed initially or in phases) OR any number of non-residential buildings (regardless of the number of occupants or tenure)
- > **Allocation of space** among two or more occupants for streets, common areas, leaseholders, condominiums, building groups or other features



When does the SALDO apply?

- > Any time a **property is subdivided** into two or more lots, tracts, parcels or other divisions

i.e. existing lot lines are changed for the purpose of lease, distribution to heirs or devisees, transfer of ownership, or development of the land/construction of one or more buildings



When does the SALDO not apply?



Subdivision of land by lease for agricultural purposes into parcels of more than 10 acres when no new streets, easements, or residential dwellings are involved



The conversion of a single-family detached dwelling (less than 3 units)



The addition of an accessory building (including farm/agricultural buildings)



The addition or conversion of buildings or rides within the confines of an enterprise that could be considered an amusement park.

Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

> Review the municipality's proposed official **sewage facilities plan**.

Act 537 requires that official sewage plans provide for the orderly extension of community interceptor sewers in a manner consistent with the comprehensive plan.

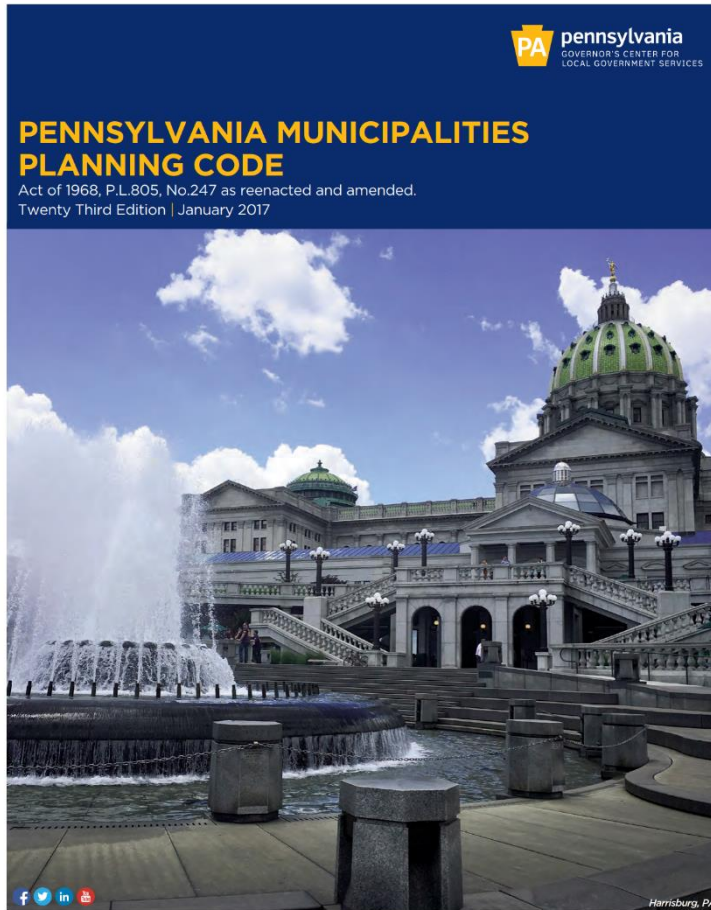
Sewage Facilities Planning

- > Sewage facilities plans should take into consideration aspects of planning, zoning, population estimates, engineering, and economics to project sewer service areas 10 years into the future.
- > Should be consistent not only with the comprehensive plan but also the zoning ordinance and other land use planning efforts within the municipality.
- > Should consider wetlands, prime agricultural land, archaeological or historical features, and water supply.

Other Miscellaneous Duties and Tasks of the Planning Commission

- > Prepare annual report due to the governing body in March.
- > Prepare, recommend, and administer planned residential development (PRD) regulations. (Typically, an article itself within a zoning ordinance.)
- > Prepare studies as may be necessary to fulfill the duties and obligations imposed by the MPC.
- > Prepare and present to the governing body an environmental study.
- > Submit to the governing body a capital improvements program.
- > Promote public interest in, and understanding of, the comprehensive plan and planning.
- > Hold public hearings and meetings.
- > Present testimony before any board.

Helpful Links & Resources



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
PA Department of Community & Economic Development | dced.pa.gov

Link to download the PA MPC Online:

<https://dced.pa.gov/download/pennsylvania-municipalities-planning-code-act-247-of-1968/>

Other DCED Resources:

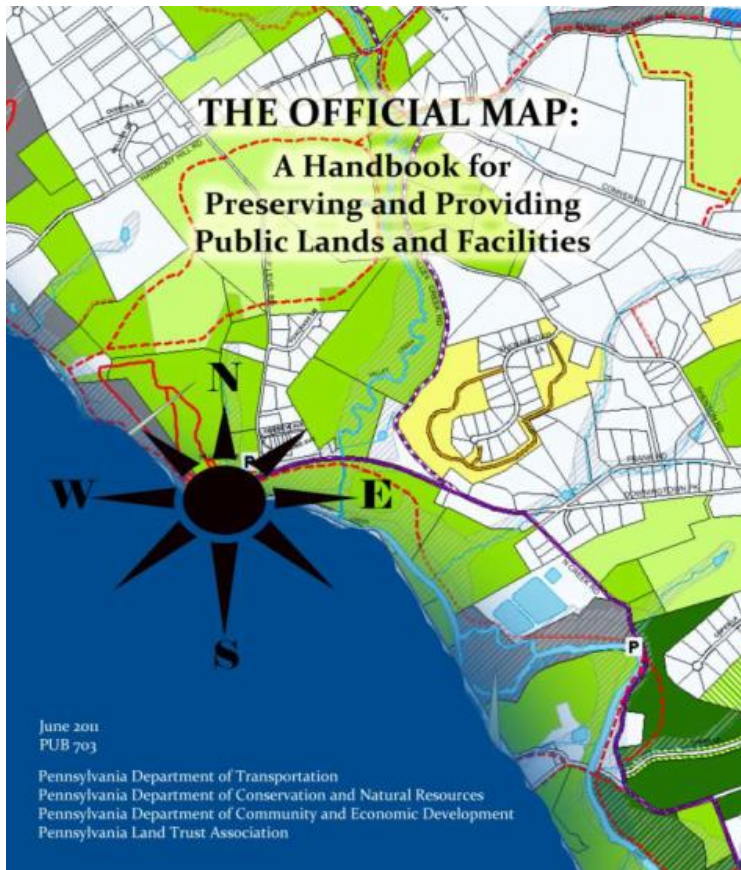
<https://dced.pa.gov/housing-and-development/community-planning/>

<https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/>

LGA:

<https://localgovernmentacademy.org/>

Helpful Links & Resources



Official Maps – Conservation Tools:

https://conservationtools.org/library_items/931

PMPEI:

<https://pmpei.org/>

PA APA:

<https://planningpa.org/>

National APA:

<https://www.planning.org/>

Questions?



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