

1. INTRODUCTION

Located on the western bank of the Delaware River, Middle Smithfield Township, in Monroe County, Pennsylvania has long been identified with the rugged, natural beauty of the Poconos. Residents and visitors alike have been drawn to the area for decades, but development in the region did not begin to spike until the 1970s when population swelled and vacation/second homes became increasingly popular. More recently, the area has transitioned into a bedroom community, accommodating more and more year round residents attracted by the local scenery, relatively affordable cost of living, and easy access to strong economies in New York and New Jersey.

Faced with continued development pressures, the Township is at a critical juncture: development is necessary to provide services and jobs close to home and to help offset a rising residential tax burden, while new models for development are needed to create and maintain a functional and attractive community. The Township seeks to chart a new path toward sensible development patterns that balance economic, environmental, and social vitality and enhance the quality of life for all residents, visitors and businesspersons.

The Comprehensive Plan is an important tool in charting that path as it lays out the Township's vision for its future and the implementation strategies for achieving those goals. The last plan was adopted in 1999. Since then, the Township has continued to experience significant housing development, increased traffic congestion, and the beginning of construction of the new Marshalls Creek By-pass.

There are five primary work products included in this Comprehensive Plan Update:

- Chapter 3 summarizes the Goals, Objectives and Strategies for those issues deemed most critical to the Township's future;
- Chapter 4 is the Township's Land Use Plan, including a Natural Resource Protection Areas Map and Map of Proposed Character Areas (Conceptual Future Land Use Plan);
- Guidelines and Best Practices for the Proposed Character Areas are also included in Chapter 4;
- Chapters 5 through 10 contain Plans for Housing, Community Facilities, Utilities, and Transportation, Relationship of Plan Components and Regional Relationship; and
- Chapter 11 is the Implementation Matrix, outlining the responsible parties and timelines for implementation of the strategies recommended in the Plan.

The Planning Process

A 17 member Steering Committee guided the planning process during 2006 and 2007. Members on the committee include elected officials, representatives of various municipal boards and agencies, County representatives, and members of the public.

Previous and other ongoing planning efforts also informed the process, including Monroe 2020, the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan, and a community survey completed in the spring of 2005, regarding community preferences.

As the plan took shape, the Township Steering Committee hosted public meetings in 2007. Several Steering Committee meetings held in the spring of 2007 began with a brief public comment session. In addition, the public was invited to submit comments in writing at anytime. In compliance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code [53 P.S. § 10302], the Comprehensive Plan Update: 2007 was submitted for review to the Monroe County Planning Commission, the East Stroudsburg School District, Lehman Township, Pike County, Porter Township, Pike County, Smithfield Township, Monroe County, pursuant to 53 P.S. § 10301.3. The Middle Smithfield Township Planning Commission hosted a Public Meeting on December 4, 2007. The Middle Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors also hosted a Public Hearing on January 29, 2008 to receive public comments on the proposed plan; public notice of said meeting was advertised in the Pocono Record on January 11, 2008 and January 18, 2008 and posted at the Middle Smithfield Township Municipal Building. The Comprehensive Plan Update: 2007 was adopted on February 14, 2008. Pursuant to 53 P.S. § 306(b), a certified copy of the Comprehensive Plan was sent to the Monroe County Commissioners.

2. BACKGROUND

Historic Growth Trends

Middle Smithfield Township’s growth trend began in the 1970’s when the Township more than doubled its population and experienced a growth rate nearly three times that of the County. Since that peak of 131% growth, the Township continued to add residents at an approximate 80% rate per decade for the next two decades, expanding from a population of 3,497 persons in 1980 to more than 11,000 in the year 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, Monroe County was the second fastest growing County in the State (second only to its neighbor to the north, Pike County), and Middle Smithfield Township was the third fastest growing Township within the County.¹

Continued growth for both the County and the Township is expected well into the future, but at a declining rate. This is already evidenced in the estimates, which show an additional 20,488 persons in the County since 2000, and an estimated 3,056 new persons in the Township from 2000 to 2006.

Table 2-1: Population Growth Trends 1970- 2000

	Middle Smithfield Township			Monroe County		
	Population	Absolute Growth	Growth Rate	Population	Absolute Growth	Growth Rate
1970	1,508			45,422		
1980	3,497	1,989	131.9%	69,409	23,987	52.8%
1990	6,382	2,885	82.5%	95,709	5,113	80.1%
2000	11,495	5,113	80.1%	138,687	26,300	37.9%
2005/06*	14,551	3,056	26.6%	159,175	20,488	14.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

* MST estimated as of July 1, 2006; Monroe County estimate from 2005 American Community Survey

Population and Housing Unit Projections

The practice of projecting population is as much an art as it is a science. The accuracy of projections is higher for larger geographies and shorter time frames (i.e., projections at the county level will be more accurate than at the smaller, municipal level and will be more accurate for the 10 year horizon than the 20 year). For purposes of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the trend is more important than the actual number. The trend for Monroe County shows a growth rate of 62% between 2000 and 2020: 31% between 2000 and 2010, and 23% between 2010 and 2020. Projections for the Township, calculated by the Monroe County Planning Commission, estimate 10,250 new residents by 2020. This is a growth rate of 89%, potentially maintaining the Township’s place as the third fastest growing Township in the County.

The 2005 and 2006 estimates as listed in Table 2-1 above show a slightly slower growth than the County’s estimates. Extrapolating the 2006 numbers (26.6% over 6 years (2000 through 2006) equals .044% growth per year, taken over ten years) would show a growth of 44% for the County between 2000 and 2010, a rate half as great as the two previous

¹ U.S. Census Bureau

decades. However if taken over 20 years, this would still result in an 88.6% growth rate (10,184 persons) for the Township, slightly under the 89.2% rate estimated by the County.

Table 2-2: 2020 Population Projections by Municipality

	2000	2010	2020	Abs Change	% Growth
Barrett	3880		5225	1345	34.66%
Chestnut Hill	14418		25600	11182	77.56%
Coolbaugh	15205		32100	16895	111.11%
DWG	744		766	22	2.96%
E Stroudsburg	9888		12100	2212	22.37%
Eldred	2665		3590	925	34.71%
Hamilton	8235		11335	3100	37.64%
Jackson	5979		10400	4421	73.94%
M Smithfield	11495		21750	10255	89.21%
Mt Pocono	2742		4625	1883	68.67%
Paradise	2671		3510	839	31.41%
Pocono	9607		13750	4143	43.12%
Polk	6533		10550	4017	61.49%
Price	2649		4675	2026	76.48%
Ross	5435		8800	3365	61.91%
Smithfield	5672		7626	1954	34.45%
Stroud	13978		20700	6722	48.09%
Stroudsburg	5756		6640	884	15.36%
Tobyhanna	6152		9800	3648	59.30%
Tunkhannock	4983		10800	5817	116.74%
Monroe County	138,687	181,740	224,341	85,654	61.8%

Source: Monroe County Planning Department

Population, however, does not provide a measure of future land consumption. Households, or more specifically, housing units do provide such insight. A rough estimate of the demand for housing units is calculated using the average household size, which for Monroe County was 2.76 persons per household according to the 2005 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS). This is higher than the State average of 2.46 persons per household for the same year and also higher than the County's 1990 average of 2.69 persons per household, showing an increase in household size. This trend reflects a departure from the national trend of decreasing household size. Nationally, Census figures have shown a rise of single person households, empty nesters, and a decrease in the percentage of families with children over the past 30 to 40 years. This trend results in more housing units, and thus more land, being needed to accommodate the same number of people.

Using the 2005 ACS figures and the County household figure, it is estimated that Middle Smithfield will need an additional 3,715 housing units by 2020. As it is unlikely that the number of persons per household will continue to rise, this estimation could represent the low end of the range. Using the State estimate provides a reasonable high end of the range. Table 2-3 shows the calculation of projected new housing units for the Township and County by 2020.

Table 2-3: 2000 - 2020 Housing Projections

	Projected New Population ¹	Persons/HH (County ²)	New Housing Units ³ (Low)	Persons/HH (State ⁴)	New Housing Units ⁵ (High)	New Housing Units (Range)
Middle Smithfield Township	10,255	2.76	3,715	2.46	4,168	3,715 – 4,168
Monroe County	85,654	2.76	31,034	2.46	34,818	31,034 – 34,818

Notes:

1. Project new persons added between 2000 and 2020, Source: Monroe County Planning Department.
- 2,4. U.S. Census 2000
3. Projected new population divided by County Average Persons per Household
5. Projected new population divided by PA State Average Persons per Household

While these projections anticipate the need for nearly 4,000 new dwelling units in the Township, population growth from 2000 to 2005 accounts for approximately 1,175 housing units. Another 1,898 units can be accounted for at the time of publication. Between 2000 and August 2007, the Township has issued 1,503 building permits for new dwelling units, and another 55 units are currently under review. The 2000 Census also considered 340 existing units to be vacant, and therefore available for new housing opportunities. Therefore, based on the above, Middle Smithfield Township would need approximately 710 to 1,028 additional housing units over the next 15 years.*

* Note: It can be argued that the 1,503 building permits issued between 2000 and 2007 already includes and accounts for the 1,175 new housing units needed to accommodate the 2000 to 2005 population increase, since it is reasonable to expect that these new residents are, at least in part, the occupants of the new housing. Subtracting both new residents and new building permits may overestimate the number of housing units already accounted for and thus underestimates the number of new houses needed. Taking this alternate approach, the Township would need approximately 1,422 to 1,875 (4,168 – 1,898 – 55-340) new units over the next fifteen years.