

The Valleys Regional Comprehensive Plan

Public Participation Outreach Initiative

Introduction

Early in the process the Valleys Regional Comprehensive Plan Committee (Committee) recognized the importance of engaging the public through an effective public participation program. A total of four public participation meetings are scheduled during the course of the project. The first of two facilitated public meetings was conducted on September 15, 2009 and focused on assets and challenges in Halifax Borough and the surrounding developed area of Halifax Township. The second meeting was conducted on September 29, 2009 and focused on more rural issues associated with Halifax Township, Wayne Township, Jefferson Township, and Rush Township. A third meeting will be scheduled to present this summary to the public. The fourth and final meeting will be scheduled towards the end of the planning process to present the draft recommendations to the public.

The meetings were designed to allow residents to share their thoughts on what they like about the township, and to discuss their concerns about any issues or threats they feel the region is facing. Residents also discussed how they would like to see the region ten or fifteen years from now.

The Committee recognizes that the Valleys Region is diverse. Halifax Borough and the surrounding developed areas of Halifax Township act as the central node of the region providing a variety of housing and employment opportunities. The region is divided into discernable valleys by Peters Mountain, Third Mountain, Berry Mountain, Broad Mountain, and Stony Mountain. The valleys created by the mountains are rich in agricultural resources. The Dehart Reservoir is located in Rush Township and provides potable water to the City of Harrisburg.

Residents were personally invited to attend the meetings that were being held by post cards that were mailed to all property owners, and information about the meetings was posted on the project's website and advertised in the newspaper.

Both meetings were held in the cafeteria of the Halifax Elementary School. Residents were invited to an informal meet and greet from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to view project displays, participate in a site specific assets and issues mapping exercise, review the project mission statement and preliminary overriding goals, and to talk with neighbors, committee members, municipal officials, and members of the consultant team.

The meeting officially began at 7:00 p.m. Following a short introduction, residents spent time discussing assets and issues pertaining to six different topics: land use; Downtown Halifax / economic development; transportation; natural resources; housing; and community facilities. Everyone was given a chance to speak and every comment was recorded. Preliminary discussions alerted residents that the meeting was to be an open forum rather than a place for debate; not everyone may agree with something that is said, but everyone receives his or her chance to comment. All comments were recorded on large flip-charts and the issues were

grouped by category and displayed on the walls of the facility. Residents then voted on what they felt were the four most important issues in each topical area. They were not allowed to vote for the same comment more than once. This allowed the issues to be ranked to determine what the group collectively felt were the most important issues facing the township.

A sign in sheet was kept for each region to document the attendance. A total of 33 residents attended the first meeting on September 15, and 36 attended the second meeting on September 29.

Residents were given an agenda that included the list of topics to discuss and sample items that would be included under each topic to provide an understanding of what “land use” or “community facilities” actually refer to. Residents were also urged to contact their committee members and use these people as conduits and representatives of the planning process. A copy of the exercise was available for people to take with them if they had a friend or family member that was unable to attend, or if there was other information that they wanted to provide but did not feel comfortable discussing in front of a group. This worksheet instructed residents to identify assets and issues in each of the six categories and then to identify strategies to improve upon the issues, if they had an idea of what should be done to fix a certain issue. Any worksheets or letters that are received will be attached to this report. Residents were also encouraged to utilize the township website for updates on the comprehensive plan and for general information about the township.

This report will examine the recurring themes that were discussed by the public at these meetings. These items represent localized issues for the Halifax Borough regions and region-wide issues that should be key areas of focus in the comprehensive plan.

Mission Statement

Prior to the public participation meetings, the Committee developed a mission statement to help establish a mission and vision for the project and region. The draft mission statement was presented at these meetings and the public had an opportunity to provide input on it. The following is the draft mission statement:

The Valleys Regional Comprehensive Plan will document who we are and what we want for our future. It will act as a guide to manage growth and change in the region with a focus on retaining the area’s rural character and community heritage while being conscious and respectful of individual and personal freedoms, and the environment.

The public’s reaction to the mission statement was very positive. A total of 69 residents had an opportunity to review the statement and there were no negative comments. One resident, though, requested the mission statement be expanded to include a reference to senior housing.

Preliminary Overriding Goals

The Committee, in addition to the mission statement, also prepared a series of preliminary overriding goals to help set the direction of the planning process. The following are the preliminary overriding goals:

Land Use

Encourage a land use pattern that is cohesive with the unique natural environment, supports the rural character of the region, and recognizes the Halifax area as the regional anchor that supports residences, commerce, and employment.

Natural, Historic, and Cultural Features

Preserve and enhance the high quality, sensitive natural resources of the region and cultivate an increased awareness of and appreciation for important natural, historic, and cultural features.

Transportation

Encourage safe, reliable, and well-maintained transportation systems that meet the needs of residents and businesses in the area without compromising the region's rural character.

Housing

Allow for a variety of safe and affordable housing opportunities that complement existing development and infrastructure, and is constructed with sensitivity to the environment and are energy efficient.

Economy

Focus economic development efforts in the Halifax area where infrastructure is available to support non-residential development and where the population is concentrated to support these establishments with employees and increased sales.

Community Facilities

Maintain and improve when necessary, the provision of high quality community facilities and services in the Valleys Region, focusing on coordinating the previous public investment in services with future growth.

Intermunicipal Cooperation

The Valleys Region Comprehensive Plan provides a foundation for future regional endeavors and encourages ongoing communication and updates to the comprehensive plan as necessary to ensure effective working relationships among the municipalities in the region and to maximize administrative and financial efficiency.

Halifax Borough

Revitalize Halifax Borough as a destination where people live, work, play, and shop.

Community Character

Retain the distinctive rural character and close-knit community feeling that is present in the Valleys Region by working to protect vital natural resources, provide necessary community facilities, infrastructure, and housing, and working to ensure that new development does not compromise this character.

Similar to the mission statement these goals were presented to the public for comment. The goals were well received by the public and no changes were requested.

This proactive approach to planning for the future has provided the region with a mechanism to be responsive to the needs of its residents. In conjunction with the development of the mission statement and overriding goals, the region's public outreach initiative should further demonstrate to its residents its intent to guide the region into the future and grow responsibly through sound planning.

In many ways, the mission statement and overriding goals support many of the items that residents discussed at the public participation meetings including a desire for the region to maintain its rural character and to grow responsibly by planning for future growth.

Summary of Results and Resident Visioning

At the end of the meeting residents were asked to state what their vision is of the region 10 to 15 years from now. The following is the result of that exercise:

Vision Statements from the September 15, 2009 meeting:

- More attractive community
- Rural/undeveloped areas
- Pocket sized developments of specific interests
- Separate uses / main traffic
- Library
- Concentrate development around established areas so it can be properly supported by water and sewer
- Small communities with large open spaces
- Peters Mountain preserved the way it looks now and the valley
- Sustainable development within the community with open space, services, shopping, affordable housing, and some growth (we as landowners can't afford the taxes; need non-residential development to offset taxes and provide jobs)
- Bypass around Halifax to mitigate trucks
- Matamoras and Halifax all as one
- Keep business close to main corridor rather than encroach on rural land
- Not a lot of change, just some new houses
- Traffic
- An area protected from some of the harmful things that could come
- More businesses in Halifax area, remainder of region more rural
- High speed commuter train for Upper Dauphin
- Commercial development around core area with rest rural and open space

Vision Statements from the September 29, 2009 meeting:

- Beautiful natural area
- Historic preservation
- Sustain beauty that we have and opportunities for progress/growth
- Protection from outside effects
- Fort Halifax
- High speed internet
- Some industry/business to support tax base
- Comprehensive
- Business/industrial campus separate from beauty
- Better traffic facility around Fort Halifax
- Balanced growth/balanced preservation
- More planning – especially for larger development (traffic)
- Sustainable growth

Overall, residents indicated that they appreciate the existing character of the region, and many people expressed a desire to “keep it like it is”. Residents value the natural resources in the region including the streams, Susquehanna River, woodlands, large contiguous areas of open space, and the overall rural character. They recognize the agricultural importance the region has and, realizing that change is inevitable, indicated that there is a need to carefully plan for and manage growth.

Residents also indicated, on multiple occasions, that they appreciated being invited to attend the meetings, and appreciated the chance to become involved. They felt that there is a need for more community involvement and that people should be invited to participate more often. Residents also appreciated the regional approach and were cognizant of the differences that existed between the five municipalities.

Topical Results

A. SEPTEMBER 8, 2009 MEETING

Focus: Halifax Borough and the surrounding developed areas of Halifax Township

1. Issues

Economic Development / Downtown		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	21	No library
2	12	Lack of things to do for seniors and active adults
3	11	Need quality sit-down restaurants
4	8	Lack of things for children to do
5	7	Need better accessibility to the post office
5	7	Can't walk to get groceries and other items
6	6	Need a movie theater
7	5	Lack of parking / accessibility
8	3	Businesses leaving downtown for SR 147 in the township
9	2	Undefined boundary

Housing		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	14	Non-owner occupied housing when you are coming from the south is an eyesore; landlords that don't care
1	14	Need for senior housing / condos with no maintenance responsibilities
1	14	Need for better enforcement of ordinances in the borough – junked cars
2	8	Need for assisted living
2	8	Conflict with housing / large lot sizes encroaching on farmland
3	7	Lack of zoning impacts housing and what is placed on a property
3	7	Safety of stormwater detention ponds (hazardous for children)
4	6	Lack of a good builder
5	4	Parking is an issue when single family dwellings are converted to multi-family
5	4	Renters creating problems
6	3	Front Street is a concern with maintenance
Transportation		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	15	SR 147/225 in borough bad configuration/geometry, especially for trucks (2 nd and Armstrong; 4 th and Armstrong; 2 nd and Market; 4 th and Market)
2	14	No good public transit into the valley
3	11	Peak hour congestion
4	9	No bike trails or designated walking trail
5	7	No stop lights (Armstrong in general; on-street parking, major cut thru to SR 147/225)
6	6	Need better speed limit enforcement
6	6	Lack of guiderails on SR 147
7	5	No local rail access
7	5	Poor roadway geometry; improvements induce speed, traffic
7	5	Problems with railroad crossings (noise, safety at unsignalized crossing, no “arms”)
8	4	Need to increase speed limit from 15 mph to 25 mph in front of school
9	3	Inconsistent sidewalks (connections – variable; condition – variable)
10	1	Need better transportation and land use coordination
10	1	Need to do a study to reduce speed limits
11	0	No berms
11	0	Poor sight distances
11	0	Better signal timing/coordination
Community Facilities		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	15	Library
2	14	Need to be able to recycle more types of items; county program not practical for residential cost
3	12	Water/sewer service expanded and updated to accommodate increased development
4	10	Poor response from police – local and state
5	9	Fort Halifax Park is a money pit
5	9	Closest hospital is an hour away. Need an emergency/trauma walk-in center
6	7	Need more large item recycling / spring cleaning days
6	7	Need for medical center
7	5	Too many parks
8	4	Recycling not emptied enough
8	4	Need more police
9	3	Need curbside/door to door recycling
10	3	Lack of a community center
11	2	Need an ambulance that can do EKG
12	1	Need more volunteers for fire company
13	1	Need a vet

Natural Resources		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	17	Better maintenance of the sycamore trees is needed (original comment: sycamore trees are a safety hazard)
2	15	Housing development impacting farms
3	13	No zoning. Leaves natural resources unprotected
4	11	Development in the floodplain and along the river
5	9	Need more water in the river for recreational purposes
5	9	Building on steep slopes
6	7	Sycamore trees threatened by road expansion
7	4	Flooding
8	2	Radon
9	0	Topography
Land Use		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	11	Lack of parking is an issue
2	10	Need larger scale and more shopping opportunities
3	9	Fragmented government – lack of coordination
4	6	Lack of or limited public water/sewer
4	6	Transportation issues affect land use
5	5	No zoning regulations
6	4	Lack of developable land in the borough
6	4	Lack of sidewalks to businesses
6	4	Neighbors around downtown (transitional, lack of relationships, no community feeling)
6	4	Need to reintroduce the square
6	2	Lack of greening / street trees in borough
7	1	Developable land
7	1	Lack of a dog park
8	0	Need for interconnection of shopping

2. Assets

Economic Development / Downtown Comment
Pride in ownership and community
Ice cream shops – hard and soft
Pizza
Front Street beautification
Historical society / museum
Good homes – historic
Good reuse of building - housing, laundromat
Housing Comment
More affordable
Not congested
Great views from houses
Good variety

Transportation Comments
Major road
Rail road
Bus
Good interconnections of side roads to main road
Scenic corridors
PennDOT Bypass study
Community Facilities Comments
Good fire / EMT service
New teen center
Churches
Parks
Pool
Recycling center
State troopers have increased presence
Historical society
Camp Hebron
Community medical center on SR 147
Natural Resources Comment
River/streams
Peters Mountain
Water
Scenic
Valley
Sycamore trees on SR 147
Wildlife
Forests
Fishing
Open space
Land Use Comment
Development mainly along major roads
Great scenery / natural (townships)
Good farmland left (townships and borough)
Good boat landing (borough and township)
Sycamore trees on SR 147
Fort Halifax Park
Good land for hunting (townships)
Appalachian trail (townships)
Deppen Park – picnics, recreation
Memorial park
Baseball fields
Good access to fishing
Pool
Dark skies

B. SEPTEMBER 29, 2009 MEETING

Focus: Rural planning issues that affect Halifax, Jefferson, Rush, and Wayne Townships

3. Issues

Economic Development		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	30	Need improved infrastructure for business growth
2	27	Lack of employment opportunities, especially for younger population / teens
3	17	People have to go over the mountain for certain items. There is no department store, no super Giant, or a Giant with a gas station
4	15	Lack of an industrial base
5	13	Need a decent restaurant
6	9	Lack of availability (products) at Giant
7	8	Demographics drives quality
Housing		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	21	Need senior housing; 55+ community; graduated care
2	18	Housing that encourages sprawl
2	18	Ordinances in place preclude affordable housing for the future
3	14	Most ordinances don't allow for traditional village style development
3	14	No incentives to fit in with the heritage/history/architecture of the community
4	11	Older/retired people can't maintain housing
5	8	Need housing for young professionals / high density housing where maintenance is required
6	5	Lack of government leadership/programs to protect historic structures
7	1	Need more apartments
Transportation		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	24	Need a way to get around Halifax, especially in the AM/PM rush hour (SR 147/225); bypass needed
2	19	Not enough signage coming off of US 322 to SR 335; problem especially for trucks
3	14	Lack of cheap, available, and convenient public transportation
4	7	Problem with intersection of 147 at 225 coming from Millersburg
4	7	Powells Valley Road is too narrow
4	7	Need a traffic light at Powells Valley Road and SR 225
5	6	Need for a light rail line / more public transit to Harrisburg
5	6	Truck traffic is increasing – especially on Peters Mountain
6	5	Limited accessibility from this region to Harrisburg
6	5	No accommodations for bikes / alternative modes of transportation (especially connections to public facilities and for kids)
7	4	Maintenance of roadways is an issue (local and state)
8	3	Armstrong and 4 th and other turns in Halifax; once trucks are committed there is no place to turn around
9	2	SR 225 at Kinsinger Rd – need a turning lane on the north side
9	2	Need to link transportation and land use when planning for growth
10	1	No taxi service available
11	0	Amish would have problems in this area because roads are dangerous for buggies
11	0	Development causes traffic

Community Facilities		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	22	Recycling facility is inadequate
2	21	Lack of a tax base to support future improvements / expansion of schools
3	16	No medical facility
3	16	No library
4	13	Lack of public areas along the river / lack of a riverfront
5	12	No community building (for all ages and with a senior center)
6	9	No entertainment venues (movies, etc.)
7	8	Need to extend public sewer and water. Not having new developments connected is an issue
8	4	Problems with well water
9	2	Need a transfer station for trash
9	2	Lack of police protection
9	2	Developers should be required to provide package sewer plants for new development
Natural Resources		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	25	It is a challenge to balance natural resources with technology/energy requirements that come with growth, e.g. wind energy, transmission lines, etc.
2	21	Need to balance natural resources protection with development
3	20	Natural resources are not adequately protected (e.g. Marcellus shale, impacts on water quality)
4	19	People polluting / littering
5	7	Lack of a long term conservation mindset
5	7	Dark skies threatened with light pollution
6	6	Low flying aircraft impacts air quality and peace in the valley
7	5	People are disrespectful to the environment
8	4	Air quality (e.g. leaf burning vs. composting)
9	3	Pursuit of natural resources has taken away from focusing on other community facilities
9	3	Business should be providing trash receptacles
10	1	Antiquated view of energy use
Land Use		
Rank	No. of Votes	Comment
1	21	Short term mindset of the population and leadership; not considering impacts/effects of actions
2	20	Amount of housing development (too much, taking away farmland, changing the character, necessary improvements fall back on taxpayers)
3	17	Need small village areas where people don't have to have large lots
4	16	Land use regulations needed
5	14	Need identified areas for growth to concentrate development and have water and sewer
6	10	Lack of coherent planning
7	9	Need to incentivize farmers rather than over-regulate
8	7	Dumping – there isn't an easy way for people to dispose of things like large appliances and construction waste
9	2	Halifax Borough is ugly / not welcoming
9	2	Property maintenance and lack of ordinances to enforce
9	2	Concern about developers that have no regard for residents that live in the area
10	1	Too much lawn area
10	1	Lack of value of historic infrastructure
11	0	Need a bed and breakfast
11	0	Posted properties – large tracts – have to go to SGLs to hunt
11	0	The amount of hunting around the house

4. Assets

Economic Development Comment
Outdoor recreation – people can visit and then go home
Historic infrastructure
Ingenuity of individuals (farmers, contractors, etc.)
Good workforce / good people
Grocery store, pizza shops, ice cream, hardware store
Housing Comment
Lots of historic architecture / historic homes
Most people own their homes
Affordable
5 apartment buildings
A lot of land to develop on
A lot of entry level / first homes
Subsidized housing is an asset
Transportation Comments
Major route – SR147
Not far from other major routes
Traffic light at SR 147 / 225
A few public transportation busses
Turning lane at SR 147 / 225
Addressing / road signs
Ambulances gave out signs for addresses
Limited access
River
CAT provides public transit for the elderly
Lack of traffic lights
Very few roads that aren't beautiful
Community Facilities Comments
All fire companies
Halifax ambulance
Fort Halifax Park
Good school district – Halifax, Upper Dauphin
Parks – Ibberson Conservation Area, Deppin Park, Halifax Community Park
Churches
Recycling center
Youth center
Swimming pool
Camp Hebron
Hemlock Girl Scout Council
Lake Tobias
Boat launch

Natural Resources Comment
All –the existing natural environment
River
Streams
Woodlands
Forestry
Mountains
State forests
Good air quality
Natural topography
Twin Valley Conservation
Eagles
Quiet and dark / dark skies
Wildlife
Land Use Comment
Powells valley / rural character
Village style communities
Forested wildlife
Historical character of infrastructure
Farmland
Viewsheds
Valleys and mountains
Access to river for fishers, boaters
Agricultural Security Areas
Ibberson Conservation Area
3 trout streams / fishing
Public land
Camp Hebron

Site Specific Issues and Assets Mapping Exercise

In addition to the topical discussions, residents participated in an exercise in which they identified site specific assets or issues in the region. They placed a sticker on a map to note the location of the asset or issue, and their corresponding comment was recorded. Comments received pertaining to site specific assets and issues in the region are listed in following table and graphically shown on Map XX.

Site Specific Assets
Assets
1. Natural Environment/Scenery
2. Boat launch
3. Good core farming area. Second only to river bed lands.
4. Churches, Schools, Parks – Centrally located.
5. Youth Center
6. Fort Halifax Park

Site Specific Issues

Issues
1. No Library
2. Sight distance/visibility and speed issue on Route 225.
3. No sidewalk near the new youth center and from 3 rd street to the school.
4. Need places to walk. Safety is a concern at Ibberson Conservation area. Need walking trails.
5. No Department Stores/Shopping.
6. Problems with water runoff at Lenker Estates.
7. Need sidewalks from Halifax Borough to Giant and commercial areas.
8. Sidewalk maintenance is an issue in the borough.
9. Need trail to connect For Halifax area to Lykens Valley Rail Trail in Millersburg.
10. Need sewer.
11. Need water, improvements coming off of Peters Mountain Road in Halifax Township.
12. Can't get sufficient business/industry because the infrastructure is bad.

Common Themes

Although the September 8, 2009 meeting focused on Halifax Borough and the surrounding developed area in Halifax Township, and the September 29, 2009 meeting focused on more rural planning issues, there were several common themes that emerged at both meetings concerning the Valleys Region in general. These themes include the following:

- Residents at both meetings indicated their desire for a local library in Halifax to serve the region.
- The exceptional natural resources in the area including the river and streams, scenic viewsheds, wildlife, woodlands, mountains and valleys, and others were noted in both meetings. Residents recognize that the unique natural features are assets to the region and in a sense, help to define the region. They also recognize that these valuable resources are vulnerable to development pressures because there are currently no regulations in place to protect them. On a similar note, residents recognize that development is threatening farmland and that land use regulations are needed to ensure that new development is sustainable, complements existing development styles and the character of the region, and is located in an area that is served by water and sewer. People indicated a preference for village style development and expressed concerns that existing regulations prohibit this type of development.
- Residents at both meetings also recognized the problems with peak hour traffic in the Halifax area where SR 147 and SR 225 come together from the north, and where they separate in the south. The poor configuration of SR 147/225 in Halifax Borough was noted in both meetings; people indicated that these turns are especially troubling for trucks. Residents at both meetings mentioned the need for a bypass around Halifax Borough.
- Most of the traffic and congestion problems on SR 147/225 are a direct result of morning and evening peak hour traffic to and from Harrisburg. Many people in upper Dauphin County travel to Harrisburg for employment and these routes represent the only routes into the city. Additionally, there is no viable public transportation into Harrisburg for residents in the northern part of the county. Residents at both meetings indicated a desire for increased public transit opportunities (that are cheap, available, and convenient) to and from Harrisburg.
- Residents at both meetings recognized that the available housing stock in the region is affordable, compared to other places. Although residents at the first meeting expressed a concern with non-owner occupied housing and absentee landlords in Halifax Borough, residents at both meetings agreed that there is a need for more senior housing in the region. Residents discussed senior housing opportunities where maintenance is provided, 55+ communities, and graduated care.

- In general, residents in both meetings talked about coordinating growth with water and sewer availability, and the need to improve and extend water and sewer infrastructure to serve new developments.
- Residents at both meetings expressed concerns with the current recycling facility. Although residents appreciated having access to a recycling facility, they thought that the current operation was inadequate in that the recycling containers need to be emptied more often. Residents at both meetings also indicated a need for more large item recycling / spring clean up events, and thought that an increased frequency in this type of event might decrease the amount of dumping.
- Another concern that residents expressed related to commercial development. Residents commented that there is a need for increased businesses and services in the Halifax Area and noted that it is necessary to travel over the mountain for certain products. In the first meeting, people commented on the lack of sidewalk infrastructure connecting the borough to the commercial businesses in Halifax Township. This creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in this area.

COMMITTEE STRENGTHS AND ISSUES/WEAKNESSES EXERCISE RESULTS - AUGUST 11, 2009 COMMITTEE MEETING

The committee identified the following strengths and weaknesses in the region:

Strengths:

- Halifax Borough has a variety of pizza shops and ice cream shops
- Close knit community
- Many people that live here grew up here
- Peace and quiet
- Crime free
- Open space / mountains / vistas
- Rural landscape and everything that you sense
- Susquehanna River and fishing opportunities
- Proximity and apparent isolation from Harrisburg
- Caring people
- Volunteer agencies (fire, EMS, etc.)
- Forest lands
- Hunting
- Wildlife
- Dehart Dam – Also a weakness because you can't access it
- Appalachian Trail
- Two conservation areas (donated by Joe Ibberson)
- Small schools
- Business growth at the triangle in Halifax Township
- Don't have to drive to Harrisburg for services (e.g. Giant, Wal-Mart)

Issues/Weaknesses:

- Giant / Wal-Mart – change the character of the region; create congestion
- Transportation
 - Powells Valley Road and SR 225
 - Tough to get out at Giant – especially turning left
 - Bottleneck of SR 225/147 and where they separate
 - Hazards at Shell and Sheetz
 - School speed limit signs blinking and causing congestion (especially an issue when the signs are for the elementary school, which is not near the highway)

- Development
 - Losing farmland
 - Factory farms – a different kind of development issue; also the political infighting that can occur surrounding the topic of factory farms.
- The whole face of the valley could change because there is no protection
- Generations of families want things to stay the way they are
 - Don't change the character of the region
 - Not in a position to manage growth
- Not enough businesses in the borough
- Need a convenience store and personal service uses in the Borough
- Need sidewalks to connect the borough to the surrounding commercial areas
- High speed internet is not available in many of the rural areas of the region
- Cell phone coverage is not available in Rush Township
 - The county recently approved two cell towers in Rush Township
- Small schools can also mean fewer opportunities for students
- Dehart dam is an issue because you can't go near it
- Availability or non/availability of water and sewer service
- Dumping is an issue – need to educate residents about proper waste disposal and recycling opportunities in the county
- Issue with single family conversions and converting duplexes into two or three apartments
- No “quality” rental opportunities in Halifax Borough
- Need to find a way to encourage energy efficient buildings and renewable energy production equipment (e.g. there is a tendency of developments to have homeowners associations that ban clotheslines and solar roof panels, and mandate manicured lawns for “aesthetics”, and consequently foster energy waste and lawn pesticide runoff, instead of using renewable energy ideas and water gardens to replenish the groundwater.) Even townships mandate wide streets and curbs in developments that foster runoff and flooding instead of putting water back into the ground.)
- Challenge to maintain or improve both surface and groundwater. people should be encouraged to not mow to the edge of streams and provide a riparian buffer, and to plant rain and rock gardens and plant trees.

The Strengths and Issues/Weaknesses were further refined and distributed into the following topical headings:

- Agriculture/Conservation
- Communication
- Community
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Landscapes
- Land Use/Economic Development
- Quality of Life
- Recreation/Family Traditions
- Transportation

Agriculture/Conservation

Strengths:

- Two conservation areas (donated by Joe Ibberson)

Issues/Weaknesses:

- Losing Farmland to Development
- Factory farms – A different kind of development issue; also the political infighting that can occur surrounding the topic of factory farms

- Challenge to maintain or improve both surface and groundwater. People should be encouraged not to mow to the edge of streams and provide a riparian buffer, and to plant rain and rock gardens and plant trees.

Communication

Strengths:

- None Identified

Issues/Weaknesses:

- High speed internet is not available in many of the rural areas of the region
- Cell phone coverage is not available in Rush Township

Community

Strengths:

- Close knit community
- Many people that live here grew up here
- Caring people

Issues/Weaknesses:

- None identified

Education

Strengths

- Small schools

Issues/Weaknesses

- Small schools can also mean fewer opportunities for students

Infrastructure

Strengths:

- None Identified

Issues/Weaknesses:

- Availability or non/availability of water and sewer service

Landscapes

Strengths

- Open space / mountains / vistas
- Rural landscape and everything that you sense
- Forest lands
- Dehart Dam – Also a weakness because you can't access it

Issues/Weaknesses

- None Identified

Land Use/Economic Development

Strengths

- Halifax Borough has a variety of pizza shops and ice cream shops
- Don't have to drive to Harrisburg for services (e.g. Giant, Wal-Mart)
- Business growth at the triangle in Halifax Township

Issues/Weaknesses

- Giant / Wal-Mart – change the character of the region; create congestion
- Development
- The whole face of the valley could change because there is no protection
- Not in a position to manage growth
- Not enough businesses in the borough
- Need a convenience store and personal service uses in the Borough
- Issue with single family conversions and converting duplexes into two or three apartments
- No "quality" rental opportunities in Halifax Borough

Energy

- Need to find a way to encourage energy efficient buildings and renewable energy production equipment (e.g. there is a tendency of developments to have homeowners associations that ban clotheslines and solar roof panels, and mandate manicured lawns for "aesthetics", and consequently foster energy waste and lawn pesticide runoff, instead of using renewable energy ideas and water gardens to replenish the groundwater.) Even townships mandate wide streets and curbs in developments that foster runoff and flooding instead of putting water back into the ground.)

Quality of Life

Strengths

- Peace and quiet
- Crime free
- Proximity and apparent isolation from Harrisburg
- Volunteer agencies (fire, EMS, etc.)
- Wildlife

Issues/Weaknesses

- Generations of families want things to stay the way they are
- Don't change the character of the region
- Dumping is an issue – need to educate residents about proper waste disposal and recycling opportunities in the county

Recreation/Family Traditions

Strengths:

- Susquehanna River and fishing opportunities
- Hunting
- Appalachian Trail

Issues/Weaknesses:

- Dehart dam is an issue because you can't go near it

Transportation

Strengths:

- None identified

Issues/Weaknesses:

- Powells Valley Road and SR 225
- Tough to get out at Giant – especially turning left
- Bottleneck of SR 225/147 and where they separate
- Hazards at Shell and Sheetz
- School speed limit signs blinking and causing congestion (especially an issue when the signs are for the elementary school, which is not near the highway)
- Need sidewalks to connect the borough to the surrounding commercial areas

LOCAL INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The committee identified the following local interrelationships – things within the region that affect the region and may have an influence on areas outside the region.

- Recycling is not required but needs to be promoted
- Agriculture
- Multiple small school districts
- Peters Mountain – outsiders think it is horrible to drive over
- Small municipalities with restricted budgets
- Public infrastructure
- Transportation infrastructure
- Commercial center in Halifax Township
- Villages
- Natural resources
- Upper Dauphin COG – includes all 19 municipalities in upper Dauphin County
- Halifax Township has two mobile home parks, will have three soon.
- Seasonal cabins turning into full time residences in Jefferson Township

OUTSIDE INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

The committee identified the following outside influential factors that impact the region.

- Dauphin County – Peters Mountain is the divide between northern Dauphin County and “that other place”
- Transportation
- Upper Dauphin Income Tax
- Concern that a landfill could come
- Wind energy
- Harrisburg and urban areas
 - Don't have much employment in the Valleys Region

- Someone right out of high school could find employment at Metal Industry (MI) or Harman Stove. Willets Shoe Factory no longer manufactures shoes at their Halifax location.
- Where do people in Rush Township go to the grocery store?
- Issue with single family conversions and converting duplexes into two or three apartments

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