
VALUES, VISIONS AND GOALS

In order to plan a desirable future for the Hereford-Washington community, the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) needed to understand their residents' perspectives on living in Hereford-Washington. The JPC needed to recognize the values that residents find in the local quality of life, the desires they have for a future that will include some change, and the direction of changes that should occur. Residents' perspectives on these topics were invited through a community survey that was distributed via Township Newsletter to all of the households in the Hereford-Washington community.

Community Values

Early discussion with the JPC generated a list of most liked features (assets) and least liked features (issues) of Hereford-Washington. The list of assets was, by far, the longer list, which reflects a positive self-image of the Hereford-Washington community. Both lists were prioritized to focus further discussion on the key assets and issues. The following assets and issues were identified as the most important from the entire list.

Key Community Assets:

- Rural character and scenic vistas
- Agriculture
- Historic sites
- Privacy of Woodlands
- Location and accessibility
- Outdoor activities
- Community Facilities
- Conservation

Key Community Issues:

- Superfund sites
- Air quality
- High density housing
- State Route 100 traffic
- Signage
- Growth/sprawl
- Diminishing open space
- Sewer Costs
- Litter



This list aided the preparation of the community survey where community values were further defined.

Survey

A Hereford-Washington Townships' Joint Planning Area community survey was completed during the winter of 2016/2017. One survey was sent to each household in the Planning Area – a total of 2,392 surveys. Of these, 206 were returned, tabulated and analyzed, resulting in an 8.6 percent response rate. Although this response rate is relatively low it is just below the average response rate for surveys distributed to external parties. Surveys that you distribute internally (i.e. to employees) generally have a much higher response rate than those distributed to external audiences (i.e. community members). Internal surveys will generally receive a **30-40%** response rate (or more) on average, compared to an average **10-15%** response rate for external surveys. The following are the main takeaways from the community survey:

- Overall, people in the joint planning area are satisfied with the quality of life in Hereford and Washington Townships.
- Roughly 50 percent of the respondents are to some degree satisfied with the Township government with regard to citizen input, building permits and codes, and zoning regulations; feeling strongest about the ease of attaining building permits, codes enforcement and inspections.

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- Generally, the availability of community services is deemed adequate by respondents. At least 20 percent of residents indicate that the following services are not adequate: police services, retail stores and restaurants, and walking/hiking/biking trails.
- Family farms were overwhelmingly chosen (92 percent strongly agree or agree) as a type of development to be encouraged. Single-family homes also received majority support for encouraging such development.
- Approximately three-quarters of the Townships' respondents disagreed with the encouragement of mobile homes and high-density housing; over half strongly disagreed.
- Actively protecting agricultural land and open space from development was strongly supported throughout the survey.
 - Over 89 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that protecting open spaces and preserving the farming industry should be given the highest priority in the Townships over the next five years.
 - Nearly 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed with supporting actions that protect agricultural land and open spaces from development.
 - Over 54 percent strongly agreed or agreed that they would support a referendum to raise funds from Township residents to purchase open space.
- 75 percent of the respondents supported cooperative economic development with Bally and/or Bechtelsville.
- Almost 66 percent support the creation of a regional police force, as the region's population grows; support for Township police forces was less – 47 percent.
- There is no current consensus on appropriate locations for future development. Of the options given, the State Route 100 (SR 100) corridor and the villages received the most support (60 percent strongly agree or agree) as a future development focus.
- Most respondents (93 percent) plan to reside in the joint planning area of Hereford-Washington for the next 5-10 years.
- However, they would consider leaving the Townships within these years if municipal taxes increased significantly (76 percent), significant woodlands and other open spaces are lost to development (75 percent), and/or farming leaves the community (59 percent).

Overall, there were few differences between the responses of Hereford Township and Washington Township. A few distinctions are noted here:

- The majority of respondents (76 percent) were residents of Washington Township.
- Results indicated that Washington Township residents were more concerned with protecting open spaces from development.
- Hereford Township residents were generally more pleased with the current quality of life in their Township than Washington Township residents.

- Hereford Township residents put a higher priority on promoting economic and employment development while Washington Township residents put more of a priority on preserving the farming industry
- Hereford Township residents put a higher priority on expanding water and sewer service areas than Washington Township residents.
- There was generally equal support for developed land uses in Washington and Hereford Townships, except Hereford Township residents indicated more support (and less opposition) for mobile homes.
- Washington Township residents expressed somewhat greater support for cooperative economic development with Bally and/or Bechtelsville.
- Both Townships residents equally support actions that protect agricultural land and open spaces from development.

The survey indicates that open space preservation, agricultural sustainability and high sewer rates are the most pressing community issues in the Planning Area. Property taxes follow closely behind. All four are related to the amount of growth that the Townships will allow and encourage in the future. These issues will need to be carefully considered in the planning efforts of this Planning Area.

From the analysis of the community survey, the JPC was able to define both joint (common) and individual values.

Joint Values include...

- Quality of life
- Family farms
- Protection of open space (agricultural fields, pastures, meadows, and woodlands) from development
- Reasonable taxes to support community facilities and services
- Local employment opportunities
- Local retail and service establishments
- Recreation linkages (trails)

Individual Values include...

Hereford Township

- Personal freedom for land development or land preservation
- Increased services that keep pace with residential growth

Washington Township

- Development to share the cost of community services
- Development should not destroy rural character