

Chapter 3 HOUSING PLAN

Introduction

The provision of safe, affordable housing is the one of the most basic needs for East Goshen Township’s residents. The Township’s housing policy should reflect the needs of an economically diverse population if local businesses and employers are to meet their employment needs in the most cost-effective way. Housing should also be safe, efficiently planned and built, and allow for the protection of the Township’s natural resources.

This chapter addresses the goal and objectives of the Township with regard to housing. These are provided below.

GOAL: Provide various housing opportunities for a diverse population.

Objective 3A Preserve the character and diversity of existing residential neighborhoods.

Objective 3B Encourage design and layout of housing that maximizes the preservation of open space and the protection of environmentally sensitive land.

Objective 3C Promote redevelopment in residential districts to preserve the character of East Goshen. Ensure redevelopment is suited in scale and character to the existing neighborhood.

Recommendations

Objective 3A Preserve the character and diversity of existing residential neighborhoods.

- **Recommendation 3A-1** Strengthen enforcement of building and maintenance codes.

DISCUSSION:

The Uniform Construction Code¹ (adopted as the official building and rehabilitation code by the Commonwealth in 2003) includes provisions that address property maintenance and older building code compliance. The property maintenance element for single-family dwellings can be used to improve properties with poor maintenance. Regulations of this type can help conserve housing stock and maintain property values. In addition, the older building code element of the UCC allows for modified code compliance for structures that predate the earlier building codes, and is especially applicable to historic structures. Enforcement of these provisions should factor in the Township’s commitment to historic preservation and flexibility of use of historic structures.

ACTIONS NEEDED:

- 3A-1-1** Ensure that code enforcement employees are fully trained on all elements of the Uniform Construction Code (UCC).
- 3A-1-2** Review and update procedures to guide Township enforcement of building maintenance codes.

¹ The Uniform Construction Code is also known as the “International Code Council 2003.”

3A-1-3 Ensure compatibility between the older building code element of the UCC with the Township’s Historic Preservation Ordinance to address adaptive reuse of historic structures.

- **Recommendation 3A-2** Encourage rehabilitation of housing in transitional neighborhoods.

DISCUSSION:

Transitional neighborhoods are those areas where older housing faces maintenance needs. These areas require more repair to maintain a positive neighborhood character. Maintenance and redevelopment of housing can affect the maintenance of surrounding homes, improve neighborhood pride, and raise property values. This is particularly true of older neighborhoods in the Low Density Residential (LD), Medium Density Residential (MD), and Traditional Neighborhood (TN) land use categories on Map 2-1.

County, State, and federally funded grant and low-interest loan programs are available to assist those with limited incomes in rehabilitating or repairing their homes. Offering information to residents about County, State, and Federally funded homeowner rehabilitation programs, and encouraging younger families to consider older homes, can facilitate rehabilitation at virtually no cost to the municipality. Information can be offered by code and zoning officials, and the application procedures can be provided at the Township offices. Maintaining a list of contacts and telephone numbers in municipal offices, posting notices in public buildings, posting information on the Township website, and printing articles in newsletters, can help spread information about available funding.

ACTIONS NEEDED:

- 3A-2-1** Obtain and post rehabilitation contacts, information pamphlets, and application materials at the Township building.
- 3A-2-2** Publish contact information in the Township newsletter and on the Township website.
- 3A-2-3** Encourage redevelopment of existing housing stock and development of vacant sites in older neighborhoods by providing for flexibility in the types of residential uses permitted.

Objective 3B Encourage design and layout of housing that maximizes the preservation of open space and the protection of environmentally sensitive land.

- **Recommendation 3B-1** Encourage the use of clustering methods for new development of vacant lands.

DISCUSSION:

The Township currently includes a single-family clustering option and a separate single-family open space development option. Both of these provisions include the design of residential developments that require that a minimum percentage of lands be preserved as common open space. Both provisions are currently permitted through the conditional use review process in the Low Density Residential (R-2), High Density Residential (R-4) and the Planned Business, Research, Limited Industrial Park and Residential (I-2) zoning districts. However, available lands for residential use are primarily defined by the Cluster Single-Family Residential Development (CR) land use category on Map 2-1.

Given the limited remaining land available for development and the natural constraints on this land, the options for development are limited. The Township should consider the value of requiring the use of cluster subdivision design for these areas. Should development occur, residential clustering would provide the best alternative to the existing conditions of the site.

STATUS OF CURRENT ORDINANCE STANDARDS: Zoning Ordinance

Single-Family Cluster Development and *Single-Family Open Space Development*: both sections establish standards for clustering of residential lots away from natural resource constraints and define minimum levels of open space. The *Single-Family Cluster Development* option (Section 240-28) requires a minimum tract of 20 acres and defines minimum lot sizes, lot widths, setbacks, and impervious coverages, through 2 different options, with a minimum open space set-aside of 40% or 50% depending on the option. There is a separate set of provisions for the R-4 District. The *Single-Family Open Space Development* option (Section 240-36) is more specifically geared toward protection of natural resources, and requires a minimum tract of 8 acres, a minimum open space set-aside of 55% and a density bonus of 1.1 units for each acre of the tract (in the R-2 District only).

ACTIONS NEEDED:

- 3B-1-1** Provide a density bonus for increase open space.
- 3B-1-2** Ensure common open space includes natural resources that connect to form natural corridors for wildlife habitat.

Objective 3C Promote redevelopment in residential districts to preserve the character of East Goshen. Ensure redevelopment is suited in scale and character to the existing neighborhood.

- **Recommendation 3C-1** Review zoning regulations that inhibit affordable housing development or redevelopment.

DISCUSSION:

Housing affordability is affected by a number of local circumstances, some of which can be influenced by municipal policy. Zoning regulations in particular should be reviewed to ensure that area, height and bulk regulations are not excessive so as to discourage affordable housing development. Design creativity should be encouraged as a design that respects natural land features could result in reduced construction costs.

This is particularly true where zoning districts create standards that do not reflect the local conditions, such as subdivisions that predate the standards of the current zoning. This is predominantly the case in the Medium Density Residential (MD) and Traditional Neighborhood (TN) land use categories (see Map 2-1), which are currently in the Medium Density Residential (R-3) zoning district. Other smaller areas are the Rocky Hill historic area, which is in the Low Density Residential (R-2) zoning district.

Township officials and developers should strive to work cooperatively to ensure construction of safe, quality homes that are moderately priced, yet also meet municipal goals of maintaining attractive and aesthetically appealing communities.

STATUS OF CURRENT ORDINANCE STANDARDS: Zoning Ordinance

Low Density Residential (R-2) District: for residential dwellings (single-family detached only), a minimum lot size of 1 acre is required, with a lot width of 150 feet at the building setback, and minimum yard setbacks of 45 feet (front), 20 feet (each side) and 50 feet (rear), as well as an average front yard setback of 60 feet. The maximum impervious coverages are 25% (buildings) and 35% (total).

Medium Density Residential (R-3) District: for residential dwellings (single-family detached and semidetached), the minimum lot size is 18,000 or 12,000 square feet, respectively, with a minimum lot width of 100 feet at the building setback, and minimum yard setbacks of 30 feet (front), 20 feet (each side, or one side for semidetached), and 30 feet (rear), as well as an average front yard setback of 40 feet. The maximum impervious coverages are 25% (buildings) and 35% (total).

Maximum Impervious Coverages: for all the residential districts, the maximum is 25% (buildings) and 35% (total). The only variation is for apartments and townhouses, which are permitted by-right in the Urban Residential (R-5) District and through conditional use review in the High Density Residential (R-4) District. These uses are allowed to have a 40% overall impervious coverage, though apartments are limited to a maximum building coverage of 20%.

ACTIONS NEEDED:

3C-1-1 Review area and bulk regulations in the residential districts.

3C-1-2 Review impervious coverage requirements in all residential districts.