
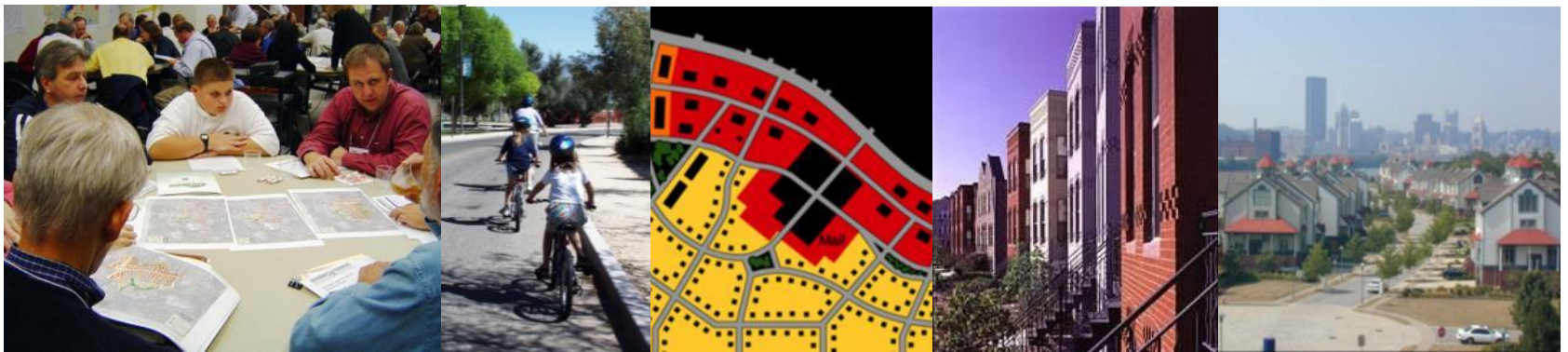


Denny Puko, PA DCED  
Jim Pashek, Pashek Associates

 2013 National Planning Conference  
Session S661

# Creating an implementable comprehensive plan



## **Session outline:**

- Philosophical approach
- Content and organization
- Process and participants
- Five keys
- Research and case study plans

\*This session is focused on helping smaller communities

**PA DCED funding – 10 years,  
\$24 million grants to local  
governments for plans and  
land use ordinances**

- Too many plans not being implemented, or not even adopted



## **APA President Mitchell Silver**

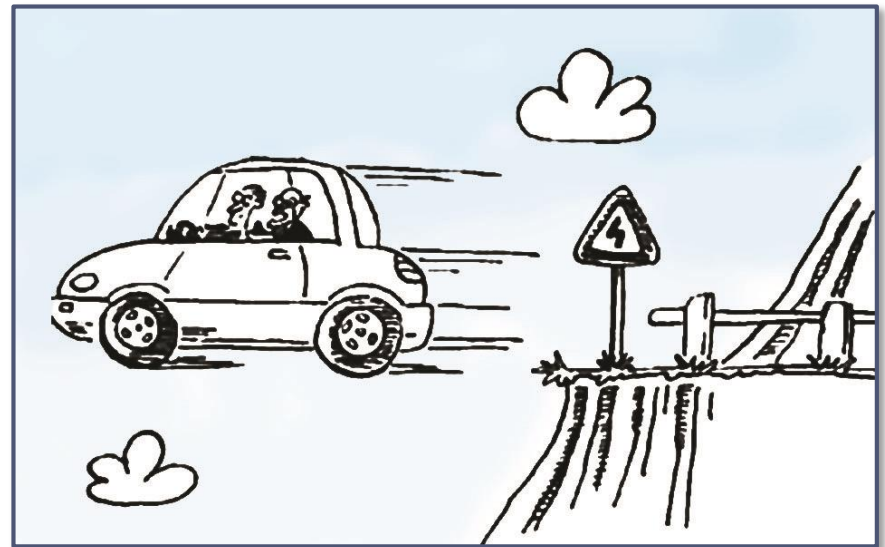
- Planners enamored with “process”
- Time to focus on “results”



- **Think differently about planning**

- **Innovation. Is it...**

- Doing things better?
- Doing better things?



# State Enabling Acts

- Give communities powers and procedures for planning
- Not (typically) a template for a comprehensive plan

**A Standard  
City Planning  
Enabling Act**

**U.S.  
Department of  
Commerce**

# Planning is part of a continuum

- Problems
- Needs
- Opportunities

- Problems getting solved
- Needs being met
- Opportunities pursued



## Comprehensive Plan

Community is dissatisfied, restless, concerned for the future

Community is taking action, moving in new directions, making improvements, achieving its vision

# Bottom Line

- To create an implementable comprehensive plan, implementation
  - not preparation –  
of a comprehensive plan  
must be the target, the end.
- Planners must accept accountability for this!





- **Tradition** – Preparing a comprehensive plan is a worthy goal.
- **Innovation** – Improving your community is a worthy goal.  
Preparing a comprehensive plan is a means to that goal.



- **Tradition** – A comprehensive plan is a guide to decisions to be made and actions to be taken after the plan is completed.
- **Innovation** – A comprehensive plan is a record memorializing decisions made and actions committed to and initiated during a planning process.



**What are ten reasons Comprehensive Plans do not get implemented?**

# Characteristics of a good plan

Berke & Godschalk – *Journal of Planning Literature*, 2009

– “Searching for the Good Plan, A Meta-Analysis of Plan Quality Studies”

- Vision and assessment of issues.
- Goals that reflect public values and vision.
- Fact base.
- Policies that are sufficiently specific to be tied to definite actions.
- Commitments to action with timelines, responsible parties, and financing.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Internal consistency.
- Organization and presentation that is understandable for a wide range of readers.
- Integration with other public and private plans.
- Compliance with enabling legislation.

# Ten Questions

Michael Chandler – *Planning Commissioner's Journal*, 1995  
– “Preparing an Implementable Comprehensive Plan”

- Is the plan **realistic**?
- Is the plan **comprehensive**?
- Is the plan **specific**?
- Is the plan **linked** with related functions?
- Does the plan link **public and private interests**?
- Is the plan **citizen-focused**?
- Is the plan **understandable**?
- Is the plan problem- and **solution-specific**?
- Is the plan **change-specific**?
- Is the plan **current**?

# Citizen and stakeholder involvement

Richard Burby – *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 2003

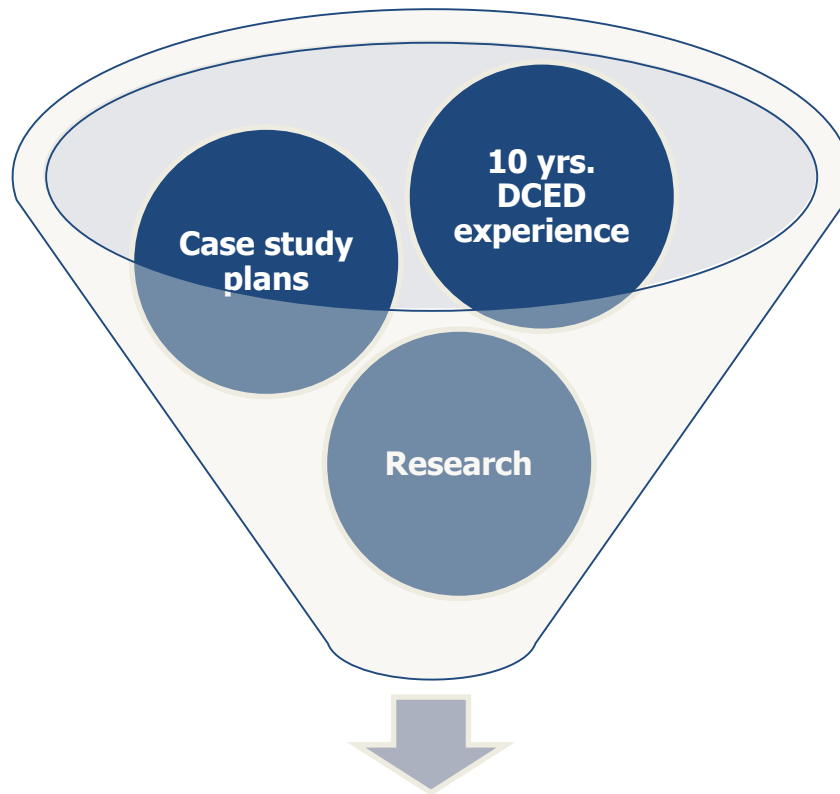
– “Making Plans that Matter, Citizen Involvement and Government Action”

- “...**stakeholder advocacy** is the critical factor in moving ideas forward from proposals made in plans to actual actions undertaken by governments.”
- “With **broad participation** in plan making, planners develop stronger plans, reduce the potential for latent groups who oppose proposed policies to unexpectedly emerge at the last moment, and increase the potential for achieving some degree of consensus among affected interests.”

# Characteristics of PA APA award winning plans

- Efficient in words, minimal jargon
- Use of accepted publication layout principles
- Ideas illustrated by drawings, photos & simulations
- Findings related to real issues, with detailed recommendations
- Inclusion of ready-to-use samples of tools & practices





## **5 keys for an implementable plan**





## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **1. Focus the plan on relevant, real community issues**

- A plan should be preceded by an assessment of community issues which the plan should address
- The work scope should go beyond the “conventional formula”
- As the plan is underway, confirm or revise the assessment of issues
- Avoid costly generation of information/data not of particular relevance



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **More on vision, goals, objectives & policies**

1. Do they convey uniqueness?
  - Or do they look like they could be written for any/every community?
2. Do they have substance and relevance?
  - Or are they “mom and apple pie”? Do they state the obvious?
3. Can they be tied to definite actions?
  - Or are they so generally written that they can be used to justify almost any or no action?



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 1. Focus the plan on relevant, real community issues

### Heidelberg/Carnegie/Scott Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan Pre-assessment SWOT Analysis

#### LAND USE

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commercial building inventory</li><li>• Tax incentives/LERTA program</li><li>• Location</li><li>• Business district is level</li><li>• Accessibility excellent between 2 highways</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Too many available properties have options, tying up available real-estate</li><li>• Unrealistic market values from property owners</li><li>• Current single-level parking lots take up potential space for new development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximize land use with professional guidance</li><li>• Build a parking garage/plan for future parking needs</li><li>• Strengthen/re-write borough codes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Failure to obtain new business will further erode business base</li><li>• Flooding</li><li>• Property asking prices, too high</li><li>• Parking is not adequate to meet potential residents and employees</li></ul>





# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 1. Focus the plan on relevant, real community issues

### Tradition

1. Historic & Natural Resources
2. Recreation
3. Transportation
4. Land Use
5. Housing
6. Community Facilities
7. Economic Development

### Innovation

1. Chartiers Creek
2. Increasing population via improved Housing
3. Route 50 Revitalization
4. Carothers Avenue Redevelopment
5. Downtown Carnegie Improvements building on other recent studies
6. Walkability



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **2. Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think**

- Organize the plan around issues instead of functional chapters
- Meetings should also be organized around the issues, and should be work sessions for finding solutions
- Be efficient in words, avoid jargon and use accepted publication layout practices



## 5 keys for an implementable plan

### 2. Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think

1. Chartiers Creek
2. Increasing population via improved Housing
3. Route 50 Revitalization
4. Carothers Avenue Redevelopment
5. Downtown Carnegie Improvements building on other recent studies
6. Walkability

1. Chartiers Creek
  - a. **Flooding**
  - b. Recreation



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **2. Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think**

1. Chartiers Creek – Flooding
  - A. Introduction to the Issue
  - B. Validation of the Issue
  - C. Vision for Future
  - D. Implementation Strategies



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 2. Organize the plan the way local officials and citizens think

### 1. Chartiers Creek – Flooding Implementation Steps

#### Tier 1:

- Creating and distributing an informational flier regarding flooding in the communities; and
- Developing an immediate alert system to warn residents of coming floods.

#### Tier 2:

- Develop a quick response plan

#### Tier 3:

- Update floodplain management regulations







## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

- 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations**
  - Priority recommendations should include depth and detail – specific action plans
  - Priorities should consider workability of recommendations
  - Plans should provide a small number of recommendations with practical depth and detail instead of a large number of general recommendations
  - Plans should use “non-traditional” but practical tools – market analysis, photo simulations, concept drawings, pro forma analysis



## 5 keys for an implementable plan

### 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations

#### Project Prioritization Worksheet

Optimizing Financial Viability of the two Boroughs	Most Important (I)	Easiest to Accomplish (E)
• Combine water authorities	1	0
• Form a joint recreation commission and merge the boroughs' land assets	2	0
• Share Public Works equipment and jointly purchase new equipment	5	1
• Coordinate leaf collection	2	5
• Coordinate snow removal	1	4
• Share night-time on-call services	0	2
• Utilize borough property at reservoirs or airport to compost leaves into topsoil	0	2
• Coordinate joint purchasing of administrative supplies and cell phone agreements	3	4
• Jointly bid for health/disability/workman's comp benefits for employees	4	3
• Consolidate IT services	4	4
• Jointly contract legal counsel and engineering consulting services	1	2
• Jointly bid for garbage services	2	1
• Develop an annual rental inspection ordinance	1	0



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations

### Know how you will be alerted to another flood.

Become familiar with your communities' alert system. Use your battery operated radio to listen for additional information if necessary.

**Flood warning:** ONE (1) STEADY – Continuous sounding of the siren with no interruptions ONE (1) MINUTE in length.

**Evacuation Signal:** TWO (2) STEADY – Continuous soundings of the siren with a TWENTY (20) SECOND INTERVAL – TWO (2) MINUTES IN LENGTH repeated THREE (3) TIMES. The siren will sound for FOURTEEN (14) MINUTES to serve as notice to evacuate flood prone and low-lying areas of the communities.

### Determine the level at which your property will begin to flood.

Knowing the water level that will flood your home will allow you to be better informed regarding the necessity of evacuating your residence. The first step is to determine the flood level of the nearest USGS water level gauge, which is situated in Carnegie. The Action Stage is 14 feet, Flood Stage is 20 feet, Moderate Flood Stage is 21 feet, and Major Flood Stage is 23 feet.

### Create an emergency supply kit.

Create an emergency provisions kit that includes items such as medical kit, non-perishable food,

and water, batteries and a battery operated radio, flashlight, etc. Suggestions for items to include in these kits are available from the Nurture Nature Center ([www.focusonfloods.org](http://www.focusonfloods.org)) and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency ([www.ReadyPa.gov](http://www.ReadyPa.gov)).

### Know your communities' evacuation routes.

Know the routes from regularly visited locations such as home, work, and your children's schools.

### Learn what you can do to prepare your property for a flood.

Prior to a flood, are there improvements or upgrades that you can install in your home to make it more flood-resistant? Common flood-proofing measures include raising the furnace and electrical and mechanical equipment.

### Determine where your family should meet if they are separated during a flood event.

Determine if your family's workplaces or schools are in flood-prone areas. Also evaluate if roadways that access these places are prone to flooding. Determine the best way to access these sites in the event of a flood. If your family gets split-up make sure you have designated a safe place for everyone to meet.

### FLOOD CONCERNS –

**"We need to be PREPARED, not SCARED"**

Heidelberg  
Carnegie  
Scott Township  
Carnegie Community Development Corporation

Prepared by Pashok Associates, Ltd.

### What caused Chartiers Creek to flood?

In September of 2004, the remnant storms of Hurricane Ivan drenched the Chartiers Creek watershed with between 5 and 8 inches of rainfall over a 24-hour period. This rainfall came after the remnant storms of Hurricane Frances had saturated the area just over a week before. The 5 to 8 inches of rain dropped by Hurricane Ivan caused the Creek to rise to 25 feet, far exceeding the flood level (18 feet).

### What has been done to prevent future floods in our Communities?

The Chartiers Valley District Flood Control Authority (CVDFCA) began removing trees and debris from the creek bed and sides after the flood. It also cleared debris and sediment from the back channel, a long flowing, and natural retention area into which water is diverted. The Army Corps of Engineers also removed sediment at 24 locations along 11 miles of Chartiers Creek. Additionally, stopped paving was replaced to stabilize the Pittsburgh and Ohio Central railroad tracks.

### Are we in the floodplain?

Much of Carnegie and Heidelberg's Main Streets and business districts are within the 500-year flood plain. Smaller portions of the boroughs are within the 100-year flood plain.



### What does a 100 or 500 year flood mean?

These are simply terms that are used to describe the probability of a flood happening in a given year. A 10 year flood has a 10 percent probability of occurring in any given year, a 50 year event a 2% probability, a 100 year event a 1% probability, and a 500 year event a .2% probability. The probabilities are not guaranteed and the terms are most frequently used in determining flood insurance rates.

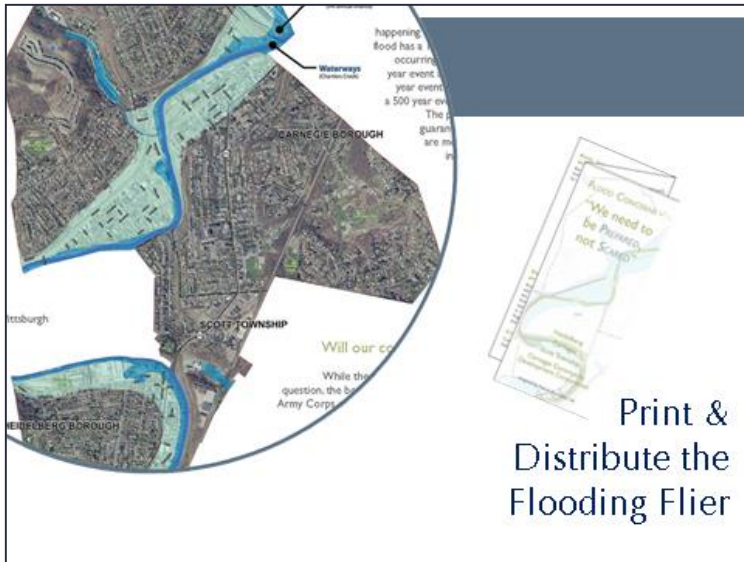
### Will our communities flood again?

While there is no "yes" or "no" answer to this question, the boroughs, the flood control authority, and Army Corps of Engineers have been working to prepare the communities for future heavy rainfalls.



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations

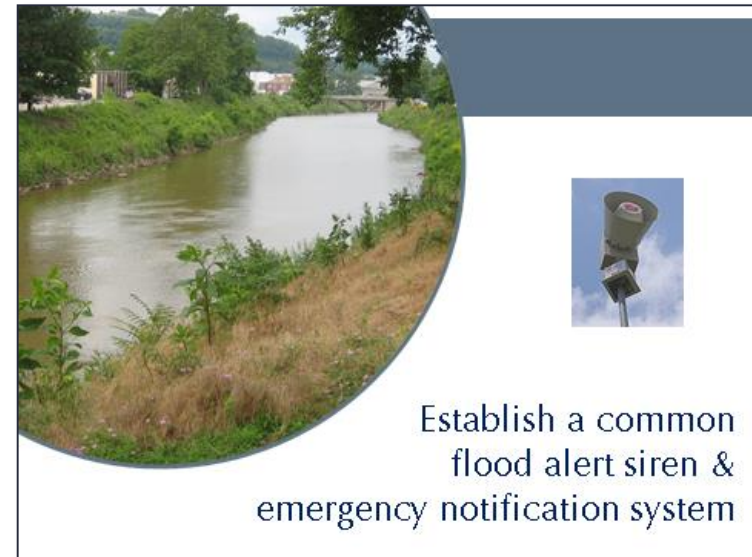


happening  
flood has a  
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year event  
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Waterways  
Pittsburgh  
CARNEGIE BOROUGH  
SCOTT TOWNSHIP  
Will our co  
While the  
question, the  
Army Corps

Ann Council  
"We need to  
be prepared,  
not scared!"

Print &  
Distribute the  
Flooding Flier

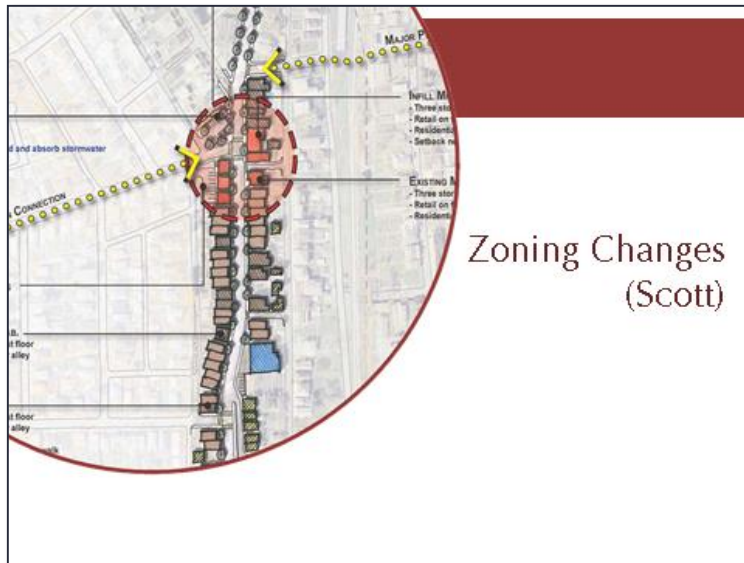


Establish a common  
flood alert siren &  
emergency notification system



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations







# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations

Visual communications that everyone understands





# 5 keys for an implementable plan

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Visual communications that everyone understands







# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 3. Devise practical and workable recommendations

Visual communications that everyone understands





## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **4. Recruit partners and create capacity to implement the plan**

- Recruit organizations and individuals with expertise and capacity; involve them in planning; ask them to take responsibility
- Start implementation before plan done
- Establish a coordinator responsible for implementation
- Planning process is not done until capacity to implement is in place





## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

- 5. Get local ownership of the plan - commitment to implement it**
  - Plan should reflect political buy in to sustain implementation over time
  - Elected officials should learn about recommendations during the planning process, not at the end
  - Steering committee and elected officials should be able to readily talk about 3-5 priority recommendations



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

- 5. Get local ownership of the plan - commitment to implement it (continued)**
  - There should be community presence at the final public meeting and they should be supportive
  - Plan process promotes a commitment to action after adoption
  - After adoption, should be on elected officials' agenda – conscious effort to track progress on implementation



# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## 5. Get local ownership of the plan - commitment to implement it

Heidelberg  
Carnegie, &  
Scott Township  
Multi-Municipal Plan

February 2012  
Prepared by: Pashek Associates, 4ward Planning, and Trans Associates

The preparation of this Plan was financed in part through a Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUTAP) Grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development, as administered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Additional support for the project was granted by the Local Government Authority.

Zelienople and Harmony  
Joint Comprehensive Plan

June 2010

The preparation of this Plan was financed in part through a Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUTAP) Grant and a Shared Market and Service Program (SMSP) Grant from the Department of Community and Economic Development, as administered by the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development as well as a grant from the Local Government Authority.

prepared by: Pashek Associates, Progresser Design Group (DM), and URS



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **5. Get local ownership of the plan - commitment to implement it**

#### **10 things Zelienople and Harmony have done since the plan was completed**

1. Enacted draft Shared Services Ordinance prepared as part of the plan.
2. Share snow removal and leaf collecting routes that are logical and not stop at political boundaries.
3. Hope to begin doing more shared administrative services.
4. Based on Main Street focus in the plan, obtained \$25,000 from Council to seed funding from banks and other organizations to hire a consultant to prepare a more detailed design study of the business districts.
5. Obtained a DCED grant to purchase new street signs that share a common appearance.



## **5 keys for an implementable plan**

### **5. Get local ownership of the plan - commitment to implement it**

#### **10 things Zelienople and Harmony have done since the plan was completed**

6. The joint shared services committee meets on a regular basis to track progress on implementing the recommendations of the plan.
7. Obtained funds from SPC to retime traffic signals on Main Street to improve traffic flow.
8. Funded an update to their community pool and leveraged a private donation to build an amphitheater in their park.
9. Shared salt purchases.
10. Council people from both municipalities meet regularly on Saturdays for breakfast to talk about common issues.





# 5 keys for an implementable plan

## Lessons Learned

1. Fluid Process, need to be flexible
2. Tension between the Scope of Work and a Plan that creates its focus
3. Staff being uncomfortable with unknowns; lost without a template
4. Need buy-in on the Process
5. Consider a new way of creating a Comprehensive Plan
6. Managing Expectations – how much is enough detail for a Tier I strategy?

*“It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end”*

## **4 things we hope you will take home with you from this session:**

1. Planners should think differently about a comprehensive plan
2. The content and organization of a plan matters, and should not follow the old “template”
3. A plan should not be considered complete until capacity to implement it is in place
4. A plan should become part of the daily conversations by elected officials and staff

**Questions???**

# Links

## **Heidelberg-Carnegie-Scott Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan**

- <http://heidelbergga.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/compplan.pdf>

## **Zelienople-Harmony Joint Comprehensive Plan**

- <http://zelieboro.org/Zelienople-Harmony-Joint%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf>

## **Lititz-Warwick Joint Strategic Comprehensive Plan**

- [www.warwicktownship.org](http://www.warwicktownship.org)

## **Mechanicsburg Borough Comprehensive Plan**

- [www.mechanicsburgborough.org/codes.html](http://www.mechanicsburgborough.org/codes.html)