



Township of
FERGUSON
Pennsylvania



2017 Strategic Plan



Chapter 1: Who We Are

Our Mission

It is Ferguson Township's mission to provide efficient, cost effective, professional services to our residents in a fair, cooperative, ethical and honest manner. The Township will endeavor to manage its resources allowing planned, sustainable growth while preserving the quality of life and its unique characteristics.

Our Vision

The Township will strive to appropriate staff and resources to maintain its infrastructure in acceptable condition, provide exemplary service, keep Township operations financially stable and keep pace with technology. As a result, the Township can continue to be a leader and model for the Centre Region and other Home Rule municipalities.

The Township is considered a 'Best Place to Live' by aspiring to create a sense of place, preserving agriculture and environmentally sensitive areas, and establishing a vibrant town center. Ferguson Township is home to a strong, diversified community and provides an effective transportation system, a rural, small town atmosphere, and the location and availability of open space.

We Value...

Effective, efficient, professionalism in delivering services to our residents. Residents, elected and appointed officials expect the highest quality service delivery from Township staff. It is our duty to meet and exceed those expectations in our daily work.

Preserving the unique character of the Township. The Township proudly boasts a diverse community of all ages and professions including farmers, scholars, small and large business employers and employees, professionals, and students. Each give the area a character all its own. It is our responsibility to ensure that policies and service delivery are directed at maintaining that character for generations to come.

A well-maintained and safe environment. Every resident and guest deserves to live, work, study, and recreate in a high quality environment. Therefore, it is our responsibility to properly maintain and provide for the safety of our community's neighborhoods, streets, parks, and common areas.

Managing our resources wisely. It is recognized that resources, including tax revenue, public utilities such as water and sewer, and services such as police and fire, are finite and must be allocated in the most efficient manner. It is our responsibility to continuously review and refine our practices to improve the management of public resources to provide the highest quality service delivery.

Partnering with our neighboring municipalities to provide cost effective services. The Centre Region is home to one of the premier and oldest Council of Governments in the Commonwealth. For decades, the municipalities that comprise the Centre Region have recognized the benefits of regional cooperation to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. It is our responsibility to maintain our commitment to the Centre Region Council of Governments and neighboring municipalities for programs where regional cooperation maximizes our return on investment.

Ethical and honest behavior. As elected officials and employees of the Township, every official, employee and service provider to the Township is directly accountable to conduct themselves in an ethical and honest manner. It is our responsibility to ensure that all who perform work for the Township operate with the highest standards of ethical and honest behavior.

Chapter 2: Executive Summary

History

Since its formation in 1801, Ferguson Township has grown into a diverse community, combining the characteristics of residential life with those of high-technology industry and agriculture interests. Named for Thomas Ferguson, an early settler who operated a mill in the Village of Pine Grove Mills at the base of Tussey Mountain, the Township sits on the southern edge of Centre County. The Township encompasses an area of approximately 50 square miles and is home to more than 18,000 residents. Several high-tech industries have found a home in Ferguson Township over the years including AccuWeather, Minitab, Sound Technology, Avail, the Applied Research Lab and Raytheon. The Township is also home to major research facilities of The Pennsylvania State University, one of the nation's premier agricultural and engineering institutions.

Organization

Ferguson Township is a council-manager form of government, consisting of a Board of five elected Supervisors (one from each of the three wards that make up the Township and two at-large) and a Township Manager who is responsible for administering the programs and policies authorized by the Board of Supervisors. Additionally, the Township government includes the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, and other appointed authorities, boards, and commissions that convene on an as-needed basis to address a variety of issues. Since the 1960s, Ferguson Township has been an active participant in the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG). The Centre Region COG is a voluntary association of the Borough of State College and the townships of College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris, and Patton. It is responsible for administering a number of programs including regional planning, refuse and recycling, code enforcement, the regional library, fire protection, and parks and recreation.

On March 14, 1974, a Government Study Commission recommended the Township modify its governing structure and become a Home Rule municipality. The electorate's approval of Home Rule permitted the Township to adopt its own Charter outlining the manner in which the Township would be governed. Home Rule in Pennsylvania permits the municipality to enact its own regulations except where explicitly superseded by state or federal law. This is different from, for example, a second class township that can only carry out duties assigned to it by the Second Class Township Code. Since becoming Home Rule, the Board of Supervisors has codified and adopted a code of ordinances.

Ferguson Township consists of five departments, each responsible for the provision of services enumerated by the governing body. The Police Department is charged with criminal and traffic regulation enforcement and protecting the health, welfare, and safety of students, residents, businesses, and visitors. The Public



Works Department maintains Township roads and infrastructure, and assists the departments of Planning & Zoning and Police in their duties. The Finance Department is responsible for managing the Township's finances and preparing the Annual Operating Budget and 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget. For the purposes of this document, the Finance Department also includes oversight of the Township's Information Technology operations. The Department of Planning and Zoning manages growth and development in the Township, and is responsible for ordinance enforcement. The Department of Administration includes the Township Manager, Assistant Manager, and staff dedicated to the oversight of Township operations. For this Strategic Plan update, the Administration Department also includes the Board of Supervisors, where the completion of a goal, objective, or action step is contingent upon their actions.

The staff of Ferguson Township is guided in its decision-making by several documents, some of which have been outlined in greater detail above. The Township's ordinances, resolutions, budgets, comprehensive plan, and the CIP are all examples of guiding documents that staff utilize on a daily basis to help allocate resources, capital and otherwise, to provide effective services. However, with all of these supporting documents there still remain several questions. How do we know our actions today are leading towards where residents want the Township to be in the coming years? How can we be sure that our resource allocation is advancing the Township's mission and vision? How are the decisions we make on a staff level related to the goals of our elected officials?

An effective Strategic Plan can address these questions and more. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to identify the goals of the elected officials and map out the objectives associated with each of them. With a clear direction moving forward, staff can be better positioned to allocate resources to achieve those goals. The document is not meant to serve as a specific work plan nor is it meant to be a formal authorization to allocate resources. Rather, it is meant to provide a true north that all Township departments can move toward for the good of the community. The Ferguson Township Manager, is primarily responsible for ensuring that these goals and the steps needed to achieve them are kept in front of the Board of Supervisors and the staff. It is only by constantly measuring Township operations against these goals that progress can be made to achieve them.

Chapter 3: Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Process

During the summer of 2016, the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors made the decision to revisit and update the Township's 2014 Strategic Plan. Working with the Township staff, it was decided to invite significant resident comment and opinion regarding the services provided by the Township, what could be done to improve the Township, and what residents want to see in the future. It was decided that the Township would seek resident comment primarily through two means.

The first effort was through the use of an electronic survey using SurveyMonkey. The Township opened the survey June 27 and closed it July 22. The survey consisted of five multiple choice questions and a comment box. The results of the survey were tallied and published and are available at the Ferguson Township offices, as well as on the Township's website.

In July, 2016, the Township engaged Peter S. Marshall & Associates to continue work on updating the Township's Strategic Plan.

The second effort to obtain resident input regarding the Township operations and future was by holding a series of three resident focus groups – one in each voting ward of the Township. The first focus group was held in the Baileyville Community Hall on August 4, 2016. The second focus group was held in the Ferguson Township Main Meeting Room on August 9, 2016. The third and final focus group was held at the Quality Inn on North Atherton Street on August 10, 2016. The results of these meetings were published and are also available at the Ferguson Township offices and Township website.

The Strategic Planning Work Session was held on Saturday, September 10, 2016 in the Ferguson Township Main Meeting Room. The Work Session was facilitated by Peter Marshall. All of the members of the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors participated along with Township Manager Mark Kunkle, Assistant Township Manager David Pribulka, and the Township Department Heads. During the Workshop, all participants had the following available to them:

- The resident survey executive summary
- The resident focus group notes
- The 2014 Strategic Plan

During the first part of the Workshop, each participant was asked to think 10 years into the future and to identify the conditions, services, infrastructure, and nature of the Township they would like to see. The following 25 answers were provided by the participants.

What Participants in the Strategic Planning Workshop of September 10, 2016 wanted to see in the Ferguson Township of the future (not prioritized)

- More art and cultural opportunities
- Return on investment for parklands
- Financial stability
- A prosperous community
- Long-term economic sustainability
- Scientifically informed decision making



- Citizen advisory boards
- A light rail system
- Reduced poverty
- More small businesses
- A vibrant business community
- Residents living and working in Township
- Connectivity to PSU, other municipalities, residents
- A safe community
- Cleanliness – well-maintained businesses and residential properties
- Multi-modal transportation options
- A government focused on carbon reduction and support of renewable energy
- Increase conserved and preserved land
- More support for diversified agriculture
- Partnership between the Township and industry to promote alternative energy
- Use of state legislation to address and make new policies
- Neighborhood schools
- Mixed housing in neighborhoods – affordability
- Well-built housing
- Centralized town square
- Regionalization of services
- Engaged and involved community

As the Workshop continued, the participants, working in small groups, identified the goals that they believed would move Ferguson Township forward in the next five years. During much of the remaining time, the participants discussed, considered, and then voted for the goals and objectives they felt were most important for the future of Ferguson Township. Finally, in the last portion of the Workshop, participants identified the steps that would be needed to achieve the goals that they had agreed upon. The process involved visioning, reflections on today's reality, and decisions about Ferguson Township's tomorrow.

Chapter 4: Ferguson Township Strategic Plan

Goals and Steps to Achieve Them

(Those responsible for each goal and step are noted in parentheses)



1) Financial Stability

- a. Make realistic estimates of program costs. (Staff)
- b. Regularly compare the cost of providing services in-house with costs from private contractors, other municipalities, other government agencies, and costs of providing services regionally. (Staff)
- c. Adjust revenues (taxes, fees, etc.) to adequately fund Township programs and needs. (Staff proposes, the Board initiates)

2) Economic Development

- a. Establish an economic development advisory group (with economic development expertise).
- b. Consider the employment of an economic development director (full-time, part-time, or a contracted service). This individual or contractor would be responsible to assist and support existing businesses to help them prosper and expand in Ferguson Township. He/she would be the Township's liaison with the business development community. He/she would develop an inventory of vacant commercial and industrial sites and would make that information available to interested parties. He/she would identify and pursue programs and grants to support economic development in Ferguson and would have responsibility for managing the Community Development Block Grant Program. (Board to initiate, staff to implement)

3) Growth Management

- a. Identify and complete (develop) plans for specific small areas. (Board, Staff, Planning Commission)
- b. Develop a future land use plan (Comprehensive Plan). (Staff, Planning Commission, Board)
- c. Develop a Township housing plan to provide for low and moderately priced housing in the Township (workforce housing). (Staff, Regional input, possible ad hoc advisory group)

4) Environmental Stewardship

- a. Identify and use existing tools to preserve the environment - Chesapeake Bay Tributary strategy, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, source water protection, conservation easements, climate action plans, referendums, agricultural conservation easements, etc. (Board, Staff)
- b. Make certain that land development regulations and development plans are consistent with environmental values (Staff, Planning Commission, Board)
- c. Identify and preserve natural resources and environmentally significant areas (Staff, Board, Planning Commission, possible ad hoc advisory group)
- d. Develop and adhere to green policy for buildings, vehicles, and operations (Staff, consultants)

- e. Update the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan with a specific emphasis on green infrastructure and sustainable parkland development

5) Best Management Practices for Operations

- a. Ensure adequate staffing and resources necessary to carry out Township services and programs (Staff, Board)
- b. Ensure proper training and professional development (Staff, Board)
- c. Ensure that operational practices are fiscally responsible (Staff)



6) Increase Participatory Government

- a. Utilize both ad hoc and standing citizen advisory boards with subject matter experts from the Township and the region to address issues related to parkland development and other matters of community interest."
- b. Fully utilize two-way communication and online platforms used to communicate (Staff)

7) Promotion of Clean Renewable Energy

- a. Assess the Township for opportunities for renewable energy (Staff, possible advisory group)
- b. Practice and promote energy conservation (Staff, Board)
- c. Establish zoning incentives to encourage renewable energy and energy conservation (Staff, Board, Planning Commission, possible ad hoc advisory group)
- d. Establish an advisory group on renewable energy (Staff, Board)

8) Promotion of Municipal Identity

- a. Develop our Sense of Place by developing a vibrant Town Center, preserving our agricultural heritage, and promoting the features that make the Township unique. (Staff)
- b. Develop a Marketing Strategy (possible advisory group)
- c. Establish and promote community events with Township help/promotion (farmer's markets, flea markets, etc.)

9) Partnerships and Regional Thinking

- a. Identify non-profits, businesses, and community groups for input on a variety of issues
- b. Work towards regional cooperation on issues that affect the entire Centre Region
- c. Increase financial stability through partnerships
- d. Monitor partnerships to ensure they continue to be beneficial