

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a general policy guide for future land use, development, conservation and preservation. The SAPA Comprehensive Plan will be developed using input from technical and planning experts and citizens of the SAPA Communities. The Plan will be adopted by the governing body of each SAPA member community.

When completed, the Plan will provide a framework for the strategic use of public resources to optimize quality of life within SAPA area. The Plan will establish an overall vision, set priorities, and provide implementation strategies to achieve future goals and objectives determined by stakeholders, experts, and citizens. The goals, priorities, and implementation strategies will focus on the following elements:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Transportation
- Community Facilities
- Utilities
- Natural Resources
- Historic & Cultural Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Agricultural Land

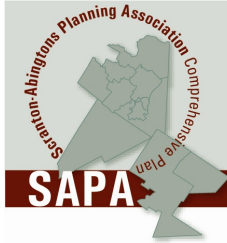
The Plan will address development, conservation, and preservation initiatives from a multi-municipal perspective. Ultimately, it will serve as a tool for elected officials to guide future growth and development to meet the needs of the citizens of the SAPA area.

2. Why is the preliminary draft land use plan different from our current township zoning map? The existing zoning map reflects the current regulations. The preliminary draft land use plan represents a positive picture of the SAPA communities in the year 2030. Following the adoption of the comprehensive plan, communities will consider using a variety of planning tools to support the implementation of the comprehensive plan. At this time, communities will also review and consider making changes to their ordinances in order to make their zoning support the comprehensive plan.

3. How could this plan affect my land? No one will make you preserve, develop or redevelop your land. It is possible that the plan will offer new opportunities to how your land is used or preserved but it is up to you to take advantage of these opportunities. It is possible that the plan may mean some limitations to how your land is developed but you will still retain the right to develop your land.

4. How will this plan benefit my municipality? Since the plan establishes the framework for development, conservation and preservation in our communities, it provides guidance for elected and appointed officials for the direction for the community and decisions about public expenditures for development, conservation and preservation. Because it is a multi-municipal plan, participating communities can agree to provide for a full range of land uses among several neighboring municipalities where they provide the most benefit and least impact.

5. Why will developers cooperate with the plan? Most developers are looking for a business opportunity that has a great deal of certainty and a way to successfully complete a project as quickly and smoothly as possible. By identifying in the comprehensive plan areas for development, revitalization, conservation and preservation, SAPA communities are telling developers what they want for their future. After the plan is adopted, participating communities should update and amend their zoning ordinances (as necessary) to implement the plan. The ordinances can include incentives that will attract developers to build projects that are positive for the SAPA communities.



Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association (SAPA) Comprehensive Plan

6. **How will this plan help our areas that need investment?** The plan will identify areas for focused investment and revitalization so that available resources can be directed where they can create substantial positive change rather than being spread too thinly to make a difference. Subsequent ordinance changes will then create a set of rules and regulations that encourage positive investment in these areas.

7. **How can we keep open space open?** There are three ways to keep open space open. The first is to use conservation subdivision zoning which allows for residential development in a limited area while protecting natural resources and creating permanent open space. The second is to use transferable development rights in which areas that have been identified to be permanent open space send development rights to other locations where they are then used for development incentives. The third is to apply conservation easements whereby the development rights of a property are purchased or donated.

8. **What is agricultural zoning and what can it achieve?** It recognizes the desirability of retaining the agricultural industry. This zoning provides measures to protect farmers' investments in that industry and reduces the potential of conflicts between urbanizing uses (such as non-farm residential use) and agricultural use. It tells potential investors that the practice of agriculture is the mainstay of an area.

9. **What is TDR (Transferable Development Rights)?** TDR programs work by transferring the development rights from land that is inappropriate for development to land that is appropriate for that type of development. These programs require developing both sending and receiving areas.

Sending areas often include agricultural, historic or natural resource lands that are valued for use as working farms or natural or historic resources and so are not appropriate for urban development. Receiving areas are suburban or urban places that have been designated for development or redevelopment.

The development rights that are transferred from the sending to the receiving areas provide benefits in both areas. The sender is compensated or receives some other benefit from giving up the future development potential of his or her land, while keeping it in agricultural production or as a natural area. This occurs at the time the property is preserved with an easement. The receiver/buyer profits by being able to increase the lot coverage, height or density of a development in the receiving area.

10. **How will we pay for what is recommended in this plan?** The plan provides a framework for public/private partnerships at many levels. For areas that want to remain open, a commitment to conserving land and preserving open space may increase prospects for gaining the interest and support of foundations and conservancies that are dedicated to preservation. A coordinated and locally-prioritized plan for multi-municipal growth in suburban areas may make agencies support new community infrastructure and facilities. Targeted public funding of activity areas in urban places will provide opportunities for focusing redevelopment and revitalization efforts that can attract private investment.

11. **How should we consider the cost of community services in this plan?** A land use may generate revenue for a community, but then require services that cost more than it generates, ultimately costing the local taxpayers. Examples of these required services can include: roads, sewer and water, schools, parks and recreation, and emergency services. Communities should consider how to balance their future land use mix (residential, nonresidential, agricultural and open space) in order to manage their cost of community services.