AFTER THE PLANNING’S OVER:
MULTI-MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania’s efforts to promote smart growth principles through multi-municipal planning have not produced significant changes in local land use planning practices. While many Pennsylvania municipalities have adopted joint comprehensive plans, recent studies suggest few have implemented them effectively. By learning more about the dynamic relationship between conditions, factors and behaviors in municipalities, we may be able to identify strategies that will encourage implementation behaviors.

This research uses a case study of four Pennsylvania municipalities to examine the relationship between community conditions such as the rate of growth; three key factors of land use planning capacity, inter-municipal relations, and public participation; and the implementation behaviors of local officials regarding their multi-municipal plans. I suggest that changes in any one of these aspects can affect implementation behavior, and that specific state-level policy changes to address planning readiness, capacity, and public engagement may be effective in achieving a greater level of joint comprehensive plan implementation and ultimately better growth management.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ vi

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. viii

Chapter 1 Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2 Land Use Planning and the Federalist Tradition ....................................... 6
   Land use planning from an intergovernmental perspective .................................. 6
   The federalist perspective ................................................................................. 8
   The argument for state concern .................................................................... 10
   Pennsylvania’s response .............................................................................. 13
   The local government perspective ................................................................. 16
   The end result: how is state policy operationalized at the local level? .......... 18
   Why does it matter what factors contribute to effective planning? ............ 23

Chapter 3 The Research Question .............................................................................. 25
   Unpacking the research question: defining implementation ...................... 27
   Existing conditions and trends ...................................................................... 30
   Factors associated with municipal behavior .............................................. 32
      Capacity ................................................................................................. 33
      Technical assistance ............................................................................. 35
      Public participation ............................................................................... 37
      Salience ............................................................................................... 39
      Inter-municipal relations .................................................................... 41
   Dynamic relationships .............................................................................. 42
   Summary ................................................................................................... 45

Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods ..................................................................... 46
   Applying the research lens .......................................................................... 48
   The case study methodology .................................................................. 50
   Case study methods .................................................................................. 51
      Primary data collection methods ......................................................... 57
         Stakeholder interviews .................................................................... 60
      Secondary data collection methods .................................................... 62
      Ethical considerations and validation methods ..................................... 65
   Summary .................................................................................................. 66

Chapter 5 The Case Study ......................................................................................... 67
   Case study description: four municipalities .............................................. 68

iv
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3-1: Conceptual Model of the multi-municipal planning process. .......................... 25

Figure 4-1: Map of case study municipalities. ................................................................. 53

Figure 5-1: York County in regional context. ................................................................. 69

Figure 5-2: Map of municipalities in the case study. ..................................................... 70

Figure 5-3: Comparison of population growth in the case study municipalities. ........... 75

Figure 6-1: Survey responses on decision-making. ........................................................ 92

Figure 6-2: Survey responses on decision-making by municipality. ............................. 94

Figure 6-3: Comparison of survey responses on capacity indicators by municipality..... 101

Figure 6-4: Comparison of survey responses on capacity indicators by position......... 102

Figure 6-5: Perceptions of capacity from survey responses ..................................... 104
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1: Survey response rate by municipality and by position held. ..........................59

Table 5-1: Comparison of government structure in the case study municipalities. ..........72

Table 5-2: Selected population characteristics for the case study municipalities. ..........73

Table 5-3: Major milestones in the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan. ..........80

Table 6-1: Formal actions taken by the case study municipalities after adoption of the

Table 6-2: Implementation strategy, Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan. ........89

Table 6-3: Summary of implementation actions. ...............................................................97

Table 6-4: Municipal links listed on municipal websites. ................................................113
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Chapter 1
Introduction

In June of 2000, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge signed Acts 67 and 68, the Growing Smarter amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC). This was a watershed moment for many in the land use planning community, from state agencies to non-profits, developers and environmentalists, and for at least some of Pennsylvania’s 2,563 local governments. In brief, the Growing Smarter amendments to the MPC recognized that joint comprehensive planning requires a different approach to issues like the distribution of land uses, shared services and shared revenues. The incorporation of new language specific to joint planning made it easier and more attractive for municipalities. In a signing ceremony later that summer, Governor Ridge said, “This legislation is about communities, the environment, and future growth. It’s about giving municipalities the tools they need. It’s about preserving open space and the quality of life we enjoy. And it’s about respecting private property rights and allowing for the growth we need” (Ercolino 2000, 48). The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) overhauled its planning grant assistance program and rolled out the Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP), designed to steer the bulk of the state’s funding assistance towards multi-municipal comprehensive planning efforts. Seemingly overnight, municipalities around the state applied for funds and set off down the road to multi-municipal planning. By 2003, there were 160 joint land use planning initiatives underway, according to DCED (Brookings 2003).
The need to ‘grow smarter’ was evident in Pennsylvania. In 1997 Governor Ridge had convened the 21st Century Environment Commission, a blue-ribbon panel created to guide the state’s environmental policy into the future. The Commission found that uncontrolled growth was among the highest concerns for most Pennsylvanians, a sentiment echoed in a series of public forums convened around the state in 1999 by DCED (McCormick, Taylor and Associates, 2000). By the time The Brookings Institution published its seminal report *Back to Prosperity* in 2003, many Pennsylvanians were experiencing firsthand the dizzying rate of growth which Brookings described as ‘slow growth bringing fast sprawl’. From 1982 to 1997, according to the Brookings report, Pennsylvania had the third slowest rate of population growth among all 50 states, but ranked sixth in the amount of land converted from open space, fields and natural land to other (mostly residential) uses. This 47% increase in Pennsylvania’s ‘urbanized footprint’ was at the average rate of 4 acres per every new resident at a time when the national average was 0.6 acres per new resident (Brookings 2003).

With growing public awareness of growth issues, new planning tools in place, and state grant funds readily available, one might expect that land use management changed significantly at the local government level in the years following the Growing Smarter amendments. But by all indications, as will be explored in this thesis, that has not happened. The interest in multi-municipal planning has not lagged: as of 2008 there have been 683 municipalities involved in joint planning projects, according to a newly released study by 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania. What has lagged, apparently, is the implementation of those multi-municipal plans: governments are not acting on the recommendations they write. Land use in many areas is still regulated by individual municipalities, and few are looking beyond their borders.

Researchers who investigate local land use planning have identified many factors that affect local government decision-making. As will be seen in Chapter 2, some researchers have focused on the tensions between state and local land use policies, and have evaluated the efficacy
of state mandates versus incentives in making substantive change to local land use planning practices. Others have studied the nature of local governance and local government officials, looking at how they interact and with whom, at their attitudes toward land use planning, their understanding of planning concepts and their use of planning tools. This latter area of research focuses on factors that seem to make a difference in the way local government officials approach land use planning in general and multi-municipal planning in particular: that is, in their behaviors.

In the multi-layered and multi-faceted world of local government in Pennsylvania, it is hard to determine causality – what makes a local official behave in a certain way – but researchers have identified factors that play a role. These include existing conditions within the community and the region, such as growth patterns, economic trends, changes in the size of or composition of the population. Other factors that play a role have to do with the way in which local officials work: how they communicate with and get along with each other, and how much they invite and listen to public comment. Still others factors have to do with land use planning in particular: how important planning is to local officials, how well they understand why they should engage in planning and how they should go about it, and how much help they ask for and accept from county, regional, state and other organizations involved in land use planning.

As social scientists, how can we untangle the web of factors involved in local government land use planning and gain an understanding of those areas in which changes in policy might result in changes in behavior? The state’s efforts to promote multi-municipal planning have not produced the hoped-for changes in local land use planning practices expressed by Governor Ridge at the signing ceremony for the Growing Smarter amendments. In the context of those efforts, how can we shed light on the workings of local government? I suggest that by learning more about the relationship between conditions, factors and behaviors in municipalities, we may be able to identify strategies that will encourage certain behaviors: in this case, the implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans.
I propose the following research question: *how are the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal behavior associated with the implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities?* The question examines the role of existing conditions and regional trends; the extent and quality of certain factors: salience, planning capacity, inter-municipal relations, technical assistance and public participation; and the implementation behaviors of local officials regarding their multi-municipal plans. The research model for this question suggests that all of these conditions, factors and behaviors exist in a dynamic relationship, that they are both independent and dependent variables acting upon and changing each other. It further suggests that a change in one of the conditions or factors can lead to a change in behavior resulting in better implementation of the plan. The model portrays the outcome of the multi-municipal planning process, including implementation behaviors, as achievement of Growing Smarter objectives: better land use, better allocation of resources, and improvements to the environment, the economy and the quality of life for a region.

I examine the research question through a case study of four Pennsylvania municipalities that engaged in and adopted a multi-municipal plan in 2004 and have made some progress towards its implementation. The case study focuses on municipal officials who are involved with the joint comprehensive plan: the elected body, planning commission, municipal staff, solicitors and consulting engineers. It draws on both primary and secondary data to provide a rich contextual background against which to observe the relationships anticipated in the research question. My case study research and data analysis provides the basis for a set of policy recommendations that may be effective in helping local governments achieve better implementation of their multi-municipal plans. I also identify considerations for additional research.

During the conduct of my research I encountered a growing sense of concern about land use planning among state agencies and statewide stakeholders who work in the area of multi-
municipal planning and among officials within my case study. The concern centers on the lack of significant change in the way Pennsylvania municipalities are managing growth. In the eight years since the Growing Smarter amendments, many of those I spoke with felt that local governments are still quite vulnerable to growth pressures and still do not have adequate tools in place to deal with that pressure. I am hopeful that my research is both substantive and timely, and that it will help inform multi-municipal planning policy.

I begin in Chapter 2 by looking at how land use planning is situated within the American federalist system of government and how the inherent tensions between federal, state and local government over land use were manifested in the late twentieth century in the smart growth movement. Through a review of research and literature, I examine the policies that state governments have adopted as they attempt to regain control of land use planning from local governments, and then focus on Pennsylvania’s policy choices. Chapter 3 presents the research question and its conceptual model as it is drawn from the literature: it explores how I identify implementation behaviors and discusses characteristics of the five factors of capacity, inter-municipal relations, public participation, technical assistance and salience. Chapter 3 also looks at the dynamic relationships of the various parts of the research question and uses a model of a hypothetical municipality to illustrate the relationships. In Chapter 4, I discuss the case study as a qualitative research methodology, followed by a description of data collection methods. The case study is presented in Chapter 5 and includes a broad-brush description of the case study municipalities and a brief history of their inter-municipal activities over the past decade. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the research data which focuses on the identification of patterns, themes and trends in the data. In Chapter 7, I present conclusions that can be drawn from the data analysis and propose a number of considerations for state policymakers along with implications for further research.
Chapter 2

Land Use Planning and the Federalist Tradition

At some level of government, decisions are made concerning land use: how land can be subdivided and owned, the ways in which the land is used, the extent to which land use is compatible with or protected from that of neighboring properties, the ways in which development can occur, and the relationship of development to transportation and utility infrastructure. In America since its inception as a nation, the vast majority of land use decisions has been made and regulated at the local government level (Teitz 2004). The constitutional division of power between the federal government and the states relegates land use authority to the states, although much land use law is governed by constitutional doctrine that is ultimately determined at the federal level by the US Supreme Court. States in turn enable their local governments to regulate land use (Teitz 2004).

Land use planning from an intergovernmental perspective

Until recently land use administration has remained largely a local responsibility, neither regulated nor funded by the higher tiers of state and federal government. Although federal policy in areas such as agriculture and transportation has affected land use, direct state and federal involvement in land use regulations did not occur on a regular basis until the twentieth century (Sokolow 1987). Responding in part to the explosive growth of America’s largest cities and to new patterns of suburban growth, the US Department of Commerce produced model legislation
for states to enable and regulate local zoning in 1922 and planning in 1928 (Burby & May 1997).¹ A decade later, the Federal Housing Administration issued design guidelines for residential development to qualify for FHA mortgages and mortgage insurance, which became a major influence in land use development patterns. Levittown, built in 1952 in response to the post WWII need for workforce housing, is the most famous example of the suburban land use pattern modeled on FHA guidelines that would become an American standard in the 1950’s and 1960’s (Bailey 2007).

Direct state involvement in land use regulation began in earnest in the late 1960’s as a response to growing public attention to environmental issues. Hawaii was the first state to enact mandates governing local planning. By the end of the 1970’s ten more states had adopted legislation mandating local planning for some or all of their jurisdictions and thirty more states had enacted legislation in other policy areas that impacted local land use regulations (Burby & May 1997). This first wave of state intervention in local land use regulation focused almost entirely on environmental issues, and states based their actions on the enabling powers provided to them in the 1922 federal zoning legislation. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, a second wave of mandates appeared in response to widespread public concern over suburban sprawl, decreasing acreage of farmland, and urban decline. These mandates attempted to impose growth management mechanisms on local government planning and to encourage smart growth initiatives. They ranged from incentive-based cooperative relationships to enforcement-based conjoint approaches (Carruthers 2002). Local government responses varied from non-compliance to plan adoption and implementation, with many local governments falling somewhere in between: adopting plans but failing to implement them. Researchers studying the effectiveness of

¹ Burby and May point out that the model legislation for zoning preceded that of planning, an approach that has been echoed by many municipalities ever since. As evidence, they cite the number of municipalities with subdivision regulations but no comprehensive plans.
state mandates found that while cooperative approaches were more palatable, those with
enforcement provisions were more effective (Turner 1990, Burby and Dalton 1994, Burby and
May 1997, Carruthers 2002). In other words, once states relinquish the authority for regulating
land use to their local governments, they must flex their statutory muscle in order to reclaim that
authority.

The federalist perspective

From the federalist perspective, the struggle over authority for land use regulation is a
classic example of the tensions that exist between local, state and federal government. Scholars
of federalism often focus on the distribution of power and resources as an explanation of these
inherent tensions. Elazar’s theory of noncentralized federalism describes the balance of power
between the levels of government as necessary to protect the existence and authority of each
(Elazar 1984). This balance is maintained between state and local governments through the
application of Dillon’s Rule, which essentially allows municipalities only those powers
specifically enumerated to them by their states. Established by Judge John F. Dillon in an 1868
opinion, this delineation of power has remained largely intact for over a century, home rule
authority notwithstanding (Pagano 1990). In this model, authority for land use regulation is
shared between the levels of government. States can mandate specific planning activities but it is
local governments that create and enforce subdivision and zoning regulations.

It would be nearly impossible – and certainly politically unviable – for a state to strip its
local governments of land use authority, requiring at a minimum an amendment of the state’s
constitution. However, this does not keep states from supplanting local regulations by taking
primacy in areas where they wish to be the primary policy-makers or regulators. Land use policy
related to energy facilities is a good example. In the past decade the siting of wind power
projects presented a challenge to local governments whose land use policies did not anticipate this type of development – nothing in most local zoning ordinances addressed wind turbines. In the absence of regulatory language allowing wind farm development, and given public outcry over environmental and aesthetic concerns, municipalities often chose to deny wind farm applications. Some state governments, citing the greater public good served by the development of wind energy, decided to preempt local decision-making for wind projects. For instance, in California, if local zoning does not explicitly address wind power, it must be considered a use by right, and is permitted through compliance with state-imposed criteria. Nevada controls permitting for all wind power projects in counties with less than 100,000 population and Wisconsin lawmakers have prohibited local governments from enacting zoning that restricts the development of wind power (Green and Sagrillo, 2005). Another example is Pennsylvania’s Oil and Gas Act, which preempts all local government regulation of oil and gas activities. The applicability of this law to the profusion of natural gas well projects currently underway in the state is being tested at the state’s Supreme Court.

Meanwhile the federal government plays an indirect but powerful role in land use regulation through policies that affect growth patterns such as investment in highway infrastructure. For instance, federal funding for new or expanded highways encourages suburban development, while funding for mass transit and alternative modes of transportation such as bike and pedestrian trails encourages more development in urban areas. Another example is the policy allowing federal income tax deductions for home mortgages, which encourages home ownership over other forms of housing tenancy. Because the vast majority of owner-occupied homes are single family dwellings, this policy does nothing to encourage higher density multi-family housing but instead encourages more investment in suburban development (Katz 2000).

Some theorists posit that the balance of power shifts when lower levels of government either cannot or will not provide adequate governance, which causes a higher level of government
to intercede. Nivola identifies four areas where failure by state and local governments has resulted in federal intervention: the provision of purely public goods, the protection of individual rights, the fulfillment of basic needs for the lowest echelons (a safety net), and environmental protection across jurisdictions. In each of these areas, the federal government has justified its intrusion into state or local affairs as necessary in the absence of appropriate state or local action (Nivola 2007). Similarly, Stephens and Wikstrom (2007) ascribe the tendency for a state to move towards centrality in its policies to the failure of local government to provide the level of governance desired by its citizens.

The literature suggests that when states perceive a failure of governance at the local level, they take action that is responsive to public demands but which also reclaims control over what was previously local policy. This does not seem to be the case for the wind, oil and gas development discussed above. There has not been significant public demand for such energy projects: in the area of wind energy, public action at the local level has frequently been in opposition rather than in support of proposed development (Green and Sagrillo 2005). It would appear that states are responding to energy industry interests rather than those of its citizens. Nor has there been a ‘failure’ of local government – unless one considers the denial of permits for energy projects to be a failing. However, in the case of smart growth mandates, the theory that state action is a response to local government inaction seems to hold true: it is the inability of local governments acting independently of each other to respond to regional growth pressures that has resulted in state intervention.

The argument for state concern

The failure of local governments to provide effective land use planning and implementation is at the heart of the public debate over sprawl. Cigler defines sprawl as
development characterized by “a low density, single use, auto-dependent land and transportation system” (Cigler 2003, 18). Sprawl is a nationwide phenomenon whose impact can be clearly seen in Pennsylvania, a state which has experienced significant loss of rural lands with virtually no population growth because it is simply spreading out (Brookings 2003). The effects of sprawl are well-documented: among these are the concentration of poverty in cities and first-ring suburbs, traffic congestion, environmental pollution, inefficient and expensive delivery of public services, and the loss of farmland and open spaces (Katz 2000). Its causes are attributed to the failure of local governments to think and plan regionally (Carruthers 2002, Daniels 1999) and to federal policies that favor single-family owner-occupied housing, capital-intensive water and sewer infrastructure, and highways over mass transit (Katz 2000). Smart growth proponents call for the control of sprawl through growth management techniques such as urban growth boundaries, traditional neighborhood design, and transit-oriented development. These techniques concentrate development in designated areas, encourage mixes of residential and commercial uses, and attempt to rebuild the sense of neighborhood and community that is perceived to be missing from sprawling suburban developments (Cigler 2003).

Because many of these techniques involve a regional approach to land use planning, they tend to be ignored or overlooked by local governments who have historically viewed land use regulation as a strictly local concern. These same municipalities may cooperate with their neighbors in the provision of services such as police, fire and rescue, libraries or other community facilities, but view land use planning in a different light. The result can be a dismal failure to communicate. As an example, a survey of Pennsylvania municipal officials in 2000 showed that only 11% of municipalities with subdivision and land development ordinances send development plans to neighboring municipalities for review, and only 7% of planning commissioners meet with their counterparts in neighboring municipalities even on an informal basis (Kelsey, Lembeck
and Fasic 2001). While these basic forms of communication do not constitute inter-municipal relationships, they may be precursors to forming those relationships.

State planning mandates in the 1980’s and 90’s have been in large part an attempt to wrest some authority from local governments in order to foster regional approaches to land use planning and to combat sprawl (Carruthers 2002). Several of these mandates specifically embrace smart growth practices, notably those in Oregon and Florida (Turner 1990, Burby and Dalton 1994). Some states attempt to mandate inter-municipal collaboration so that the land use policies in one municipality do not simply drive undesired growth across its boundaries to the municipality next door. The mandates address this concern by imposing requirements for vertical, horizontal and internal consistency (Carruthers 2002). Vertical consistency is defined as consistency between municipal and state policy, as for example between a Pennsylvania township’s comprehensive plan and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Horizontal consistency occurs between municipalities, or between a municipality and its county. Internal consistency concerns the relationship between a municipality’s comprehensive plan, subdivision and zoning ordinances.

The problem is that there is no horizontal relationship between municipalities that is equivalent to the vertical relationship between local governments and their states; no natural framework for the allocation of power and resources between municipalities. Inter-municipal relationships have to be invented: enabling legislation is required at the state level. When a state mandate imposes smart growth techniques on local governments, it is a paradigm shift; an attempt to restructure the nature of local governance. Little wonder that the success of states in requiring local governments to cooperate with each other is, at least in the area of planning mandates, largely a function of the strength and enforceability of the mandate (Turner 1990, Burby and Dalton 1994, Burby and May 1997, Carruthers 2002).
Pennsylvania’s response

The state of Pennsylvania was a relative latecomer to the growth management movement. In 1997 Governor Tom Ridge convened the 21st Century Environment Commission, whose report the following year resulted in the Governor’s Sound Land Use Executive Order 1999-1. This Order’s recitals drew attention to the state’s land use issues

. . . from 1960 to 1990, the population of Pennsylvania’s largest metropolitan areas grew by 13 percent, but developed land in those areas grew by 81 percent . . . between 1970 and 1997, Pennsylvania lost 24,000 farms and 25 percent of the total acreage of farms to other uses . . . Pennsylvania’s present growth patterns have long term social, environmental, and economic health consequences to the Commonwealth . . .

The Order invoked smart growth principles, citing the dynamic links between community, environment and the economy, and the importance of the state’s historical and cultural resources to maintaining community viability. It specifically enumerated the benefits of smart growth:

Sound land use practices minimize urban sprawl, alleviate traffic congestion, promote efficiencies, reduce environmental degradation, and contribute to more efficient and effective long-term economic growth.

Ridge charged the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services, an agency within the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, with responsibility for making good planning happen at the local level. Order 1999-1 requires the Governor’s Center to assist, advise, encourage, partner, and work in conjunction with local governments to implement sound land use practices. Among the first actions taken by the Governor’s Center was a series of fifty-three ‘Sound Land Use Forums’ around the Commonwealth in July and August of 1999, the results of which were compiled into Pennsylvanians Speak: Sound Land Use Forums Report (McCormick, Taylor and Associates 2000). This compendium of public opinion, examined from the perspective of nearly a decade, is surprising not for its content but for how little the issues
appear to have changed over the intervening years: inter-municipal cooperation, farmland and open space preservation, impact fees, water concerns, education for municipal officials, property taxes and the viability of farming were key concerns in 1999 and would likely top the list if the forums were replicated today. In fact, similar results were obtained by The Brookings Institution and Penn State University in listening sessions conducted around the state in 2006 (Brookings 2007).

The Governor’s Center report was accompanied by a comprehensive inventory of land use planning tools which fulfilled another requirement of Order 1999-1, and which served as the basis for a series of amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code known as Acts 67 and 68 of 2000, also referred to as the Growing Smarter legislation amendments (Local Government Commission 2006). Unlike other states’ mandates that impose planning requirements on local governments, the Growing Smarter amendments provide enabling legislation for those local governments who choose to engage in sound land use practices. Key provisions authorize local governments to enter into inter-municipal agreements in order to develop, adopt and implement comprehensive plans, and further enable participating municipalities to enter into revenue-sharing agreements, transfer-of-development-rights programs and regional zoning (Local Government Commission 2006). This latter point is considered by many to be the most important, because it nullifies the requirement for each municipality’s zoning ordinance to allow every use within its boundaries – a requirement widely seen as so onerous as to be a disincentive to any zoning at all (Bailey 2007). The 2000 Growing Smarter amendments also allow municipalities who engage in joint comprehensive planning to adopt a ‘specific plan’ for designated non-residential areas² (Bailey 2007). Additional provisions of the

² The ‘specific plan’, a term defined in the MPC, is a holistic approach to planning for a designated non-residential area that can streamline and coordinate permitting and oversight across a broad array of issues and agencies.
amendments require state agencies to consider planning consistency before issuing permits, and allow those agencies to give a higher ranking to project applications that demonstrate consistency with local and county comprehensive plans. The amendments introduce legal definitions for a number of smart growth terms including ‘designated growth area’, ‘development of regional significance and impact’, ‘future growth area’, and ‘multi-municipal plan’.

Taken as a whole, the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments are a combination of enabling legislation and legislative incentives. They make inter-municipal collaboration easier by allowing joint zoning and revenue sharing, and they hold out the promise of better access to state funding for participating municipalities. The response from Pennsylvania municipalities was significant. The Brookings Institution documented 160 multi-municipal planning efforts in its 2003 report, a phenomenon that it described as “a veritable explosion of collaboration” (Brookings 2003, 71).

The Rendell administration continued the smart growth efforts initiated by Governor Tom Ridge. In 2003, Governor Ed Rendell appointed an Interagency Land Use Team comprising key cabinet officers. The team was charged with developing a policy for the state’s investment in public infrastructure that would support smart growth principles. The resulting document, the Keystone Principles, was adopted in 2005 as a guideline for state agencies to use on a voluntary basis in determining the allocation of grant and loan funds to local governments. The ten Keystone Principles are a prescriptive approach to smart growth. They range from ‘redevelop first’ to ‘concentrate development’ to ‘plan regionally, implement locally’. A set of five core criteria and nine preferential criteria accompany the Keystone Principles and are designed to assist state agencies in reviewing and ranking municipal projects. Both sets of criteria offer higher rankings for projects that are consistent with multi-municipal plans. The core criteria also rank projects in terms of local capacity, technical ability and leadership abilities (Governor’s Center 2005). The Keystone Principles are advisory only, and have not been widely disseminated to local governments.
Another initiative of the Rendell administration was the reactivation of the Pennsylvania State Planning Board in 2004. The Board, originally established in 1929, became inactive during the late 1980’s. In reactivating the Board, Rendell charged it with recommending legislation and policy that would encourage smart growth, improve local governance and address conflicting land use interests. Three working committees were formed to focus on governance, economic development, and transportation and infrastructure. In 2006 the State Planning Board issued its report, based on the work of the committees, which calls for voluntary actions and incentives rather than state mandates. The report recommends an outreach effort to discuss its findings across Pennsylvania; an effort that it suggests will allow the Board to refine its recommendations for the Governor and the legislature (Pennsylvania State Planning Board 2006). However it does not appear that any such outreach effort has been initiated, nor have any additional reports been forthcoming from the Planning Board. Thus it is unclear what impact if any the Board has had in advancing the state’s smart growth agenda. Like the Keystone Principles, this is a Rendell initiative that fails to appear on most local government radar screens.

The local government perspective

Land use planning is just one of a myriad of services that Pennsylvania local governments provide. It may seem less critical for some communities, particularly those not beset with rapid development, than the provision of adequate roads, snow removal, solid waste collection, water and sewer service, emergency management or code enforcement. Providing municipal services at all can be daunting: some of Pennsylvania’s smallest local governments, those with a few hundred citizens or less, are only able to provide the most basic level of municipal services by contracting with their larger neighbors (Bailey 2007). In addition, keeping up with the volume and complexity of state and federal mandates can be overwhelming. Two
recent examples are the National Incident Management System, a post-Katrina federal mandate that requires every local government official to receive emergency preparedness training and meet a minimum level of certification; and the state-imposed mandate requiring every municipality to adopt and enforce a uniform construction code.

Land use planning is not mandated in Pennsylvania: the MPC enables municipalities to engage in land use planning, but does not require it. Only counties are required to adopt comprehensive plans (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). Small and rural communities in Pennsylvania are less likely to engage in land use planning than their larger or more urban counterparts. Lembeck et al, studying the extent of planning in Pennsylvania, found that boroughs with populations under 2,500 are least likely to have the four basic planning tools: planning commissions, comprehensive plans, subdivision ordinances and zoning ordinances (although many municipalities have at least one of the four). Among the reasons cited was a lack of salience, i.e. no urgent or important planning-related issues are confronting the community (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). This is often the case with rural municipalities who think of themselves as ‘policy islands’ and fail to recognize regional growth trends. Because of their inclination not to engage in planning until a perceived need arises, growth and development can occur very quickly and overwhelm local officials (Elmendorf 2007).

This is not to say that all small or rural municipalities in Pennsylvania take a nonchalant or distant view of planning. In its 2005 State Land Use and Growth Management Report, the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services indicates that the vast majority of local governments have at least one of the planning tools identified by Lembeck et al. 97% of Pennsylvania municipalities have subdivision and land development ordinances, 70% have zoning ordinances and over 60% have adopted comprehensive plans. In many cases the municipality has chosen to adopt the county’s ordinances or plan in lieu of its own, but nonetheless it has a planning tool in place (Governor’s Center 2005). What the Governor’s
Center report does not tell us is how adequate the planning tools are and how effectively they are used.

The relationship between counties and their local governments in regards to land use planning varies widely around the state. Municipalities are required to submit subdivision and land development plans to their county planning offices for review, and county planners are required to review those plans. Some counties use the review requirement as an opportunity to provide guidance to their municipalities. For instance, the Adams County Office of Planning and Development provides comprehensive review comments that discuss consistency with both the county comprehensive plan and municipal land use ordinances. Adams County also provides professional planning for some of its local governments as a contracted service. Neighboring Franklin County, on the other hand, routinely reviews local projects with no comment at all, citing the county’s statutory inability to enforce the provisions of its comprehensive plan. Municipal responses to county reviews also vary widely: some local planners ignore county comments since consistency with the county comprehensive plan is not required, or consider them to be biased in favor of the county comprehensive plan (Bailey 2007). The quality of county-municipal relationships seems to be at least in part a function of the perception on each side of the relevance and strength of the county comprehensive plan.

The end result: how is state policy operationalized at the local level?

While planning of some sort is going on in most of Pennsylvania’s municipalities, it is evidently not up to the task of managing growth in the state, according to the state itself. Witness

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3 Based on my personal experience in Franklin County as a municipal manager and in both Franklin and Adams County as a Penn State Extension Educator – a position in which I work with both counties’ planning directors.
the 1998 Report of the 21st Century Environment Commission, the 1999 report of the Sound Land Use Advisory Committee, and the 2003 and 2007 Brookings Institution analyses. All of these documents recite the grim statistics for Pennsylvania: population growth is slow but land is being consumed at record levels, the state’s urban areas are hollowing out and sprawl is endemic, municipal infrastructure investments are costly and inefficient, municipalities are sliding towards fiscal distress and the state’s economic focus is blurred. Each document calls for more and better land use planning through state mandates, incentives, technical assistance, funding, or a combination thereof. In addition, as the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments and the 2005 Keystone Principles demonstrate, there is considerable emphasis on regional approaches to planning in general, and on multi-municipal comprehensive planning in particular. Yet it seems, based on the reports cited above, that the response from Pennsylvania’s municipalities is simply not sufficient. Is this because municipalities are unwilling or perhaps unable to embrace the concept of multi-municipal planning, and if so, why?

Given the tension inherent in the relationship between state and local governments and the long history of local government control of land use planning, one might question the “explosion of collaboration” in joint municipal planning that the Brookings report described (Brookings 2003, 71). The sheer number of municipalities involved in multi-municipal comprehensive planning may not in itself constitute effective collaboration. The 2001 Penn State study asked municipal officials how often they used their comprehensive plans in decision-making. Only 28% of local planning officials and 24% of elected officials reported using the plan ‘often’ in decision-making. Another 25% of planning officials and 36% of elected officials reported using the plan ‘once in a while’ for decision-making (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). Even if one interprets ‘once in a while’ use as effective, there still remained roughly 40% of local governments who were not using their comprehensive plans as a tool for governance. Burby and May (1997) explain this phenomenon of meeting the letter of the law without meeting its spirit in
terms of ‘calculated commitment’ as opposed to ‘normative commitment’. Compliance with state mandates, or calculated commitment, includes the preparation and adoption of planning documents and other actions that are specifically required by the mandates. Normative commitment, on the other hand, happens when local officials truly embrace the policies they have adopted and make a sincere effort to implement them.

In the case of multi-municipal planning in Pennsylvania, calculated commitment is demonstrated through the process of writing and adopting a joint comprehensive plan. Thus the Governor’s Center can report that ‘x’ number of joint municipal plans have been adopted and ‘x’ more are in process. The number of joint comprehensive plans in the state has in fact increased dramatically since the enactment of the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments. One likely reason for the increase is the revamping of the state’s funding stream for planning grants, the Land Use Planning Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP), which all but requires applicants to engage in a multi-municipal approach in order to be considered eligible. An application from a single municipality will only be considered if a “compelling rationale” is provided for going it alone, and if the municipality can demonstrate that “participation from other municipalities was sought and refused” (Governor’s Center 2006, 2) In effect, the only way for a local government to obtain funds for comprehensive planning is by entering into a multi-municipal effort. A local government that is not interested in multi-municipal planning has three choices: it can engage in comprehensive planning on its own and without the benefit of LUPTAP grant funds, it can choose to forego writing or revising its comprehensive plan, or it can participate in a multi-municipal planning effort despite its lack of interest in collaboration. Surely some multi-municipal planning projects, despite an initial reluctance from some of the participating municipalities, have evolved into true collaborative efforts. But it is just as likely that some joint comprehensive plans simply meet the requirements for LUPTAP funding, after which the
participating municipalities return to business as usual, having demonstrated their calculated commitment to state policy.

How does a municipality demonstrate normative commitment, i.e. the implementation of a multi-municipal comprehensive plan? An examination of the plan itself will give some indication. The plan’s goals may speak specifically to multi-municipal cooperation if there is genuine commitment. For instance, a plan that includes designated growth areas or rural resource areas may reflect a concerted effort to manage growth on a regional basis, particularly if such areas span municipal boundaries. Portions of the comprehensive plan that address transportation and utility infrastructure, recreation and community facilities may also include specific references to multi-municipal cooperation.

The implementation portion of the plan provides some indication of the level of commitment of the participants. The MPC anticipates that, as a result of completing a joint comprehensive plan, municipalities will take formal steps to implement the plan. These include the revision of subdivision and zoning ordinances to ensure internal consistency with the plan, and the adoption of new legislation such as adequate facilities ordinances or official maps. Article XI of the MPC enables municipalities to enter into formal inter-municipal agreements that may include revenue sharing, and ‘specific plans’ for designated nonresidential areas (Denworth 2002). Municipalities that include such steps in the implementation portion of their joint comprehensive plans are demonstrating their normative commitment to multi-municipal planning. This commitment can be verified by examining the extent to which municipalities actually carry out the implementation portions of their comprehensive plans by adopting or revising ordinances.
Not all municipalities are ready to enter into formal inter-municipal agreements, or even to adopt zoning ordinances as a result of joint comprehensive planning.\(^4\) There are a number of factors that may contribute to a municipality’s reluctance to take formal implementation steps. Funding constraints, limited local capacity or more pressing municipal concerns might play a role. Parochial attitudes towards the complexities of additional regulations may also be a factor. Small municipalities are often inclined to conduct business on an informal basis, and to cooperate with their neighbors in ways that they may fail to recognize as ‘inter-municipal’, such as lending manpower and/or equipment to help with road maintenance, snow or trash removal. For these municipalities, normative commitment to multi-municipal planning may fall short of formal implementation, at least in the short term. The process of thinking regionally becomes an incremental one, measured by shifts in attitude and awareness rather than by the adoption of ordinances.

As Lembeck et al point out; the true measure of effectiveness is in the use of planning tools, not merely the possession of them (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). The extent to which a municipality considers and uses its multi-municipal comprehensive plan in decision-making is an indicator of its normative commitment, and of the effectiveness of the plan. For instance, a municipality that has not adopted an adequate facilities ordinance may refer to its multi-municipal plan when considering extensions to utility or road infrastructure. If the plan informs the decision-making process, then one can say that it is being used effectively.

A plan may not necessarily be used consistently across municipal government: a planning or recreation commission may give it more credence than do elected officials, or vice versa. The

\(^4\) Such is the case in Fulton County, where 12 of 13 municipalities in the County participated in and adopted a multi-municipal plan in 2007. Only one municipality had zoning prior to the joint planning process, and there are no plans for other participating municipalities to adopt zoning (Fulton County Planning Office interview, October 13, 2008).
level of communication between planning commissions and elected officials is sometimes so low as to border on non-existent (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). Normative commitment to multi-municipal planning may start with improved communications within a local government. In this case, increases in intra-municipal cooperation after the adoption of a multi-municipal plan may be as important as increases in inter-municipal cooperation.

The extent to which a municipality interacts with its fellow plan participants can also be indicative of normative commitment to the plan. Do the municipalities continue to communicate after the plan is adopted? Is there a process for monitoring progress on implementing the plan, and if so is the process being used? In the case of informal implementation of the plan, inter-municipal communication may also remain informal and thus more difficult to observe. Indicators of informal multi-municipal cooperation include sending subdivision and land development plans to neighboring municipalities for review, joint meetings of local officials or of planning commissions, sharing of meeting minutes or other information, and designating liaisons between municipal bodies (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001).

Evaluating the extent of normative commitment to multi-municipal planning involves an examination of both formal and informal mechanisms for cooperation, the use of the comprehensive plan in local government decision-making, and even changes in a local government’s methods of operation and communication. Much of this ‘evidence’ is hardly quantifiable, and the researcher must rely on the perceptions and behaviors of local government officials to demonstrate such subtle changes.

**Why does it matter what factors contribute to effective planning?**

Pennsylvania has spent much of the last decade examining its condition and searching for solutions to the ongoing challenges of low population growth, sprawling land development and a
sluggish economy. The state has taken several important steps to encourage growth management: enactment of the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments to the MPC, refocusing of planning assistance funds under the LUPTAP program, creation of the Keystone Principles, and reactivation of the State Planning Board are among the most notable. But despite a growing body of research, studies, citizen surveys, focus groups and reports covering a broad spectrum of opinion, state lawmakers have not enacted significant legislative reform addressing the structure of Pennsylvania local governments, nor have they chosen to direct land use policy through state mandates. Given this reluctance to manage growth with a heavy hand, it is likely that lawmakers will continue to provide incentives and encouragement to local governments rather than impose multi-municipal or smart growth mandates. If this is indeed the case, then policymakers need an understanding of those factors that will be effective in getting local governments to do what the state wants when it comes to land use planning. While existing incentives like the LUPTAP funding program and the MPC Article XI amendments have been effective for some municipalities, there are still significant numbers of local governments who are planning – or failing to plan – on their own. And among those municipalities who have adopted joint comprehensive plans, a certain number have demonstrated calculated commitment to state policies but have not shown normative commitment through implementation of their plans.

A better understanding of the factors that encourage municipalities not only to plan, but to use their plans, could contribute to the development of more effective state policy in the area of growth management. Such an understanding might also lead lawmakers and state agencies to develop programs that have long-range impact on municipal planning activities. The net result for Pennsylvania, if we are lucky, will be the application of more smart growth planning tools that yield livable and sustainable neighborhoods, preserve open space, and strengthen the economic vitality of communities.
Chapter 3

The Research Question

My research is designed to inform the discussion of the role of multi-municipal planning in achieving Pennsylvania’s stated growth management and land use policy objectives. It attempts to answer the question, how are the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations associated with the implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities? The question is not one of causality, but rather of the influences on municipal behaviors and the role those behaviors play in the implementation of joint comprehensive plans. Implicit in the research question is the assumption that implementation ultimately results in land use policies and practices that encourage smart growth; an assumption that may merit research of its own. The conceptual model for this question is shown below:

Figure 3-1. Conceptual model of the multi-municipal planning process
The model starts by acknowledging the conditions that exist within a region or sub-region that spur interest in multi-municipal planning: something brings municipalities together to do planning. These conditions vary by region. For instance, the conditions in the high-growth Pocono region of eastern Pennsylvania are very different from those in rust-belt communities on the western side of the state. The need for and interest in starting the joint planning process can originate from within communities or may only develop with the help of county or state planners. The research question as depicted in the conceptual model recognizes the importance of identifying the origins of a specific multi-municipal planning effort and at the same time understanding how existing conditions are related to the factors under examination. As the model shows, these factors are associated in some way with municipal behavior during and after the multi-municipal planning process. In other words, there is a relationship between the extent to which these factors are present and the extent to which municipal officials put their joint comprehensive plan to use. The conceptual model suggests that implementation of a multi-municipal plan may lead to land use policies and practices that achieve smart growth objectives: better land use, better allocation of resources, and improvement or protection of environmental quality, economic conditions and quality of life. Implementation of a plan is a critical step in achieving the goals of smart growth (assuming that the plan has embraced these goals). A better understanding of the factors that are associated with implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans may serve to inform policy-makers at the state, county and municipal level. Given the general consensus among policy-makers that a gap exists between multi-municipal planning and implementation of those plans, the research question seeks to understand the interrelated set of factors that can foster plan implementation.
Unpacking the research question: defining implementation

The research question focuses not on the development and adoption of multi-municipal plans, but on their implementation: in Burby and May’s terms, calculated commitment versus normative commitment (Burby and May 1997). In the case of multi-municipal plans, calculated commitment might consist of adopting the plan, while normative commitment would involve taking actions to ensure that the plan is followed. Thus one aspect of the research design involves defining ‘implementation’ as a demonstration of normative commitment. Because municipalities may use both formal and informal mechanisms to implement joint comprehensive plans, it is important to look for evidence of both. The most obvious of the formal behaviors is one that is enabled by the MPC and which can only be undertaken after adoption of a multi-municipal plan: the inter-municipal agreement. Municipalities that enter into inter-municipal agreements can then develop additional agreements concerning tax and revenue sharing, multi-municipal transfer of development rights programs, and specific plans (Bailey 2007).

There are other formal behaviors that are associated with implementation of a joint comprehensive plan because they are so closely related to the planning process. They are legislative in nature, and include enactment or revision of one or more of the following:

- Subdivision and land development ordinances
- Zoning ordinances
- Greenways, open space or parks and recreation plans
- Act 537 sewage facilities plans
- Official map ordinances
- Adequate facilities ordinances
- Transportation impact fees
- Recreation impact fees

Many of these involve considerable time and can be quite costly. For instance, before a municipality can enact a transportation impact fee, it must appoint a Transportation Impact Fee Advisory Committee and engage consultants to complete a Land Use Assumptions Report,
Roadway Sufficiency Analysis, and Capital Improvements Plan. The process can last up to 18 months and cost upwards of $100,000 (PennDOT 2007). Even the process of revising subdivision or zoning ordinances takes time: a municipality must obtain funding, develop a scope of services, solicit for and retain a consultant, follow prescribed steps in the MPC regarding public hearings and county review, not to mention the time required to review and evaluate the policies underlying the ordinances. It could take a municipality years to achieve implementation using one or more of these formal mechanisms.

The vast majority of multi-municipal plans in Pennsylvania were not initiated until at least 2001, and the process from initiation to adoption can easily span two to three years. If grant funds are used, the process can take even longer depending on the time required to develop an application and the funding cycle of the grantor. Because most multi-municipal plans in Pennsylvania have been completed so recently and the time required to adopt or revise legislation is so lengthy, for the purposes of this research I will consider the initiation of the process of adopting an ordinance or a plan to be evidence of implementation of a multi-municipal comprehensive plan. Evidence of such initiation would be in the form of a motion or resolution to seek funds, retain a consultant or similar action.

Less formal behaviors that indicate the implementation of a joint comprehensive plan include its use in decision-making by municipal planning commissions and elected officials, i.e. the extent to which they consult the plan before making decisions or cite the plan in their rationale for making decisions. Another informal indicator of implementation is more and/or better communication within municipalities, such as between elected officials and planning commissioners (when there is a separate planning commission), or between participating municipalities in a joint comprehensive plan. While more difficult to identify than formal legislative action, changes in these behaviors may in fact be more profound for a community, because they affect not only the policies a municipality implements, but also the way in which
those policies are determined and implemented. For a community that has hitherto failed to recognize the importance of planning, the mere fact of improved communications can create a better appreciation for the value of a joint comprehensive plan. For this reason, it is important that formal and informal behaviors receive equal weight and scrutiny.

Beyond these measures of implementation are indicators related to growth management, which a community can use to assess the impact of its efforts on the ultimate desired result, i.e. better land use and smart growth practices. An example of this community benchmarking was done in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, where indicators such as housing affordability, acreage of open space and economic indicators were compared before and after adoption of the comprehensive plan (Daniels 1999). Parzen (2007) suggests that the use of such comparisons is a good way to maintain community interest and citizen involvement after the plan is completed. While this type of analysis gets to the heart of the question of whether multi-municipal planning can be an effective growth management tool, it would be very difficult to determine the extent of the plan’s impact when there are so many other factors beyond the control of the community that affect indicators such as housing affordability. Carruthers (2002) points out that in metropolitan areas one has to assess such indicators for the entire region in order to get a true sense of the impact of the growth management policies in municipal comprehensive plans. For example, the specific land use policies in municipality A may allow higher housing densities and impose requirements for the inclusion of affordable housing within residential developments. Neighboring municipalities B and C, whose land use policies are not in sync with municipality A, may restrict density through the imposition of larger lot sizes, effectively driving up the average cost per housing unit beyond what is considered affordable for the region. So even though municipality A is providing for the development of affordable housing, there may be a net deficit of such housing across the region. In addition to housing affordability, Carruthers uses indicators such as density of development, the geographic extent of sprawl, shifts in population within the
region, and public expenditures on infrastructure (Carruthers 2002). This approach can provide a wealth of research data, and its analysis is likely to shed a great deal of light on the growth dynamics of a region. But its macro-level perspective makes it an inappropriate method for evaluating implementation in this research, which focuses on a case study of municipalities in York County, Pennsylvania. An evaluation of regional dynamics affecting the case study municipalities would involve a large portion of south-central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. In such a large context, the specific dynamics at work in the case study municipalities would effectively disappear.

Existing conditions and trends

I suggest that certain factors can affect municipal behavior regarding multi-municipal planning in two ways: they can influence a municipality’s decision to engage in multi-municipal planning in the first place, and/or they are associated with the implementation of the plan. In addition, certain existing conditions may serve as precursors that cause municipalities to become interested in planning together. These existing conditions tend to be regional in scope. Growth pressure is a good example. A municipality may become interested in multi-municipal planning because it is experiencing high growth pressure itself, or because it is feeling the impact of high growth in neighboring municipalities. For instance a borough that is essentially built-out may not be subjected to significant growth pressures itself, but may be concerned about the impact of development in the neighboring township on borough services. In this case, both the township and the borough may recognize a need to engage in multi-municipal planning.

In areas of high growth, development proposals often raise issues that require multi-municipal responses: the development itself may cross municipal boundaries, or may request public water or sewer service from an adjacent municipality, or may require road construction
across municipal boundaries. These types of issues require municipalities to communicate with each other regarding the development, and can lead to recognition of the benefits of multi-municipal planning. A low-growth or no-growth scenario can have the same effect. The ‘hollowing-out’ of boroughs noted by Brookings in both its 2003 and 2007 reports can have a major impact not only on the borough but on adjacent townships if migration leap-frogs over them to more rural townships, and on school districts that encompass more than one municipality. In this case, municipalities may focus on transportation, economic development, or enhanced recreational opportunities and community facilities in an attempt to attract new residents. While the goal in this case is different, i.e. encouraging growth and development, the decision to engage in multi-municipal planning to achieve that goal is the same one reached by high-growth communities.

Other existing conditions such as changes in the demographic composition of the population can trigger interest in multi-municipal planning. For instance, an influx of retirees or young professionals that drives changes in the housing market may result in pressure for a municipality to allow higher density development or to encourage commercial expansion. An influx of families with small children will drive a demand for different recreational and community facilities than will a significant number of residents aging in place. A school district concerned about an increase in students may encourage its municipalities to allow more commercial or industrial development. These types of population shifts occur over regions rather than by municipality (Carruthers 2002) and may be difficult to discern at the level of individual municipalities. But their impact, especially when it comes to the distribution of land uses, can be an incentive for municipalities to work together and thus avoid having to include every land use within each municipality’s boundaries (Paulsen and Wilson, 2008)

Economic trends can also influence municipal decisions to engage in joint planning. Downturns in the regional economy can drive municipalities towards inter-municipal cooperation...
as a way to save costs and manage resources more efficiently. Sharing road maintenance equipment or public works crews can lead to interest in joint planning as a way to identify and implement even more savings. And the cost of planning itself decreases significantly when municipalities work together, since they become eligible for state grants through the Land Use Planning Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP). Economic development agencies, which are often organized at the county level, are likely to identify the fragmented nature of local government as a barrier to attracting new business and industry to the region (Michael Young Strategic Research, 2005). These agencies can bring pressure on municipalities to engage in joint planning in order to bolster the county’s economy, especially when the agency is attempting to recruit, or has just failed to recruit, a major new employer.

Upturns in the economy can have the same effect, particularly when economic growth results in population growth and thus in new residential development pressures. Truly large-scale regional phenomena can play a major role in encouraging joint planning. For example, the exurban expansion of the New York and New Jersey metropolitan area into Monroe County, Pennsylvania created growth pressures and fiscal impacts that ultimately resulted in two county initiatives to encourage multi-municipal planning (Manring, Rivkin and Rivkin 2003). Similarly, growth pressure from the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area has had a major impact on Pennsylvania border counties such as Franklin, Adams, and York, and was a contributing factor to the recently completed multi-municipal planning effort by eleven municipalities in Lancaster County.

Factors associated with municipal behavior

Unlike macro-level trends that affect all or most municipalities within a region, the micro-level factors that are associated with municipal behavior can vary from municipality to
municipality within the same joint plan. Such factors include the capacity of local government officials (that is, the skills and expertise that make them capable of governing); the amount and type of technical assistance provided by the county, region or state; the level of community involvement in plan development; the salience of joint planning for the community; and the quality of existing relations with neighboring municipalities. These factors have been identified and examined by researchers who evaluated the effectiveness of state planning mandates and of municipal comprehensive planning (Burby and Dalton 1994, Burby and May 1997, Weitz 1999, Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001, Norton 2005, Bailey 2007). Their research provides a foundation for studying the relationship of the same factors to the implementation of multi-municipal plans.

**Capacity**

Capacity, when applied to local government, usually refers to a combination of experience and expertise that provides a local government official with the skills he or she needs to provide competent governance. In terms of municipal planning, adequate capacity includes a working understanding of planning concepts, of the municipality’s ordinances related to planning and of the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Some planning commissioners are asked to serve precisely because they have planning capacity by virtue of their professional training in planning, engineering or other related fields, but many others, and many elected officials, bring no particular planning expertise to the table. And while some of this latter group apply

5 There is another aspect of capacity for local elected officials that speaks to their ability to provide good governance through leadership and collaborative skills. This aspect of capacity, while worth exploring, is beyond the scope of this research project.
themselves to the process of gaining capacity through municipal training, publications and other means, others do not.

In their 2001 study, Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic surveyed municipal officials, county planners and AICP-certified planning professionals, all of whom said there was a significant need for more training for planning commissioners and elected municipal officials (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). This finding infers that there are many inadequately trained local officials throughout the state. The Pennsylvania Planning Association has developed a white paper on the need for state-mandated training for local planning commissioners that includes a discussion of how required training could be monitored and tracked (Lembeck 2007). But until such a program is instituted, the question of adequate planning capacity can only be answered by ‘yes or no’ and not by ‘how much’. Short of administering a skills assessment to local government officials, there is no way to make an objective comparison of planning capacity between individuals.

Evidence to support the need for additional planning capacity could be developed by determining the extent of training which municipal planning commissioners and elected officials have received to-date. Both planning commissioners and local elected officials should be evaluated for two reasons: first, in many small municipalities there is no separate planning commission (Lembeck, Kelsey and Fasic 2001). Secondly, even when there is a planning commission, it is the governing body that makes the final determination on all planning issues: the planning commission can only recommend actions. Governing bodies can and do choose to disregard the recommendations of their planning commissions. In terms of implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans, a basic level of planning capacity at the elected official level may prove to be a critical factor.

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6 This does not hold true in the case of the zoning hearing board. The elected officials of a municipality cannot overturn a decision of the board, which can only be appealed in court.
Technical assistance

Technical assistance for the purposes of this research question refers to the provision of data, information, training, education, facilitation and guidance to a group of municipalities by county, regional or state planning agencies or other entities such as non-profit organizations and educational institutions. The range of technical assistance activities is broad, as are the methods by which it can be provided. Burby and May (1997) found that the provision of data by state planning agencies was particularly valuable to local planning efforts. An extensive amount of data needed to consider all the required components of a comprehensive plan as established by the MPC. For municipalities engaged in joint planning, 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania recommends collecting data on natural features, soil surveys, flood plains, aerial photographs, historic buildings and sites, stream quality and classification, ground water aquifer quality and quantity, air quality, agricultural and rural lands, state parks, forests, heritage parks and greenways, demographic information, local housing conditions, population and housing projections, highway information, sewage facilities information and school district enrollment projections and facilities plans (Denworth 2002). Data collection of this sort can constitute a major burden for a community.

Accumulating the data is only the first step: municipalities also require technical assistance in understanding and interpreting the data. For example, census projections of population growth or of shifts in the demographic characteristics of a population have far-reaching implications that may not be obvious to those unaccustomed to analyzing such trends. Officials may need help understanding the implications of a change in the median age of the population on housing choices, community facilities, recreational needs, transportation infrastructure, and tax base. Another example is the analysis of soil types: local officials may be familiar with the practice of using soil surveys to evaluate properties for farmland preservation
purposes, but they may not have thought about the application of soil data to other land use considerations.

An additional form of technical assistance is provided as guidance, education and facilitation for the municipalities involved in a joint planning process. In some instances, given the presumed need for training found by Lembeck et. al., municipal officials will first need an educational orientation to the concept of multi-municipal planning: what it involves, the benefits and challenges of joint planning, anticipated results, and strategies for implementation. Training and capacity-building for elected officials and planning commissioners can be an integral part of the joint planning process. Municipalities will also likely require a facilitated process to help them negotiate an agreement to conduct the multi-municipal plan, apply to the state for LUPTAP funding, draft a request for proposal and scope of services, and select a consultant.

During the planning process, technical assistance may take the form of functioning as staff: organizing meetings, distributing materials, taking minutes, and complying with public notification requirements. While municipal officials or their staff may be accustomed to handling such functions for their own municipalities, the logistics of inter-municipal efforts are complex and challenging (Paulsen and Wilson, 2008). For example, convening a single meeting involves notifying all parties (including governing bodies, planning commissions and usually a steering committee) advertising the meeting, paying for the advertisement, collecting funds from the participating municipalities for the cost of the advertisement, taking minutes, sending the draft minutes to all parties, and scheduling another meeting at which the minutes can be approved.

The provision of more substantive planning services from county, regional or state agencies is another form of technical assistance. In its most comprehensive form, this involves the designation of a staff planner to serve on the joint comprehensive plan steering committee as a participant and providing advice and comment throughout the process. Less intensive (and more typical) assistance comes in the form of plan review and comment.
Public participation

Public participation is another important aspect of the multi-municipal planning process. The MPC incorporates public participation into the planning process by requiring public hearings prior to the adoption of the multi-municipal plan; but not until the plan is virtually completed. It takes a concerted effort of the municipalities involved to provide widespread opportunities for public participation from the outset of the planning process (Manring, Rivkin and Rivkin 2003, Denworth 2002). Engaging the public in a meaningful way involves a sincere commitment from the municipal officials involved, and a fairly specialized skill set. Unless a municipality has a tradition of open and active public dialogue, it is not likely to succeed in a public participation process for its plan without external assistance.

Although a visioning process or strategic plan is not a required component of the comprehensive plan, either for a single municipality or for a joint planning effort, it is sometimes incorporated as an integral component of the planning process. An example cited by 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania is the French Creek Communities Regional Visioning Process. A group of municipalities in Crawford County recognized the importance of citizen participation and brought the community together before beginning any substantive work. They asked the Center for Rural Pennsylvania to educate the community about the visioning process and to conduct preliminary sessions, and then retained the Pennsylvania Environmental Council to facilitate the community process (Denworth 2002). In this example, public participation preceded and informed the planning process by providing a clear vision of community goals for growth management.

Another example is Monroe County’s revision of its comprehensive plan in 1995, which was in part a reaction to an earlier planning effort that had not been effectively implemented. As a result, the comprehensive planning process included a detailed strategy for community
participation from the outset, with the creation of five citizen task forces, involvement of the
news media and regular opportunities for community input (Manring, Rivkin and Rivkin 2003).
As Monroe County Planning Consultant Goldie Rivkin recalled, “The whole focus of discussion
was on goals and objectives and analysis of alternative means—short term and long term—for
achieving those localized and county-wide goals and objectives including densities and
implementation tools. By the time we consolidated those into a draft plan . . . all participants in
the process knew what was in there.” (Goldie Rivkin, e-mail message to author, August 4, 2008)
A third example is Montgomery County’s update of its county comprehensive plan
following the 2000 MPC amendments. The County integrated a variety of public participation
strategies into its plan of work. Educational meetings to explain the MPC amendments were
followed by a citizen survey, public visioning sessions and public review workshops, after which
the plan was revised and redistributed for comment – all prior to the public hearing for the plan.
The county’s reason for putting forth this effort was to create a plan with significant municipal
buy-in and to encourage multi-municipal planning efforts within the county (Denworth 2002).
A concerted effort to involve all segments of the community, so that differing
perspectives and concerns are heard, is an admirable goal, but it is difficult to achieve. Citizen
activists who are passionate about a particular issue can drown out other voices, and sometimes
create an atmosphere so hostile that municipal officials are tempted to disregard public input
altogether. When outside interests, often nonprofit organizations, weigh in on local issues, local
officials may feel threatened, outnumbered, or manipulated. The issue, which could be anything
from a taxpayer’s bill of rights to an environmental protection initiative, becomes less important
than the threat of usurpation of power from outside the community. That being said, there are
still valid reasons for encouraging and embracing community input, as enumerated below.
Public participation in the planning process accomplishes several things. First, it
attempts to ensure that the plan is an accurate reflection of community goals rather than a
narrowly focused document. A typical multi-municipal planning committee includes a handful of representatives from each participating municipality, often limited to members of the planning commission and municipal officials. These participants are not necessarily representative of the demographic composition of their community, in terms of age, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability and a host of other characteristics. If, for instance, a disproportionate number of the planning committee members are retired, they may not accurately reflect the concerns of young working families.

Second, public participation builds community capacity by educating citizens on a variety of planning issues. This can help create a body of volunteers willing to serve on planning commissions or even run for local office—a need faced by many of Pennsylvania’s truly small municipalities. It also helps ensure a sense of continuity for small governments, since each new appointee or official does not have to begin at ‘square one’ in understanding planning issues. A third benefit of community participation is part of the hypothesis of this research project: that an involved community is associated with the implementation of a multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

**Salience**

The salience of planning has to do with the perceptions of local officials and the community about existing conditions and trends. Is there a concern about growth (whether too much or too little), changes in demographic characteristics, housing availability or affordability, recreational needs, traffic congestion or other issues? If so, then planning in general, and joint planning in particular, may be perceived as a means for addressing the concern. As discussed above, existing conditions and regional trends can be contributing factors when a community decides to embark on multi-municipal planning. These trends often underlie community concern,
but have more salience for some municipalities than for others, especially when a community’s sense of identity is not regional in scope. A township or borough may agree to participate in a joint plan, but have the sense that it’s the other community that has all the problems.

Bridger (1994) refers to the sense of community identity as a ‘heritage narrative’, i.e. a shared perception of community history and identity that is sustained over long periods of time, and which may not be an accurate reflection of a changing community. For instance, a heritage narrative that talks about a close-knit self-sustaining farming community may ignore the fact that the majority of its citizens work in non-farm occupations in a struggle to keep their farms viable. It fails to incorporate the reality that many of its members work, shop, recreate, seek professional services and even worship outside the community. In this case, the prevailing heritage narrative may prevent the community from perceiving regional issues as salient.

Sometimes it is an issue within or close by the municipality, rather than a regional trend, that causes a community to look towards planning as a way to address the problem. The loss of a major employer can trigger an interest in planning to find ways to spur economic growth. Abandoned lands or facilities, particularly commercial or industrial properties, can also spark interest in planning. Positive changes in the community can focus attention on planning as well. The arrival of a new business or the creation of a new amenity sometimes suggests other opportunities for community betterment. A good example from Franklin County PA is the development of Whitetail Ski Resort in the early 1990’s, in an area with no comparable tourism businesses. The nearest town, Mercersburg Borough, recognized the potential benefits for its downtown retailers as well as the potential for problems such as increased traffic and seasonal housing issues. As a result, the borough embarked on a multi-year planning process, revising first its comprehensive plan and then its subdivision and zoning ordinances.\(^7\)

\(^7\) These facts are drawn from my tenure as Mercersburg Borough Manager from 1989 – 1997.
While community perceptions are difficult to quantify, one can get a general sense of them by tracking the discussion of issues in the community. News stories, editorials and letters to the editor in the local newspapers can reveal local issues of concern. If there is a local Chamber of Commerce, retail association or community improvement organization, its newsletters, meeting topics and website discussions can also reveal community perception. Conversely, one might well conclude that the lack of significant discussion within a community about growth and planning-related issues indicates a lack of concern about them.

Inter-municipal relations

The inter-municipal relationships that exist in a municipality may affect its predisposition to enter into joint planning efforts, the sincerity of its efforts, and also the use of the resulting plan. As with the question of salience, a community’s sense of identity may impact its relations with its neighbors. Longstanding traditions of going it alone can keep local officials from recognizing the benefits of inter-municipal cooperation. As Bradshaw puts it, “Communities have history, politics, high school football teams, and shared dreams. These are difficult to give up.” (Bradshaw, 1993, 168) Although some municipalities routinely share services or equipment, others just as staunchly refuse to do business with ‘the competition’. A change in the local political structure, such as turnover in elected officials, may improve the nature of inter-municipal relations if the political shift also reflects a change in the community’s heritage narrative. However if newly elected officials do not reflect the community’s shared sense of identity, they may have difficulty in obtaining community buy-in for increased inter-municipal cooperation.

The nature of relations between municipalities or between a municipality and the county can be difficult to ascertain. Within the realm of formal planning one can determine the extent of
horizontal consistency between municipal and county planning documents, and there may be formal relationships in place, such as when a municipality contracts with the county for planning services. Less formal relations may be harder to uncover and indeed may be largely a matter of perception. Yet these informal relationships can create the level of trust and rapport necessary for successful inter-municipal cooperation. Poor relationships may be effective barriers to inter-municipal cooperation; especially those entrenched in local history. In the case of joint comprehensive planning, strong inter-municipal relationships may function as the foundation that keeps municipalities working together after the plan is completed.

**Dynamic relationships**

The five factors of capacity, technical assistance, public participation, salience and inter-municipal relations are interrelated in a dynamic way. A change in the extent or intensity of one factor affects the other factors, and it can be difficult to determine causality or even which factor changed first because of this dynamic relationship. The complex relationships may be more readily identifiable when conditions undergo a marked change in a community. For example, imagine a small, rural municipality with a low level of population growth, whose municipal officials have not had to deal with many land use planning issues. Because existing conditions and regional trends are not associated with growth pressures, planning issues have little salience in the community. The officials have a low level of capacity for planning since it is an aspect of municipal governance that rarely appears on the monthly meeting agenda. The officials see no reason to hone their skills by attending training sessions, nor do they consider the level of planning capacity when making appointments to the planning commission or other boards and commissions.
This municipality also thinks it has little reason to interact with its neighbors since the region is not experiencing growth pressures: there are no proposals for developments that cross municipal boundaries, nor is there a need to expand municipal infrastructure – water, sewer, and streets – to accommodate growth. While there are ample reasons for inter-municipal cooperation and communication that have little to do with growth issues, the officials of this municipality aren’t aware of them because their level of planning capacity is so low: they equate ‘planning’ with ‘subdivision review’. For the same reason, the municipality’s planning commission meets infrequently, has very little business to present to the governing body, and rarely communicates with them. Public input on planning issues is virtually nonexistent. No one asks for comment and no one offers it. Likewise, the municipality has no reason to seek technical assistance from the county or state. In fact, it has minimal communications with the county planning office since it receives few plans to submit to the county for review and comment.

Now imagine that there is a change in the region that affects the municipality in some way, such as the announcement of plans for a 200-unit housing development in an adjacent municipality. This change in conditions arouses public concern. People are worried about the impact of 200 housing units on the rural small-town nature of their community: will the schools become overcrowded, will there be an increase in traffic congestion and accidents, and will there be enough water supply? Most importantly, they express concern that the proposed 200-unit development is just the tip of the iceberg, and that more development is sure to follow. Thus the change in existing conditions raises the salience of planning for the community. Some citizens start attending municipal meetings, others talk informally with members of the governing body and the municipal planning commission, asking how they are prepared to handle similar development if it is proposed in their own municipality.

A few members of the planning commissioners and the elected body start to discuss their concerns. One or two of them chat with officials from the adjacent municipality to find out how
they are handling the proposed development and to gauge citizen reaction and political fallout. They ask the county planning office to send someone to their next municipal meeting to explain what their municipality can do to avoid similar development proposals. On learning that there is little the governing body can do to stop growth, they begin to examine their ordinances and consider what changes they may be able to make to mitigate the impact of development. The municipal secretary asks to attend a training session on land use planning, and a few members of the governing body attend with her. They are introduced to the concept of multi-municipal planning but think it would be difficult to work with their municipal neighbors, not to mention expensive. But they do start to pay attention to articles on planning in the monthly municipal magazine they receive from their professional municipal organization.

In this hypothetical situation, the factors at play in the community – salience, capacity, public participation, technical assistance and inter-municipal relations – function as both dependent and independent variables. They have all been affected and have affected each other, and as a result have changed in fundamental ways. The relationships between the factors are complex and interdependent: changes in existing conditions make planning issues more salient, which changes the nature of inter-municipal relationships, which causes yet another change in the level of salience for planning issues, as does the increase in public awareness and participation in local governance, and so on.

This hypothetical community’s perspective about land use planning – its heritage narrative – has undergone nuanced changes. No longer can the community consider itself as a static entity, frozen in time. The need for planning has become a topic for discussion, and although members of the community differ on how likely it is that development will come their way, the topic has gained legitimacy. In real communities that have completed joint comprehensive planning and are at the implementation stage, the complex interrelationship of factors may be harder to perceive than in the hypothetical example discussed above, in part
because the presence and intensity of the factors can differ radically among community members, and even among members of a governing body.

Summary

The research question asks what factors are associated with implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities. Unpacking the question gives us a concept of ‘implementation’ which includes both formal and non-formal indicators, and identifies factors related to municipal behaviors in multi-municipal planning and implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans. I have identified five such factors: capacity, technical assistance, public participation, salience and inter-municipal relations, and discussed how those factors can be manifested in municipal behavior related to planning and implementation. These factors, which are in dynamic relationship with each other, are also part of the complexity of perceptions that comprise the community’s self-definition and its heritage narrative. Changes in the municipality’s perceptions and changes in these factors are interdependent, so that changes in the nature or intensity of one aspect of the community are reflected in changes in the nature or intensity of other aspects. The research question also acknowledges the impact of existing conditions, regional trends and other externalities which are in dynamic relationship with some or all of these aspects. Indeed changes in regional conditions may trigger municipalities to engage in multi-municipal planning or to undertake behaviors that result in plan implementation.
Chapter 4

Methodology and Methods

Determining the extent to which municipalities implement joint comprehensive plans and the factors which are associated with implementation behavior requires a qualitative approach to the research question. The behaviors I wish to identify and describe within municipalities do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis: one cannot simply count the number of instances of inter-municipal communication to get a sense of the relationship between municipalities, nor can one get a true sense of the ways in which a plan is used in decision-making based solely on the number of legislative actions taken. Qualitative research is more appropriate than quantitative research for examining this type of municipal behavior for a number of reasons.

First, a qualitative approach allows one to appreciate the interrelatedness of factors and provides a context for their evaluation. The researcher can explore and examine a set of factors without having to assign causality or relative weight to them. My research, which seeks to understand the relationship between a set of factors, which are in dynamic relationship to each other, and a set of municipal behaviors, requires a methodology that embraces the concept of interrelatedness. Qualitative research looks for patterns, categories or themes in behavior and develops in an iterative fashion as those patterns or themes emerge (Creswell 2007). For this reason, qualitative research sometimes raises as many questions as it answers: as the researcher explores the relationship between different sets of data, he may uncover a new relationship that also merits investigation.

Second, the research is conducted in natural settings and uses the researcher as the key instrument for data collection through a combination of observation, surveys, interviews or focus groups. The result of the research is an interpretation by the researcher based on his analysis and his particular worldview, which is interpreted anew by each reader (Creswell 2007). My research
question, posed from a federalist perspective, looks at the behaviors of local governments in
response to the state’s efforts to encourage the achievement of specific land use goals. The
researcher must observe and interpret municipal behaviors and identify the factors that affect
them. Kvale (1996), discussing the interview as a qualitative research tool, uses two metaphors to
describe the ways in which a researcher can use qualitative data. The ‘miner’ uncovers and
delivers discrete pieces of information gleaned from interviews, much as a miner extracts and
polishes a bit of mineral from a mine. The ‘traveler’, on the other hand, explores new territory
and through his interpretation of the information he encounters, he develops a new understanding
of the world outside his previous boundaries. He is sometimes transformed himself by this new
understanding, which he then shares with his readers (Kvale, 1996).

Third, qualitative research involves the use of both primary and secondary data. While
primary data is a necessary and critical component of any research which focuses on human
interactions, secondary data can be equally important. It provides the contextual background on
which the research question is predicated, and it can also serve as a baseline for triangulating
information gleaned from primary sources. The use of both primary and secondary data in
qualitative research helps ground it in a body of research and provides the means for comparative
analysis (Creswell 2007). The use of secondary data to address my research question will place it
within the context of current research and policy analysis which seeks to improve the
effectiveness of multi-municipal planning in Pennsylvania.

Fourth, my research focuses on the participants’ definition of the problem or issue and
recognizes the researcher’s role and its potential affect on participant responses. This last point is
critical to qualitative research: the researcher cannot be considered an objective party when he is
actively involved in the collection of primary data. He must remain keenly aware of his
participation in the very social network he is examining. Hollway and Jefferson (2000, 55) posit
four questions which the qualitative researcher must ask himself when collecting primary data:
“What do we notice? Why do we notice it? How can we interpret what we notice? How can we know our interpretation is right?” It is precisely this focus on the participants’ perspective, coupled with the researcher’s self-awareness, which allows the researcher to explore and understand participants’ perspectives. In the case of my research, it would be impossible to understand the complex interrelationships between municipalities without ascertaining how individual actors within the municipalities perceive themselves and their neighbors. And because the research focuses on factors that the individual actors do not typically think about, like their level of planning capacity or their response to public participation – at least not in those terms – I must be able to overtly identify my interest in municipal behaviors in order to observe behaviors and elicit information that is authentic.

Qualitative research focuses on understanding a given set of relationships, behaviors, perspectives or actions. Its purpose is “to make behaviors in a given context visible for contemplation” (Hart, 1998, 46). Like Kvale’s traveler, the qualitative researcher explores, interprets, and is transformed by the act of conducting his research, and provides the opportunity for similarly transformative experiences when he presents his research to others.

Applying the research lens

All research is conducted through a lens: the researcher brings certain philosophical assumptions to his question. These assumptions underlie and define the purpose of the research, the way in which the question is posed and the anticipated utility of the completed project. Qualitative research embraces an epistemological perspective that seeks to understand and illuminate interrelationships rather than focus on the causality in those relationships. It eschews the logical positivist assumptions that focus on empirical data, in favor of post-positivist, constructionist approaches that place a higher value on the interpretation of social interactions.
Qualitative methodology recognizes the role of the researcher in his research and acknowledges the lens through which the research question is formed as the application of a given perspective to the study of complex interactions.

My research approach uses a federalist lens: it places the question of multi-municipal planning in the context of the political tension and struggle for power between state and local governments. From this perspective, the increasing involvement by states in land use planning is but one of many arenas in which state and local governments vie for power and authority. While my research in multi-municipal planning is limited to examples in Pennsylvania, the state’s role is viewed in the context of more aggressive mandates adopted by other states. Thus any discussion of the actions that Pennsylvania might take to realize more effective implementation of multi-municipal planning places those actions within a spectrum of legislative options available to the state. This same context underlies much of the public discussion on growth management in Pennsylvania, and is the basis for the recommendations found in Brookings, the report of the State Planning Board and similar documents. Although not always explicitly stated, a fundamental question addressed in each is how the state chooses to exercise its power and authority over municipalities in order to change local government behavior.

The research question, *how are the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations associated with implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities,* is intended to illuminate municipal behavior in relation to the factors of capacity, technical assistance, public participation, salience and inter-municipal relations. These factors have been the subject of much prior research in the broader context of municipal planning and local governance as discussed in Chapter 2. The extent to which these factors are present in a community and are nurtured or disregarded may be directly impacted by state policies, as has been seen in Pennsylvania’s administration of LUPTAP grant funds. In this case, the state has chosen to restrict virtually all of its land use planning funds to multi-municipal
projects. By refusing to provide funding to municipalities who choose to engage in comprehensive planning by themselves (except in very limited cases), Pennsylvania has placed an emphasis on inter-municipal cooperation, presumably under the assumption that better inter-municipal relations will result in more effective comprehensive plans and better implementation of those plans. Thus the research question enables us to observe the effect of state policy at the community level by examining municipal behavior in the context of implementation of comprehensive plans: does the quality of inter-municipal relations (or any of the other factors) make a difference?

The case study methodology

The case study methodology provides a number of advantages for conducting such an examination of municipal behavior. It allows the researcher to place his ground-level observations in a historical context, using both primary and secondary data. This is particularly important when trying to observe nuanced changes in behavior such as changes in the quality of inter-municipal relationships. The case study provides a temporal location for research: a richly described community can serve as the baseline for future researchers who return after a period of time to study the same community. The case study methodology provides a rich contextual description, with background data and observations that can provide additional insights for the reader. Indeed, the descriptive nature of the case study allows the reader to draw his own inferences, and to compare and contrast the case study community to other communities which he wishes to study. Another advantage of the case study methodology is in the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the community, which allows the research to proceed in an iterative fashion. As the researcher learns more about the community, he is able to gather new sources of information and new perspectives on his research. Finally, the holistic nature of the case study
approach lends itself to the study of interrelated or interdependent factors, and allows the researcher to explore new factors or relationships as his examination of the case progresses (Stake 1995, Creswell 2007, Feagin et al 1991).

A not insignificant consideration is the type of case study to undertake. The instrumental case study uses one or more cases to focus on an area of interest and provides greater understanding of the research question. The intrinsic case study examines a unique case that has inherent or special value in itself: it is the case that is of interest and which is the focus of the research question. A collective case study examines multiple cases in order to compare and contrast them, and seeks to find areas of generality or replicability (Stake 1995). I chose to conduct an instrumental case study because my research seeks to understand municipal behavior in terms of a set of factors: I am less interested in the presence or absence of the factors than I am in what we can learn about their relationship to municipal behavior. The instrumental case study approach allows me to focus intensely on one case and on the nature of relationships. Case study research, according to Stake, should be designed to maximize understanding of the research question. He emphasizes the value of the particular case in informing the research (Stake 1995).

Case study methods

Case studies require clear boundaries and criteria that define the scope of the research. I used the following criteria to select my case:

- The case consists of a group of municipalities who initiated multi-municipal planning after the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments to the MPC and who have completed and adopted the plan
- The plan was funded at least in part through LUPTAP
- All participating municipalities will be included in the case study
- The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and/or County Planning Office consider the multi-municipal plan to be viable.
10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania was, at the time of my research, midway through a study of its own on the implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans, and sent me a list of 14 cases that it was examining. I chose to avoid the communities which 10,000 Friends was already studying, because the very fact of having research conducted there could alter perceptions and opinions within the communities. More importantly, by choosing a different multi-municipal plan for my case study, I could broaden the field of research being conducted in Pennsylvania.

DCED provided me with a list of eight multi-municipal comprehensive plans which it felt would meet my criteria. A careful review of the plans suggested by DCED showed them to pose logistical problems given the limited scope of my research project, either in terms of the number of communities involved or the geographic locations of the communities. Some of the plans involved as many as eight municipalities, which meant I would need to conduct a much larger survey and many more interviews in order to collect primary data according to my selected methods, which are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Other communities were located over 200 miles away from me. In both cases, the time and expense involved in the research would have been difficult for me to support in addition to my full-time employment as a community development professional.

Looking closer to home, I selected my case study communities in Northern York County based on the recommendation of Randy Beck, Chief of the York County Planning Commission Department of Municipal/Current Planning. He described the municipalities’ implementation of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan, citing the progress they have made despite continuing debate (Beck, interview, May 27, 2008). The case did not fit my selection criteria perfectly: the Northern York Plan was technically initiated before the 2000 MPC amendments, since the communities made application to DCED in 1999. However by the time a consultant began work on the plan, the amendments had been adopted and clearly influenced the comprehensive planning process as evidenced in the language and content of the plan itself. Thus
I consider the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan to fit the criteria I established for a case study. The subject municipalities are Carroll Township, Franklin Township, Dillsburg Borough and Franklintown Borough, all in northern York County.

Figure 4-1: Map of case study municipalities, adapted from York County Public Libraries http://www.yorklibraries.org/images/map.JPG

I selected three of the five factors identified in my research question for analysis through the case study methodology: planning capacity, public participation, and inter-municipal relations. Although I chose not to analyze salience as a factor, I have addressed it in the contextual description of the case study. Indicators of salience can be extracted from secondary data such as newspaper accounts and municipal websites, as well as from interviews with key informants in each community. I have also chosen not to evaluate the level of technical
assistance received by the municipalities during the comprehensive planning process, because it is very unlikely that the level of technical assistance offered by outside sources – county, regional, state or nonprofit – would differ between municipalities who are working on a joint plan. This factor may indeed be significant, but cannot be assessed in a single case study. If similar research were conducted using multiple case studies in situations where the level of technical assistance is anticipated to vary, it is possible that the research would reveal the significance of technical assistance as a factor associated with implementation of comprehensive plans.

The case study methodology calls for a combination of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data obtained directly from community members is inherently subjective in nature. It is information provided by a participant as he perceives it through his or her worldview. The use of primary data involves a number of considerations on the part of the researcher. First, the researcher must decide whether he can accept a participant’s statements at face value: is the participant saying what he thinks, or is he adjusting his statement to what he thinks he should be saying or what he thinks the researcher wants to hear? The researcher also assumes that the participant has sufficient self-knowledge of the subject at hand, i.e. his own understanding of his behavior, and that he is sufficiently articulate to be able to convey what he means (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Some of these concerns can be mitigated when the researcher embeds himself into the community and its complexity of social networks for an extended period of time. In this way he becomes less an outsider and is more likely to obtain authentic primary data.

My research was limited in scope and took place over a very short period – approximately two months – which meant I did not have the opportunity to establish myself as a researcher and become known in the community. To moderate the effect of simply appearing in town and asking questions, I approached each of the four case study municipalities and requested an opportunity to speak at the township or borough meeting prior to conducting the planned
research in the field. I used this opportunity to introduce myself and explain the nature of my research. This strategy, designed to provide all elected officials with the same information and understanding of the project, was also intended to establish a basic level of comfort with my research among the case study participants that would result in more effective data collection for both primary and secondary data. My appearance at the August 2008 public meeting of each municipality was recorded in the meeting minutes (see Appendix A).

Because primary data collection involves the application of research methods to human subjects, the researcher must take care to work within established guidelines. In the case of research conducted at The Pennsylvania State University such as mine, this involves obtaining the review and approval of the University’s Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB). My research was determined to be ‘exempt’, meaning that a full review was not required and that submission of an Exemption Determination Form with appropriate attachments would be sufficient. The exemption was granted because all of my research subjects are publicly elected or appointed municipal officials. The IRB’s guidelines required me to obtain the implied informed consent of all of my research subjects. For survey recipients, this was accomplished by including a letter, approved by the IRB, with each mailed survey. For interviews, I read each participant a similar letter, also approved by the IRB. In both cases, the implied informed consent materials explained how and under what circumstances data collected would be treated confidentially, how it would be stored and for how long and also provided information on how to contact me or my adviser, Dr. Theodore Alter. Compliance with research guidelines affords a measure of protection for the researcher and the institution with which he is affiliated. Beyond compliance issues, the IRB approval also indicates that the conduct of my research conforms with generally accepted practice – an important point should other researchers wish to build on my work by using the primary data I collected.
Secondary data, which is also an integral part of the case study, is generally used to develop context, describing the characteristics of the case study community as a whole in terms of geography, demography, history, formal structures and other objective information. Secondary data is often used to triangulate primary data observations: was the participant correct in his subjective understanding of the situation? But in cases where the structure of power in a community counts, the use of terms like ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ to contrast primary and secondary data sources must be understood within the context of that power structure. Secondary data tends to be top-down. It is controlled by those who create it. The US Census is a good example: the definition of a single term such as ‘household’ has far-reaching implications about the type of data that will be collected and how it will be collected. Primary data, on the other hand, is bottom-up: it is ‘owned’ by the individual who is providing it (Feagin et al, 1991).

In some case studies it is critical to ensure that voices from all segments of the community are heard, in particular those segments who are not generally acknowledged (and who may be overlooked in the secondary data). For the purposes of my case study, the voices are limited to those of municipal officials: I am not attempting to obtain a sense of the community at large. Had I chosen to do so, I would have needed a method for identifying disparate segments of the community, perhaps by socio-economic strata, demographic characteristics or opinions on growth management. Interestingly, this point was made by one of the elected officials I interviewed in the context of public participation. He noted that as a younger member of his municipality’s governing body he interacted with parents of young children and thus was exposed to a different perspective on community issues such as recreational needs. In other words, his ‘primary data’ was obtained from a different segment of the community that that of his colleagues.
Primary data collection methods

I employed two methods of primary data collection: a written survey followed by key informant interviews. The written survey was sent to 100% of the population of local officials I identified in the case study municipalities: all township supervisors, borough council members, mayors, and planning commissioners, along with the municipal manager or secretary, the solicitor, and the engineer for each municipality for a total N of fifty-five. The survey was designed according to generally accepted principles. The physical appearance of the survey was designed to have adequate text size and fairly large amounts of white space per page. Questions were numbered, and the one instance of a ‘skip’ option clearly indicated to which question the reader should skip. The back page of the six-page survey was reserved for additional comments by the respondent (Salant and Dillman, 1994). The wording of questions on the survey was varied to avoid a pattern of automatic responses (Burby and May, 1997). Several different types of questions were used: open-ended, close-ended with ordered responses and with unordered responses, and partially close-ended questions.

Research shows that respondents can be reluctant to choose a response if they think it reflects poorly on them. For instance, when asked about educational attainment, a respondent may not choose the answer ‘never finished high school’ because he finds it embarrassing, but will choose the correct answer if it is presented with alternative language such as ‘finished some high school’ (Salant and Dillman, 1994). In order to mitigate the undesirability of choosing certain responses, some of the survey response options used ‘I’m not sure’ rather than ‘I don’t know’ and ‘hardly ever’ rather than ‘never’.

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8 Late in my research, after I had received surveys from both the first and second mailings, I discovered that I had inadvertently omitted the name of one Borough Council member from the mailing list, thus my total n was only 54.
A valuable lesson provided by Norton in his research of coastal Carolina communities steered my survey questions toward specific examples. Norton, surveying local officials, found that they reported using coastal hazard risk mitigation plans (the focus of his research) often in decision-making, such as when reviewing applications for land development, building permits or zoning changes. But he was unable to triangulate the claim in his interviews with municipal staff and consultants. He recommended that future researchers ask for specific examples of the use of plans in decision-making, which I have done in my survey instrument (Norton 2005).

The survey was pre-tested informally among four of my colleagues, two of whom serve or have served as elected officials in local governments. Their comments resulted in clarification of language on some questions and a reformatting of the response options on a few others. The mailing list for the survey was based on downloadable mailing labels from DCED’s Governor’s Center for Local Government Services website which were cross-checked for accuracy with the list of municipal officials on the website of each of the four case study municipalities. Gaps in mailing address information were filled in using on-line and print telephone directories, and with the additional assistance of municipal staff as needed. Only one survey was returned by the post office, and the correct address was quickly obtained from the township. A self-addressed, stamped return envelope was included with the survey. The mailing labels on the return envelopes were hand-coded. As each survey was returned, I removed it from the envelope and stored it separately, so that when I recorded the survey responses I was unable to determine which participant had completed the survey. This process was repeated in the follow-up mailing. I received a total of 35 survey responses for a response rate of 66%.
Table 4-1: Survey response rate by municipality and by position held.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey responses by municipality</th>
<th># of surveys sent</th>
<th># of responses</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Township</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillsburg Borough</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Township</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>77 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklinton Borough</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>35*</td>
<td>66 %</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey responses by position</th>
<th># of surveys sent</th>
<th># of responses</th>
<th>Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected officials</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Commissioners</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed officials</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>83 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36*</td>
<td>66 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N by municipality = 35, N by position = 36. This is because one elected official also serves as a Planning Commissioner, and is counted twice when analyzing responses by position.

The second method of primary data collection involved the use of interviews with a selected members of the group that was surveyed. The list included the municipal manager or secretary and the chief elected official for each community. I selected additional interviewees from among the members of the governing body and/or planning commission using a modified key informant approach, combining my own impressions of key informants based on my reading of meeting minutes with the recommendation of the municipal manager or secretary in each community. Obtaining participants for these interviews was challenging. A few candidates declined to respond to my telephone calls, others proved difficult to schedule and two of them missed their appointments. However the thirteen officials whom I was able to interview all proved cooperative during the interview session, and had set aside ample time for the interview.

I used a prepared set of interview questions that ranged from introductory to probing, specific, direct and indirect in order to guide the interviewee towards more in-depth responses

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9 The chief elected official in a township is the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors. Boroughs have a President of Council and a Mayor – I chose to interview the President of Borough Council since the Mayor’s role in policy-making is limited by PA Borough Code.
(Kvale, 1996). Implied informed consent was obtained from each participant, and each interview was recorded using a small digital voice recorder. This technology doubled as an ice-breaker for me, as nearly every person I interviewed was curious about how the recorder worked. I also took written notes during the interview on a prepared form. During the interview, I employed techniques that encouraged the participant, such as allowing a silence to linger, using segues when changing the direction of the interview, and seeking clarification when necessary (Kvale, 1996). At the close of each interview I asked the participant for his final thoughts. While some participants did not wish to make additional comments, others revisited earlier responses or spoke on new but related topics at some length. On closing each interview I explained my process for member-checking my notes, i.e. sending my notes to each participant for review and comment.

I planned to conduct an interview with at least one person from the York County Planning Commission at the close of my research. I prepared a separate set of interview questions for this meeting, aimed at clarifying and expanding on the information gleaned from the surveys, interviews and secondary data collection. Thanks to the extraordinary cooperation of the Planning Commission, I was given access to seven staff members during the interview. Thus I was able to interview staffers who had been involved during the development of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan along with those who are involved today in its implementation.

Stakeholder interviews

In order to place my research within the context of the state’s application of land use policy to local governments, I conducted a series of interviews with stakeholders outside the case study, whose county, regional or statewide perspectives add breadth to my research. These stakeholders and the organizations they represent have weighed in on the question of policy
mandates and incentives, and often advocate or recommend state policy concerning municipal
land use and planning issues. The stakeholder organizations and the representatives I interviewed
are as follows, and can also be found in Appendix B.

- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor’s Center for Local Government Services: Dennis Puko, Planning Program Manager
- Pennsylvania State Planning Board: Alex Graziani, member
- Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association: Stanford Lembeck, Chairman, Municipalities Planning Code Task Force
- Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors: R. Keith Hite, Executive Director, Elam Herr, Assistant Executive Director, James Lombardo, Senior Advisor for Development, and James Wheeler, Director of Environmental Affairs
- Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs: Edward Knittel, Director of Events and Information
- 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania: Judith Schwank, President and CEO

Some of those interviewed are involved in more than one stakeholder organization. For example, Alex Graziani is also president of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, Judith Schwank chairs the Pennsylvania State Planning Board, and Stanford Lembeck is a Professor Emeritus of Rural Sociology at Penn State University. In each case, I asked the stakeholder to respond in terms of all his or her professional experience and affiliations, not just one organization.

The questions posed in these interviews focused on the relative success of multi-
municipal comprehensive planning and implementation across the state, and on factors
contributing to or inhibiting success in both planning and implementation. I also asked these
stakeholders to discuss the impact of state policy on implementation of joint comprehensive
plans, and the positions held by their organizations regarding modification to existing state
policy. Their responses provide insight into their organizations’ philosophies regarding the
tension between state and local governments over land use planning. These responses presented
in Chapter 7, and I use them to provide context for the conclusions drawn from my case study research.

The combination of surveys and interviews used to collect primary data resulted in a rich set of observations and perceptions about multi-municipal planning, implementation, municipal behaviors and their relationship to the set of factors identified in the research question. In order to examine and analyze the data, I also needed secondary data that would provide both context and boundaries, enabling me to discern patterns and themes in the primary data.

**Secondary data collection methods**

I identified sources of secondary data that could give both the researcher and the reader a sense of the case study communities. Some of the data was selected to supply factual information: the physical size of each municipality, its governmental structure, the size of its population, and an array of socio-economic characteristics. Other secondary data such as meeting minutes and news articles helped me establish a chronology of municipal behaviors leading up to the decision to engage in multi-municipal planning, during the planning process, and of actions during the implementation period. This data also indicated when and how the case study municipalities took formal actions to implement the joint comprehensive plan. I used secondary data to identify regional conditions and changes that affected the case study communities and to get a sense of local reaction to them. And I sought secondary data to triangulate the data collected in surveys and interviews. For instance, the survey asked how often elected officials attend planning commission meetings and vice versa; a factual question. I used meeting minutes to obtain a factual answer to the question. The answer I received on the survey represented the respondent’s *perception* of the level of communication between the governing body and the
planning commission. By comparing the respondent’s perception with the factual answer, I hoped to get a sense of the extent of intra-governmental relations.

An unanticipated use of secondary data had to do with municipal meeting minutes. I planned to use meeting minutes as described above to document formal indicators of plan implementation, to develop a chronology of municipal behaviors and to triangulate primary data. But in the course of reading the minutes from all four municipalities, it became apparent to me that the minutes themselves were an indicator of municipal capacity in terms of the detail and accuracy with which they described municipal meetings. While one municipality’s minutes were so sketchy that it was difficult to identify actors and actions, others contained detailed descriptions of discussions and arguments, providing me with a new source of indicators of inter-municipal relations.

Secondary data was drawn from the following sources:

- Municipal meeting minutes from each case study municipality, Jan, 2004 – Dec. 2007
- Planning commission minutes from Carroll Township, Dillsburg Borough and Franklin Township, Jan, 2004 – Dec. 2007. (Franklintown Borough does not have a Planning Commission).
- Municipal website for each of the case study communities
- York County Planning Commission
- US Census of Population
- Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development, Governor’s Center for Local Government Services

Selecting the sources for secondary data was an iterative process. Initially I planned to read municipal planning and zoning ordinances, Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans, recreation plans and other local legislation related to land use and growth management. However, since my research focuses on municipal behavior rather than municipal policy, I found that it was more important to obtain primary data on what municipal officials thought they had enacted than it was to obtain the
actual policies. In addition, my reading of municipal minutes made it clear that at least two of the case study municipalities – Carroll and Franklin Townships – had revised their ordinances repeatedly in the years immediately following adoption of the joint comprehensive plan. Tracing the evolution of the land use ordinances, I realized, was far beyond the scope of my research, and would require its own method complete with coding and data analysis.

My search for secondary data resulted in the discovery of ‘Northern York County Regional Plan: Comprehensive Planning Elements and Proposals’, published in 1972. This plan, prepared by Clifton E. Rodgers and Associates of Harrisburg, was funded in part by a planning grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, the predecessor to PA DCED. The plan included the four case study communities and Monaghan Township – the same communities involved in the 2004 joint comprehensive plan (Monaghan was a participant but did not adopt the 2004 plan). It is not clear from the document I obtained whether the plan was officially enacted by the municipalities, nor could I find anyone within the municipalities or at the York County Planning Commission who had any knowledge whatsoever of the existence of the 1970 plan. Because the plan was prepared more than three decades ago using data collected in the 1960’s, I concluded that it was too old to be useful in assessing existing trends and conditions in the context of the 2004 plan. And while the 1970 plan has a fairly detailed implementation strategy, by itself it provides no information about municipal behavior, e.g. what the case study municipalities did with the plan: did they enact the plan? Did they embrace any of the implementation strategies? In itself, the plan cannot be used as an indicator of cooperation or communication between the municipalities. Other secondary data, starting with news accounts in the 1990’s, makes it clear that inter-municipal cooperation in that decade was limited; a point to which I return in Chapter 5. Whatever spirit of cooperation may have existed in 1970 apparently dissipated over the next two decades.
Ethical considerations and validation methods

Ethical considerations are critical to effective qualitative research. For my research project, the key issues are confidentiality, consent, reciprocity and validation. I was concerned about becoming privy to sensitive information during my examination of such things as opinions from local officials about the capacity of their peers. Thus I was very careful, when obtaining consent, to establish a clear understanding with interviewees about how I would use statements they made. For instance, I explained that I might quote them as ‘a planning commission member’ or ‘an elected official’, but would take care to do so in such a way that they could not be easily identified by their peers. Another important ethical consideration is reciprocity: what value can I as a researcher provide for the municipalities and others with whom I interact? I plan to share the results of my research, in summary form, as a tool that may be useful for some of the participants. In addition, in my role as an Extension Educator I may be able to offer a presentation to the community on the subject of my research if it is of interest to them, or on related land use topics.

Another concern is with validation: how do I confirm that my interpretation of the data is valid and accurate? This is a critical consideration in the research process – my work will have little value if I cannot present it with a reasonable certainty that it represents an accurate understanding of the municipalities I study. I employed member-checking with all of the participants in the case study and stakeholder interviews to make sure that I ‘got it right’. This process involved sending a copy of my interview notes to each interviewee with a request that he or she let me know whether I had misunderstood or been inaccurate in recording his or her comments. My notes averaged three pages per interview. Of the 19 member checks I sent, I received comments back from 8 (5 of the 13 in the case study and 3 of the 6 statewide stakeholders). Of the responses, 3 suggested minor changes and 5 requested no changes at all.
This feedback gave me reasonable confidence that my understanding and recording of primary data via interviews was sufficient to make this portion of my research robust.

**Summary**

In order to determine the appropriate methodology for answering the research question, I first evaluated the advantages of qualitative over quantitative research, and found that my investigation of the perceptions and behaviors of municipal officials is best served by qualitative methodology. I then identified the case study methodology as an appropriate approach to my research question because it provides such a rich contextual background for understanding the complex interrelationship of factors under examination. Having identified the most appropriate methodology for my research, I then focused on methods of primary and secondary data collection that would provide the data needed to consider the research question. The selected methods include a survey, interviews, and a number of secondary data sources. One unanticipated but valuable result of the secondary data collection was the extent to which news articles and municipal meeting minutes contributed to my understanding of the perceptions of local government officials and their citizens concerning land use planning and growth. Finally, I identified a method for verifying the accuracy of my data collection procedures – my ability to understand and interpret primary data – by asking participants to review and revise my interpretations of the information they provided in their interviews. With the data collection complete, I was prepared to begin constructing a sketch of the case study in broad strokes.
Chapter 5

The Case Study

Much of the primary data collected for this case study deals with individuals’ perceptions about themselves and their communities: the level of capacity, the quality of inter-municipal relations, and the extent of inter-municipal cooperation. To appreciate the context in which these perceptions are expressed, it is critical to have a sense of the four case study municipalities and some of the pre-conditions that led them to engage in multi-municipal planning. As discussed in the Chapter 4, the multi-municipal planning process involved five municipalities. However one of them, Monaghan Township, did not adopt the comprehensive plan, and is not a subject of this case study which focuses on municipal behaviors after the plan was adopted, nor is it included in this discussion of the contextual background for the case study analysis.

My description of the four case study municipalities is drawn from secondary data, key informant interviews and my personal observations and interactions with members of the community. The few visits I made to Northern York certainly do not constitute an in-depth examination, nor can I pretend to understand fully the boundaries and interactions of groups within the community. The limited scope of my research notwithstanding, one can still get a sense of the regional trends affecting Northern York which serves as a backdrop for viewing the attitudes and opinions of its local government officials.
Case study description: four municipalities

York County is located in the south central portion of Pennsylvania between Harrisburg to the north and Baltimore to the south. York City is the geographic and urban center of the county, with a population of 40,862 according to the 2000 US Census. US Interstate 83 bisects the county on a north-south axis and runs through York City. US Route 30 bisects the county on an east-west axis and also runs through York City. The Pennsylvania Turnpike cuts across the northern tip of the county. York County is bounded by the Susquehanna River to the east, Adams and Cumberland counties to the west, and the Mason-Dixon Line to the south. With its strategic location between two urban centers and its major transportation routes, the county has seen major residential growth over the past few decades. U.S. Census data shows that the county’s population grew from 339,754 in 1990 to an estimated 421,049 in 2007; an increase of 24% in less than two decades. To put this in context, the population of Pennsylvania over the same time period increased by 5%, and the total United States population increased by 21%. Along with its neighboring counties on the Maryland border – Adams, Franklin and Lancaster – York County is among the fastest growing counties in Pennsylvania.

The county’s 71 townships and boroughs range from suburban to rural in nature, and are divided into seven regions by the York County Planning Commission. The Northern Region contains seven townships and six boroughs, including the four municipalities which are the subject of this case study: Carroll Township, Franklin Township, Dillsburg Borough and Franklintown Borough. The Northern Region borders Cumberland County to the north, Adams County to the west and the Susquehanna River to the east. One major highway, US Route 15, runs on a north-south axis through the Northern Region.
The designation of planning regions apparently provides a means for the York County Planning Commission to manage the very large number of municipalities in the county in terms of staffing and administration. I was unable to find any functional commonality, such as a common school district or emergency management structure, among the thirteen municipalities in the Northern Region. However at the sub-regional level, the four municipalities in the case study area and their neighbors do share some commonalities. The Northern York County School District serves seven municipalities on the western side of the planning region, including all four case study municipalities. Other functions including police services, water and sewer, and a community center are shared between various combinations of the seven municipalities in the Northern York School District.
The case study area comprises the four westernmost townships and boroughs in the Northern Region; essentially the northwest tip of York County. The two townships, Franklin and Carroll, are similar in land mass at 15.3 and 18.8 square miles respectively. Franklintown Borough, 0.8 square miles, sits in the southeast corner of Franklin Township and is completely surrounded by the township. Likewise Dillsburg Borough, 0.2 square miles, is completely surrounded by Carroll.

![Figure 5-2: Map of municipalities in the case study, adapted from US Census](image)

Route 15 bisects Franklin and Carroll Townships and runs along the western edge of Dillsburg. It has played a major role in the case study communities, contributing to significant increases in residential and commercial growth and also serving as a rallying point for inter-municipal cooperation. Using Dillsburg as the approximate center of the case study area, Harrisburg is roughly 15 miles to the north. A high-speed divided highway, Route 15 provides easy access to Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania Turnpike and US Interstate 83. York City is 35 miles to the southeast, and is accessible via PA Route 74, a two-lane highway. The people I interacted
with tended to identify more closely with Harrisburg than with York. Several of those interviewed work in the Harrisburg area, but only one in York. In the interviews, I asked each person how he or she answered the question ‘where do you live?’ and found that nearly every one responded as living in the Dillsburg area, and several used Harrisburg as a geographic reference, but none used York.

Local government structure differs slightly between the municipalities: each townships has a five-member board of supervisors while each borough has a seven-member council and a mayor. As the table below shows, three of the four municipalities have planning commissions and zoning hearing boards. Franklintown Borough is, at this writing, in the process of enacting a subdivision and land development ordinance and a zoning ordinance. Once these ordinances are in effect, they will appoint a Planning Commission. There are subtle differences in internal structure as well. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) enables elected officials to serve on the planning commission, which is the case in Carroll but not in Dillsburg or Franklin.

Another area of difference is in the level of staffing. Only Carroll Township and Dillsburg Borough have professional municipal managers. In addition, Carroll Township created the staff position of engineer in 2005, and is the only municipality in the case study area with in-house professional engineering resources. The other three municipalities contract with a consulting engineer for services, a common practice for small local governments. Carroll’s engineer also provides code enforcement services. Franklin’s Building, Zoning and Code Enforcement Officer holds a part-time position, Dillsburg’s Code Enforcement Officer serves under a contractual arrangement, and Franklintown utilizes its engineer for building permits and enforcement issues.
Table 5-1: Comparison of government structure in the case study municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carroll Township</th>
<th>Dillsburg Borough</th>
<th>Franklin Township</th>
<th>Franklintown Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elected Executive</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elected Legislators</strong></td>
<td>5 supervisors</td>
<td>7 Council members</td>
<td>5 supervisors</td>
<td>7 Council members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legislative Head</strong></td>
<td>Chairman of Board of Supervisors</td>
<td>President of Council</td>
<td>Chairman of Board of Supervisors</td>
<td>President of Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning Commissioners</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative head</strong></td>
<td>Township Manager</td>
<td>Borough Manager</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engineer</strong></td>
<td>Staff engineer</td>
<td>Consulting engineer</td>
<td>Consulting engineer</td>
<td>Consulting engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other administrative staff</strong></td>
<td>• Secretary/Treasurer • Assistant Secretary/Treasurer</td>
<td>• Secretary/Treasurer • Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>• Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Code enforcement, building and zoning</strong></td>
<td>Staff engineer</td>
<td>Contractual employee</td>
<td>Part-time employee</td>
<td>Consulting engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Works staff</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Police</strong></td>
<td>12-member Police department</td>
<td>Contracts with Carroll Township Police</td>
<td>Contracts with Northern York Regional Police Force</td>
<td>Contracts with Carroll Township Police</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Socio-economic data from the 2000 US Census reveals many similarities between the municipalities but also reveals some significant differences. Among the similarities are a racially homogeneous population, ranging from 97.2% to 98.7% white, in contrast to York County which was 92% white in the 2000 Census, and Pennsylvania which was 82% white. This racial homogeneity is not surprising in small rural municipalities in this region of Pennsylvania. Other indicators show similarities by the type of local government, that is townships versus boroughs.
For instance, the boroughs have a lower percentage of owner-occupied housing units than the townships, and a lower average household size, indicating more renters. This is typical of even the smallest urban places, which tend to offer more multi-family housing options such as townhouses and apartments.

Table 5-2: Selected Population Characteristics for the case study municipalities (2000 US Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected characteristics, 2000 US Census</th>
<th>Carroll Township</th>
<th>Dillsburg Borough</th>
<th>Franklin Township</th>
<th>Franklintown Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population, age, race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4,715</td>
<td>2,063</td>
<td>4,515</td>
<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>38.3 years</td>
<td>37 years</td>
<td>36.5 years</td>
<td>29.4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: White</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race: African-American</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (of any race)</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households and home values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size</td>
<td>2.76 persons</td>
<td>2.29 persons</td>
<td>2.65 persons</td>
<td>2.52 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total household units</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single family owner-occupied</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Single family owner occupied</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median value, single family owner-occupied homes</td>
<td>$146,700$</td>
<td>$123,600$</td>
<td>$122,500$</td>
<td>$94,400$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and work force</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or higher</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate or higher</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In labor force</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean travel time to work</td>
<td>23.7 minutes</td>
<td>22.8 minutes</td>
<td>27.2 minutes</td>
<td>27.3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$54,273</td>
<td>$37,530</td>
<td>$49,020</td>
<td>$43,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean per capita income</td>
<td>$23,481</td>
<td>$19,801</td>
<td>$24,322</td>
<td>$18,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals below poverty level</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both boroughs have a higher percentage of individuals with income below the poverty level which is also typical of urban places. Other indicators which may contribute to the higher
poverty rate, at least in Dillsburg, are a lower percentage of individuals who have completed at least a high school education, and a lower percentage of individuals in the work force.

Franklintown seems to be an outlier. The median age of its residents at 29.4 years is nearly 10 years younger than the median age for the other three municipalities. Franklintown has the highest percentage of persons in the labor force but also the highest percentage of persons with incomes below the poverty level, and by far the lowest median value for single-family owner-occupied homes. One possible explanation is that Franklintown residents hold a disproportionately higher percentage of low-wage jobs compared to residents of the other three municipalities. This would explain the higher percentage of incomes below the poverty level and the lower home values. However, I was unable to find readily available data to support this explanation. These anomalies may simply be a factor of the extremely small size of Franklintown Borough, whose population in the 2000 census was only 532. For the purposes of my research suffice it to say that Franklintown as a borough appears to be slightly less well-off than its municipal neighbors.

At the other extreme is Carroll Township, which is clearly the most suburban and the most rapidly growing of the four municipalities. It experienced a 43% change in population from 1990 to 2000. It has the highest median household income, the highest median value of single-family owner-occupied housing and the highest percentage of college graduates: all indicators of a growing suburban population. Perhaps the most telling indicator is the percentage of owner-occupied single-family homes, which at 77% is nearly 25% higher than any of the other three municipalities.

The case study area has experienced rates of population growth even higher than those of York County. The combined rate of growth for all four municipalities from 1990 through the US Census 2007 estimate is 42%, or nearly twice the York County growth rate of 24%. Changes in
population are shown below in Figure 5-3 in actual numbers in order to account for the relative size of each municipality.

By percentage, the highest rate of change from 1990 to 2007 was in Carroll Township at 72%, followed by 49% in Franklintown, 25% in Dillsburg and 23% in Franklin.

![Diagram showing population growth for Case Study Municipalities: change in population 1990 to 2007]

Figure 5-3: Comparison of population growth, case study municipalities (US Census)

At the height of the housing boom, in 2004, Carroll Township officials found themselves facing two rezoning requests involving nearly 300 acres for commercial development, and at the same time reviewing four preliminary plans for residential development totaling 600 homes (T.W. Burger, ‘Rezoning plans force Carroll Twp. to grapple with growth’ Patriot News, March 8, 2004). According to articles in the Patriot News, township citizens surveyed in 1998 and 2000 identified rapid growth as a key concern (Ellen Lyon, November 24, 1998; T.W. Burger,
The amount of growth in the case study area appears to be a nearly universal theme for its citizens: every person that I interviewed or interacted with mentioned growth as a trend that is defining the community.

Northern York regional cooperation: a brief history

In 1998, a handful of elected officials from Dillsburg Borough and Carroll Township began talking about the benefits of regional cooperation in areas such as land use planning and joint purchasing. It started when the Mayor of Dillsburg and a Carroll Township Supervisor carpooled to a series of training sessions in Harrisburg together, and expanded in a series of informal conversations over coffee. Eventually they called for creation of a regional task force (Ellen Lyon, ‘Officials in Northern York to share ideas’, *Patriot News*, May 27, 1998). The two municipalities had been working together for over a decade on the development of Logan Park, a 23-acre tract bequeathed by the Logan family to both the township and the borough in 1986. By 1992 the two municipalities had completed and adopted a comprehensive plan for the park (Kristina A. Kerstetter, ‘Borough, Carroll Twp. make big plans for park, *Patriot News*, July 28, 1992). In addition Dillsburg and Franklin were purchasing police services from the Northern York Regional Police Force. But little inter-municipal cooperation existed beyond these two examples: in 1998 each municipality was essentially going it alone.

While the concept of regional cooperation may have been a novel one for most of the local officials, it did attract their attention. Elected officials from seven municipalities, including all four case study municipalities, and the Northern York School District attended the inaugural meeting of the Northern York Inter-municipal Task Force in July 1998 (Ellen Lyon, ‘Planning-panel idea backed as problem solver’, *Patriot News*, July 14, 1998). The group moved quickly: it invited the York County Planning Commission to its second meeting in September 1998, and
proceeded to ask for assistance in conducting a study of the Route 15 corridor. The task force also asked the county planning officials for a cost estimate for a regional comprehensive plan. By the end of 1998 with three meetings under their belts, task force members had begun to embrace the notion of inter-municipal cooperation, and agreed to share minutes of the meetings of each member’s governing body. In a year-end retrospective story on the task force, Ellen Lyon of the Patriot News noted that “the single greatest – and most intangible – advantage of all this inter-municipal cooperation has been increased communication” (December 30, 1998).

As discussions with York County progressed on a PennDOT-funded Route 15 corridor study and a regional comprehensive plan, Dillsburg proposed a regional police study as well. This topic was more controversial and evinced more parochial attitudes towards regionalization. Neither Carroll Township, which had its own police department, nor Franklintown, which contracted with Carroll for police services, was interested in supporting the study. Patriot News reporter Ellen Lyon captured the sentiment in this quote from Franklintown Fire Chief and Councilman Richard Blouch, "We consider this as a rather serious thing because the state is in a regionalization mode. We might lose our identity.” (March 8, 1999). Two months later, Franklin Township voted to support the study (Neighborhood News, Patriot News, May 14, 1999). But when DCED funding was obtained two years later to conduct the study, Franklin withdrew its support despite a 56-signature petition presented to the supervisors by township residents (Wendi Himmelright, ‘Northern York studies regional police’ York Dispatch, May 1, 2002).

Far from ignoring its citizens, the township was to some extent responding to their will, as expressed in the voting booth. T.W. Burger of the Patriot News offered this background in his July 15, 2001 story on growth along US Route 15: in 1999, Franklin Township residents voted to increase the board of supervisors from three to five members, in an attempt to wrest control from the sitting board of supervisors. New supervisors included a write-in candidate running on an
anti-regionalization platform, which included opposition to the idea of a joint comprehensive plan. The issue inciting the change was growth-related: the township’s incumbent supervisors had agreed to join the Dillsburg Area Authority in order to obtain public water and sewer services for a small area. By July of 2001 Franklin Township withdrew from the Dillsburg Area Authority, but remained a participant in the joint comprehensive planning process.\textsuperscript{10}

Although both the Route 15 corridor study and the regional police study are beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that both were completed but with little effect. Discussions of yet another regional police study are underway this year, and a new Route 15 study is about to begin. Citing the lack of action after the first Route 15 study, the York County Planning Commission and the York County Metropolitan Planning Organization imposed conditions on the case study municipalities before agreeing to conduct the new study. These conditions included the adoption of an implementation agreement for the 2004 regional comprehensive plan.\textsuperscript{11} (York County Planning Commission interview, October 3, 2008)

Another example of the challenges of regional cooperation for the case study municipalities is illustrated by the case of the Northern York Community Services Foundation and the development of a community center. When the Northern York School District abandoned its middle school building in 2001, officials from Carroll Township, Dillsburg Borough and Franklintown Borough formed a committee with the goal of reusing the building as a community center. Three years later they had made little progress, and so the Northern York Community Services Foundation was created to take on the project (T.W. Burger, ‘2 groups study ideas for center, recreation’ \textit{Patriot News}, April 4, 2004). The idea was to have the Foundation broker an inter-municipal agreement with the four case study communities for recreational services, starting

\textsuperscript{10} Franklin Township subsequently rejoined the Dillsburg Area Authority and currently has two representatives on the DAA Board.

\textsuperscript{11} The agreement was adopted in August of this year and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
with expansion of Dillsburg’s summer playground program. This effort was not successful; the municipalities could not reach consensus on the inter-municipal agreement, and instead the Foundation has entered into individual agreements with each municipality.

The Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan

Against this backdrop of regional cooperation in fits and starts, the joint comprehensive plan was initiated in 2000 and completed in 2004. Five municipalities joined together in the comprehensive planning process: Carroll, Franklin and Monaghan Townships and Dillsburg and Franklinton Boroughs. Monaghan Township had recently completed a comprehensive plan, but agreed to participate in the process anyway. The process was a typical one, with a few public meetings at the outset to gather community input. The bulk of the work was undertaken by a steering committee comprising two or three representatives from each municipality’s governing body and planning commission (except in Franklinton where there is no planning commission).

Keeping some steering committee members engaged was a challenge. A York County Planning Commission staffer recalls spotty attendance by some municipalities (York County Planning Commission interview, October 3, 2008), and a Carroll Township official described the township’s role in sending notices and making phone calls to other municipalities to remind them of upcoming meetings. According to one member of the steering committee, Franklinton Borough’s attendance at steering committee meetings was so irregular that representatives from the other three municipalities were surprised when the Borough voted to adopt the completed plan. When asked about their lack of attendance, the Franklinton Borough representatives explained that once they were sure they could get the zoning they wanted, they saw no reason to continue attending the steering committee meetings (key informant interview).
In contrast, citizen turnout for the public review meetings was sizable: 60 people in November 2001, 70 in July 2003 and 150 at the public hearing on the final draft held in March 2004. Meanwhile, the Inter-municipal Task Force stopped meeting, presumably so as not to interfere with the comprehensive plan process. (It resumed meetings in 2005 but did not realize its earlier success in engaging local officials, and has apparently become defunct.)

Table 5-3: Major milestones in the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 1998</td>
<td>Northern York Inter-municipal Task Force holds first meeting; identifies regional planning as agenda item for next meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1999</td>
<td>York County gives $10,000 for regional comprehensive plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1999</td>
<td>Northern York municipalities apply to county CDBG for $30,000 and to DCED for $30,000 for regional comprehensive plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2000</td>
<td>Comprehensive planning begins, includes Carroll, Franklin and Monaghan Townships and Dillsburg and Franklintown Boroughs. Municipalities appoint committee members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2001</td>
<td>Three public meetings are announced in Franklintown Borough, Monaghan Township, and Carroll Township.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2001</td>
<td>Comprehensive Plan public meeting - nearly 60 people discuss existing and potential land uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2003</td>
<td>70 people attend public meeting to review draft comprehensive plan. There is little public comment, and the meeting only lasts one hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2004</td>
<td>Public Hearing on final draft of comprehensive plan – 150 people attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Carroll, Franklin, Dillsburg and Franklintown adopt regional comprehensive plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2004</td>
<td>Monaghan Township votes not to adopt comprehensive plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2008</td>
<td>Carroll, Franklin, Dillsburg and Franklintown adopt regional comprehensive plan intergovernmental cooperative implementation agreement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In September 2004 the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted by Carroll Township, Dillsburg Borough, Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough. In
November 2004 Monaghan Township officials voted not to adopt the comprehensive plan, choosing instead to use the plan they had completed in 2001.

What happened next, or failed to happen, is the subject of this case study: how was the joint comprehensive plan implemented, and what role did the capacity of municipal officials and their relationships with their citizens and their neighboring municipalities play in the implementation of the plan? An examination of these factors – capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations – may help us understand the complexity of municipal behavior and decision-making that, taken as a whole, points to effective or ineffective implementation of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan.
Chapter 6

Data Results and Analysis

The research question asks *how are the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations associated with the implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities.* The first step in answering this question is to examine the case study for evidence of implementation of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan. As discussed in Chapter 3, implementation can be manifested in formal and informal behaviors. Once the extent of implementation has been determined, I will examine the data to determine the relationships, if any, between the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations and the implementation of the plan. Finally, I will determine if there are any patterns or themes that emerge from the data that can inform my analysis (Creswell 2007).

**Indicators of implementation behavior**

**Formal indicators**

Formal indicators of implementation are legislative actions taken by municipalities, and include initiatives to bring their land use and related ordinances into conformity with the comprehensive plan. In the case of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan, I looked for the adoption or revision of planning and zoning ordinances, of other regional plans and studies, and of an implementation agreement for the comprehensive plan. I found that each of the case study municipalities has adopted or is in the process of adopting at least one of these formal
indicators. As shown in Table 6-1 below, Carroll Township revised both its Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO) and its zoning ordinance several times to achieve consistency with the comprehensive plan. In response to a developer’s request, the township also revised its zoning ordinance to incorporate Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), one of a number of smart growth approaches that combines mixed uses and densities with pedestrian-friendly and community-focused design. Although the joint comprehensive plan does not recommend TND development per se, the key characteristics of TND are a good match for meeting the plan’s growth management objectives.

Table 6-1: Formal actions taken by case study municipalities after adoption of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2004-2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLDO (Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance)</th>
<th>Carroll Township</th>
<th>Dillsburg Borough</th>
<th>Franklin Township</th>
<th>Franklintown Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLDO</td>
<td>Multiple revisions</td>
<td>No revisions required to conform to comprehensive plan</td>
<td>Reviewing SLDO to bring into conformity with zoning</td>
<td>In process of adopting first SLDO ordinance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning Ordinance</td>
<td>Multiple revisions, added Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND)</td>
<td>No revisions required to conform to comprehensive plan</td>
<td>Adopted first zoning ordinance</td>
<td>In process of adopting zoning (previously adopted and repealed in 1980’s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern York Region Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces Plan</td>
<td>Initiated and adopted</td>
<td>Adopted</td>
<td>Adopted portions – did not adopt trails portion of plan</td>
<td>Unclear whether adopted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dillsburg Borough’s SLDO and zoning ordinances did not require revisions in order to reflect the goals of the comprehensive plan. However the Borough did make minor revisions to its zoning map in response to two requests for rezoning, and each time cited the comprehensive plan as the basis for its approval. Franklin Township adopted its first zoning ordinance after the
comprehensive plan was adopted, and has the distinction of being the last township in York County to enact zoning. Franklin is in the process of reviewing its SLDO to make it consistent with its new zoning ordinance. This process, which is in the hands of an ad hoc committee, has taken several years and is still underway. The revisions have been extensive: “Since the ordinance is getting so large it is too difficult to staple. The ordinance will be put in a binder and a new resolution will be prepared changing the fee to $25.00” (Franklin Township Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes June 17, 2004). Franklintown Borough is about to adopt a SLDO and zoning ordinance. The Borough had an aborted experience with zoning in the 1980’s, when it adopted and then repealed a zoning ordinance, but has never had a SLDO until now.

In 2004, Carroll Township initiated work on a regional recreation plan, funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The Northern York Region Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces Plan was adopted in 2006 by Carroll Township and Dillsburg Borough; two municipalities with a history of cooperation on recreational issues dating from the establishment of the Logan Park Authority in the late 1980’s. The plan ran into difficulties in Franklin Township, where one township supervisor led a group of citizens in opposing it. This vocal group appeared at numerous Carroll Township meetings and filed complaints with DCNR in an attempt to derail the plan. Apparently the major concern was the perceived potential for municipalities to utilize eminent domain to create the trail network delineated in the plan. Ultimately Franklin Township adopted the regional recreation plan over the objections of the opposing supervisor, but with the explicit caveat that it was not accepting the trail recommendations in the plan. Monaghan Township, which had once again been invited to the table, declined to adopt the plan, and Franklintown Borough simply took no action.

It is difficult to say whether these formal actions of the municipalities occurred as a direct result of the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan. The question, however, is not one of causality: these legislative actions constitute implementation of the joint comprehensive plan.
regardless of whether or not they would have occurred had a plan not been adopted. For instance, in the absence of a regional plan, Carroll Township might still have revised its SLDO and zoning ordinances, because it was receiving considerable pressure from developers to do so\(^\text{12}\). Carroll might also have engaged in recreation planning because there was interest among citizens and township officials in providing more land for parks and ball fields. But it is possible that neither Franklin Township nor Franklintown Borough would have participated in the recreation plan had it not been for the comprehensive planning process that had just been completed. There would have been no reason for them to come to the table just to discuss recreation, but by the time recreation planning was initiated, they had already been sitting at the table for two years. Nor is it clear if Dillsburg would have participated, since it perceives itself as essentially built-out, and already jointly owns and operates Logan Park with Carroll Township.

The decision to enact zoning in Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough merits a closer examination. In both municipalities, officials whom I interviewed stated that they had intended to enact zoning prior to their decision to join the comprehensive planning process. Both municipalities apparently saw a need for zoning. “It [lack of zoning] put us potentially at risk and a lot of people felt that one day, somebody’s gonna walk in here with a big pocketful of money, and a whole bunch of lawyers, and they’re going to build something that we really don’t want, because we have done nothing to plan for our future” (key informant interview, Franklin Township). According to the municipal officials, they only agreed to participate in the regional comprehensive plan because of the benefit it provided on zoning issues. Without a joint comprehensive plan, municipalities are required to provide for every use somewhere within their boundaries. Franklintown would have to include industrial zoning; Franklin would have to allow high density housing. These requirements were eased by the 2000 Growing Smarter amendments

\(^{12}\) Unfortunately, in my research I did not ask Carroll Township key informants whether they would have taken the actions hypothesized here.
to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, which allow municipalities within a joint comprehensive plan to distribute zoning uses among the participants even if they do not enact joint zoning. The joint comprehensive plan gave the municipalities a vehicle for adopting zoning that was more acceptable to them. So while the actions of Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough in enacting zoning ordinances are clearly indicators of implementation of the comprehensive plan, in both instances municipal officials anticipated this action before beginning the planning process. This view was corroborated by Randy Beck, Chief of the York County Planning Commission Department of Municipal/Current Planning: “If there were two identifiable unifying effects early in the process and continuing to this time, it would be common transportation concerns and concerns over responsibility for certain [zoning] uses. Those are the two principle themes that unite the common effort up there [the case study area] in terms of how are we going to work this out.” (York County Planning Commission interview, October 3, 2008).

The clearest indication of implementation of the comprehensive plan is the decision of all four case study municipalities to participate in and to provide matching funds for a study of the Route 15 corridor, funded through the York Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (YAMPO). The study will technically be an amendment to the existing comprehensive plan, and will look at congestion, access and safety issues on and around Route 15. The impetus for the study came from Franklin Township, which was experiencing significant traffic safety and access problems along the section of Route 15 within its boundaries. According to the York County Planning Commission, which staffs YAMPO, a township resident who worked for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) was the local champion, advising and encouraging the municipalities to request a joint study. This resident evidently understood the process for obtaining PennDOT funds and the benefit of presenting a unified request from all four municipalities. But YAMPO’s funding came with conditions: because the municipalities failed to implement the previous Route 15 study completed in 2001, YAMPO wanted to make sure that
this time, the study would result in action. So YAMPO required the municipalities to enter into an inter-municipal agreement to implement the existing comprehensive plan (York County Planning Commission October 3, 2008)

Intense negotiations between the municipalities resulted in the five-page Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan Intergovernmental Cooperative Implementation Agreement, signed by all four municipalities in August 2008. Municipal perspectives on the purpose of the agreement echoed their positions on the purpose of the original comprehensive plan. Franklin Township Supervisors “noted that Franklintown and Dillsburg Boroughs need this agreement to help protect them” (Meeting Minutes, June 21, 2007). Franklintown Borough referred to the agreement as “the intergovernmental comprehensive agreement for zoning” (Meeting Minutes, July 11, 2007), in keeping with its perception that its only benefit from the Regional Comprehensive Plan was the ability to share zoning uses.

The agreement spells out procedures for plan amendments, dispute resolution, and for withdrawal from the plan by any municipality. More importantly, the municipalities agree to notify each other of any development activity that occurs along joint borders (except for minor subdivisions of under five lots), and to notify all of the other municipalities in the event of significant changes to their SLDO or zoning ordinances. The agreement establishes a higher level of inter-municipal activity for any ‘Development of Regional Significance and Impact’, which it defines in terms of the number of residential lots, non-residential square footage, acres of earth disturbance, number of vehicle trips and proximity to municipal boundaries. The host municipality must ensure that the applicant notifies all other municipalities who are party to the agreement and must consider comments submitted by the municipalities.

The most curious aspect of the Intergovernmental Cooperative Implementation Agreement is a stipulation that within two years of plan adoption, each municipality will enact or revise its SLDO and zoning ordinances to bring them into general consistency with the joint
comprehensive plan. What is odd about this requirement is the timing: the joint comprehensive plan was adopted in 2004. This language, which requires the municipalities to achieve consistency within two years of the adoption of the plan, would make all legislative actions due by 2006. But that is two years before the implementation agreement was adopted in 2008. I can only conclude that this requirement is intended to be imposed retroactively to 2006. If that is what is intended, then Franklin Township will be most vulnerable to enforcement under the agreement. The ad hoc committee it appointed to revise the SLDO is reportedly far from ready to present ordinance revisions for adoption (key informant interviews). In addition, Franklin Township’s zoning ordinance may not meet the ‘general consistency’ standard of the agreement: the York County Planning Commission did not recommend its adoption and Franklin Township was advised that the four-acre minimum lot size in the zoning ordinance may not withstand a legal challenge (York County Planning Commission October 3, 200; key informant interviews). The responsibility for enforcement of the implementation agreement is not clear, nor does the agreement specify what enforcement actions can be taken. If the municipalities do abide by the agreement, it could result in better implementation of the comprehensive plan through the application of consistent land use ordinances in all four municipalities.

**Formal actions not taken**

The Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan is an ambitious document. The implementation section calls for the creation of seven committees and task forces, as summarized in Table 6-2. Of these, only one materialized: the Regional Recreation Steering Committee, which oversaw the development and adoption of the Northern York Region Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces Plan adopted in 2006. That plan is one of the formal indicators of joint comprehensive plan implementation discussed above.
Table 6-2: Implementation strategy, Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee or Task Force</th>
<th>Purpose and function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Planning Commission/Committee</td>
<td>Implementation oversight: monitors and coordinates actions, reviews for consistency with plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Ordinance Committee</td>
<td>Coordinates development of land use ordinances with multi-municipal approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadway Standards Task Force</td>
<td>Establish common roadway standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Watershed Planning Steering Committee</td>
<td>Oversee completion of watershed plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Environment Committee</td>
<td>Implement section of plan dealing with environment and natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Economic Development Task Force</td>
<td>Implement regional business development program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Recreation Steering Committee</td>
<td>Develop regional parks, recreation and open space plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One could also argue that a Regional Watershed Steering Committee was formed, because a watershed and wellhead protection plan was in fact developed and adopted. However, this action was taken by the Dillsburg Area Authority and the Franklintown Borough Water Authority, not by the governing bodies. Nor could I find mention of the watershed plan during its development, adoption and (if any) implementation in the meeting minutes of any of the four case study municipalities. There is no evidence of a formal connection between the watershed and wellhead protection plan and the regional comprehensive plan.

The joint comprehensive plan had an ambitious schedule, calling for the completion of a number of additional implementation actions within the first four years. Among those actions which have not been completed to date are development of subdivision design features and guidelines, an official map, roadways and access management standards, environmental standards for site plans, a stormwater best practices program, a regional business development program, an historic preservation program, an older adults services program, an inter-municipal communications program, and a strategic plan for the Dillsburg Area Public Library.
The failure of the participating municipalities to maintain the joint comprehensive plan steering committee as a regional planning committee appears to have been a critical factor behind the lack of implementation activity. There was no leader: I was unable to identify any entity or individual who claimed oversight responsibility for plan implementation after adoption. The consultant for the plan had completed all tasks in the planning contract and was no longer involved with the communities. The York County Planning Commission provided assistance with specific actions such as zoning ordinances when asked to do so by one of the case study municipalities, but did not provide overall coordination for the case study communities. (York County Planning Commission, October 3, 2008). And while Carroll Township has called the municipalities together when necessary, for instance to enact amendments to the plan’s future land use map, the Township has not assumed the role of ‘first among equals’ to lead the implementation process. Nor is it clear that the four municipalities would have participated even if someone had been willing to convene regular meetings.

The structure and content of the plan itself may also explain at least in part why there was so little implementation activity. Some aspects of the implementation plan have obvious actions associated with them, such as the development or revision of SLDO and zoning ordinances or of a parks and recreation plan. The approach to such actions is fairly straightforward: there are grant funds available from state agencies, many consultants who do such work, and many examples of completed ordinances and recreation plans. Other aspects of the joint comprehensive plan’s implementation may be more difficult to translate into action, such as a regional business development program, or the creation of environmental standards for site plans. As one member of the York County Planning Commission commented, “Their plan ended up being a plan to do a plan. It’s not your typical comp plan; it was more of a strategic plan. There are a lot of recommendations: create this committee, do this plan, create a committee for this, do this. A lot of what they were telling them to do after they adopted the plan is already done as part of many
municipal plans. I just don’t think it’s a good reference document. I think there’s so much more it could have done for that group and I think they would have had a better understanding and a more usable document if it had been a more traditional style comprehensive plan.”

Informal indicators

As discussed in Chapter 3, a key informal behavior that can indicate the implementation of a joint comprehensive plan is its use by municipal planning commissions and elected officials in decision-making. I asked municipal officials in the case study communities if they used the joint comprehensive plan when making decisions, and if so, how. The question was posed on the survey as well as in key informant interviews. On the survey, respondents were asked ‘How often does your municipality refer to the Northern York Regional Comprehensive Plan? For instance, how often does someone ask what the plan says, pull out a copy of the plan, or ask staff to check the plan?’ The survey listed seven types of municipal activities where the plan might be used:

- small applications for land development or subdivision (5 lots or less)
- applications for land development or subdivision over 5 lots
- improving, expanding or adding new roads, intersections or traffic lights
- expanding or improving parks and recreational facilities
- farmland preservation or Agricultural Security Areas
- amendments to subdivision or zoning ordinances
- rezoning requests and requests for conditional uses

For each activity, respondents were asked to choose from ‘hardly ever’, ‘sometimes’ ‘often’ ‘very often’ or ‘don’t know’. Figure 6-1 shows the total number of ‘hardly ever’ and ‘often or very often’ responses for each of the seven municipal activities listed in the survey question. A majority (18 of 29 responding) said the comprehensive plan was hardly ever used when reviewing small land development proposals. And although responses indicated that the plan is used more when reviewing large subdivisions, it is apparently not being consulted on a
consistent basis during the review of roads, parks and recreation and agricultural preservation projects.

![Survey responses on use of comprehensive plan in 7 types of municipal activity (N=35)](image)

**Figure 6-1: Survey responses on decision-making**

The plan is being used in some cases: more respondents indicated that they used the plan ‘often’ or ‘very often’ than ‘hardly ever’ for reviewing ordinance amendments and for considering rezoning requests.

The survey also asked participants to cite a specific example of the use of the comprehensive plan in decision-making and then to answer four follow-up questions: ‘why was the plan consulted for this issue; who was involved – planning commission, elected body, or both; when did this happen (what year); and did consulting the plan make a difference in the final decision’. Twelve participants responded to this series of questions: 5 from Carroll, 3 from Dillsburg, 3 from Franklin and 1 from Franklintown. Eight of them said that consulting the comprehensive plan made a difference in the ultimate decision.
When the responses to both sets of questions are sorted by municipality, it becomes clear who is using the plan and who is not. Figure 6-2 shows the breakdown of responses by municipality. For ease of comparison, I combined the responses for all seven types of municipal activity that are shown on Figure 6-1 into a total response for each municipality on Figure 6-2. As Figure 6-2 indicates, Carroll Township officials use the plan in decision-making far more than the other municipalities. Each of the seven survey respondents from Carroll Township chose ‘often’ or ‘very often’ at least once, and five of them offered specific examples of times when the plans had been consulted. By contrast, only one respondent from Franklin Township indicated the plan was used ‘often’ or ‘very often’, and only three respondents offered specific examples of the plan’s use. Two of the Franklintown respondents chose ‘often’ or ‘very often’, and only one of them offered an example of a specific use of the plan. The response from Dillsburg is less clear: there were an equal number of responses for the ‘hardly ever’ or ‘sometimes’ categories and the ‘often’ or ‘very often’ categories. Three respondents cited specific examples of plan use, but four other Dillsburg respondents – two from the planning commission and two elected officials – chose ‘don’t know’ as their response to the entire set of questions on decision-making. In fact, they were the only four survey respondents to choose ‘don’t know’ for that set of questions.

It is difficult to conclude from the survey data that Dillsburg officials use the plan in decision-making, when four out of thirteen Dillsburg respondents apparently don’t know if the plan is used. The data from key informant interviews gives more strength to the argument that Dillsburg does use the comprehensive plan in decision-making. All three key informants from Dillsburg Borough indicated that the comprehensive plan was used in some way. As one official described it, “We look at the plan when we’re talking about zoning. We go ‘is this right?’ and we go back to check to make sure that we’re okay with the plan. Sometimes someone on council
will bring it up, or the planning commission when they’re reviewing a plan, they’ll bring it to our attention."

**Survey responses on use of comprehensive plan (combined for 7 types of municipal activities)**

- Carroll Township (n=49)
- Dillsburg Borough (n=91)
- Franklin Township (n=70)
- Franklintown Borough (n=35)

**Fig 6-2: Survey responses on decision-making by municipality**

Key informant interviews also supported survey data for the other case study municipalities. Two of the three key informants from Carroll Township described using the comprehensive plan often in decision-making. On the other hand, Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough officials dismissed the idea that the plan is a guide for decision-making. One Franklin Township official said, “As we work through our zoning and refine our zoning, we’re not referring to the comp plan. Very rare that we refer to the comp plan.” A Franklintown official told me the borough doesn’t use the plan either. “We really got into it [the joint comprehensive plan] so we didn’t have to have every use in the world in our zoning. And that’s basically the only reason we did.”
Internal communication

Another informal indicator of implementation is an increase in the level of or quality of internal communications, such as between the elected body and the planning commission. To document an increase (or decrease) in the nature of something requires assessing that thing at two points in time and then measuring the difference. I did not ask participants in the survey whether their communications had increased and/or improved since the adoption of the joint comprehensive plan, but I did explore the question in the key informant interviews. I had two reasons for collecting this data by interview rather than by survey. First, based on my professional involvement in training newly elected officials and my informal knowledge of turnover in elected positions, I suspected that a number of the municipal officials in the case study had come on board after the adoption of the comprehensive plan. If this was the case, the officials would not be able to compare communications before and after the plan, since they were not involved in the municipal government prior to plan adoption. My hunch was correct: 10 of the 35 survey respondents reported that they had been in office less than four years. Second, the survey method does not lend itself to the collection of nuanced information such as subtle changes in communications. That kind of information can be better collected in an interview, where the participant can provide examples and the interviewer can ask follow-up questions to clarify a point or delve deeper into an answer (Kvale 1996).

The research data collected through key informant interviews provides a glimpse into the nature of internal communications in all of the municipalities, but only reveals changes in one of these municipalities. In Carroll Township, officials described the past relationship between the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors as troubled. According to one key informant, “The Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors were butting heads. It was nasty.” But a deliberate change in the way the two bodies communicated, beginning in 2005, greatly
improved communications. “There used to be two meetings a month [of the Supervisors] and we switched it to a workshop and a regular meeting and at the workshop, we asked the Planning Commission members to attend. And we didn’t sit up at the top table; we sat around the back in a U-shape with the Planning Commission, the Board and staff. And we opened up plans and looked at them.”

This same official describes the relationship today: “They [supervisors and planning commission] have the same sort of vision, there’s very seldom that they disagree.”

By contrast, internal relations in Dillsburg seem to have been fairly consistent over many years, with no discernible change after adopting the comprehensive plan. All three key informants described communications between the Planning Commission and Borough Council in positive terms, and attributed this in part to the fact that a Planning Commission member attends every Borough Council meeting. One long-tenured key informant cited the fact that Borough Council has only overruled Planning Commission once in over ten years. Another described the Council’s decision to consult with the Planning Commission prior to undertaking a codification of municipal ordinances in 2005 as an example of strong internal relations.

I was unable to get a sense of how internal communications may have changed in either Franklin Township or Franklintown Borough, and only a limited sense of how municipal officials relate to each other today. Relationships in these municipalities appear to be far more driven by personalities. Key informants chose to respond to questions about the planning commission and board of supervisors in terms of individuals rather than the municipal bodies as a whole. In fact, at least one key informant in each municipality was outspoken in his or her criticism of colleagues, and accused them of seeking personal aggrandizement through their municipal duties.

Taken as a whole the data is inconclusive when looking for changes in internal communications as an informal indicator of comprehensive plan implementation. But it is quite

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13 Carroll Township recently changed to quarterly workshop sessions in response to citizen complaints about a perceived lack of transparency in conducting business during the workshop sessions.
useful in exploring inter-municipal relations as a factor in comprehensive plan implementation; a discussion I will return to later in this chapter.

Summary of findings on implementation behaviors

The examination of formal and informal indicators of implementation through the use of both primary and secondary data reveals that all of the case study municipalities have taken some actions, as shown in Table 6-3. My definition of implementation, as discussed in Chapter 3, includes actions that are underway. Thus I include the SLDO revision that is in process in Franklin Township and the development of SLDO and zoning ordinances in Franklintown as evidence of implementation.

Table 6-3: Summary of implementation actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carroll Township</th>
<th>Dillsburg Borough</th>
<th>Franklin Township</th>
<th>Franklintown Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formal Indicators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLDO revision/adoption</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning revision/adoption</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional recreation plan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>Unable to determine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Route 15 study</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption of implementation agreement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal indicators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use plan in decision-making</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved internal communications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unable to determine</td>
<td>Unable to determine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Burby and May’s distinction discussed in Chapter 2 between ‘calculated commitment’ and ‘normative commitment’ i.e., the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law, is applicable to
this analysis. Formal implementation actions such as the adoption of the inter-municipal implementation agreement may have been a normative commitment for Carroll Township and Dillsburg Borough, but would appear to be a calculated commitment for Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough: a means for obtaining grant funds for the Route 15 study. In fact, adoption of the comprehensive plan itself, according to officials from Franklin and Franklintown, was a calculated commitment that was needed in order to enact the kind of zoning they wanted.

But documenting municipal implementation behaviors is only part of the picture. We also need to understand the extent and quality of capacity, public participation and particularly inter-municipal relations and the ways in which these factors are related to the behaviors just described.

**Analysis of the factors**

**Capacity**

The capacity of municipal officials to provide effective governance as it relates to planning involves a combination of experience and expertise that translates into a fundamental understanding of the issues at hand and how to deal with them. In Chapter 3 I suggested that such capacity would consist, at minimum, of a working understanding of planning concepts, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, and the municipality’s plans and ordinances. Several questions on the survey were designed to gauge capacity. One series asked about the amount of training participants have attended and whether they have planning expertise by virtue of their educational or professional background. Participants were also asked how familiar they are with the joint comprehensive plan and whether they have a copy of the plan. Two less direct questions were also used to assess capacity: one asked about the distribution of minutes between
the elected body and the planning commission, and the other about the use of the plan in decision-making. This latter question, although already discussed as an indicator of implementation, also informs the discussion of capacity.

20 of the 35 survey respondents reported attending municipal training of any kind in municipal planning. 16 said they had attended training offered by the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors or the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs.14 These sessions tend to be two to three hours in length and provide broad overviews of planning issues. Only 6 said they had attended the more intensive ten-hour training offered by the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute. The responses to follow-up questions about the number of trainings attended and the topics were somewhat vague, which was not unexpected: few of us can remember the number and types of trainings we have attended over the course of several years without more prompting. For instance a list of planning workshop topics might have helped respondents to recall more specifically the number and types of sessions they attended.

Nearly all appointed officials (municipal staff, solicitors, and engineers), roughly half of the elected officials and half the planning commissioners who were survey respondents reported attending training, as shown in Figure 6-2. By contrast, while 6 out of 10 appointed officials said they have planning expertise in their background, only 5 of the 26 elected officials and planning commissioners indicated a background in planning.

Another question on the survey used to gauge capacity was familiarity with the joint comprehensive plan. Respondents could choose from a range of responses: ‘I’m familiar with the

14 Training offered by all these groups is technically from a single source, the Pennsylvania Local Government Training Partnership of the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services in the Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development. However, this relationship is relatively new, and many local officials might not recognize the name ‘PA Local Government Training Partnership’.
general concepts of the plan’, ‘I know the plan very well’, ‘I know a little bit about the plan’, or ‘I’m not familiar with it’. 23 of the 35 respondents reported being familiar with the plan or knowing it quite well, including 5 out of 10 appointed officials, 10 out of 13 elected officials and about half the planning commissioners. But of the 23 respondents who are familiar with the plan, only 15 said they have a copy of the plan, and only 3 of the 13 planning commissioners who were survey participants reported having a copy.

The use of the joint comprehensive plan in decision-making is also an indicator of capacity. About half of the survey respondents reported using the plan ‘often’ or ‘very often’ for one of the seven types of municipal planning activities offered as indicators of plan implementation, but fewer – only twelve – could cite a specific example of its use.

The analysis of qualitative research data involves searching for patterns or trends that can inform our understanding of the issue under examination. In this case, analyzing the indicators of capacity by position and by municipality can provide insight into the ways that capacity may or may not be related to implementation of the joint comprehensive plan. Figures 6-2 and 6-3 show the distribution of survey responses by position and by municipality, respectively. It is important to note that the figures present percentages of responses. Because the total number of survey respondents is low, displaying responses by percentage can be misleading. For example, one response more or fewer in Franklintown, where five officials responded, would appear to have a larger impact than one response more or fewer in Franklin, where twice as many officials responded. Still, portraying data in terms of percentages provides a basis for comparison.

In the comparison of capacity indicators by position (Figure 6-2), two interesting patterns emerge. One is that while appointed officials as a group exceed both elected officials and planning commissioners in training and background, they have less familiarity with the joint comprehensive plan. The other is that planning commissioners lag behind elected officials in every indicator except that of bringing planning background to their positions. And as was
mentioned above, only a small percentage of planning commissioners have a copy of the plan.

![Capacity indicators by position](image)

**Figure 6-3: Comparison of survey responses on capacity indicators by position**

Perhaps more importantly, Figure 6-2 shows a significant deficit in capacity across the board, at least as judged by these indicators. Of the eighteen response rates shown as indicators of capacity, eleven of them are at 50% or less, and only two of them exceed 75%. Given the fact that respondents to this survey represent a majority of those involved in governance in the case study municipalities, the data suggests that lack of capacity may well be related to low levels of implementation of the joint comprehensive plan.

A look at the same data when sorted by municipality (Figure 6-3) is also revealing. Carroll Township exceeds the other three municipalities in every category, and particularly in the use of the plan in decision-making. Dillsburg is a close second in several categories, including familiarity with the plan and training. An across-the-board examination of Figure 6-3 shows that
Franklin Township falls below the 50% point on all indicators, and Franklintown Borough falls under 50% on most of them. Like Figure 6-2, the data when arrayed by municipality suggests a serious lack of capacity for three of the four case study municipalities.

![Capacity indicators by municipality](image)

**Figure 6-4: Comparison of survey responses on capacity indicators by municipality**

But this figure also provides a good example of the dangers inherent in applying descriptive statistics to the analysis of small amounts of quantitative data. Franklintown Borough has a 40% response rate to the indicator ‘says the plan is used often in decision-making’.

Because the number of respondents from Franklintown is so small (n = 5), 40% constitutes only two responses. According to Figure 6-2, Franklintown appears to have a considerably higher level of use of the plan in decision-making than Franklin Township: 40% as compared to 10%.

But data from the key informant interviews, discussed in the implementation section above, indicates that neither municipality uses the joint comprehensive plan very much, and that a number of officials in both municipalities consider the plan to have been merely a vehicle for implementing zoning. The qualitative data from key informant interviews provides a mechanism
for evaluating the validity and applicability of the quantitative data from the survey, and in this case informs us that Franklintown does not use the joint comprehensive plan very much at all when making municipal decisions.

*Perception of capacity*

The survey also asked *'In your opinion, how well do these groups as a whole understand planning concepts and issues'*. The four groups listed were Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Borough Council or Board of Supervisors, and ‘most citizens in your municipality’. Survey respondents were asked to rank each group’s understanding of planning concepts and issues, choosing their responses from ‘a little’, ‘fairly well’ or ‘very well’ (a not applicable category was also provided for respondents from Franklintown, where there is no planning commission or zoning hearing board).

As Figure 6-4 shows, a majority of survey respondents believe that their planning commissions understand planning concepts and issues very well, but have a lower opinion of the level of understanding among members of the Zoning Hearing Board and governing body. The distinction between ‘fairly well’ and ‘very well’ is, in this question, entirely subjective. So it may be that one respondent’s concept of ‘fairly well’ is similar to another’s concept of ‘very well’. Still, the data indicates that most survey respondents are confident in the planning capacity of their municipal organizations.

This perception stands in marked contrast to the data discussed earlier in this section which shows a widespread deficit in planning capacity. Because my research did not provide an objective framework for survey responses about perceptions, I am unable to triangulate the two sets of data. Had the survey asked for *opinions* about the same data sets used to gauge capacity, such as familiarity with the plan, level of training or use of the plan in decision-making, I would
be able to draw more definite conclusions about the apparent disconnect between perception and reality when it comes to planning capacity.

![Perception of planning capacity](image)

**Figure 6-5: Perceptions of capacity from survey responses**

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from the data on perceptions of capacity is the near consensus on the general public’s lack of understanding of planning concepts and issues. 28 of the respondents said they think citizens in their municipality have only a ‘a little’ understanding of planning and 6 said the citizens understand planning ‘fairly well’, but none thinks that citizens understand it ‘very well’. This lack of confidence in the planning capacity of ordinary citizens may be a factor in the level of public participation in the case study municipalities, and in the impact of public participation on governance.

**Public participation**

Like most municipal comprehensive plans, the Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan was based on a process that included public participation. A steering
committee of more than thirty local officials was assembled, which also included community representatives, although the plan does not state how many or how they were selected. In addition to public participation on the steering committee, there was a three-phase process for soliciting public input. Phase 1 ‘Understanding the Community’ utilized focus groups, Phase 2 ‘Envisioning the Future’ utilized a visioning forum, and Phase 3 ‘Developing the Technical Analysis and the Strategic Action Plan’ involved review of the draft plan (Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan 2004). Based on news media coverage during the planning process, the Phase 1 focus groups were held early in 2001 in Franklintown Borough, Monaghan Township and Carroll Township (‘Community’, York Daily Record, February 19, 2001). The first gathering attracted 14 participants, the second one about 40, and I was unable to locate news coverage of the third session (T.W. Burger, ‘Meeting seeks to shape northern York County’, Patriot News, February 22, 2001; Bev Krumbine, ‘Residents focus on regional planning’, York Daily Record, March 3, 2001). The Phase 2 visioning forum was held in November of the same year with nearly 60 people in attendance. According to T.W. Burger’s story in the Patriot News, the forum involved reviewing current land use maps and discussing where future development should occur (November 6, 2001). In July 2003, 70 people attended a public meeting to review the final draft of the plan, but as T.W. Burger’s story ‘Land use plan attracts lots of interest, few questions’ pointed out there was little public comment and the meeting lasted only one hour (Patriot News, July 8, 2003).

Since the plan adoption in 2004, there has been only sporadic public participation at municipal meetings, according to both the meeting minutes and the key informants I interviewed. As one might expect, citizens tend to show up when there is an issue of concern. When asked how they find out about citizen concerns, most key informants said citizens either contacted municipal staff or talked to them directly. As one Dillsburg official remarked, “An awful lot of it happens right at the curb.” But some officials complained about the apathy of their citizens. A
Franklintown official blamed it on the transience of citizens: “Truthfully not too many of them even tell you – because they’re gone. Particularly the newer ones [in townhouse developments]. . . they move in and sometimes within a year they move out because they’re transient. . . They don’t stay around long enough to really care – they just want a place to live.”

There are apparently ‘regulars’ who attend most of the governing body’s meetings. A Dillsburg official spoke of “core citizens” who attend Borough Council meetings, and a Franklintown official spoke of “the ones who come all the time.” In Carroll Township there is a citizens group which has been active since 2005, Carroll Citizens for Sensible Growth (CCSG). This group sends a representative to every township meeting and according to one official is the only regular member of the audience other than a newspaper reporter. Key informants who spoke of these ‘regulars’ did not appear to give much credence to their participation at meetings, and seemed to consider them more as gadflies than watchdogs. For instance, after one CCSG member’s sixth appearance to protest the regional recreation plan, a Township Supervisor commented on ‘the time it took to create this plan and wondered why [CCSG] did not come to meetings” (Carroll Township Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes September 11, 2006).

An exchange among Carroll Township Supervisors and representatives of CCSG over the appropriate time for public comment, as recorded in the township meeting minutes, is indicative of the relationship. The Township Manager ‘informed the Board that it has been mentioned that we may want to place the Public Comment period at the end of the Agenda instead of the beginning of the Agenda.” A CCSG representative “commented that would be a good idea. This way the attendees could comment on the whole Agenda and any action that was taken. There was no action taken, but the Board recommended that the Public Comment Period be moved to the end of the Agenda for the next meeting to see how it goes” (October 10, 2005). The minutes of the following meeting show that the same CCSG representative “stated that public comments on the agenda items should be at the beginning of the agenda not at the end, because the decisions
are already done. Non-agenda items could be at the end‖ (October 18, 2005). At least through 2007, the Public Comment period remained at the end of the Carroll Township meeting agenda.

I asked key informants how much does public participation matter in the decisions you make. If more citizens spoke out or came to meetings, do you think it would make a difference in the final decision? Of the 13 key informants, 9 of them said that public participation at meetings does make a difference in the governing body’s deliberations. As one official put it, “You need citizens to look over your shoulder and ask the hard questions, do we need this or why do we need that?” Other officials pointed out that while they listen, public comment does not necessarily change their decisions. “Sometimes the twenty minutes of citizen complaints just doesn’t have the same weight as the six months of deliberations the supervisors have been through – or the citizen input is something the supervisors have already thought about. So unless we hear something really new, we may not change our minds.” But two others were unabashed in their indifference to public input. As one said, “The people that knew me, the ones that I feel elected me; they know what my feelings are towards big government, towards spending. I’m going to make the same decision whether they’re sitting there or not.”

At the end of each interview, I asked the key informant what he or she would do for the municipality if given a magic wand. The interviewees seemed to enjoy this question, and most of them thought about it for a minute or two before responding. Two of the responses were directly related to public participation, even though that topic was raised in a much earlier portion of the interview. One official wished for a larger municipal building that could accommodate more citizens at meetings. The other spoke of increasing public participation: “More community involvement. That’s essential to everything we do. It doesn’t matter how big your community is or how small. You need volunteers to work on parks, people to get involved in different programs, people to show up at meetings and voice their opinions.”
Key informants from Carroll, Dillsburg and Franklin were able to cite specific examples when public participation at a meeting influenced the governing body’s deliberations or caused them to reverse an early action. Many of the examples offered had to do with rezoning, which has been an active area of municipal governance since the adoption of the joint comprehensive plan. Officials from Franklintown were unable to offer a similar example. This may be related to the fact that the Borough does not yet have a zoning ordinance, or to the Borough’s small size, or to what one official described as the transient nature of the population. But another key informant from Franklintown spoke in harsh terms about the small group of elected officials who, it was claimed, control the Borough, and of the group’s exclusion of other Borough citizens. It would be interesting to find out if this opinion is widely shared among Franklintown residents.

As will be discussed in the next section, Franklintown Borough has a reputation among its neighboring municipal officials as being isolationist, which may be a reflection of the perspective of its citizens.

As a whole the case study municipalities do not seem to have a history of significant public participation, judging by the reports of key informants and local newspaper accounts. Municipal officials do not actively seek citizen input except in prescribed situations such as the joint comprehensive planning process, where it is mandated by the MPC. Nor do they necessarily give credence to citizen input when they do receive it. As discussed in the previous section on capacity, this may be due in part to the belief among municipal officials that the general public has a limited understanding of planning concepts. For some officials this translates into an inclination to disregard public input or to characterize those citizens that do not attend meetings as apathetic. But in many cases, even though the level of public participation is low, municipal officials reported specific instances when they did in fact change their minds.
Inter-municipal relations

Earlier in this chapter I examined the working relationships within the municipalities to determine if there had been a change in the level of communications between members of the governing body and the planning commission. I return to the data to explore the quality of internal relations in each of the case study municipalities: how well elected and appointed officials and planning commissioners communicate and how well they get along. In the key informant interviews, I asked how well each interviewee knows the other officials in his or her municipality. In most cases, the key informants reported getting to know their fellow officials only since becoming involved in municipal government, although a few mentioned knowing colleagues through other community relationships: school, church, or volunteer fire company. One official described his philosophy of keeping relationships at arm’s length: “They are not personal friends and maybe it’s due to business but I tend not to get personally involved. Sometimes I have found that – I have the ability that I can work with anybody, I can go out and I can enjoy time with anybody – but business is business and my feelings don’t get hurt no matter how a vote goes.”

As discussed in the section on internal communications, key informants in Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough revealed significant hostility between some members of their governing bodies. One of them described the governing body as “one big happy family – except the two new ones.” The fact that the two municipalities with the lowest level of plan implementation also have the most overt tensions among officials bears repeating in the context of this discussion of inter-municipal relationships.

I also asked key informants how much communication is there between the elected officials and the Planning Commission in your municipality. Are you satisfied with this level of communication? In the three municipalities with planning commissions, relations were uniformly
described as good. Every key informant spoke about the at least occasional attendance of elected officials at planning commission meetings and vice versa and several spoke about shared meeting minutes. With the exception of Carroll Township, where one official described monthly workshop meetings initiated to bring the supervisors and the planning commission together, there was no indication of strained relations between the two bodies. However key informants did offer some comments about fellow officials – some more nuanced than others – that made it clear there were political and policy differences at both levels.

These differences came into sharper focus when key informants discussed relationships among the municipalities. A recurring theme in the interviews had to do with the perceived character of each municipality. Carroll was identified as pro-growth and encouraging development, Dillsburg as entrenched in a power struggle with Carroll, Franklin as intent on preserving its rural character, and Franklintown as isolationist. A few excerpts from key informant interviews are illustrative:

Carroll: They [Franklintown] understand that they’re getting a benefit here . . . but they want to keep their identity.

Carroll: Right now, my honest opinion, it’s a very guarded relationship [with all of the municipalities]. ‘Carroll’s trying to take everybody over by coming here and changing everything we’re doing. That big bad Carroll Township, they’re talking about regionalization.’

Dillsburg: A lot of the residents have been here forever and you don’t even say the Carroll Township word around them, because ‘I remember back in 1952 . . .’

Dillsburg: Franklin Township is the furthest away physically and in every way.

Franklin: The community [Franklin] is still very much interested in being left alone. We have given other municipalities the impression that we’re backwoods and ignorant. Carroll Township is perceived as being all about big development and the money it brings in. But neither perception is true.
Franklin: There’s not a general sense that we need to work together with anybody.

Franklintown: We’re cordial. We’re not really close to any of them and I don’t think any other municipalities are interested in helping us to protect our interests - they don’t really care.

Franklintown: Franklin doesn’t give a ‘huh-huh’ about us and we don’t give a ‘huh-huh’ about them. That’s the way it’s been for years.

One of the intriguing things about these statements from key informants is how much they describe their own municipalities. Municipal officials seem to be quite aware of the reputations their municipalities have among their neighbors. I was also surprised at how willing the key informants were to give such stark and honest assessments during their interviews. They were very aware of the changing nature of the inter-municipal relationships: “I think that the relationship is much better now . . . but I definitely think that especially at the beginning of it [the comprehensive plan], until we got through to the end and actually starting to do things together – we’ve had a lot of meetings together, we’ve had a lot of conversations ‘okay we can do this, you can do that’ and now everybody’s kicked in the money to make sure these things happen, so I think that it’s getting better.”

When I asked key informants whether they could think of any specific areas where there could be more inter-municipal cooperation, all but three of them gave positive responses, citing police, fire, public works, recycling, sewer, purchasing and recreation. The three key informants who responded negatively were all from Franklintown. One simply said “no”, one suggested eliminating all local government below the county level, and one said “there probably could be, but it just doesn’t seem to work.” The follow-up question is there a downside to cooperation elicited a wider variety of responses. Three key informants responded that there is no downside to cooperation. Other interviewees were less optimistic:
Franklin: When you have to build consensus, everything comes out ‘medium’ instead of ‘great’.

Franklintown: If we can’t give them something we’re not going to get a whole lot.

Franklintown: Some municipalities think they have the answer and you should follow everything they say; even if that isn't the way you want to do it

Dillsburg: I guess some people don’t want anyone else knowing their business. That could create a problem.

Carroll: Human nature. There’s always those few who see it [cooperation] as a power play and an ego-feeder.

Attempts to triangulate municipal officials’ perceptions of their relationships with other data proved difficult. For instance, I looked at each municipal website to find out to what extent it identified with other case study municipalities. The results, as shown in Table 6-4, were informative for those municipalities who included links: Carroll, Franklin, and Franklintown. Carroll Township’s website provides links to all of the other case study municipalities, the Northern York Community Services Foundation, the Northern York School District and the York County Planning Commission. Franklin Township provides links to the county planning commission and the Northern York Community Services Foundation, but not to any other municipalities. Franklintown Borough’s website links to Dillsburg Borough and Franklin Township, the Northern York School District and the Northern York Community Services Foundation, but not to Carroll Township. And Dillsburg’s website has no links. (By drilling deep into the website I was able to find one link to the Northern York Community Services Foundation.)
Three of the four municipal websites seem to reflect their municipalities’ attitudes on inter-municipal relationships as expressed by key informants. But the Dillsburg borough website does not contain any links, and it is unclear whether this reflects a municipal predisposition or whether it is simply an oversight on the part of the creators of the website. Given all of the other data from Dillsburg on its interest in participating in both planning and implementation, I suspect that the lack of links on the website should not be interpreted as indifference on the part of the municipality.

Communications between the municipalities seem to be spotty at best. One explanation for the lack of communication may be that the municipal officials as a whole don’t seem to know each other except through their municipal affiliations. With few exceptions, the key informants said they did not know their colleagues at all prior to taking office. Whatever the reason, officials are not communicating well across municipal boundaries. An example is the statement made by two different key informants about two different municipalities, expressing surprise that the municipalities voted to adopt the joint comprehensive plan. Given the fact that representatives

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<th>Carroll Township</th>
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Table 6-4: Municipal links listed on municipal websites
from all four municipalities served together on a steering committee for the plan for two full
years, the statements by these two key informants are surprising in themselves.

What happened to the spirit of cooperation that was manifested in the Inter-municipal
Task Force of the late 1990’s and that set the stage for the joint comprehensive plan? The Task
Force, which stopped meeting during the development of the joint comprehensive plan, attempted
to start up again in 2005 with little success. Dillsburg’s Mayor, one of the founders of the Task
Force, made a plea for continued participation: “I think we should stay involved in the Inter-
municipal Task Force, I feel that there are still some great things that can be done for the area,
Carroll, Franklin and Monaghan joining together and doing things. . . I think if we had joint
planning commissions, it would help us in the area of developing the whole area and again as I
mentioned stay actively involved with the Inter-Municipal task Force” (Dillsburg Borough
Council Meeting Minutes, December 13, 2005). But a comment from one Franklin Township
Supervisor, made earlier in the year in response to the call to reestablish the Task Force, is
indicative of the resistance the Task Force encountered. “Back when the task force started, it
brought the regional comprehensive plan and it was also [the Mayor’s] idea to have an industrial
park. Then it was his idea to develop a regional Carroll Township Police Force. The Supervisor
does not know if this region can survive anymore of [the Mayor’s] efforts. None of the
supervisors were interested in attending the [Task Force] meeting” (Franklin Township Board of
Supervisors Meeting Minutes, March 17, 2005).

Nor did the case study municipalities continue to meet after the adoption of the
comprehensive plan, unless called together by one of the municipalities for a specific purpose,
such as to develop the regional parks and recreation plan, or to join forces for the Route 15
corridor study. Each municipality has apparently been willing to come to the table, as long as
someone else issues the invitation. But absent a compelling reason to communicate, there is no
indication that the case study municipalities have made much effort to maintain relationships with each other.

One municipal official, offering a comment at the end of the survey, captured the tension between cooperation and implementation behaviors: “It is extremely difficult for the citizens of Pennsylvania to appreciate the value of cooperating with our neighbors. The development of the comprehensive plan required several years of hard work to accomplish. Implementing the plan is done in very small steps, against intense opposition.”

**Summary of findings on factors**

The survey and key informant data reveals many individual differences among municipal officials in their levels of capacity, their attitudes towards public participation, and in how they get along with each other. But taken as a whole the data shows a fairly low level of planning capacity among the officials: only half of them have a working knowledge of the multi-municipal comprehensive plan, less than half use it in decision-making, slightly more than half have had some training in land use planning. Put another way, nearly half the municipal officials have not had training, do not have a working knowledge of the plan and do not use it in decision-making. There is no significant difference in the levels of capacity for appointed and elected officials, but planning commissioners have less capacity than either of the other groups. However, all three groups perceive elected officials and planning commissioners to have a good grasp of planning concepts, and there is near consensus in the opinion that the public does not understand planning well at all.

Public participation was incorporated into the multi-municipal planning process and citizens did turn out for meetings designed to garner their opinions, but since the plan adoption, citizen participation at municipal meetings has been low except in reaction to a specific issue.
Citizens in the case study municipalities do not appear to be proactively engaged in the governance of their communities, nor are municipal officials particularly proactive in seeking to engage citizens. While most municipal officials will incorporate public input into their decision-making, a few said they put little value in public participation. Some officials interpret the lack of public participation at municipal meetings as an indication of apathy in the community.

Despite the small-town nature of the case study communities, municipal officials do not generally know each other through social networks, and only get to know each other through their municipal positions. Each municipality seems to have a distinct persona that was described by several key informants. Intra-municipal communication varies among the municipalities, and some key informants described hostile relationships between elected officials. But in general, the officials perceive their inter-municipal relationships to have improved as a result of the multi-municipal planning process, although significant levels of tension and mistrust remain.
Chapter 7

Conclusions and Policy Implications

The case study data is a treasure trove of opinions and perceptions, behaviors and actions – a rich description of the Northern York municipalities and the officials who govern them. Analysis of this data has provided many insights into the relationships within and between the municipalities, and into the implementation behaviors they choose regarding the joint comprehensive plan. Patterns and trends in the data help us understand how factors such as capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations can affect municipal behaviors in the case study municipalities. But this is only a single case. It may be representative of many multi-municipal comprehensive planning projects in Pennsylvania, and the informed reader can draw parallels to other cases of municipalities that are similar in geography, demography or even philosophy. Yet the same reader can no doubt identify just as many cases of municipalities that differ radically from the case study. When I selected the instrumental case study methodology, I decided to focus on a single case in order to maximize my understanding of the research question, i.e. the nature of the relationship between selected factors and municipal behaviors related to the implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans. The case study methodology seeks to provide illumination rather than generalization (Stake 1995).

Still, the temptation remains to generalize; to draw conclusions from a single case that can apply to a larger universe. In this case, the larger set is the municipalities who have engaged in multi-municipal comprehensive planning in Pennsylvania since the adoption of the 2000 Growing Smarter Amendments to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), a total of 683 municipalities involved in 175 multi-municipal efforts (10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania 2008). The distinction between drawing conclusions that have relevance across the larger set, and making generalizations about all of the members of the set is a subtle one, yet critical. My
research can inform our understanding of relationships that may exist in some way in the larger set, but it cannot make assumptions about the extent or quality of those relationships in all the cases without examining each case.

As a researcher, how can I establish a level of confidence that the relationships I observe in a single instrumental case – or even in a dozen cases – have relevance for all of the cases? One way is to position the research within the context of broader experience. There are a number of organizations with statewide breadth that spend considerable time and resources looking at issues related to multi-municipal planning. I identified six such organizations and conducted stakeholder interviews with representatives from each: the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Bureau of Community Planning, the Pennsylvania State Planning Board, the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania (see Appendix B). I asked the stakeholders to consider my questions from the perspective of their experience with multi-municipal planning cases across the state, their participation in discussion and debate over state planning policy, and their constituencies. These stakeholder opinions serve to amplify my findings: their statewide perspective broadens the context of my case study findings.

For instance, in the area of implementation, my analysis of both primary and secondary data shows that the case study municipalities have taken a number of formal implementation actions that may look impressive on paper. But an examination of informal implementation behavior – those behaviors that tend to embody the spirit of implementation – shows more questionable progress. Stakeholders reinforced this perception when asked how they would define effective implementation behavior, using words like ‘action’ and ‘commitment’.

Dennis Puko, Planning Program Manager, Governor’s Center for Local Government Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED):
“when a community undertakes an action, initiative or project that is recommended in the plan, and they are cognizant of doing that.”

Ed Knittel, Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs: “When community A and community B actually sit down and talk about a project that’s going into one of them in relation to how it’s going to affect both of them.”

Judy Schwank, President of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania: “I believe there are multiple layers of implementation. Communities may begin implementation on an informal, discussion basis. At an intermediate level, they may agree to enter formal agreements to share equipment or deliver services and eventually move to more complex and meaningful actions and ultimately codify their relationship by adopting joint zoning ordinances.”

Penn State Professor Emeritus Stanford Lembeck, who chairs the Municipalities Planning Code Subcommittee of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, and is also Board Chairman of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Education Institute: “Implementation has to mean action taken in accordance with the plan. . . I do not include the adoption of regulations as necessarily being the implementation – the creation of legislation in itself doesn’t do anything.”

Alex Graziani, President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association and member of the Pennsylvania State Planning Board: “it’s tangible, it’s measurable – there’s policy adoption or a new way of doing business – or it’s regulatory in nature.”

James Lombardo, Pennsylvania Association of Township Supervisors: “It has to be more than an ordinance passed by the policy-makers, the elected officials; there needs to be financial commitment to support the continuation of the process and the adequate staffing to carry it [the plan] out. The commitment began with the policy-makers coming together to develop the plan, but efforts to work on fulfilling the details has to continue.”

By these standards, the Northern York communities still have some distance to go to implement their comprehensive plan. The stakeholder comments provide a context which
reinforces the findings of the case study data; that despite formal indicators, the level of implementation is fairly low.

**Success and progress in Northern York**

This is not to say that there has been no progress in Carroll Township, Dillsburg Borough, Franklin Township and Franklintown Borough. Starting with the creation of the Intermunicipal Task Force in 1998, the four municipalities have made significant strides in working together. The fact that they chose to engage in multi-municipal planning and successfully completed the process is a demonstration of their ability to think and work regionally. In fact, the York County Planning Commission presented the four municipalities with a Planning Award in May 2006 in recognition of their accomplishments. Adoption of the plan was followed by two significant efforts, the Northern York Region Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces Plan, which was completed in 2006, and the Route 15 corridor study which is underway.

The history of the past several years shows considerable success in a number of areas that should not be dismissed out of hand simply because they do not reflect the implementation envisioned in the joint comprehensive plan. The Northern York Community Services Foundation is one example. Intended as a joint project of the municipalities, the Foundation has instead developed as an independent non-profit organization which provides important community services and has ambitious plans for the future. A more subtle example is in the willingness of the case study municipalities to consider new multi-municipal initiatives, even in the face of prior challenges. Police service is one such area: the concept of a regionalized police force that would be smaller and more local than the Northern York Regional Police Force has been discussed at least twice in the last decade. The topic was recently raised again by Dillsburg Borough, and is under consideration by the other three municipalities.
While differences in philosophy and approach to municipal governance remain among the four case study municipalities, and while personalities continue to play a significant role in inter-municipal relationships, one thing is clear. Carroll, Dillsburg, Franklin and Franklintown have sat at the table together often enough to be comfortable with the process, even if they have reservations about the particular topic of discussion. It may be hard to imagine what they identify as the next issue of regional concern, but it is easy to imagine them sitting down and at least talking about it.

Conclusions

The fundamental conclusion at which I arrive from an examination of the case study data is that there is a dynamic relationship in this case study between the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations and the municipal behaviors associated with implementation of the joint comprehensive plan. Changes in the extent and quality of the factors affect municipal implementation behaviors, and changes in municipal implementation behaviors affect the extent and quality of the factors. This fundamental conclusion is based on a series of inferences about the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations which are discussed below. Comments from the statewide stakeholders provide additional context for my conclusions. The applicability of these inferences to other municipalities involved in multi-municipal planning depends in part on whether a similar dynamic relationship exists between the factors discussed in this research and the behaviors of the local governments who are parties to the multi-municipal plan. A different ‘blend’ of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations in a different set of communities might change the dynamics of the relationship and the extent to which each factor influences the others. Still, the inferences I have drawn about
capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations may have relevance for other municipalities, as these factors can be identified in some form in all municipalities.

**Planning capacity: municipal officials**

*Lack of planning capacity hampers municipal officials’ ability to take steps toward implementation.* Those municipalities with more planning capacity make more progress in implementation. Both Carroll and Dillsburg have made progress in implementing the multi-municipal comprehensive plan by ensuring that land use and zoning ordinances that are consistent with the joint comprehensive plan and by adopting the regional recreation plan. Franklin and Franklintown have made less progress on implementation. Franklin’s zoning has issues of consistency with the plan, according to the York County Planning Commission, and Franklintown Borough’s zoning is likely to receive a similar judgment since it is being prepared by the same consultant who prepared the Franklin Township ordinance. Neither municipality embraced the regional recreation plan: Franklin chose to adopt only portions of the plan, while Franklintown apparently opted out altogether. One reason for the disparity in levels of implementation may be the capacity of municipal staff. Both Carroll and Dillsburg have municipal managers, and Carroll also has a full-time engineer on staff. Professionals in these positions usually have considerable training and expertise in a host of municipal issues including land use planning. The willingness of elected officials in Carroll Township and Dillsburg Borough to invest in professional staff is an indication that they recognize the need for capacity within their municipal governments.

Many of the case study officials have a limited understanding of the joint comprehensive plan, and are apparently at a loss to recognize the steps necessary to implement the plan, or to identify potential areas of inter-municipal cooperation. Several of them seem to think of the
comprehensive plan in very limited terms, as a zoning tool, and are not aware of the plan’s breadth in addressing environmental quality, economic development, and community services. If municipal officials fail to understand that the comprehensive plan is a roadmap for their community, they have no reason to work towards its implementation.

Staff-level capacity can play a role in helping municipal officials gain a better understanding of the plan. There seems to be a positive relationship between the level of staff capacity and that of municipal officials. Municipal managers who routinely refer to the comprehensive plan when providing background information to elected officials may in fact be providing training and building capacity by example. Staff-initiated discussions of the plan serve to increase the officials’ level of familiarity with the it and their use of the plan in decision-making.

**Stakeholders on planning capacity and implementation:**

Dennis Puko, DCED: “There is a direct relationship between the intervention of a big brother [county planning] to provide capacity and effective implementation of joint comp plans.”

Stanford Lembeck, Penn State: “You really need two tracks: the capacity-building track and the technical track. If they’re not equal in importance and investment, then the end result is going to be less than hoped for.”

Judy Schwank, 10,000 Friends: “Those that probably need it [capacity] the most – those with fewer professional staff or with elected officials who have less time to devote to the operations of the municipality – need to be engaged in multi-municipal plans. Not having those resources hinders you from getting involved. It’s like a double-edged sword.”
Planning capacity: appointed officials

There is a deficit in planning capacity among some municipal solicitors and consulting engineers. The ability of appointed officials to provide wise counsel concerning the multi-municipal comprehensive plan is compromised by a lack of planning capacity as defined in this research. Over 50% of appointed officials responding to the survey said they were not familiar with the joint comprehensive plan, and some of them don’t even have a copy of it. One explanation for this may be associated with the tenure of municipal solicitors and consulting engineers, which can be quite short: four out of the ten appointed officials who responded to the survey had been in office less than four years. In other words, they began advising the municipality after the completion of the joint comprehensive planning process. Apparently some of them never gained an understanding of and appreciation for the plan, despite its intended use as the basis for a wide range of municipal policy-making.

Another reason for their lack of capacity may be related to the breadth of functional areas that local governments have to deal with. A solicitor may have significant expertise in the area of labor relations, public works contracting, human resources or utilities, but once retained is expected to advise the municipality in all of these areas – plus land use planning. In the case study municipalities, only 60% of the appointed officials claimed to have a background in planning. Consulting engineers can likewise be retained on the basis of their expertise in one area of expertise, but expected to handle all areas of municipal concern. This is particularly true for smaller rural communities, who sometimes choose to give their business to the hometown lawyer or engineer, even though his or her specialty happens to be unrelated to municipal government.
Public participation

Public participation plays a limited role in the level of implementation of the multi-municipal plan. There is little evidence in my research data of effective citizen engagement in the case study municipalities. Public participation in implementation actions has been limited: citizens have shown up at municipal meetings in reaction to specific issue such as a proposed development or a sewage treatment plant. But there has been no public outcry for municipal officials to ‘do something’ about the pace of growth, traffic on Route 15 or other regional issues. In fact my review of newspaper articles showed relatively little discussion of the multi-municipal comprehensive plan while it was under development or after it was adopted. The plan just doesn’t seem to have much salience for the majority of citizens.

Many of the municipal officials interviewed said that when there is public participation, it affects their decision. A low level of public participation may discourage municipal officials from taking steps to implement the multi-municipal comprehensive plan, particularly if those steps are controversial ones and the few citizens who do speak up are opposed to implementation. On the other hand, a large number of citizens speaking against implementation may have the same effect.

Some officials in the case study maintain that public participation makes little difference in their decisions. The failure of municipal officials to recognize the value of public participation is related to their level of capacity and their understanding of their role in governance. A municipal official who understands the role of the comprehensive plan in guiding a community will be interested in what the community has to say. Likewise, an official with a true understanding of municipal planning will recognize the importance of planning as a reflection of the community’s vision, and will encourage and respond to public participation. At least, this is a widely-held view among those agencies and organization who work on capacity-building for
local governments, including the stakeholders I interviewed. But my research is inconclusive on this point: while the data reveals distinct differences in the attitudes of municipal officials towards public participation, I found no significant difference in the level of participation in the case study municipalities, and thus no relationship between the level of participation and the level of implementation.

**Stakeholders on public participation:**

Alex Graziani, Pennsylvania Planning Association: “You want a lot of public participation and support in a comp plan to create safety for local officials who have to implement the plan. It’s a wonderful mechanism for democratic accountability. Public participation has to be a part of any successful implementation.”

Stanford Lembeck, Penn State: “Citizen participation is a very complicated issue – the thought seems to be it’s just a matter of how many meetings we hold. It’s not just the number of meetings you hold.”

Ed Knittel, PSAB: “You have the public who doesn’t understand what local government’s about. They haven’t the faintest idea that the Planning Commission is advisory, they have never heard of the municipal planning code, and the fact that you have to operate within its parameters . . . the public unfortunately has abdicated its responsibility.”

**Inter-municipal relations**

*The quality of inter-municipal relations affects plan implementation.* The case study showed a clear distinction between those municipalities who have figured out how to get along amongst themselves and with their neighbors – Carroll and Dillsburg – and those who have more polarized relationships – Franklin and Franklintown. The first two have made the most progress
in plan implementation; the latter two have made the least. It is tempting to conclude that those municipalities who have a good relationship going into the planning process will have more success with implementation. And this seems to hold true for Carroll Township and Dillsburg. But the planning process itself can help forge better relationships. Whether inter-municipal relations are strong at the outset or improve during the planning process, the better they are, the more likely municipalities are to implement the joint comprehensive plan.

Individual personalities can make a significant difference in inter-municipal relations and in plan implementation. Personal enmity between municipal officials can get in the way of progress. In the case study, one municipal official in particular was mentioned by a majority of the key informants, who described that official as quite confrontational. According to both key informant interviews and meeting minutes from two municipalities, this official was successful in partially blocking some implementation actions. Individual influence is not always negative: another municipal official was widely recognized as embracing and leading the joint comprehensive planning process for one municipality. The point here is that the power of individuals to affect municipal governance cannot be underestimated. It may be driven by capacity or lack thereof, by a desire for public participation or a repudiation of it, but individual behavior will affect the quality of inter-municipal relations, both within and between municipalities, and ultimately the implementation behaviors of the municipalities.

Stakeholders on inter-municipal relations:

Elam Herr, PSATS: “Municipal officials that know each other and already have some type of working relationship are more likely to implement the plan.”

Alex Graziani, Pennsylvania Planning Association: “You can’t help but see folks a little differently after working with them over a period of meetings on a plan. The resistance
to working together wears down.” And, “it always comes down to personalities – the great wild card of planning is that there are people involved.”

Ed Knittel, PSAB: “Elected officials need to work with their Planning Commissions and Zoning Hearing Boards. Most municipalities never put all three bodies in the same room at the same time.”

Dennis Puko, DCED: “You should date before you get married. Municipalities have to build relationships through smaller cooperative ventures before they do joint zoning or implementation agreements. They need to be comfortable with each other. If they’re sitting down together for the first time they are guarded, resentful, and bringing up ghosts from the past.”

Judy Schwank, 10,000 Friends: “It’s not always geography. It may be service delivery, and again it may be something like a school district . . . something that is impacting all of the communities involved in some way so it behooves them to work together. If you have something like that—that starts from the very beginning, that is the reason why communities are working together – it works better in the long run.”

Policy considerations for Pennsylvania: mandates or incentives?

The growing interest in assessing the success of multi-municipal plan implementation, as evidenced by the new 10,000 Friends study, suggests that the timing may be right for considering changes in state policy. In fact, all of the stakeholders I interviewed expressed a high level of interest in the research question as it pertains to implementation. Because most comprehensive planning processes take at least two years to complete – and more if grant funding is involved – stakeholders are just beginning to get a sense of what is working and what isn’t.

Pennsylvania has opted to allow the authority for land use planning to reside with local governments, and has not mandated any planning at all below the county level. With few exceptions, the state has chosen to offer incentives over mandates when it comes to influencing
local government land use planning. For example, DCED’s land use planning assistance grants (LUPTAP) are, with very few exceptions, given only to applicants who propose a multi-municipal approach. From the state perspective, this makes sense: the state’s investment strategy supports the goals of the Growing Smarter Amendments to the MPC.

From the local government perspective, this kind of incentive raises the question of undue state control. Keith Hite of PSATS explained, “The problem is that every time the Commonwealth invests a dollar in local planning it wants to impose its values on how that community grows and develops, and the Commonwealth is more susceptible to the values of special interests than to the values you have at the community level.” The fear is that the interests of builders and developers, which many local governments view as a threat, will have a greater influence on state policymakers than the interests of municipalities. The PSATS organization is particularly sensitive to state policy in the areas of inter-municipal cooperation and multi-municipal planning, and has been outspoken in its opposition to any state program or activity that might be seen as mandating mergers and consolidations of local governments. From the PSATS perspective there is thin line between functional consolidation through shared municipal services and the erosion of local government power and authority.

But smart growth advocates see it differently. 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania has long been an advocate of multi-municipal planning and believes that such plans can and should lead to the implementation of joint zoning, shared services and revenue sharing. In fact the organization is currently working on a legislative initiative that would do for revenue-sharing what the Growing Smarter amendments did for multi-municipal planning, i.e. make it easier for municipalities to work together. The proposed legislation would create powerful incentives for municipalities who apply for state funding to achieve these goals, by requiring grant recipients to sign commitments to follow through with implementation.
The fundamental policy question of mandates v. incentives merits serious reflection by state policymakers. However, recognizing that the question is unlikely to be resolved any time soon, I offer the policy considerations below as a combination of both mandates and incentives.

**Capacity-building for municipal officials**

*Use a planning grant incentive or a state mandate to create minimum levels of capacity in land use planning for municipal officials.* The state can address capacity deficits in a number of ways. Using the incentive approach, it can require a minimum level of training for all municipal officials involved in a multi-municipal planning process as a condition of receiving grant funding. Currently the state’s LUPTAP grants include $1200 for ‘education’, but there is no requirement that it be spent on capacity-building activities. It is often used at the end of the planning project, almost as an afterthought, and the grantee is not required to meet any specific criteria. Tighter LUPTAP guidelines regarding the use of the education line item could specify types of training, for whom the training is intended, and even when during the planning process the training should occur. However this does not guarantee that the funds will be used for capacity-building or that the training or activity will be effective in actually building capacity. It also fails to address the capacity-building needs of those elected officials, planning commissioners and appointed officials who join the local government after the multi-municipal plan is completed.

Policymakers can also address the deficit in municipal planning capacity through mandates. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association recently released a white paper on the issue of required training for citizen planners and other municipal officials. The report, produced by a task force led by Penn State Professor Emeritus Stanford Lembeck, documents the required training programs used in other states and describes how such a program
might work in Pennsylvania. The focus is on planners in all municipalities, not just those who have engaged in multi-municipal comprehensive planning. The report proposes a process wherein citizen planners must take a specified number of hours of training when first appointed and ‘refresher’ training thereafter. Failure to comply with the state mandated training would be a basis for barring a citizen form serving on the municipal planning commission (Lembeck 2007).

Policymakers looking for a less aggressive mandate may be tempted to rely on existing municipal reporting requirements or impose additional requirements in an effort to ensure that capacity-building is ongoing. However, policymakers should be cognizant that many municipalities fail to meet current requirements, such as the annual report from the planning commission to the elected body that is mandated in the MPC. For example, among the Northern York case study municipalities only Franklin Township’s planning commission prepares an annual report. Unless the state is willing to follow-up such reporting requirements with a program of monitoring and enforcement, they are likely to have a minimal impact.

**Technical assistance for implementation**

_**Invest in land use planning capacity for municipalities in the form of outside expertise.**_

The state can address the problem of low levels of both capacity and plan implementation by investing in substantive technical assistance for municipalities after the joint comprehensive plan is adopted. This could be provided through the use of state or county planning staff, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, peer relationships or circuit-riders – just to name a few options. Municipalities would get help with the process of implementing their multi-municipal plan: such tasks as maintaining an organizational structure for reporting and monitoring; seeking funding for ordinance revisions, feasibility studies for shared services, etc; and establishing avenues for ongoing communications.
An inherent problem with providing state or county-level technical assistance is the perception among local governments that the technical assistance will reflect state policy over local preference. In order for technical assistance to be effective, local governments have to embrace it, which is not always the case. For example, York County Planning Commission staff told me that their attempts to work with Franklin Township on its zoning ordinance were rebuffed, and the township declined county involvement except to conduct the county review that is required by the MPC. Since then the relationship has improved, and a county staffer is sitting on the township’s ad hoc committee to bring its land development ordinance in to consistency with its zoning (York County Planning Commission, October 3, 2008).

Another concern is that providing technical assistance does not necessarily result in more engaged or better informed municipal officials. Municipal officials who use outside expertise can become comfortable in a passive role, in effect abdicating some of their responsibility for governance. This point was raised by the stakeholders that I interviewed in the context of comprehensive planning. Both PSATS and PSAB representatives talked about municipal officials who simply don’t know what is in their comprehensive plans because they allowed the planning consultant to direct the planning process.

Policymakers should also consider whether this type of investment in technical assistance ultimately helps address the capacity deficit among municipal officials. If the purpose of capacity-building is to insure specific actions such as the implementation of multi-municipal plans, than the provision of capacity through technical assistance has value. If, on the other hand, policymakers are also concerned with making long-term changes in the ability of municipal officials to provide good governance for their citizens, this policy option may not be the best choice.
Capacity-building for appointed officials

*Address the need for specialized land use planning expertise for solicitors and consulting engineers.* This is a sensitive issue, as it involves a discussion of the qualifications of two sets of licensed professionals – attorneys and engineers. But the state can take leadership in acknowledging that a deficit exists for specific planning capacity among some of those solicitors and consulting engineers who serve municipalities, and in providing specific training through its Pennsylvania Local Government Training Partnership program.

To make training more attractive to attorneys and engineers, the state could work with their professional associations to provide training at venues and with continuing education credits that have value for them. For instance, members of the Pennsylvania Bar are required to obtain a certain number of continuing legal education hours (CLE’s) per year. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania’s Continuing Legal Education Board administers the CLE program, which offers training by a variety of topics including local and municipal law and zoning. But there are very limited options in these areas of concentration, and none of them are specifically crafted for attorneys. The Board’s website lists one option for zoning: members can earn 1 CLE by attending a session of the Lancaster County Planning Commission for its annual update. Likewise, they can earn 6 CLE’s by attending ‘Elected Officials Leadership Training’ offered by the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities. While both of these opportunities may be of value for the attorneys who attend them, neither one provides the specific land use planning training that would help a municipal solicitor understand a multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

Recently the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute (PMPEI) began offering 9 CLE’s for completion of any of its four 10-hour courses in subdivision, zoning, zoning administration and community planning. PMPEI is an educational collaboration of Penn State Extension and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association and receives
operational support from the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB). According to PSAB, there has been an increase in the number of municipal solicitors enrolling in PMPEI courses since the CLE’s became available. This may be indicative of the level of interest among solicitors for specific training in land use planning: if more training were available, more solicitors might avail themselves of it.

One way to make training in land use planning attractive for attorneys and engineers is to create a niche market for this specialty, by encouraging municipalities to seek professionals who have specialized training. County or state planning staff can provide technical assistance to help municipalities ensure that their appointed officials have sufficient planning capacity. For instance, they can develop a model Request for Proposal for municipal solicitors and consulting engineers, a list of sample interview questions and other tools that municipal officials can use in recruiting and selecting professional expertise.

Policymakers might consider tying the receipt of LUPTAP funds to the use of appointed officials who can demonstrate land use planning expertise, but need to explore the ramifications. Once again the question of state-imposed values comes into play – who is creating the training and deciding what planning philosophies and approaches are included? Another consideration is expense to local governments: by creating a niche market with limited demand, the state could inadvertently be driving up professional fees charged to municipalities. In some areas of the state, especially rural areas without significant growth pressure, there may be little incentive for professionals to obtain land use planning expertise, making it difficult for municipalities who want to engage in multi-municipal planning to meet LUPTAP requirements.
Outreach and public engagement

*Invest in outreach and public engagement activities as part of land use planning.* Most municipalities solicit public participation by holding meetings, from public hearings to visioning sessions. But in today’s world there are many ways to engage citizens: community surveys, web-based tools such as blogs, podcasts and wikis, direct mail, newspaper inserts, and internet social networks are just a few examples. By providing funding to explore and use these strategies through its LUPTAP program to municipalities involved in joint comprehensive planning or implementation, the state could help blaze the trail for these tools to create more citizen engagement. The policy choice seems clear: does the state want to invest in increasing citizen involvement in local governance? But the answer is not necessarily straightforward, and raises issues of empowerment for constituencies who may not be popular among policymakers. When everyone is invited to the table and everyone’s voice is heard, local governments may find themselves thinking about issues of distributive justice as part of land use planning. To be sure, issues such as fairness are implicitly planning issues, but more citizen engagement can make the relationship explicit. Much research is needed in this area, both in effective strategies and in the implications of those strategies for communities.

Planning readiness

*Require planning readiness activities and a commitment to implementation as conditions for receiving land use planning assistance grants.* Creating clear expectations at the outset is critical to the multi-municipal planning process. One of the elected officials I interviewed explained the need this way: “Our biggest fear – and it’s a recurring fear – is do you really understand what you’ve signed up for and what it’s going to mean for the township? We can’t
really fully answer that, because it involves predicting the future. We do our best – everyone is sincere – but it doesn’t mean we’re right. We are working in a situation where we could easily institute a mistake. Any time anyone is doing anything that is inter-municipal, there needs to be a way for everyone to understand what they’re buying into.”

As has been noted several times in this discussion of policy considerations, the LUPTAP program is a major incentive that the state can use to steer local government land use policy. But the state could be doing more, by requiring municipalities to demonstrate planning readiness before the state funds the multi-municipal comprehensive plan. This involves the development of planning readiness criteria, which is also probably the biggest impediment to its implementation from a policy perspective. Once again, the question arises of who determines what constitutes ‘readiness’ and whose values that definition reflects. Yet comments such as the one above make it clear that local officials who take the task of governance seriously need a shared fundamental understanding of the planning process before they jump in. This is clearly an area for more research, as will be discussed in the next section.

**Implications for further research**

While I am hopeful that my research contributes to the body of work on multi-municipal planning, it has also raised a number of questions that may merit further consideration:

Do traditional capacity-building methods work? If not, what will? State, regional and county planning agencies, cooperative extension offices, nonprofit organizations and many others have been working on capacity-building for municipal officials for decades – and are still at it. Has there been a measurable improvement in local government capacity in land use planning? Research into how municipal officials learn new skills and behaviors and how a municipality’s ‘corporate knowledge’ is maintained would be valuable in addressing the question. Another area
of research that could inform this discussion has to do with who needs to have capacity within a local government, and whether the provision of capacity through technical assistance is a viable alternative or supplement to building capacity from within.

Can municipalities benefit from technical assistance in implementation over the long term – will they continue to implement after the help is gone? This question is really about organizational capacity, and how technical assistance might be used to help municipalities build the structures they need to implement joint comprehensive plans. Like the question of capacity-building, research in this area can inform policymaking regarding the institutional structures of not only local governments but also community and non-profit organizations.

Given the dynamic relationship between factors such as capacity, public participation, inter-municipal relations and municipal behavior, policy-makers and practitioners need to be cognizant of the effect of their policies and actions in a community. Further research into the nature of these dynamic relationships can inform strategies for effecting changes in municipal behavior. It can also help identify the most effective points at which to introduce change. For example, would an increase in capacity be more effective than the provision of additional technical assistance in creating better implementation behaviors? Which strategy is more effective: addressing multiple aspects of the dynamic relationship at the same time, or focusing more attention on a single aspect?

Does an increase in citizen engagement lead to more implementation of multi-municipal comprehensive plans? More research is needed into how citizens engage with their local governments and how local governments can encourage such engagement. A related question is how champions evolve in the community, and what conditions or factors encourage the development of citizen champions. A focus on the effect of citizen engagement on municipal behaviors would inform policymaking for a host of local government behaviors from the implementation of joint comprehensive plans to decisions about budget and taxation, the
provision of municipal services, or the role of local government in sustainability. Questions of
distributive justice, of whose voices are heard and how engagement strategies target specific
constituencies should also be explored.

How can we assess the readiness of a community to engage in comprehensive planning
and of a group of communities to plan together? Research in this area might look for a set of
fundamental skill sets, a set of knowledge or types of behaviors that, when present, are indicators
that a community will be successful in its planning efforts or in other areas of inter-municipal
cooperation. Given the influence of individual behavior on municipal behavior, what strengths
and competencies does a community need in order to move forward with confidence? Perhaps a
self-assessment tool can be developed that communities can use to determine their own level of
readiness.

How can we prepare communities to engage in planning? Is this a different discipline
than land use planning? Assuming that research in to readiness can suggest a set of basic
competencies for a community, how can those organizations who work with local governments –
state, regional and county agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, professional
associations – help a community build those competencies? If building a community vision or
creating an engaged citizenship is an important prerequisite to planning, how can we help
communities recognize the importance of these activities? Research into effective strategies for
helping communities become ready to plan might also look at how readiness activities relate
structurally to the formal comprehensive planning process: who guides such activities, are they a
required prerequisite to the receipt of LUPTAP funds, or is building readiness even a process with
temporal placement and identifiable activities.

Research in these areas can help direct or redirect policy in order to help, encourage or
require local governments to plan well, to implement their plans well, to cooperate with their
neighbors, and ultimately to achieving the state’s smart growth objectives.
Final thoughts

The ultimate goal of multi-municipal planning is to draw on regional thinking to achieve better land use, better allocation of resources, and improvements to the environment, the economy and the quality of life for each municipality and for the region as a whole. The research question asked how are the factors of capacity, public participation and inter-municipal relations associated with the implementation of joint comprehensive plans adopted by Pennsylvania municipalities. Through case study research supported by statewide stakeholder perspectives, I have attempted to illuminate the ways in which these factors affect, and are affected by, municipal behaviors regarding plan implementation. Understanding the dynamic relationship between capacity, public participation, inter-municipal relationships and municipal behavior, and the context in which this relationship exists, is the first step in developing policies and strategies that can work on the ground, from municipality to municipality and from region to region.
Cited References


141


Bibliography


Appendix A

Excerpts from minutes documenting researcher’s appearance at meetings of the four case study municipalities, August 2009

CARROLL TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 11, 2008

ROLL CALL SUPERVISORS – Robert Faulkner, Jeffrey Murphy, William Turner, Nancy Livingston and Paul Walters

ATTENDEES – Dianne Price, Faye Romberger, Mark Hilson, Steve Stine, Peggie Williams, Brad Pealer, Judy Chambers, Traci Cook, Paul Reichart, Kathryn Zeiders, Don Germeyer, Tony Baker, Bob Taylor, Amy Britton, Check Britton, Todd Lyons, Clarence Burbaker, Mary Ann Burbaker, Leon E.Zeiders, Richard Magee, Cynthia Magee, Paul Walsh, Deana Weaver, Sue Graham, Jeff Griffin, Stacey Ryder, Mark Ryder and Don McKendrick

CALL TO ORDER Chairman Robert Faulkner called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Carroll Township Board of Supervisors to order at 6:30 p.m. The location of the meeting is at the Carroll Township Municipal Building, 555 Chestnut Grove Road, Dillsburg, Pennsylvania.

COMMENTS

JUDY CHAMBERS REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN Judy Chambers is working on her thesis at Penn State on the Regional Comprehensive Plan. She just wanted to introduce herself, because she wants to interview the Board members from all Municipalities and members of the Regional Comprehensive Committee.

DILLSBURG BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 12, 2008 – MINUTES
7:00 PM

The Dillsburg Borough Council held their monthly business meeting at the Dillsburg Area Authority Building on the above-mentioned date. Council Members attending were
President Jeff Griffin, Vice President Mark Ryder, David Baldwin, John Richardson, Kathryn Zeiders, Holly Kelley and Michael Whitzel. Also present were the following: Mayor Henry Snyder, Borough Solicitor Mark Allshouse, Borough Engineer Tim Knoebel, Borough Manager Karen Deibler and Borough Secretary/Treasurer Debbi Beitzel.

The following visitors were present: Tony Baker from Citizens’ Hose Fire Company #1, Chief Jack Francis from Carroll Township Police, Mary Lou Bytof from the Dillsburg Banner, Paul Reichart from the Patriot-News, Dillsburg Area Authority Representative Brian Radcliffe, Planning Commission Representative Leon Zeiders, DEMA Representative Tim Hildebrand, Bill Gladstone from NIA Commercial & Industrial Realty and Judy Chambers from Penn State Extension.

The meeting was called to order by President Griffin at 7:02 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and an invocation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Judy Chambers, a Community Development Educator for Penn State Extension stated she is an Extension Agent in Adams County and works some in Cumberland County and five other counties in the region on land use community development. She indicated she is a graduate student of Penn State working on her master’s degree and doing thesis research on multi-municipal comprehensive planning. A major part of her research is a case study on the Northern York County Regional Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in 2004. Ms. Chambers indicated her focus is from a statewide perceptive and the gap between adopting plans and actually going to the next step. She stated she will be mailing a survey out and doing interviews for her thesis.

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MEETING
August 11, 2008

CALL TO ORDER

Present were Supervisors Donald Lerew, John Shambaugh, Naomi Decker, Gary Brown and Edward Campbell. Also present were Solicitor Stacey MacNeal, Engineer Tim Knoebel, and Secretary Nancy Zentmeyer. Visitors are on the attached sign-in sheet. The meeting was called to
order at 7:34 p.m. at the Franklin Township Municipal Building, 150 Century Lane, Dillsburg, York County, PA.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER
Chairman Lerew led the Pledge of Allegiance and also gave the opening prayer.

PUBLIC COMMENT
1. Penn State Extension, Judith Chambers
Ms. Chambers was presented and addressed the Board. Ms. Chambers is working on the thesis research for her master’s degree in community development. The subject of the thesis is multi-municipal comprehensive planning. Her study will involve a mailed survey and interviews with municipal officials. Ms. Chambers indicated that the study will be made available.

FRANKLINTOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 6, 2008

President D. Blouch called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m.
Council present S. Blouch, McGee, Vasco, D. Blouch, Kilgore, Isenberg
Visitors: S. McGee, Williams, Adams, Stein, Judy Chambers from Penn Conservation, Chief Francis, Tim Wakefield, Sara Harbig, Joel Brosius

PUBLIC COMMENT:
S. McGee asked if a letter could be sent to 351 Old Cabin Hollow Rd to clean up their property;

Judy Chambers was here to discuss Community Block grant, and doing a study of Northern York County Municipalities.
Appendix B

List of Stakeholder Interviews

1. Alex Graziani, Smart Growth Partnership, Westmoreland County. Interview conducted by telephone, September 9, 2008.

2. R. Keith Hite, Executive Director, Elam Herr, Assistant Executive Director, James Lombardo, Senior Advisor for Development, and James Wheeler, Director of Environmental Affairs Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. Interview conducted at the office of the Pennsylvania State association of Township Supervisors, Enola, Pennsylvania, August 13, 2008.


5. Dennis Puko, Planning Program Manager, Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. Interview conducted by telephone, August 6, 2008.