

## **Section 10: Community Services**

### **Introduction**

This section includes three goals areas, each addressing a separate element of community services including recreation, community facilities and emergency services. Background information, objectives and strategies for each goal are described in the following paragraphs.

**Goal 10.1: Coordinate the Region's recreation resources to provide a complementary and broad range of cost effective recreation facilities and programs that enhance residents' quality of life.**

### **Background**

A major goal of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan was to develop tools to share the costs of the recreation programs and facilities among the Region's partners. In 1999, the Manheim Central Regional Recreation Commission (MC Rec) was formed to implement this goal. MC Rec is a partnership that has included the three municipalities of the Manheim Central Region and the Manheim Central School District. MC Rec is the operating and programming organization for recreational facilities and services in the Manheim Central Region. At the time of its formation, all of the Region's recreation facilities were located in the Borough, and its formation helped to dissipate some friction over use of and responsibility for recreation resources.

Annually since its formation, each municipality has made a contribution to MC Rec's operating budget. The School District initially also made annual contributions, but now simply funds the MC Rec director position. In 2005, the partners of MC Rec contributed to pay down a \$400,000 debt that MC Rec had carried since its inception for a pool maintenance project completed prior to the founding of the Commission. In 1997 a capital expense account was established with equal contributions for each municipality in addition to the operating contribution.

Since the formation of MC Rec, Penn and Rapho Townships have used developer fees to add parks and open spaces as new development has occurred. The Borough and Townships have increased their budget contributions to MC Rec to maintain and operate parks, but funding increases have not kept pace with increased costs. MC Rec maintains Regional parks and recreational facilities, including playing fields, the community pool, playgrounds, trail systems, basketball courts and pavilions. The Region needs to consider additional tools for managing operating costs or increasing MC Rec maintenance resources.

In 2002, the Region undertook a study, the Manheim Central Region Open Space, Recreation and Greenway Plan, to address open space needs and the potential for more greenways.

In the October 2008 stakeholder interview, MC Rec Board members and staff expressed concern over the costs of operating and maintaining increasing recreation facilities. While grant resources and development fees-in-lieu provide good sources for land acquisition and construction of new parks and recreation facilities, few resources, aside from program fees, are available to fund increased operating costs.

MC Rec provides programs for a full spectrum of age groups. MC Rec and a variety of other community organizations currently use the former Middle School for programs at no cost, but the School District is intends to dispose of this property in the relatively short term. As the School

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District transitions out of that space, MC Rec will need to move or come to some agreement with the District for use of the property.

The Manheim Athletic Association (MAA) manages a number of youth sports programs in the Region. Programs include softball, football, cheerleading, and baseball through affiliations with Little League International, American Softball Association, Susquehanna Softball League, Red Rose Football League and the Donegal Rheems Softball League. MAA and other youth recreation organizations use MC Rec and School District facilities for their programs.

During the comprehensive planning process, the increasing costs of recreation facility maintenance and how to structure cost sharing became a very large issue. In July 2009, Penn Township voted to resign from the organization at the end of 2009, leaving the three remaining partners – Manheim Borough, Rapho Township and the Manheim Central School District – to embark on a strategic planning process.

### **Strategies**

#### **10.1.1. Develop a strategic plan for MCREC and the Manheim Athletic Association's short- and medium-term operation**

The strategic plan should focus on short and medium term needs of the organization and its partners and lay out a road map to address long-term recreation priorities. Specific elements of the strategic plan should include:

- Identification of current partners and potential for additional partners that could provide for higher efficiencies and greater opportunities for cost sharing
- Identification of immediate and medium-term facilities needs
- An operations funding strategy that addresses the needs of current and future services and facilities
- A strategy for funding new facilities that could be added
- A capital funding strategy for existing and potential new recreation facilities

#### **10.1.2. Develop a long-term recreation plan that considers facility needs, services to be provided and a cost management structure**

Once the organization has been stabilized, MC Rec should develop a long-term recreation strategy that builds on the strategic plan to identify top priorities for moving forward. In addition to the items above, the long-term plan should include a vision for the ultimate form of the organization, the services it will provide (on its own or in partnership with other organizations) and the facilities needed to meet those needs, such as:

- Feasibility of continued operation of the existing pool
- Potential for partnerships and/or consolidation of services and/or with other organizations, such as the Manheim Library
- Consideration of long-term facility needs for program operation, including whether a community center – at any scale – could be feasibly constructed and managed, given likely capital and operating resources

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**Goal 10.2: Maintain and enhance high-quality and cost effective community services that will enable the Region to attract and retain a diverse population while ensuring long-term financial stability.**

### **Objective**

- Expand the library and augment its programs to continue to meet evolving service needs.

### **Background**

In addition to recreation and the schools, the Manheim Community Library is an important community resource shared by the Region. Demand for library services has grown dramatically in recent years. Circulation of library material is up 63 percent since 2004, and visits are up from 24,799 in 2004 to a projected 38,211 in 2009, for an increase of 54 percent. At 2,200 square feet, the library's small size greatly limits program offerings and its ability to implement new services to meet changing service needs. The library is located on the second floor of Manheim Borough Hall, which while central within the Region, limits access for persons with disabilities and families with young children. The lack of parking is also a concern.

The Manheim Library Trustees and staff have identified a new, larger library structure as a critical need. As initial steps to locate and construct a new facility, the library has developed a general set of site specifications, built a \$100,000 down payment fund and secured a line of credit for purchase and construction.

### **Strategy**

#### **10.2.1. Construct a new library facility capable of meeting long-term regional needs.**

The Manheim Community Library will continue to pursue site acquisition and construction of a suitable new library facility. Some important criteria for a new library site were established by the Library and its funding sources, these criteria include:

- High visibility and accessibility for the Region's residents – a location within one mile of the intersection of Routes 72 and 772 would be ideal
- Sufficient size to meet primary facility needs on one floor and to supply adequate off-street parking
- Location outside of a floodplain
- Served by a local police force
- Room for growth on site as library service needs grow and change over time

#### **Goal 10.3: Provide safe and cost effective emergency services for the Region.**

### **Background**

Penn Township and Manheim Borough each have their own police departments. Rapho does not provide local police protection, but instead relies on the Pennsylvania State Police for coverage. Fire and emergency services are largely provided by volunteer organizations, including:

- Manheim Fire Company, serving Manheim Borough, east central Rapho Township and west, central and southern Penn Township

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- Mount Joy Friendship Fire Company and Ambulance, serving southwest Rapho Township
- Penryn Fire Company, serving central and northern Penn Township and the extreme northeast of Rapho Township
- Mastersonville Fire Company, serving central and northern Rapho Township
- Salunga Fire Company, serving the extreme southeast area of Rapho Township
- East Petersburg Fire Company, serving the extreme south central area of Penn Township
- Neffsville Fire Company, serving the extreme southeastern area of Penn Township
- Lititz Fire Company, serving east central Penn Township
- Manheim Veterans Memorial Ambulance Association, providing ambulance service to about 75 percent of the Region, including all of Manheim Borough, three-quarters of Penn Township and the northern and eastern portions of Rapho Township

During the October 2008 stakeholder interviews conducted for the Comprehensive Plan, the Region's fire chiefs and ambulance providers identified a number of concerns regarding the future operation of their respective companies and provision of fire protection services within the Region, including:

- Equipment costs have escalated dramatically and the fire companies cannot continue to fully support the cost of acquiring new and better equipment.
- Increases in state-mandated training requirements require significant time commitments from volunteers and are discouraging participation.
- Donations are down considerably.
- Daytime calls are a particular challenge because the volunteers are at work
- Large facilities and special events (Pleasant View, Renaissance Faire, Farm Show, etc.) strain the resources of the volunteer programs.
- As the level of volunteer participation continues to decrease, the ambulance companies stated that they will have to rely more on hiring paid personnel, which will increase program costs.
- Uneven volunteer and funding levels have resulted in a situation in which some fire companies cannot staff the apparatus they have, while others have volunteers but lack equipment.

In summary, the Region possesses effective volunteer fire companies which cooperate closely and are committed to providing the best possible fire protection. However, as with volunteer departments throughout the nation, they face considerable staffing, monetary, equipment and facility shortages.

### **Strategies**

#### **10.3.1. Establish a regional emergency services committee.**

- 10.3.1.1. Identify methods to provide adequate fire and ambulance response coverage in light of decreased numbers of volunteers**

Decreases in the number of volunteers have made it difficult for local fire companies and ambulance service to respond to all calls, but particularly to those that occur during the daytime work hours. To help address this shortage, all three municipalities permit municipal workers who are fire volunteers to respond to daytime calls. Additional initiatives are needed. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has explored a number of options to increase volunteerism including tax credits for volunteers and their employers and the establishment of grant programs to encourage emergency services volunteerism. One local response, specifically to the daytime shortage, would be to designate municipal employees to respond to emergency calls as drivers and/or firefighters during weekdays. Some municipalities have designated public works or code enforcement staff for this role.

### **10.3.1.2. Identify opportunities to fund services for large facilities and special events that strain the resources of the Region's volunteer programs**

Large events and facilities put a particular strain on small volunteer services and local ambulance service. Each municipality should consider whether to adopt some type of fee structure to help cover the cost of serving these. Stand-by fees could be charged for events. Building or inspection fees could be set to recover at least a portion of the higher cost of servicing large facilities or structures.

### **10.3.1.3. Investigate the feasibility of consolidating the Region's ambulance and volunteer fire services**

As funding and the number of volunteers have decreased, merger and consolidation of volunteer fire companies is beginning to see serious consideration. During the Comprehensive Plan stakeholder interview with the Region's fire chiefs, all recognized the need to continue to work more closely with each other and the communities they serve to increase service and cost efficiencies. Several recognized that, in the long-term, it would likely become necessary to consolidate, becoming one fire department with four stations.

The Region's municipalities should work with the fire companies that serve it to pursue a Pennsylvania State Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) grant to study to understand how the departments could work together to continue to provide the highest quality service within limited resources. As potential alternatives, or even interim steps to consolidation, the study should:

- Explore the creation of a regional emergency services alliance
- Identify expected regional equipment needs over the next five to 10 years and develop a capital plan for meeting them