

## **Section 9: Community Character**

### **Background**

The Manheim Region has many resources that contribute to great community pride. The region's agricultural and wooded landscapes, the Borough's dense concentration of historic resources and vibrant business district, as well as new areas of development all bring growth and energy to the Region. The goals and strategies listed below consider what could be done to acknowledge and enhance the community character of the Manheim Region.

Founded in 1762, Manheim Borough is rich in architectural, cultural and industrial history. The Borough is actively planning for its upcoming 250th anniversary celebration in 2012. A Borough Design Committee monitors the appearance of the downtown by coordinating efforts of Borough staff and other community groups to create an inviting atmosphere and preserve the historic character of the area. This group also oversees the façade improvement guidelines and grant applications, which are available to properties located in the Commonwealth-designated Main Street area. In addition the Borough adopted a historic preservation overlay district with regulations intended to maintain the character of the entire community. The district overlays the entire Borough to ensure that dispersed historic resources are also considered.

Both Rapho and Penn Township have rich agricultural histories and, in addition to the rural landscapes, retain many 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> century farmsteads. The townships also contain several historic villages.

### **Community Character Recommendations**

**Goal 9.1: Conserve the rural agricultural landscape in the Region's Rural Areas.**

#### **Strategies**

##### **9.1.1. Identify, designate and preserve scenic vistas**

The Region's farmland, natural features, and historic resources are extraordinary and draw people to the Region, residents, tourists and businesses alike. Local ordinances should acknowledge and preserve scenic vistas throughout the Region.

##### **9.1.2. Identify rural roads that have a variety of users and develop road design standards that support movement of equipment and other needs of the Region's farms**

Rural roads through farmland have a variety of users that often conflict. Farm equipment, bicyclists, horse and buggies, trucks and cars use the roads. Each Township should consider targeting narrow roads with high farm equipment use for safety improvements. Improvements could include 'green shoulders' that are reinforced vegetated surfaces, passing lanes and 'clear zones' on the side of the road that farm equipment can use to hang over instead of the in the on-coming traffic lane. Rural roads are part of this Region's community character, and they should be safe for all users.

### **Goal 9.2: Conserve the Region's cultural and historic resources.**

#### **Objectives**

- Promote the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic properties
- Promote heritage tourism in the Region

#### **Strategies**

##### **9.2.1. Complete a historic and cultural resources survey for the Region**

Each municipality should complete or update a survey of its historic resources. It is the first step in acknowledging and documenting the history of the Region. The survey can be an educational tool for the public and public officials to illuminate the interesting history of the Region's built environment. With the survey, the public can make a more educated decision about what is important to protect. Lancaster County was recently awarded grant funds to complete and update historic resource surveys in the County's boroughs. The Borough should work with the County to obtain funding to complete an update of its survey.

##### **9.2.2. Strengthen the Manheim Borough historic district standards and guidelines to ensure the preservation of historic resources while supporting reinvestment**

Manheim Borough has a historic preservation overlay district enabled by the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), which regulates structural changes to buildings in the historic district. The regulations were adopted shortly after a 1998 fire on the main square in the Borough's downtown.

After the fire, the Borough worked with the site's owners and provided financial assistance for the design of new buildings that would be compatible with the historic character of the square. This experience highlighted the need for and interest in protecting the historic character of the Borough, and subsequently (in 2000) most of the Borough was listed on the National Register as the Manheim Borough Historic District. A local historic preservation overlay was adopted to ensure the retention of community character.

In the past ten years, a number of successful rehabilitation projects have occurred, though during the comprehensive planning process, concerns have been expressed about the development review process in the historic district. The Borough should review its standards and the review process to ensure that they are fully protective of local resources while supporting an efficient development review.

As a part of this initiative, the Borough should consult Lancaster County's recently completed design guideline template available on the County website. It is meant to be a tool for use by municipalities that contains all the basic text and encourages municipalities to insert their own historical information, photos of architectural features, streetscapes, buildings, etc. to illustrate the character defining features of the municipality.

**Goal 9.3: Encourage high quality design for new development.**

**Strategy**

**9.3.1. Include design guidelines and streetscape standards in zoning and subdivision ordinances to support compact development that is in character with rural and small-town lifestyles**

To achieve high quality and sustainable design for new development, design standards should be adopted and required in areas where growth is expected in the designated growth areas. Permitting higher densities is often important to make high-quality design economically feasible. Such compact development allows for a more walkable, traditional neighborhood style of development. Each municipality should develop design standards that address requirements for sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, street trees, trails, landscaping, local materials, local architectural styles and consistent setbacks or build-to lines.