

Chapter 1:

Background/Planning Process

Adams County Comprehensive Plan

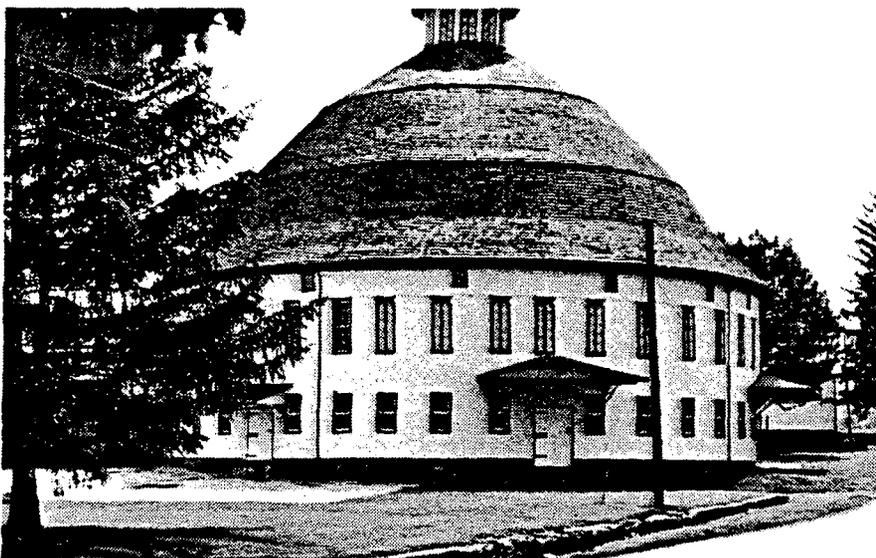
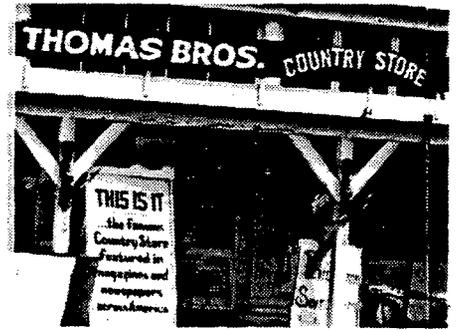
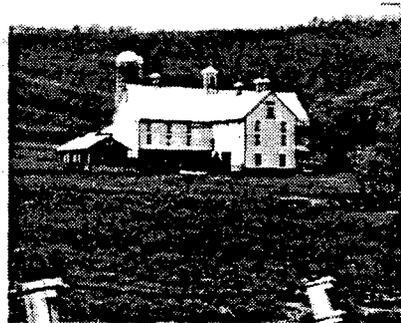
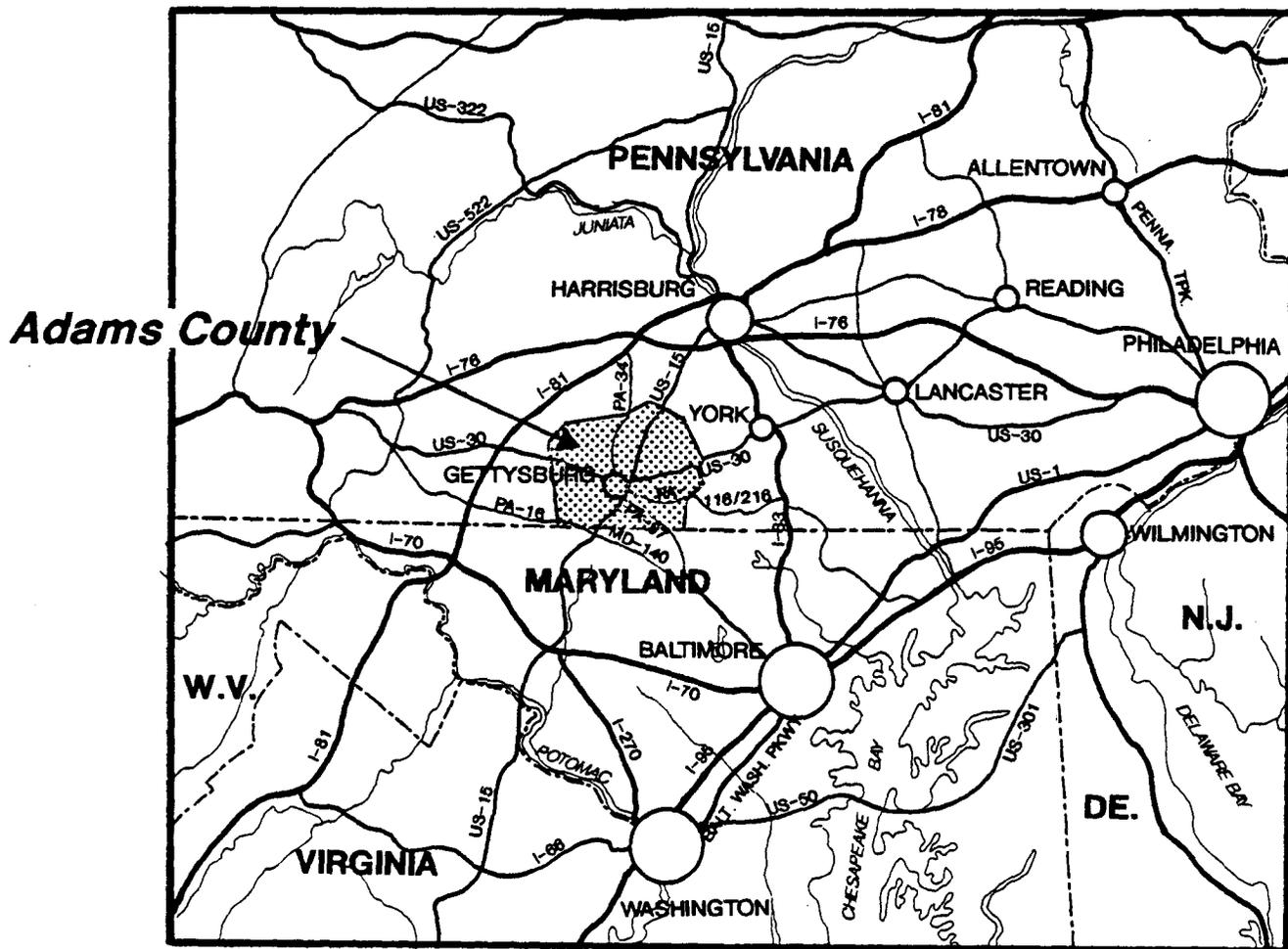


Figure 1.1

Location of
Adams County



CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND/PLANNING PROCESS

Introduction

Adams County is located in south-central Pennsylvania along the Maryland border. The surrounding counties are Cumberland, Franklin, and York Counties in Pennsylvania and Carroll and Frederick Counties in Maryland.

The first settlers to the area, of German and Scotch-Irish origin, arrived in 1734 and began clearing hardwood trees near Hanover, Fairfield, and York Springs. In 1764, the surveyors Mason and Dixon established a line between the lands of the Penns and Lord Baltimore, which continues today as the southern line of Adams County and the boundary between Pennsylvania and Maryland.

This area became world-famous in 1863 when one of the bloodiest battles in history raged for three days. The Battle of Gettysburg, fought in and around the county seat of Adams County, proved to be the turning point of the Civil War and was the location of Abraham Lincoln's famed Gettysburg Address. The battle significantly influenced the destiny of Adams County, and particularly the Gettysburg area, giving it a prominent and permanent place in the nation's history. More recently, the designation of the home and farm of Dwight D. Eisenhower as a National Historic Site further emphasized the area on a national scale.

Adams County is located on the eastern side of the Appalachian Mountains. The broad physical features of the county include a portion of the Blue Ridge Mountains along the western boundary, the famous "fruit belt" along the foothills of the mountains, a broad central valley dominated by the Borough of Gettysburg and the National Military Park, and an area of rolling hills bordering York County to the east.

The county is divided almost equally between two major watersheds. Roughly one-half of the county is drained northeastward into the Susquehanna River by the Conewago and its tributaries, and the other half is drained south and west into the Potomac River by the Monocacy tributaries. Major portions of South Mountain on the west and the Pigeon Hills on the east are covered with forests. Large areas of forest land are owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Adams County comprises 526 square miles of land and ranks 44th in area among the 67 counties of Pennsylvania. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, the total population was 78,274 persons. Adams County is divided into 13 boroughs and 21 townships, each with its own local government (Figure 1.3).

The pattern of urban settlement in the county is an example of the classic "hub and spoke", with Gettysburg at the hub and numerous smaller boroughs such as New Oxford,

Littlestown, Fairfield, Arendtsville, and Biglerville along the spokes of a long-established radial road system. The Borough of Gettysburg is almost completely surrounded by the 6,000-acre National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site. Congressional action recently enlarged these federally-designated lands by some 2,000 acres.

Prominent in the economy of Adams County are agricultural activities and tourism. The overall level of agricultural activity is relatively high but is subject to new pressures from urban development activities in many parts of the county. Tourism, which until recently was focused almost exclusively on Gettysburg and the National Military Park, is now spreading into the fruit belt, the South Mountain area, and into the picturesque villages and scenic areas of the countryside.

Economically, the county is characterized by a low wage structure and relatively low income levels, especially among long-term residents. Average household income in the county is rising, but the increase appears to be the result of the in-migration of new residents continuing to work outside the county. There is a general concern for the lack of new economic and employment opportunities in the county and a growing concern for the increasing disparity of income levels between older and newer residents.

Growth Trends and Issues

The county has experienced a significant increase in the level of development activity in recent years and is now under considerable development pressure from a variety of directions. Land costs, development regulations, and new impact fees in the nearby Maryland counties are providing a strong push into Adams County from the southeast and southwest. From the east, the expansion of Hanover and York is creating new development pressure, and the emergence of new employment centers southwest of Harrisburg is creating growth pressure down along the US Route 15 corridor. Even in the western fruit belt, new subdivisions are popping up in response to the attractive ambiance of the area and its proximity to growing employment centers along Interstate 81 near Chambersburg.

By 1990, many residents of Adams County had become increasingly concerned with the pace and type of development, particularly as it began to affect the quality-of-life in their communities. Increased traffic, loss of farmland, threatened natural amenities and historic resources, and strained public services are some of the present and potential problems associated with growth. On the other hand, many residents recognized, high-quality development could also serve as a catalyst for needed economic growth.

The significant development issues and problems of concern to county residents are many and varied, but probably include the following:

- The increase in the overall pace of development in recent years in the face of inadequate land development controls.

- A general feeling that growth in the county is occurring in an uncontrolled, shortsighted and haphazard pattern.
- Decisions made outside Adams County strongly affect the location and pace of development within the county.
- Sewer and water systems are inadequate to accommodate new development.
- Many of the small historic villages, as well as the scenic roads and countryside, are being threatened by random scattered urban development.
- The setting and quality of the National Military Park is threatened both by urban development pressure and by increased levels of tourism and related economic activities.
- The agricultural resources of the county are being threatened both by urban development pressure and limited economic opportunities for young farmers.
- The general lack of economic opportunities and new employment choices in the county for all age groups, but most especially for young adults, is leading to significant and unhealthful demographic changes.
- Pervasive circulation problems in a number of corridors and at key intersections in the county are leading to unacceptable congestion and safety risks.

Needed - An Updated Plan

Reflecting upon these development trends and the array of problems facing the county, it became clear that an update of the 1970-72 Adams County Comprehensive Plan would be timely. The comprehensive plan is the document intended to guide development in the county, but the Plan was nearly two decades old and its usefulness was diminishing. As well, a new-style Plan was needed, one that is more action- and policy-oriented, and which would place in the hands of the County a more useful instrument for guiding, directing, and controlling expected growth over the next ten to twenty years. In short, there was an urgent need to get on top of current growth pressures and to resolve emerging transportation problems within the county.

A new Comprehensive Plan would need to focus on: Describing and understanding recent development trends; critically commenting on the consequences of these trends in the county; anticipating and accommodating the magnitude of growth that is expected; and protecting the historic, scenic, and agricultural resources of the county - while at the same time projecting a clear and attractive image of the future for the county. The new Plan

would need to place more than the usual emphasis on transportation improvements, because of the critical nature of transportation problems in the county. By enhancing and expanding the transportation component of the Comprehensive Plan, and considering the county's future transportation picture in detail as the Comprehensive Plan is updated, Adams County would be able to set the stage for well-integrated and balanced planning for the decades to come.

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan

The purpose in preparing an updated comprehensive plan is fourfold. First, the data base for the county has been brought up to date. Chapter Two includes surveys of natural and cultural features, the current land-use pattern, the road system, and the systems of public services and utilities; analyses and projections of population, housing, and employment; and an examination of the types of changes in the county over recent years. Second, in Chapter Three's Land Use Plan element, the Plan identifies the basic direction and structure recommended for the future development of the county, derived from explorations of alternative development patterns. Third, the Plan specifies the goals, policies, and individual elements that will form the basis for the development (including conservation efforts) of the county. Finally, the Plan lays forth, in Chapter Four, a specific implementation strategy and program to aid the County, its municipalities, and other local groups and organizations, both public and private, in achieving the goals of the Plan.

The Comprehensive Planning Process

Preparation of the 1991 Adams County Comprehensive Plan was accomplished largely over a fifteen-month period from August 1990 through October 1991, with Public Meetings and Hearings held in late 1991. The Work Program Schedule (Figure 1.2) outlines graphically the process which was observed, consisting of seven phases.

The County Commissioners were committed to substantial and ongoing citizen participation throughout the comprehensive planning process. In the months leading up to the commencement of the process outlined in Figure 1.2, several citizen participation efforts were pursued; including seven Issue Identification meetings held in various parts of the county and citizen surveys conducted through local newspapers. Over 600 residents responded to the newspaper surveys by completing questionnaires and mailing them to the County for compilation and analysis. Findings of these meetings and surveys contributed significantly to the early identification of issues of concern to Adams County residents (see "Growth Trends and Issues", previously).

Community participation was a hallmark of the formal plan preparation process. There were four types of groups involved:

- 1) Citizens Advisory Committee (CITAC) - a widely-representative 40-member body that served as a steering committee for the Plan preparation;
- 2) Transportation Advisory Committee (TRAC) - a smaller body whose members focused on transportation issues in particular;
- 3) Focal Groups - series of groups with specialized interests, canvassed at critical points in the overall process;
- 4) General Public - 3 widely-advertised presentations were made over the course of the study, oriented to the public-at-large.

The Adams County Office of Planning and Development directed the Plan preparation effort, with a five-firm team as technical consultants. Norman Day Associates (NDA), a planning and urban design firm based in Philadelphia, led the consultant team in the Plan effort. The other team members were: Orth-Rodgers and Associates, Transportation Planners; Coughlin, Keene and Associates, Planning and Policy Analysis; John Milner Associates, Architects, Archaeologists, Planners; and R. E. Wright Associates, Earth Resources Consultants.

With the new Plan placing more than the usual emphasis on transportation improvements, owing to the critical nature of circulation problems in the county, an "Enhanced Transportation Component" was funded, in part, by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the staff of which worked closely with the County and the consultant team.

Other prominent issues addressed in the Plan included agricultural resources planning, historic resources planning, and infrastructure systems planning. Experts in these fields on the consultant team brought special perspectives to the planning work.

The first phase of the Plan preparation was primarily devoted to background data collection and the documentation of change in the county. Tasks within this phase included reviewing earlier planning documents and data, creating the base maps of the county for the study, an inventory of natural and cultural features and development limitations, documentation and projections of demographics and development activity, land use surveys, traffic counts, historical surveys, surveys of agricultural activities, documentation of water and sewer facilities, and documentation of physical change.

Phase B incorporated a number of different activities, all building upon the Inventory of Existing Conditions in Phase A and leading towards the Preliminary Goals and Exploration of Alternative Futures of Phases C and D. In Phase B projections were made of county population, housing units, and employment. These projections were then converted into potential demand for new housing units by type and to land area requirements for new development. This investigation provided some "ball-park" estimates of required areas for new residential, commercial, and industrial uses over the next ten to twenty years, and

allowed participants in the comprehensive planning process in the next phases to concentrate on potential locations, types, and intensities of new development.

Within Phase B, one possible way for development to occur was explored. Although this type of investigation was the main thrust of activity in Phase D, Exploration of Alternative Futures, one alternative, which envisioned a continuation of current development trends for another twenty years, was outlined in Phase B. This Trend or "Base Case" alternative was examined to determine the traffic implications of such a scenario: What would traffic conditions be like at key intersections and in key road corridors across the county if development continued as it had been and no intersection and roadway corridor improvements were undertaken? The results of this investigation proved significant for the setting of several goals and objectives of the Plan and the kinds of different directions explored in the Alternatives phase.

Phase C began with the submission of an elaborated statement of goals about the county's future to the CITAC/TRAC group. An extremely important part of the planning process, the Exploration of Alternative Futures (Phase D), began with the sketching of maps illustrating different ways in which new development could occur over the next twenty years. Along with the Trend alternative presented in Phase B, these alternative views of the future all relied upon projections of housing units and employment made earlier. These first-round alternatives explored the following themes:

- Trend - continuation of current development trends for another 20 years.
- Borough-Centered - most future development takes place in and around existing boroughs.
- New Starts - creation of several new settlements of 1,000-2,000 people each.
- Country Living - most new housing units are dispersed widely across the countryside.
- Country Clusters - widely-distributed clusters of 10-20 housing units.
- Village Clusters - widely-distributed clusters of 100-150 housing units.
- Single Urban Core - most future development is focused on the Gettysburg area.
- Legacies Preserved - development is directed away from scenic areas, the Fruitbelt, the National Military Park, etc.

Eight maps displaying the themes were prepared, along with a table that outlined the characteristics of each theme and permitted comparisons to be made by members of CITAC/TRAC among the alternative development themes.

In the second round of Exploration of Alternative Futures, selected themes from the first round were combined and refined to yield new alternatives. These were displayed in map form and in "fact sheets", outlining the numbers and characteristics of new housing units and new jobs, along with land development controls and water and sewer improvements that would be needed to carry out each alternative.

Discussions concerning these alternatives by CITAC/TRAC revealed a desire to see a substantial portion of new development occur in conjunction with existing boroughs (i.e.: Borough-Centered), while recognizing that some development will occur beyond the immediate surroundings of the boroughs. Detrimental effects of scattered development could be controlled, it was felt, through the creation of a few new centers (New Starts) and by encouraging residential clustering (Country Clusters, Village Clusters), all within a general framework of conservation (Legacies Preserved).

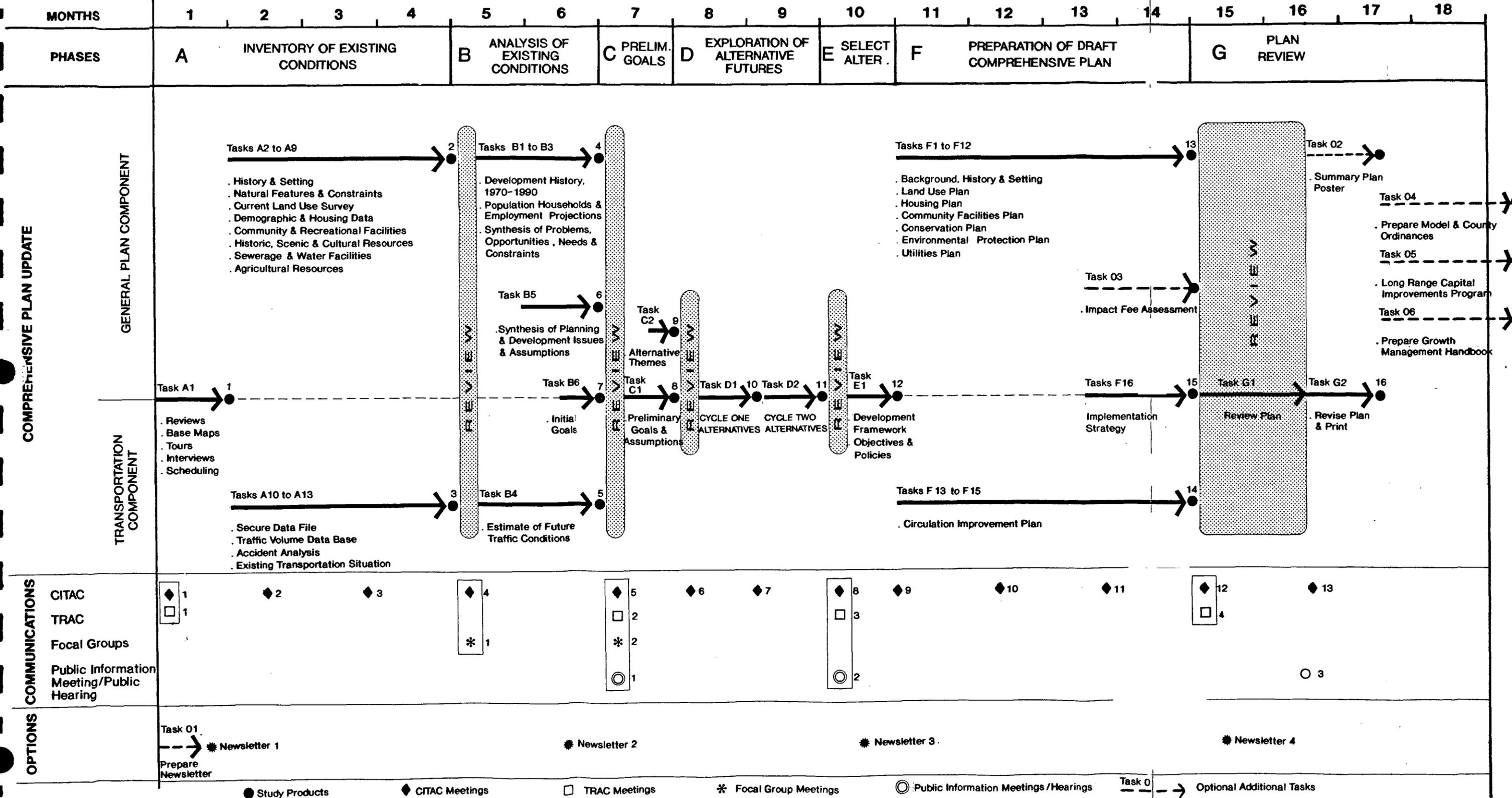
Phase E saw the sketching of a development framework for the future growth of the county, based upon the preferences of CITAC/TRAC members in the Alternatives phase. With confirmation of this direction provided by the second Public Information Meeting, the actual preparation of the Comprehensive Plan document was begun in Phase F. This work was prepared as preliminary drafts, reviewed by various bodies and organizations, and revised to final draft form.

Phase G encompassed the period of public reviews and hearings on the final draft of the Plan. Revisions were made based on those reviews and hearings and a camera-ready original of the Plan was prepared for printing and public distribution.

Figure 1.2

WORK PROGRAM SCHEDULE

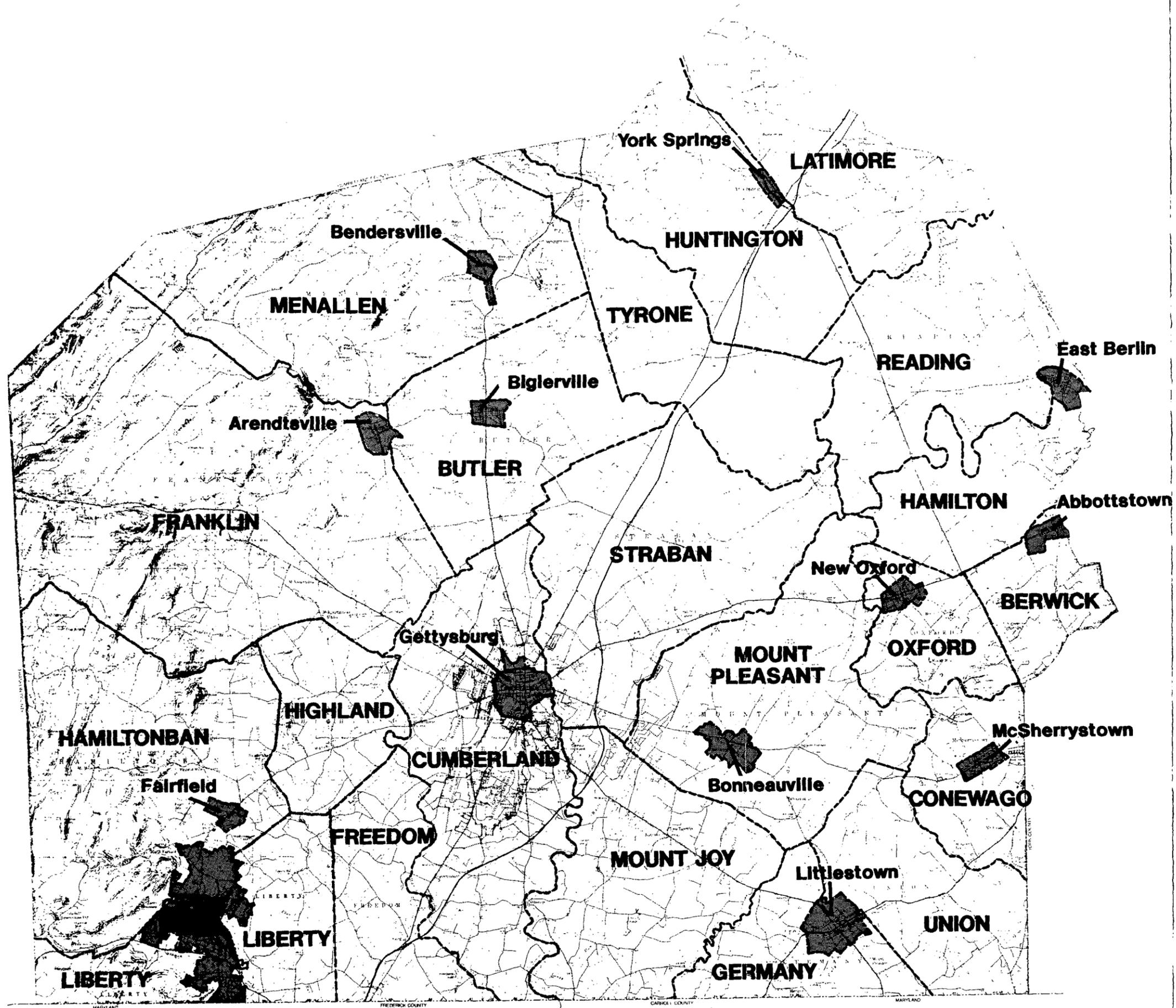
Adams County Comprehensive Plan Update



Study Products
 CITAC Meetings
 TRAC Meetings
 Focal Group Meetings
 Public Information Meetings/Hearings
 Task 0
 Optional Additional Tasks

ADAMS COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES

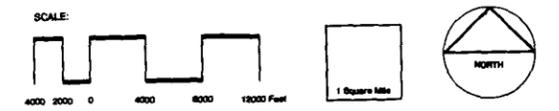
 Boroughs & TOWNSHIPS



ADAMS COUNTY

Pennsylvania

Comprehensive Plan Update



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 • Coyle, Kover & Associates
 • John Miller Associates
 • R.E. Wright Associates