

Establish Pine Grove Mills as a Gateway Community

Background

Two rural state highways intersect in Pine Grove Mills, making it a vehicular gateway to the State College Area for traffic coming from the south and west. The area is also a vehicular gateway to Rothrock State Park for traffic coming from the north, east, and west. A key consideration identified during the planning process is to strengthen the notion of Pine Grove Mills as a gateway to Rothrock and other areas in the State College Area. The gateway concept included establishing stronger non-vehicular access to Rothrock from portions of Pine Grove Mills and potentially using that access to leverage opportunities for businesses in the Village area. The gateway concept was also discussed at the local level because residents felt neighborhoods in Pine Grove Mills were disconnected from each other and the Village due to gaps in sidewalks, lack of bicycle facilities, and unsafe conditions on SR 45 and SR 26 that make it difficult and uncomfortable to walk or bike. Residents also expressed the need to address issues related to the ownership (public or private), condition, and maintenance of alleys.

Issues

- Pine Grove Mills is a cross road, and not a destination for locals and visitors to stop for lunch, dinner, other events.
- There are no obvious trail connections to Rothrock State Park and no real reason for hikers or bikers to stop in the Village area.
- Bike trails, paths or lanes are needed to provide non-vehicular access to the State College area.
- Speeding and truck traffic on State Routes 45 and 26 is a threat to safe pedestrian and bicyclist mobility.
- Gaps in the sidewalk system throughout Pine Grove Mills result in disconnected neighborhoods and no sidewalk connections are provided from neighborhoods to the Village area.
- Dedicated bicycle lanes or multi-use trails not available in most parts of Pine Grove Mills. The lack of on-street and off-street parking in the Village area creates difficulty for those travelling to do business locally and constrains the viability of new non-residential use in the Village area.
- The alleys in Pine Grove Mills are problematic because they are poorly maintained, and ownership is not clear.

Goal

Establish a signage and branding program for Pine Grove Mills.

There are a few entrance signs to Pine Grove Mills, but other than identifying the boundaries of the community, they do not tell any passerby anything about the community. The signage and branding program should tell people the focus of Pine Grove Mills. For example, if it Pine Grove Mills is a gateway to Rothrock, that should be clearly developed and communicated in a signage and branding program.

Objectives

- To demonstrate community support for reinvestment in the Village area
- To create an attractive destination for locals and visitors
- Encourage unique shops, restaurants and other local businesses to locate to the Village area
- Increase the viability of existing and new businesses
- Allow for the growth of community events that are open to the public
- To broadcast the feeling of small town, friendly community beyond the radius of Pine Grove Mills

Actions

- Obtain funding or grants to prepare a branding strategy for the Pine Grove Mills.

Goal

Improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety, mobility, and connectivity throughout, and beyond Pine Grove Mills.

Provide a transportation environment that enables safe movement for pedestrians and bicyclists from neighborhoods to Ferguson Township Elementary School, existing and proposed parks, the Village, and other priority destinations. Include access into Rothrock State Park and routes into the State College Area and integration with any CATA bus stops and school bus stops.

Objectives

- Provide safe mobility from neighborhoods to destinations throughout Pine Grove Mills.
- Maintain the character of the Village area by crafting regulations that respect historic resources, scale, and form of the existing Village.
- Support a mix of uses in the Village area including businesses, community facilities, and residential uses within walking distance to many homes.
- Support the business community along State Route 26 in the Village area to maintain and enhance the parking.
- Require new developments to install or support facilities that improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities

Actions

- Implement the Pine Grove Mills Pedestrian and Bicyclist Mobility Map (to be prepared with this Small Area Plan).

The items identified in the Pedestrian and Bicyclist Mobility Map will need to be implemented through a variety of methods. Ferguson Township will need to provide a role thorough the Planning Commission (or other committee) along with staff and the Board of Supervisors. Funding and grant funding for implementation could be sought from a variety of sources through the Township, the Centre Region Planning Agency, or Commonwealth entities.

Goal

Assess the need for additional parking on street and off-street parking in the Village Area.

The Village area has very little off-street and on street parking. Parking is always a critical issue for any business that relies on drive-by traffic to support themselves. More parking needs to be provided in the Village area to prompt and sustain growth in the businesses that may want to locate there. Additional parking needs to be planned in a manner that respects the character and heritage of the Village area while not infringing on existing neighborhoods.

Objectives

- Plan for viable parking opportunities in the Village area.
- Maintain the character, scale, and heritage of the Village area.
- Support changes to the zoning ordinance that would facilitate non-traditional parking options in the Village area.
- Provide parking in a location that facilitates safe pedestrian movement to the business area.

Actions

- **Complete a parking inventory and comprehensive study in the Village area.**
A comprehensive assessment of existing parking inventory, need, and potential improvement will quantify the deficiencies and recommend effective means to address the deficiencies. This study should be done so that it complements the branding strategy for the Village area. Changes to regulations in the Township should also be addressed.

Generally, grant funding is not available for this type of project, which will probably need to be funded by the Township. The work should be completed by a transportation engineering and planning consultant. Township staff, the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors should provide oversight.

Establish Pine Grove Mills as a Place that Values Community Events

Background

Pine Grove Mills is a community which already supports many local events. Among those are **church** services, dinners, youth group meetings, Bible studies, annual strawberry festivals, holiday celebrations, craft and rummage sales; **Lions' Club** meetings, dinners, soup sales, craft and rummage sales, turkey shoots; **VFW** dinners and sandwich sales; **Ferguson Township** Senior Citizens' meetings; the **Pine Grove Mills Farmers' Market** and **PGM Historical** presentations. Ferguson Township is also developing the **Cecil Irvin Park** in PGM which could become a site for a variety of family oriented activities on its completion.

Issues

- Need for better advertising of activities. If we want to attract more participants, we need to advertise events in ways other than posting signs on the PGM post office bulletin board, leaving flyers in the local bank, or publishing in the PGM Community in Action Newsletter. The PGM Farmers' Market already does a great job of advertising and reaching out to the community and perhaps their example could be followed.
- Signage restrictions limit the ability to advertise activities
- Lack of parking in PGM limits the ability to draw large numbers of visitors from outside of Pine Grove Mills to PGM events
- Lack of safe crosswalks limits the ability to safely travel on foot throughout the PGM community
- While churches are terrific sites for holding community events, as they provide not only indoor space but parking as well, we need to educate potential event attendees that holding an activity at a church site does not mean it is necessarily a "church activity" or that you have to be a member of that church to attend the activity
- A community use building and a facility with flush toilets would enhance the Cecil Irvin Park space for family and community use. The park itself would also need to be promoted more with signage.

Goal

Provide and promote more community events in Pine Grove Mills for not only PGM residents but also to draw more visitors to Pine Grove Mills.

Objectives

- To enhance the feeling of community in PGM for residents and visitors alike
- To draw more visitors to the area so that PGM is not just a place which people drive through to get elsewhere

Actions

- Increase and improve advertising for PGM events possibly through a PGM website and “inventive” signage in the PGM area
- Explore ways to increase parking in the PGM area, none of which would be easy fixes
- Work with PA DOT to improve crosswalks in PGM, especially at the intersection of Rts. 26 and 45 at the blinking traffic light

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Improve Safety and Provide for Multiple Modes of Transport on State Route 45 in Pine Grove Mills (formally called Traffic

Solutions/PennDOT/Vehicular)

Background

State Route 26 and State Route 45 are the primary vehicular routes to, and through Pine Grove Mills. Activity on these roads are dominated by motor vehicles, with inconsistent, poor quality, unsafe, or nonexistent choices for other modes of transportation. Changes that allow more transportation choices are important to help the Village area thrive, and to improve safety for people of all ages who live in and visit Pine Grove Mills. Residents who are mobility-impaired, walk, bike, take public transportation to and from the neighborhoods, Ferguson Elementary School, businesses, and parks in Pine Grove Mills have limited options other than driving a car. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) controls the rights-of-way for State Routes 26 and 45. Participation by PennDOT will be necessary to remove barriers to other forms of transport and to transition State rights-of-way so they can be safely shared to multiple modes of travel.

Issues

- Lack of definition between vehicular and pedestrian areas and no sidewalks in the vicinity of SR 45 and Meckley Drive is not pedestrian friendly.
- There are no marked pedestrian crossings at the intersection of SR 26 and SR 45 or SR 45 and Nixon Road.
- There are no sidewalks on the south side of SR 45 west of Deepwood Drive, or the north side west of the St. Paul Lutheran Church driveway.
- There are no sidewalks on the south side of SR 45 east of the Good Egg, or on the north side east of Rosemont Drive.
- Speeding and truck traffic on State Routes 45 and 26 is a threat to safe pedestrian and bicyclist mobility.
- Gaps in the sidewalk system throughout Pine Grove Mills result in disconnected neighborhoods and no sidewalk connections are provided from neighborhoods to the Village area.

Goal

Transition State Route 45 through Pine Grove Mills to a “complete street”

State Route 45 is plagued by negative impacts from vehicular traffic at the expense of other modes of transportation. The negative impacts of vehicular traffic on the quality of life in Pine Grove Mills could be reduced, and opportunities for multiple modes of transport, including walking, biking, and public transit should be substantially increased over time. SR 45, through Pine Grove Mills, should be transitioned to a complete street that recognizes the context of Pine Grove Mills and respects local goals that make the road safe for multiple modes of travel, reduce vehicular speed, and to provide a context-

sensitive design that supports small businesses in the Village area. The community should work towards incorporating elements that emphasize this portion of SR 45 as “main street” through a small rural village and a road that supports safe non-vehicular movement to and from neighborhoods, Ferguson Elementary School, parks, public places, and businesses.

Objectives

- Transition SR 45 from one end of Pine Grove Mills to the other to a complete street to enable safe access for all users including, pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and motorists.
- Provide sidewalks on both sides of SR 46 thorough the entire Pine Grove Mills Study Area
- Create a distinctive entrance to Pine Grove Mills from both ends of the Study Area to signify that it is a rural village.
- Reduce speed on SR 45 from one end of the Study Area to the other.

Actions

- Prepare a complete streets study for State Route 45 to facilitate the transition to a complete street.

A complete streets study should be led by a transportation planning consultant at the direction of the Township. Any study should be integrated with other sections of the Small Area Plan to assure there is connectivity for multiple modes of transportation to other parts of the Study Area and consistency with other goals and objectives. The study should address SR 45 from one end of the Study Area to the other end. There have been some improvements to sidewalk and lighting in parts of the Village which should also be noted. If no changes can be made to SR 45 in the Village area, the Township may want to consider phasing the study to address SR 45 east and west of the Village area.

Funding and grant opportunities...

Components that could potentially be included:

- Traffic calming including, but not limited to changes in paving, texture crosswalks, zebra striping, sharrows, and narrowing lanes.
- Improved CATA bus stops and shelters for safety and visibility.
- Direct coordination with PennDOT District 2 prior to and during the study to address their concerns and issues.
- Crosswalks in some locations when intersecting north-south streets that connect to neighborhoods.
- Distinctive entrances to Pine Grove Mills at both ends of the Study Area, including signs, landscape features, or other features to signify the entrance to Pine Grove Mills.
- Potential for “pop up” implementation in the study area to test real-world concepts and gauge community support of potential strategies. These temporary installations will help assess the success and scale of potential changes prior to proposed permanent installations.

Pine Grove Mills – A Vibrant Community

Background

This theme investigates how Pine Grove Mills can improve, attract, and retain small businesses that are local, unique, and could meet basic needs of both the local population and others that may travel through, or visit Pine Grove Mills. This also includes strategies to encourage revitalization, adaptive reuse, infill development, and new construction that respects the character of the community.

Issues

- There are no specific incentives attracting businesses that would foster the vibrant community
- Current zoning ordinances do not reflect or support the tenants of a vibrant community
- There is no single unifying business development organization within Ferguson Township
- Businesses are stand-alone and do not have a conduit for open communications amongst each other or with the township
- Tourism has not been fully explored or developed for Pine Grove Mills
- Pine Grove Mills has a finite amount of space for commercial businesses and non-profits

Goal

Tax breaks for locally owned businesses in the village zone

Objectives

- To incentivize businesses to move to the village
- Increase the number of businesses within the village
- Encourage the types of businesses that support the vibrant community vision to move to the village

Actions

- Work with local businesses and Ferguson Township's financial office to understand what tax breaks would be beneficial to businesses.

Goal

Zoning and ordinance (esp. signage) that supports/enables community and small scale

Objectives

- To support local businesses and non-profits by permitting appropriate signage
- Ensure the available land is utilized appropriately to meet the vision of a small and vibrant community

Actions

- Develop a zoning vision for the future of Pine Grove Mills that can support a road-map of getting from the current state of zoning regulations to the future state

Goal

“Small business sales days in PGM”

Objectives

- To promote a sense of community amongst the businesses in Pine Grove Mills
- To generate patronage of businesses within Pine Grove Mills

Actions

- Establish a business network for the enterprises within Pine Grove Mills

Goal

Promotion and funding of tourist oriented destinations (TODS) signage.

Objectives

- To increase awareness of attractions within the community
- To generate patronage of attractions within Pine Grove Mills

Actions

- Identify the attractions that would benefit from TODS signage

Goal

Connect with existing local businesses.

Objectives

- Establish a sense of business community amongst for-profit and not-for-profit, or non-profit organizations within Pine Grove Mills
- To generate patronage of businesses within Pine Grove Mills

Actions

- Establish a business network for the enterprises within Pine Grove Mills

Establish Pine Grove Mills as a Place that Embraces a Diversity of Neighborhoods

Background

Although Pine Grove Mills is a vehicular and recreational gateway, it is, in and of itself, a diversely vibrant community. Pine Grove Mills is the major population center of Ferguson Township and included within the [State College, Pennsylvania Metropolitan Statistical Area](#). Located strategically near Penn State University, the Borough of State College, Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rock Springs, Rothrock State Park and rural lands extending for miles, Pine Grove Mills is potentially a stopover spot and recreational center for those traveling through it, the closest point to purchase needed provisions for those living or enjoying recreation in the nearby areas, and commuters. It could also be a refreshing venue for those living nearby and its neighborhood residents as they choose to embrace the same amenities as commuters and visitors. This would require convenient inter-neighborhood access with a safe physical environment to be established.

Issues for Embracing Neighborhoods

- Lack of definitions and focused plans
- Lack of safe connectivity (road crosswalks, bike paths, bike ways, walk ways)
- Lack of signage / indicators (historic and directional)

Goal

The first step to Establish Pine Grove Mills as a Place that Embraces a Diversity of Neighborhoods is to define terms. The Pine Grove Mills Small Area Plan provides an inclusive outline of the neighborhoods. But, the term “neighborhood” has not heretofore been used precisely and needs commonly agreed upon spatial definition.

Objectives

For purposes of the Small Area Plan a minimal number of neighborhoods facilitate analyses, while allowing sufficient homogeneity to express their individualistic natures in general terms.

A dictionary definition of neighborhood is: "A district or area with distinctive characteristics." A major distinctive serving to identify neighborhoods within the Pine Grove Mills Area is building styles, which resulted from the periods in which the majority of structures clustered together were built. There are similarities in style among houses built from the beginning of the Village to the early 1900's. Mid-1900's houses exhibit a different style. Then, houses from the late 20th century and early 21st century are notable by their style. An architect could explain these transitions, but they are evident to any observer. Building structure identification of neighborhoods serves the purposes of the Small Area Plan and avoids socio-economic and zoning complications. Interestingly, residential areas around the core Village came into being in a roughly concentric pattern over the decades, area by area; thus making contiguous

neighborhoods identifiable. Future analyses of connectivity of parts within neighborhoods, between neighborhoods and between each neighborhood and the core Village can be more easily planned with outlines in place. Recommended Neighborhood designations: West End, Village, Crescent.

Actions

A Study Area map with outlines of designated neighborhoods is attached.

Goal

Diversity among Pine Grove Mills neighborhoods can become unity by construction of safe connecting bike paths, bike ways and walk ways.

Objectives

Pine Grove Mills has not benefitted from the network of bike paths and bike ways that have been a long standing objective of the Centre Region Planning Authority and Ferguson Township. Connection to existing municipal facilities and the state bike route on SR 45, along with inter-neighborhood bike path, bike way and walkway facilities would enhance village life and unify neighborhoods.

Actions

Complete the proposed bicycle facility northward from the state bike route at the intersection of E. Pine Grove Rd, Meckley Rd and Banyan drive. Construct northern and southern bike path, bike way and walkway facilities in two prongs from that same intersection through the Village and Crescent neighborhoods to rejoin the state bike route at the Ferguson Elementary School with a spur into the West End. A map of these vital facilities is attached.

Goal

Historic and directional signage and indicators would attract neighborhood residents and visitors to the core Village and inform them of significant local people and events. The interest generated would help reestablish the traditional quality of village life. Knowing about Pine Grove's history would generate a bond of identity throughout the neighborhoods. Details on these markers are the purview of other sections of this report. But, planning for the construction of the bike /hike path / way should include indicators, and signage. Identification of the outlines of the neighborhoods could also be included.

Conclusion

Residents expressed the need to address issues related to lack of bicycle facilities, incomplete sidewalks and unsafe conditions on SR 45 and SR 26. These make it difficult and uncomfortable to walk or bike within and among neighborhoods. A bike /hike path / way loop the length of the Village on both north

and south sides of SR 45 would greatly relieve these concerns and enhance other developments by creating Pine Grove Mills as a fun, family safe place to visit.

DRAFT

Pine Grove Mills History and Heritage

Background

Pine Grove Mills is an historic village with a recorded history dating back to the late 1700's. In its heyday, the village was a bustling town, home to various stores, service businesses and a hotel. The community enjoyed regular events such as parades and band performances and was even home to a Pine Grove Mills baseball team. The village thrived as residents interacted and with one another regular in business and pleasure.

Today, buildings, sites and memorabilia remain and have been catalogued by local residents. Written collections have been completed on the Union cemetery, its surroundings and those laid to rest there in three bound books. As well, notable homes, buildings and historical narratives have been recorded in an additional set of three books. A general history of Pine Grove Mills was written by Felicia Mulley. Other historic materials that exist include photographs, deeds, diplomas and furniture.

This section of the small area plan will address the community's desire to preserve and share these historic resources.

Goal

Put the rich history of Pine Grove Mills on display.

Objectives:

- Share the accumulated knowledge of this area with local residents as well as visitors.
- Display collected items such as furniture from the Academy, lands deeds and photographs in an area that is free and open to the public.
- Collaborate with local groups.
- Create an online presence of Pine Grove Mills history.
- Share the written documentation of Pine Grove Mills history as collected in the PGM book series.
- Explore connections between Pine Grove Mills history and state and national actors or events – i.e. graduates of the Academy, Helen Keller visit, Don Kepler's survival training for the Peace Corps and baseball connections.

Actions

- Present history on a Pine Grove Mills website or a Pine Grove Mills page hosted on the Ferguson Township website.
- Create educational materials that will explain and promote the heritage of Pine Grove Mills.
- Support the creation of an educational display area by creating zoning in Ferguson Township that will make museums allowable spaces in the village.
- Identify and create partnerships between local groups that have laid a foundation for this goal: PGM Community in Action, local churches.
- Discuss joining historic organizations to promote Pine Grove Mill as an historic place: Centre County Historical Society, National Parks Service.
- Consult with county, state and federal historic preservation groups and Ferguson Township on funding for the creation, maintenance and promotion of the displays or museum spaces.

- Seek funding to support additional prints of Pine Grove Mills Historic District Book Series, Pine Grove Mills Union Cemetery Book Series and Pine Grove Mills: History of a Hometown 1801-2001.
- Seek funding to establish placement of PGM book series in local libraries.

Goal

Connect history to community events

Objective:

- Offer interactive, educational events in the village.
- Provide opportunities to share the stories of Pine Grove Mills.
- Reimagine and revitalize social activities from Pine Grove Mills history such as the community band, baseball team, shows and parades.
- Create an historical walking tour that is safe and informative.
- Support events like the Sit and Stroll.
- Share historical information with local schools.

Actions

- Identify specific sites that can be or are used as community gathering locations.
- Create a 'map tour' of historic places in the village.
- Address difficulties of pedestrian travel in the town 'diamond' with PennDOT and Ferguson Township.
- Inform residents of events through existing and new communication tools: a Pine Grove Mills website or a Pine Grove Mills page hosted on the Ferguson Township website, Village newsletter.
- Work with Ferguson Township Elementary School to share history of the school with current students, families and staff.
- Work with Pine Grove Mills Farmers Market to identify times for special events with an historical theme.
- Connect with Grange organizations to participate in special events.

Goal

Preserve the historic character and architecture of Pine Grove Mills

Objectives

- Protect historic buildings from decay or demolition while allowing for changes in use and freedom to make alterations to buildings.
- Encourage repurposing of existing structures, i.e. a home used for a commercial use, which also echoes the past uses of many of the homes in the village.
- Work with property owners to educate and support maintenance of historic structures.
- Share information on history of Pine Grove Mills places with the public.
- Collaborate with Township, County and State resources to investigate historic district designations that will not impede revitalization plans or landowner rights.

- Consider governmental strategies to decrease likelihood of demolition or redevelopment of historical structures.

Actions

Create and share educational materials on historic Pine Grove Mills sites. Promote these among the public (including homeowners, government, educations, realtors, and local businesses).

- Provide specialized educational materials to residents and owners of historic sites (as identified in Historic District Properties Books) when bought, sold or proposed development occurs.
- Create digital inventory of historic properties and sites.
- Nominate selected sites to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Work with Ferguson Township to create zoning ordinances that permit desired uses for existing structures.
- Consider, and subsequently if advised, develop and implement regulatory guidelines for remodeling and redevelopment of historic places. Possibilities include a design review board with advisory or mandatory guidelines.
- Consider, and subsequently if advised, develop and implement township ordinances for the Village Zoning district that align with preservation goals. Examples: an ordinance in the village district that would limit or delay demolition of structures, tax incentives to restore sites rather than redevelop.