



# A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Study Background

The City of Hermitage has a history unlike most other Pennsylvania cities. It varies widely from its municipal neighbors such as Sharon or Farrell not only in the way it has developed, but more importantly, in the *timing* of its development. Originally a township until 1974, Hermitage did not become a city – at least in name – until 1984. Since the early 1960s it has been one of the largest communities in the Shenango Valley, smaller only than the City of Sharon.

Hermitage's growth period came during the post-World War II development boom, which took place across America during the 1950s and 60s. The area grew from 6,725 in 1950 to 15,421 by the end of the 1960s. The area's lack of an urban form is a result of its time of peak development, an era that is marked primarily by the emphasis on the private automobile. Hermitage quickly developed on an auto-centric pattern for residents and businesses fleeing the urban centers of older, more established communities in the region for more rural surroundings.

As a result, Hermitage at the millennium is a community that finds itself at a crossroads for transportation and land use planning. One weakness of the City – as identified by City officials during the most recent update of its Comprehensive Plan – is the lack of a strong identity within the region. The pending construction work on widening PA 18 North between U.S. 62 and the South Pymatuning Township line has only heightened interest and awareness of the development pressures the City faces, and the choices that must be made in addressing the future of the community with respect to transportation and land use.

### 1.2 Study Purpose

The community is ultimately a product of its development patterns, and nothing shapes a community more than transportation. There are many issues facing Hermitage residents and officials; coordinating land use and transportation figures prominently among these. The purpose of this study is to identify a community vision for the future of Hermitage that will allow planners and decision-makers to advance positive recommendations for how the community should look and function in the future. This report provides the City with a plan that accommodates anticipated growth, mitigates development impacts, and identifies sources for funding of recommended improvements. Ultimately, planners hope that this plan will improve the quality of life for Hermitage residents by promoting tools for the logical and coordinated accommodation of growth that the City is sure to experience. This study was not about limiting or eliminating growth, but providing ways to manage it in ways that are beneficial not only for the City, but the larger region that depends on the performance of PA 18 North as well.

#### Study Purpose

"...to identify a community vision for the future of Hermitage that will allow planners and decision-makers to advance positive recommendations for how the community should look and function in the future."



## 1.3 Study Goals

The project team identified the following goals, or “success factors” for the report as follows:

- Propose recommendations that improve safety and the efficiency of traffic flow in the study area.
- Improve access management.
- Identify ways of improving bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation in the study area.
- Identify if new traffic signals will be necessary and their locations.
- Identify traffic improvements where needed.
- Provide the City with an overall concept for the evolvement of its street network and its degree of connectivity.
- Promote recommendations that emphasize the *quality* of land development in the study area, as opposed to the *quantity* of development.
- Provide recommendations that will allow residents other transportation options than the private automobile.
- Improve the “livability” of the community through both tangible transportation improvements, and intangibly through improved language in land use control ordinances, etc.

## 1.4 Methodology

The recommended transportation/land use scenario and resultant recommendations are the product of a process that began with the study team’s kickoff meeting on September 29, 2000. The study team adopted the project scope, which included a 10-step process towards developing this final report, as follows:

1. Finalization of the work plan
2. Identification of major stakeholders
3. Identification of existing transportation/traffic conditions
4. Identification of existing land use
5. Public Involvement #1 (including surveys, student visioning, focus group meetings, etc.)
6. Development and testing of community scenarios
7. Selection of the preferred scenario
8. Creation of the draft recommendations
9. Public Involvement #2 (intercept surveys, public meeting, etc.)



## 10. Presentation of the Final Report to Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) and City Commissioners

These steps are described in more detail elsewhere in this report. (See also project flow chart in the appendix.)

## 2.0 Glossary of Terms

The following land use, zoning, and transportation terms are used throughout the report and are defined here for reference purposes.

**Agriculture use** - the production, keeping, or maintenance, for sale, lease or personal use of plants and animals useful to man including but not limited to forages and sod crops, grains and seed crops; dairy animals and dairy products, poultry and poultry products; livestock including beef cattle, sheep, swine, horses, ponies, mules, or goats or any mutations or hybrids thereof, including the breeding and grazing of any or all of such animals; bees and apiary products, fur animals; trees and forest products; fruits of all kind, including grapes, nuts, and berries; vegetables; nursery, floral, ornamental, and greenhouse products; or lands devoted to a soil conservation or forestry management program.

**Area and Bulk requirements** - a zoning term that refers to regulations that dictate the physical dimensions of a building. **Area** refers to the total area taken on a horizontal plane at the level of the ground surrounding the main building and all necessary buildings, exclusive of uncovered porches, terraces, and steps. **Bulk** refers to the cubic volume of a building.

**Buildout** – projected development of the buildable land in the PA 18 North study area. For this study’s purposes the buildout scenario considered transportation impacts of all of the land being developed as currently zoned.

**Commercial land use** - land use types that generally include establishments engaged in retail trade or services.

**Gross building area** - refers to the actual amount of land that may be built upon in a given lot. The gross building area is the lot size minus setback and open space requirements.

**Impervious coverage** - refers to the percent of the lot area that does not absorb water. Impervious coverage can be determined by dividing the impervious area of the lot by the total lot area.

**Industrial use** - this land use generally includes: (1) establishments engaged in transforming raw materials into new products, usually for distribution to other regions and not sold on-site, and (2) establishments engaged in wholesale trade, storage, or distribution with little or no retail trade or service. Because of their shipping, storage and processes that create noise, smoke, smells, or light pollution, industrial uses should not be located in close proximity to residential areas.





**Institutional use** - for purposes of this study, institutional uses refer to schools. Other common uses of institutional land include personal care centers, hospitals, places of worship, educational institutions, and government facilities.

**Level of service** - a traffic engineering term used by the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) that rates a roadway or an intersection's ability to handle traffic flow. The system uses a rating system of A (best) through F (worst). A roadway's level of service is measured by comparing the volume of traffic against the capacity of the roadway. An intersection's level of service is measured by total control delay per vehicle at the intersection.

**Light industrial use** - manufacturing or storage uses that are characterized by uses of large sites, attractive buildings and inoffensive processes and can be compatible with neighboring residential uses. Differs from industrial by not having processes that have byproducts such as smell, noise, light, having larger lot sizes that allow screening techniques to be used between residential areas.

**Lot** - a designated parcel, tract, or area of land established by a plot or otherwise as permitted by law and to be used, developed, or built upon as a unit.

**Office land use** - a land use that involves administrative, clerical, financial, governmental, medical or professional operations.

**Open space** - any parcel or area of land set aside, dedicated, or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment or for the use and enjoyment of owners and occupants of land adjoining or neighboring such open space. Developers may be required to meet an open space requirement that ensures that a certain percentage of the lot area will remain as open space.

**Peak period** - traffic engineering term that refers to the time period when a certain roadway carries the most vehicles. Peak periods usually occur in the morning, 6 a.m. - 9 a.m., and in the evening, 3 p.m. - 6 p.m. The peaking characteristics of a roadway coincide with the time when the roadway sees the highest use, usually but not limited to the morning and evening rush hours. Roadways and the associated facilities should be designed to satisfactorily handle the peak period.

**Retail land use** - land use in which merchandise or goods are sold to the general public for personal or household consumption and rendering services incidental to the sale of such goods. An important component of a retail establishment is that it buys goods for resale.

**Transportation analysis zone (TAZ)** - a delineated area that has uniform land use, population/employment characteristics in which trip generation and distribution will be further analyzed.

**Vacant land** - this land use type includes lands that are not presently developed, such as wooded areas, unimproved areas not used for agriculture or recreation, and improved areas or buildings that are not occupied.



**Warehousing / distribution center** – a break in bulk point for freight movement characterized by large storage buildings with convenient access to transportation facilities.

### 3.0 Assessment of Existing Conditions in the Study Area

This section describes the existing land use, zoning and transportation conditions in the study area.

#### 3.1 Land Use

The evolution of suburban development has contributed to the rise of congestion and travel delay. With most traffic problems seemingly immune to quick fixes or projects that add capacity, planners and public officials alike have come to realize the need for sound land use planning and its benefits for the transportation system.

As in other suburban environments, Hermitage's development pattern has contributed to problems in its transportation system. Currently, several notable land use features characterize the City:

- A lack of a definable downtown area with no pedestrian facilities
- Large areas of similar uses
- Large home lots with limited direct accessibility to public parks
- Wide streets with no on-street parking
- Large, undeveloped parcels

##### 3.1.1 Existing Land Use

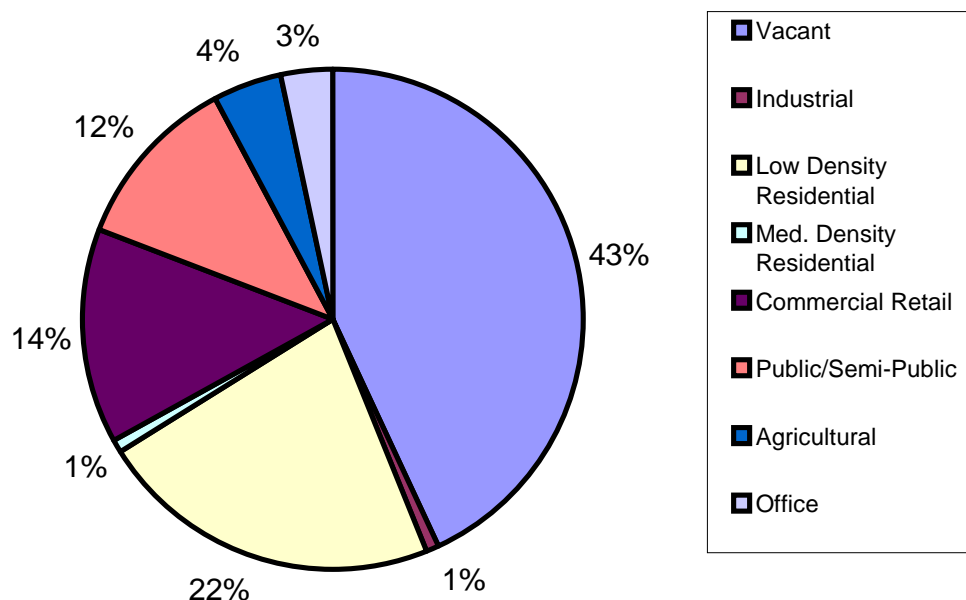
The study area (*see Existing Land Use map*), as arbitrarily defined by the City, includes 2.37 of Hermitage's 30.1 square miles, or roughly 1,517 acres. The most remarkable land use characteristic is the vast quantity of vacant undeveloped land that entails 43 percent of the entire study area. Perhaps more than any other land use or study issue, the future development of this vacant land will determine not only the performance of PA 18, but the overall character of the community as well. A key study focus was identifying how the community can balance its approach to both commercial and residential growth while managing low-density sprawl. Prominent parcels include the 70-acre lot north of the YMCA, and the land north of D'Onofrio's west of PA 18.



Typical newer residential land development in the study area.



**Figure 1: Study Area Land Use Proportions**



Source: City of Hermitage, Gannett Fleming GIS.

**Residential uses** comprise 335 acres, or 22 percent of the study area. This is proportional to the City as a whole. The majority of residential uses are single-family detached, built in new subdivisions off state and secondary roads. The transportation network within these subdivisions such as Hunter’s Woods, McConnell’s Upper Woods Phases 1 and 2 and Ridgewood Drive is discontinuous, providing only one means of ingress/egress onto the larger, collector roads and do not provide through access from one neighborhood to another. These relatively newer residential developments are “inward-oriented,” and also do not feature any sidewalks, recreation areas, or “tot lots” as part of their development. Medium-density residential units within the study area are limited to Kilgore Trailer Park off of East State Street (U.S. 62) and Hickory Hills Apartments off North Keel Ridge Road.

**Commercial Retail** uses consume 14 percent of the study area. The study area boasts a concentration of nationally known, big-box “chain” stores adjacent to the intersection of U.S. 62 and PA 18. A smaller concentration of commercial uses is clustered near the intersection of PA 18 and PA 518 (Lamor Road). A majority of these uses are locally-owned.

Given the study area’s location within the heart of the City, it should be expected that **public and semi-public** uses of land such as schools and municipal concerns garner a disproportionately greater share of the study area (12 percent) than the



City as a whole. These areas host the Hickory School District's educational campus of elementary and middle schools, as well as the high school. Other uses include MCAR, the armory, YMCA, City offices, and the Rodney B. White Olympic Park. Commercial development pressure has been eroding this Institutional zoning district.

**Agricultural** uses are limited to the northern portion of the study area, adjacent to the South Pymatuning Township line.

Fifty acres, or approximately three percent of the study area is used as **Commercial Office**. There is a high concentration of medical offices at the intersection of PA 18 and Highland Road, with the rest mixed with the more heavily commercial retail uses by the U.S. 62/PA 18 intersection. There has been pressure within the community for converting some existing single-family homes with frontage along PA 18 to this type of use, given the ongoing commercialization of the corridor.

Hermitage has just three prime **industrial** sites left with adequate highway access. Within the study area, there exists just one industrial property – an 11-acre site off Lamor Road, which hosts the Joy Cone Company. This industrial use is actually a non-conforming use within a residentially-zoned area, but offers a good example of how buffering can protect the value of surrounding homeowners from more intensive uses of land.

## 3.2 Transportation

The study area is served by a hierarchy of roadways primarily served by two major highway facilities that intersect near the southern boundary: U.S. 62 (State Street) and PA 18. Other collectors include Highland Road, North Keel Ridge Road and Dutch Lane as well as PA 518 (Sharpsville Road). The role of PA 18 in the region is particularly notable, in that it not only provides for the movement of local traffic, but serves as the region's sole north-south highway to two economically important centers, the Shenango Valley and the Greenville-Reynolds development area to the north of the study area.

*"PA 18 is the  
future of  
Hermitage."*

- Joe D'Onofrio

### 3.2.1 Functional Classification

Table 1 shows the functional classification of highways in the PA 18 North Corridor study area. The hierarchy of classifications (from highest to lowest) includes principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors and locally-classified roadways (not shown). State, regional, county, municipal planners and officials use the functional classification system in planning highway improvements. Priority is naturally given to those highways that have higher classifications.



**Table 1: Functional Classification of Roadways Within the Study Area**

Functional Classification	Roadway
Urban Extensions	U.S. 62
	PA 18
Principal arterials	Highland Road
Minor arterials	Keel Ridge Road
	Lamor Road
Urban collector	Dutch Lane

Source: Hermitage Comprehensive Plan (1993)

### 3.2.2 2001-2004 TIP

The Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study (SVATS) is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Hermitage and Mercer County. The MPO is required to develop and maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the region. SVATS manages the development of its TIP with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). The TIP is a fiscally constrained listing of projects programmed for the first four years of PennDOT's 12 Year Program. Eighty percent of the projects listed are typically for maintaining the existing system. The listing is updated every two years and is amended and modified at various times in between major updates.

The City currently has several highway and bridge projects on the region's 2001 TIP; however, few, if any have the potential of providing sustained relief from traffic congestion or promoting better connectivity in the City. (The PA 18 widening project has already been programmed for construction in 2001 and thus is not part of the 2001 TIP.) Table 2 provides an overview of current study area projects on the region's TIP.

**Table 2: Hermitage Projects on the MPO's 2001-2004 TIP**

TIP Project	Phase*	Cost (\$000s)
Lamor Road/ Pine Hollow (safety)	E (2001)	1,300
Lamor Road/ Pine Hollow (safety)	R (2004)	1,000
Highland Road (Congestion Mitigation)	E (2001)	100

\*E – Engineering, R – Right-of-way acquisition, C – Construction. Source: MCRPC, 7/26/00

Development of the 2003 TIP will begin during fall 2001 with project solicitations coming from MCRPC. From there, the State Transportation



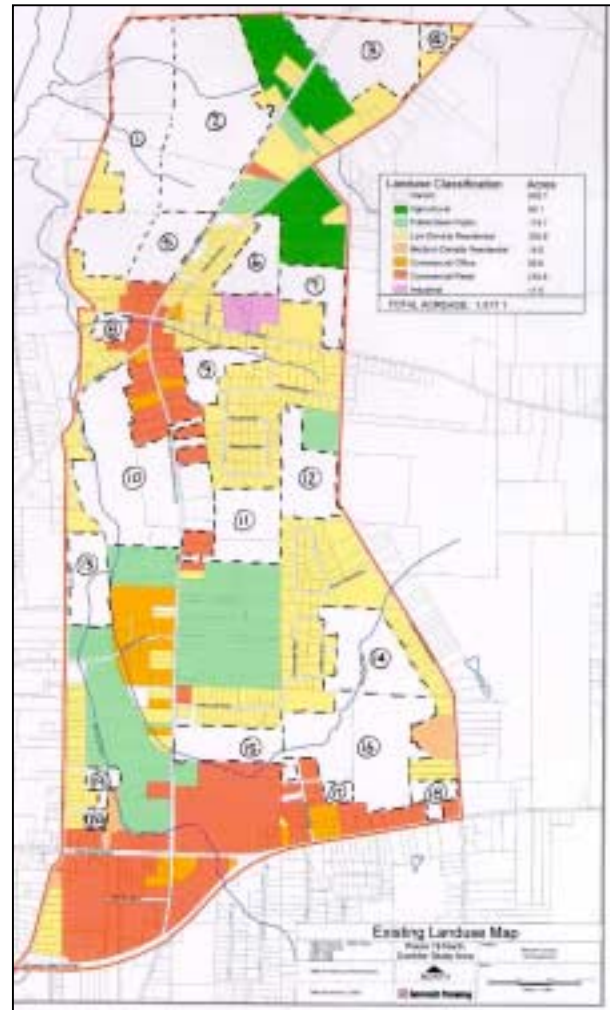


Commission (STC) reviews candidate projects for approval and placement on the Commonwealth's 12 Year Program.

### 3.2.3 Traffic Projections

As Part of this study, traffic projections were performed using the land uses and sizes determined for each scenario. The study area was divided into 20 Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ's). The type and amount of development in each zone was determined for the full build scenario with existing zoning in place. Maximum densities were assumed under this scenario. The type and amount of development in each zone was determined for the public preferred scenario based on input received during the various public and focus group meetings.

The number of vehicle trips generated by each TAZ was based on the data for each respective land use contained in the Trip Generation manual, Sixth Edition, published by ITE. Formulae and rates are provided for each land use based on the square feet per dwelling units. This data is used to determine the number of average daily trip ends, number of vehicle trips occurring during the A.M. peak hour, P.M. peak hour and Saturday peak hour. The manual also provides data on the proportion of trips entering and exiting a use during these peak hours, as well as the percentage of "pass-by" trips a particular land use attracts. Pass-by trips are trips attracted to a development from a traffic stream adjacent to the development. Pass-by trips are not new trips being added to the roadway network. Typically, retail and service (i.e. gas stations, banks, restaurants, convenience markets) uses attract pass-by trips.



A map of Traffic Analysis Zones, or "TAZ's" was prepared to aid in assigning future trip generation rates, based on expected development.

A small percentage (10%) of trips generated by each TAZ containing commercial uses was assumed to have multiple destinations within those zones. These "shared" trips typically occur when large amounts of retail and service uses are present. These trips were deducted from the total trips generated.

The number of vehicle trips generated by each TAZ during the A.M., P.M. and Saturday peak hours are presented on Table 4 for the public preferred scenario.

The projected vehicle trips generated by each TAZ were routed through the intersections within the study corridor in accordance with existing traffic patterns and volumes, while taking into account possible access points and roadway connections. Existing traffic volumes were increased by 1% per year



compounded for 20 years, to account for “through” traffic growth in the corridor. This growth represents projected traffic not generated by additional development in the study area. The projection horizon year is 2020.

### **3.2.4 Traffic Analysis**

The projected volumes for each scenario were analyzed based on the methodologies contained in the Highway Capacity Manual published by the Federal Highway Administration. A capacity analysis for each intersection within the study area was performed to determine the adequacy of existing geometry for each scenario. Possible access points, new roadways and realignments along PA 18 were analyzed as well. Levels of service (LOS), a performance ranking system ranging from LOS A (minimal delays) to LOS F (long delays/failure), were determined for each intersection. Generally, PennDOT designs intersections and roadways to function at a minimum LOS C in rural areas and LOS D in urban areas. Potential mitigation (i.e. additional lanes, signalization) for any deficiencies identified in the analysis was developed to attain a minimum LOS D.

### **3.2.5 Findings**

The number of vehicle trips projected during an average weekday in all TAZ’s under the full build scenario were within 1,000 of the number projected under the preferred scenario (77,512 vs. 76,730). The number of A.M. and P.M. peak hour trips projected were also comparable (within 15%).

The number of vehicle trips projected during a Saturday under the preferred scenario was higher than under the full build scenario.

Three TAZ’s (2, 10 & 15) generate two-thirds of the vehicle trips out of the twenty zones projected in either scenario. These three zones are anticipated to contain a business park and variable commercial uses totaling nearly 3 million square feet.

The following are existing and projected average daily traffic (ADT) volumes at two locations along PA 18:

**Table 3: Existing and Projected ADTs**

<b>Public Location</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>2020 Full Build</b>	<b>2020 Preferred</b>
PA 18 N of Shenango Valley Mall	19,600	43,700	42,900
PA 18 S of Dutch Lane	14,930	32,500	31,700

Increases in the ADT for PA 18 of 112% to 123% are projected.

The principal findings of the traffic analysis are as follows:



- Similar mitigation is needed under either the full build or public preferred scenario.
- To maintain minimum LOS D, PA 18 would need to be widened between U.S. 62 (Shenango Valley Freeway) and the Shenango Valley Mall driveway to provide three through lanes in each direction.
- An additional through lane is needed on State Street (S. R. 3008) eastbound from PA 18 to the Shenango Valley Freeway.
- Connecting McConnell Road with North Keel Ridge Road (S. R. 3011) would provide for improved access in this residential area. A minimal amount of through traffic is projected to use it.
- An east-west connector between PA 18 and North Keel Ridge Road through TAZ's 10-11-12 would create an improved "grid" network, however the adjacent development is not anticipated to contribute a large amount of traffic.
- Mitigating vehicle queuing is the primary concern at the PA 18/Dutch Lane and PA 18/Lamor Road/Valley View Road intersections. One possible alternative is to realign Dutch Lane to intersect further south along PA 18. Similarly, a connection from Valley View Road to PA 18 to the north of Lamor Road would mitigate queuing caused from the proximity of Valley View Road to PA 18 at Lamor Road.



McConnell Road, looking west towards PA 18.

Future signalization would most likely be needed at the following intersections:

- PA 18 and McConnell Road
- PA 18 and potential east-west connector
- PA 18 and potential realigned Dutch Lane
- PA 18 and potential Valley View connector/business park access
- PA 18 and potential business park access

These findings should be considered preliminary for discussion purposes. Additional mitigation and alternatives may be developed pending additional input from the study groups. See the Ultimate Scenario Map for a graphic of these recommended improvements.



**Table 4 - Ultimate Scenario - AM Peak Hour Trip Generation Summary**

TAZ NUMBER	LAND USE	GROSS ACREAGE	ADJUSTED ACREAGE	SIZE	ITE CODE	NUMBER OF VEHICLE TRIPS GENERATED							
						AVERAGE WEEKDAY TRIP ENDS	A.M. PEAK HOUR						TOTAL
							ENTER			EXIT			
							NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	
1	Single Family Detached Housing	83	62.25	136 Units	210	1,251	25	0	0	74	0	0	99
2	Variable Commercial	97	87.3	950,700 S.F.	820	19,527	152	62	24	97	40	16	391
3	Agricultural	38	-	38 Acres	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Single Family Detached Housing	5	3.75	8 Units	210	74	1	0	0	4	0	0	5
5	Variable Commercial	22	11	191,660 S.F.	820	3,891	30	12	5	20	8	3	78
6	Single Family Detached Housing	21	15.75	34 Units	210	313	6	0	0	18	0	0	24
7	Single Family Detached Housing	19	14.25	31 Units	210	285	6	0	0	17	0	0	23
8	Single Family Detached Housing	5.6	4.2	12 Units	210	70	1	0	0	5	0	0	6
9	Single Family Detached Housing	16	12	26 Units	210	239	5	0	0	14	0	0	19
10	Variable Commercial	90	45	784,080 S.F.	820	16,293	125	51	19	80	33	13	321
11	City Park	30	15	15 Acres	411	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Single Family Detached Housing	28	21	46 Units	210	423	8	0	0	25	0	0	33
13	Single Family Detached Housing	22	16.5	36 Units	210	331	6	0	0	19	0	0	25
14	Single Family Detached Housing	39	29.25	64 Units	210	589	12	0	0	35	0	0	47
15	Variable Commercial	25	12.5	1,306,800 S.F.	820	27,155	209	85	33	134	55	21	537
16	Single Family Detached Housing	69	48.3	187 Units	210	1,098	15	0	0	69	0	0	84
17	Variable Commercial	3.8	1.9	198,630 S.F.	820	4,128	32	13	5	20	8	3	81
18	Variable Commercial	7.5	3.75	392,040 S.F.	820	8,147	63	25	10	40	16	6	160
19	Single Family Detached Housing	3	2.7	8 Units	210	47	1	0	0	3	0	0	4
20	Variable Commercial	2	1	104,540 S.F.	820	2,172	17	7	3	11	4	2	44
TOTAL						86,057	714	255	99	685	164	64	1,981

**TABLE NOTES**

Number of vehicle trips generated determined through the use of the methodologies presented in Trip Generation, 6th Edition published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

- (1) Pass-by trip percentage of 26% for a shopping center during the A.M. peak hour is assumed to be the same as the pass-by trip percentage during the Saturday peak hour determined through the use of the Trip Generation Handbook Table 5.5 published by ITE, page 45.
- (2) Shared trips are trips having more than one destination within the proposed developments in each TAZ. A 10% shared trip percentage is assumed for the A.M. peak hour.

Source: Analysis by Trans Associates.

**Table 5 (Cont'd) - Ultimate Scenario - PM Peak Hour Trip Generation Summary**

TAZ NUMBER	LAND USE	GROSS ACREAGE	ADJUSTED ACREAGE	SIZE	ITE CODE	NUMBER OF VEHICLE TRIPS GENERATED							
						AVERAGE WEEKDAY TRIP ENDS	P.M. PEAK HOUR						TOTAL
							ENTER			EXIT			
							NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	
1	Single Family Detached Housing	83	62.25	136 Units	210	1,266	82	0	0	46	0	0	128
2	Variable Commercial	97	87.3	950,700 S.F.	820	19,527	506	307	91	548	333	98	1,883
3	Agricultural	38	-	38 Acres	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Single Family Detached Housing	5	3.75	8 Units	210	74	5	0	0	3	0	0	8
5	Variable Commercial	22	11	191,660 S.F.	820	3,891	102	62	18	110	67	20	379
6	Single Family Detached Housing	21	15.75	34 Units	210	317	20	0	0	12	0	0	32
7	Single Family Detached Housing	19	14.25	31 Units	210	289	19	0	0	10	0	0	29
8	Single Family Detached Housing	5.6	4.2	12 Units	210	70	4	0	0	2	0	0	6
9	Single Family Detached Housing	16	12	26 Units	210	242	15	0	0	9	0	0	24
10	Variable Commercial	90	45	784,080 S.F.	820	15,917	417	253	75	452	275	81	1,553
11	City Park	30	15	15 Acres	411	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Single Family Detached Housing	28	21	46 Units	210	428	28	0	0	16	0	0	44
13	Single Family Detached Housing	22	16.5	36 Units	210	335	22	0	0	12	0	0	34
14	Single Family Detached Housing	39	29.25	64 Units	210	596	38	0	0	22	0	0	60
15	Variable Commercial	25	12.5	1,306,800 S.F.	820	26,528	695	422	124	754	458	135	2,588
16	Single Family Detached Housing	69	48.3	187 Units	210	1,092	68	0	0	33	0	0	101
17	Variable Commercial	3.8	1.9	198,630 S.F.	820	4,032	106	64	19	115	69	20	393
18	Variable Commercial	7.5	3.75	392,040 S.F.	820	7,958	208	127	37	226	137	40	775
19	Single Family Detached Housing	3	2.7	8 Units	210	47	3	0	0	2	0	0	5
20	Variable Commercial	2	1	104,540 S.F.	820	2,122	56	34	10	60	37	11	208
TOTAL						86,057	2,414	1,288	379	2,442	1,395	410	8,328

TABLE NOTES

Number of vehicle trips generated determined through the use of the methodologies presented in Trip Generation, 6th Edition published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

- (1) Pass-by trip percentage of 34% for a shopping center during the P.M. peak hour determined through the use of the Trip Generation Handbook Table 5.5 published by ITE, page 45.
- (2) Shared trips are trips having more than one destination within the proposed developments in each TAZ. A 10% shared trip percentage is assumed for the P.M. peak hour.

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Source: Analysis by Trans Associates.

**Table 5 (Cont'd) - Ultimate Scenario - Saturday Peak Hour Trip Generation Summary**

TAZ NUMBER	LAND USE	GROSS ACREAGE	ADJUSTED ACREAGE	SIZE	ITE CODE	NUMBER OF VEHICLE TRIPS GENERATED							
						AVERAGE Saturday TRIP ENDS	SATURDAY PEAK HOUR						
							ENTER			EXIT			TOTAL
							NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	NEW	PASS- BY	INTERNAL	
1	Single Family Detached Housing	83	62.25	136 Units	210	1,327	67	0	0	57	0	0	124
2	Variable Commercial	97	87.3	950,700 S.F.	820	24,604	846	343	132	780	316	122	2,539
3	Agricultural	38	-	38 Acres	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Single Family Detached Housing	5	3.75	8 Units	210	78	4	0	0	4	0	0	8
5	Variable Commercial	22	11	191,660 S.F.	820	4,960	170	69	27	157	64	25	512
6	Single Family Detached Housing	21	15.75	34 Units	210	332	17	0	0	14	0	0	31
7	Single Family Detached Housing	19	14.25	31 Units	210	303	15	0	0	13	0	0	28
8	Single Family Detached Housing	5.6	4.2	12 Units	210	68	3	0	0	3	0	0	6
9	Single Family Detached Housing	16	12	26 Units	210	254	13	0	0	11	0	0	24
10	Variable Commercial	90	45	784,080 S.F.	820	20,292	697	283	109	642	261	100	2,092
11	City Park	30	15	15 Acres	411	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Single Family Detached Housing	28	21	46 Units	210	449	22	0	0	19	0	0	41
13	Single Family Detached Housing	22	16.5	36 Units	210	351	18	0	0	15	0	0	33
14	Single Family Detached Housing	39	29.25	64 Units	210	625	31	0	0	27	0	0	58
15	Variable Commercial	25	12.5	1,306,800 S.F.	820	33,820	1,163	472	182	1,072	435	167	3,490
16	Single Family Detached Housing	69	48.3	187 Units	210	1,062	51	0	0	43	0	0	94
17	Variable Commercial	3.8	1.9	198,630 S.F.	820	5,141	177	72	28	163	66	26	532
18	Variable Commercial	7.5	3.75	392,040 S.F.	820	10,146	349	142	54	321	130	50	1,046
19	Single Family Detached Housing	3	2.7	8 Units	210	46	2	2	0	2	0	0	4
20	Variable Commercial	2	1	104,540 S.F.	820	2,705	93	38	14	86	35	13	279
TOTAL						108,271	3,791	1,440	555	3,481	1,329	512	11,108

**TABLE NOTES**

Number of vehicle trips generated determined through the use of the methodologies presented in Trip Generation, 6th Edition published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

- (1) Pass-by trip percentage of 26% for a shopping center during the Saturday peak hour determined through the use of the Trip Generation Handbook Table 5.5 published by ITE, page 45.
- (2) Shared trips are trips having more than one destination within the proposed developments in each TAZ. A 10% shared trip percentage is assumed for the Saturday peak hour.

Source: Analysis by Trans Associates.



### **3.2.6 Bicycle/Pedestrian Network**

The City currently has no formal bicycle and pedestrian network, although recent planning efforts by MCRPC have identified a county-wide network as well as project recommendations. One of the recommendations from this plan includes the development of a bicycle/pedestrian plan for the corridor linking Hermitage with New Castle.

More on a neighborhood scale, there are no formally established bikeways in the city, or connections linking residential neighborhoods with commercial and public properties. Users of these modes must use circuitous routes along roads such as Dutch Lane and North Keel Ridge Road that do not offer suitable shoulder width. The City's highway network has also developed independently from a traditional, grid pattern.

The City's neighborhoods and commercial areas alike have developed apart from a coordinated system of pedestrian pathways. There are virtually no sidewalks anywhere in the study area, except for the Rodney B. White Olympic Park. As of the writing of this report, "No Pedestrian" signs warn pedestrians not to cross at certain intersections of PA 18. The widening of PA 18 will see pedestrian signal heads installed at PA 18's intersection with Highland Road and the middle school as part of its construction.

### **3.2.7 Description of PA 18 Widening Project**

The entire portion of PA 18 within the study area is scheduled for a summer 2001 letting for widening to 5 lanes. The widening project is essentially an extension of the widening of 3 miles of PA 18 from I-80 to U.S. 62, which was completed in 1995. When completed in spring 2003, PA 18 will have four, 12' wide travel lanes, with a 14' wide center turn lane and 8' wide shoulders. A new traffic signal will also be installed at the entrance to the Shenango Valley Mall as part of the project. As of this writing, PA 18 North between U.S. 62 and the South Pymatuning Township line remains the only "missing link", or two-lane portion of the highway between I-80 and Greenville.

One pedestrian design element of the pending widening of PA 18 includes a 10-foot wide bituminous multi-use trail along the eastern side of the road between the Shenango Valley Mall and the vicinity of the City's administrative building at 800 N. Hermitage Road.

## **3.3 Municipal Ordinances**

The **zoning ordinance** is the most powerful regulatory ordinance the City of Hermitage uses in regulating the types and intensities of development. The study area includes eight different zoning districts. While many of the districts permit the same basic uses by right, restrictions on how a parcel may be developed vary from district to district. In terms of total land area, the study area is predominately zoned R-1-100, or low-density, single-family residential. The study area also hosts nearly half of the City's institutional uses, as the Institutional District



comprises 13½% of all land area in the study area. Uses fronting U.S. 62 are all zoned as either Central Core 1 or 2; an additional commercial zone is the Highway Commercial “HC” district between the institutional core and Lamor Road. Finally, several tracts north of Lamor Road and west of PA 18 are designated as “Planned Technical Park.” Table 6 provides a summary of zoning in the study area.

**Table 5: Hermitage Zoning Ordinance Summary**

Zoning District	Zoning Code	Minimum Lot Area	Maximum Height	Maximum Lot Coverage	Percent of Study Area
Residential	R-1-100	20,000	45	15%	47%
Residential	R-1-75	11,250	45	20%	-
Residential	R-4/R-2-100	20,000/ 30,000 2 fam./ 5000 addl fam.	45	25%	0.13%
Residential	R-3/R-2-75	11250/ 15,000 2 fam/ 2500 addl fam	45	25%	-
Residential	R-2-60	7500/ 11,000 2 fam/ 1750 addl fam.	45	25%	-
Central Commercial	CC-1	30,000	60	40%	12%
Central Commercial	CC-2	30,000	90	40%	2½%
Highway Commercial	HC	40,000	60	40%	10%
Institutional	I/I-2	30,000	45/ 3 stories max	30%/ 25% I-2	13½%
Planned Technical Park	PTP	40000 Lot/ 25 Acres Park	45/ 3 stories max	25%	10%
Office Building	OB	35,000	45/ 3 stories max	30%	-
Light Industrial	LI	40,000	60	50%	-
Heavy Industrial	HI	40,000	60	50%	-

Source: City of Hermitage Zoning Ordinance

**Table 6: Existing Study Area Zoning District Classifications**

Zoning District	Parcel Count	Acreage
CC-1 – Central Commercial	81	185
CC-2 – Central Commercial*	26	39
HC – Highway Commercial	47	155
IN – Institutional	48	205
R-1 – Single Family Residential	339	708



Zoning District	Parcel Count	Acreage
R-2 – General Residential	24	71
R-4 – Residential High-Density Development	1	2
PTP – Planned Technical Park	12	152

\* differs from CC-1 only in height requirements (90 foot high structures are permitted versus 60)

Source: City of Hermitage; Gannett Fleming

In 2000, Hermitage amended its zoning ordinance to establish **landscaping and related standards** for nonresidential developments. The amendment served to bolster the existing zoning ordinance by requiring land development submissions to include a landscape plan as part of the land development. The amended ordinance now requires landscaping for building perimeters, parking lots, buffer yards, loading docks, trash collection enclosures, stormwater detention ponds, and greenways. More importantly to the transportation needs of the City, the ordinance requires the construction of 5 foot wide sidewalks (or greenways) in all new non-residential land developments abutting public roads.



## 4.0 Public Involvement #1

As part of the first public involvement opportunity, the project team administered four focus group sessions in addition to the general public transportation/land use open house held on November 8, 2000. Special-interest groups included representatives from the following groups:

- Businesses within the PA 18 North Study Area
- School district officials
- Middle school students
- Elected officials
- Economic development concerns from outside of the study area

Unabridged summaries of all the focus group sessions are included in the report appendix.



Hickory Middle school students were given an overview of the study before identifying improvement needs within the study area.



## 4.1 Focus Group Meetings

### 4.1.1 Business Concerns

The business focus group tended to maintain a narrow focus on the study area, rather than the region as a whole, while those with interests from outside of the study area predictably concentrated on congestion issues as they relate to access from I-80 to their communities to the north of the City line. The reciprocal relationship the Shenango Valley has with the Boardman area was mentioned, as Shenango Valley residents make the 20-minute drive to the Youngstown suburb for greater retail choices, while Ohioans are drawn to the Shenango Valley/Grove City areas for tax-free clothing. Those representing the business community were more likely to desire PA 18 to be fully developed as a retail corridor.

### 4.1.2 Elected Officials

Elected officials and economic development officials representing interests from outside the study area were concerned with increasing levels of congestion on PA 18 and how it affected existing and potential economic development efforts and quality of life for residents to the north of the study area. It was agreed that PA 18 is an important gateway to their portions of the county, and even its attractiveness and image could be a factor as a marketing point to companies looking to locate in the region. This group was also concerned with planning at a regional level,

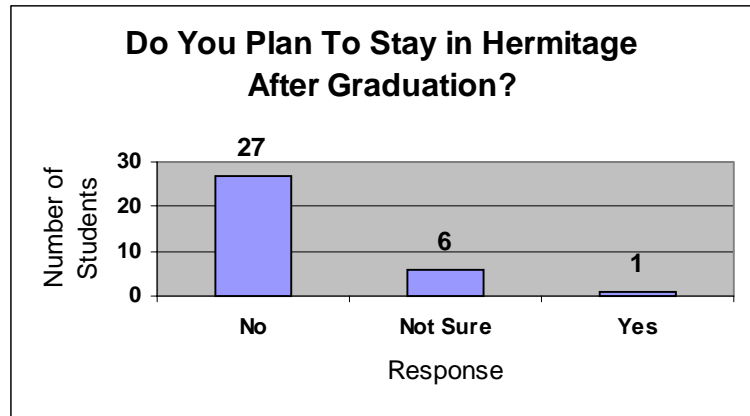




citing the needs and concerns of transportation are all too often ones that transcend municipal boundaries and jurisdictions.

### 4.1.3 School Students

During initial scoping meetings, the project team decided early on to include the perceptions of middle school students as part of developing a public preferred scenario. For obvious reasons, school students as a group are more dependent on non-motorized modes of transportation, and also tended to be more visionary in their remarks than their adult counterparts in the other focus group sessions. As the future parents and business people of the community, their input was essential.



Source: Hickory Middle School focus group meeting.

The project team met with approximately 40 middle school students in the Hickory Middle School Community Room during the afternoon of November 8. The project team gave students a general overview of the study and how their input would be used in developing the study's recommendations. Students were asked about improvement needs they saw within the study area before voting on a prioritized list. Students next highlighted the needed changes on the 24x36" maps provided.



Hermitage Middle School students noted the condition of Hermitage Square as a liability to the community.

Overall, school students pointed to the need for less reliance on the private automobile, with better accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as mass transit. Some also showed insight into transportation system management (TSM) needs in the corridor, including turning lanes, signalization and coordinated signal timing. Students were also more likely to mention needs for more community activities (retail choice, neighborhood connectivity, recreational needs) and expressed displeasure on the current state of Hermitage Square. A majority (80%) said they planned to leave the community upon graduation, citing the lack of recreational, entertainment and employment opportunities. Eighteen percent were undecided, while only one would stay.



#### **4.1.4 School District Officials**

This group provided the most progressive responses, noting the need for incorporating stronger design controls and concepts as a way of community beautification. The study area's lack of an adequate bicycle/pedestrian network is also reflected in the school district's policy of busing children to different locations for different functions. A suitable barrier from a widened PA 18 was also cited, as well as a need to mitigate the impact of new retail development (i.e. Wendy's) and the pedestrian trips it would generate from the middle school. More than any other group, School District officials voiced a desire to see a clearly defined downtown, with public gathering places better integrated into the residential areas of the community.

## **4.2 Public Land Use/Transportation Open House**

In addition to other means of collecting information on community concerns and desires, the study team hosted the study's first formal public involvement opportunity at Artman Elementary School on the evening of November 8, 2000. The purpose of this event was not only to educate the general public of the study and anticipated outcomes, but more importantly to elicit feedback from the public on its expectations for the PA 18 North Corridor study report.

The public meeting was held in an open house format, where attendees could come and learn of the study effort, then offer expectations for the study results. Study team members gave formal presentations at 6:15 and again at 7:45. These PowerPoint presentations (*see appendix*) were followed by four concurrent breakout groups, which were facilitated and recorded by members of the study team.

Several planning "themes" emerged from the open house under both headings of transportation and land use:

#### **Land Use Issues**

- Zoning Recommendations
- Sprawl
- Open space/Recreation
- Schools
- Aesthetics/Design

#### **Transportation Issues**

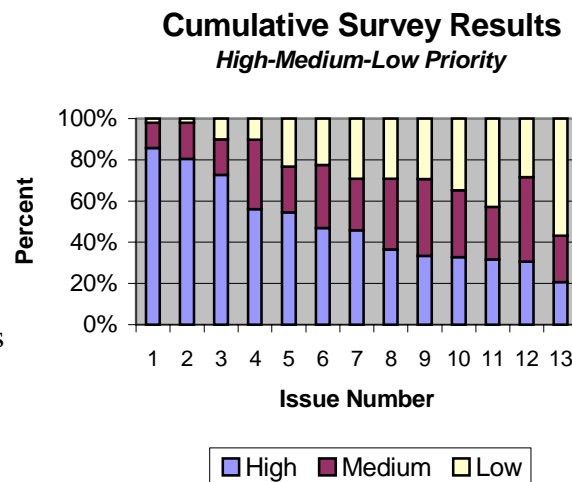
- Traffic Improvements
- Bicycle/Pedestrian
- Connectivity
- Access Management
- Congestion-related
- Miscellaneous



### 4.3 Exit Survey

A “quality of life survey” (*see appendix*) was also administered during the meeting to capture additional information on an individual level on concerns related to traffic congestion, accommodation of bicyclists and pedestrians, and other issues. MCRPC posted the survey on its website in portable document (PDF) format for viewers to download and respond. Survey questions asked where respondents lived with respect to the study area, as well as their perceptions of the rate of growth in the community over the past decade. A majority (64 percent) agreed that growth has been “somewhat fast” to “very fast”, while 88 percent said that growth will “increase somewhat” to “increase dramatically” over the next ten years. A matrix on the back of the survey asked respondents to gauge the importance of the following 13 issues on a high-medium-low basis:

1. Reducing traffic congestion
2. Improving roadway safety
3. Attracting technology industries
4. Improving City planning and zoning
5. Attracting industrial development
6. Attracting commercial development
7. Creating walking and biking trails
8. Accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians
9. Reducing truck traffic
10. Improving transit service
11. Building sidewalks in the downtown
12. Creating recreational and open space
13. Building sidewalks in neighborhoods



The questions on the survey matrix were also offered to two focus group session attendees (Businesses and Outside Elected Officials) for their response. Responses from these groups were generally in line with the general public’s, with some notable differences.

All three groups were in consensus to varying degrees on reducing congestion and improving safety. With regard to job creation, the public agreed with those in the business community for the City’s ability to be able to attract both technology- and commercially-based employment opportunities. However, the public was less in favor of attracting industrial, “smoke-stack” type industries to the community. The public also indicated a stronger desire for the reduction of truck traffic and construction of sidewalks in the study area, according to the survey.

To the general public, three issue areas in particular emerged as the highest areas of concern. “Reducing traffic congestion” and “Improving roadway safety” both scored high on the survey, with over 70 percent of the public rating each of them as a “high priority” concern. Following close behind was “Attracting Technology Industries” at 68 percent. Nearly three-quarters of the public saw the



accommodation of bicyclists and pedestrians as a high to medium priority, compared to 66 percent from the business community and 14 percent of those with interests outside the study area.

**Table 7: Exit Survey Results (in %)**

Ranking	Sample Group	Issue Area	Reducing Traffic Congestion	Improving Roadway Safety	Attracting Technology Industries	Improving City Planning and Zoning	Attracting Industrial Development	Attracting Commercial Development	Creating Walking and Biking trails	Accommodating Bikes & Pedestrians	Reducing Truck Traffic	Improving Transit Service	Building Sidewalks in the Downtown	Creating Recreational and Open space	Building Sidewalks in Neighborhoods
<b>High</b>	Businesses		88	77	88	44	88	44	22	11	0	33	22	44	0
	Outsiders		100	71	86	100	100	57	57	14	29	57	14	29	14
	Public		80	79	68	52	44	45	45	41	38	29	34	27	23
	Total		84	78	72	55	54	46	44	35	33	32	31	29	29
<b>Medium</b>	Businesses		11	11	11	44	0	44	44	55	44	22	44	22	44
	Outsiders		0	29	14	0	0	29	29	0	29	0	57	71	29
	Public		14	17	18	35	27	29	21	33	36	36	18	38	18
	Total		12	17	17	33	22	30	24	33	37	32	25	39	22
<b>Low</b>	Businesses		0	*	0	*	11	11	33	33	55	33	33	33	55
	Outsiders		0	0	0	0	0	14	14	86	43	43	29	0	57
	Public		3	3	12	12	27	24	29	21	24	33	45	29	55
	Total		2	2	10	10	23	22	28	28	29	34	42	27	55

\*Unsure

Source: Survey results from focus group sessions conducted November 8 & 9, 2000. Survey sample size included 9 business representatives, 7 “outsiders”, or elected officials from outside the study area, and 66 from the general public. Totals indicate aggregate responses for each issue area in percentages.

## 5.0 Development of the Public Preferred Scenario

The project team developed the Public Preferred Scenario based on several factors:

- Input received as part of the public involvement process
- Individual focus group responses
- Exit survey results
- Student visioning exercise



- Local knowledge of the area, including land development proposals such as the 3-store, 400,000 ft<sup>2</sup> big box retail center planned for the 70-acre lot across from Goldstein's Furniture
- Professional planning judgment of Gannett Fleming, MCRPC and City of Hermitage planning staffs

The public preferred scenario varied from the City's existing zoning map in several areas:

**Table 8: Variations Between Existing Zoning Ordinance Map and the Public Preferred Scenario**

Property	Existing Zoning Classification	Public Preferred Scenario Use
Lot immediately north of D'Onofrio's	Planned Technical Park	Mixed Uses
Lots between Valley View Road and PA 18	R-1-100 Residential	Limited Commercial Retail
Lots adjacent to U.S. 62/PA 18 intersection	Mix of all districts	Downtown Center Overlay
Lots between Valley View and PA 18 in upper portion of area	R-1-100 residential	Agricultural

Source: City of Hermitage, Gannett Fleming GIS

A "town center" zone was also delineated, largely following the southern boundary of the study area and including current uses such as the Shenango Valley Mall, FNB properties, Lowe's, and the commercial retail enterprises fronting U.S. 62 between PA 18 and Dutch Lane.

The following table summarizes the land uses included in the public preferred scenario:

**Table 9: Land Use Composition/Study Area Versus Public Preferred Scenario**

Land Use Type	Parcels	Study Area Acreage	(2020) Public Preferred Scenario Acreage
Vacant	54	603.8	-
Low Density Residential	360	337.9	579.8
Commercial Retail	100	215.1	222.1
Public/Semi-Public	18	171.8	189.7
Agricultural	3	66.1	78.0
Commercial Office	6	60.5	46.6
Medium-Density Residential	32	50.6	91.0
Industrial	2	11.5	141.7
Downtown Business District	-	-	164.0

Source: City of Hermitage, Gannett Fleming GIS



Public recommendations for transportation improvements included:

- a two lane connector road from Dutch Lane to PA 18, intersecting just north of the YMCA
- a two lane connector road from Dutch Lane through the 70-acre property north of the current YMCA, intersecting PA 18 near Goldstein's furniture store
- a new traffic signal in front of the 70-acre retail site on PA 18
- a network of greenways and trails along Indian Rock and Pine Hollow Run and extending into the Rodney B. White Olympic Park and the neighborhoods of Hunter's Woods, McConnell Upper Woods Phases 1 and 2 and Mount Hickory Blvd



## **6.0 Public Involvement #2**

The study team held a second public involvement/education opportunity on the evening of Monday, April 16, 2001. The meeting was held at Artman Elementary School and, similar to the first public meeting the previous November, followed the same format and schedule as before, with formal study presentations being delivered at 6:15 and 7:45. Study team presenters used Power Point slides (*see appendix*) to convey the draft report recommendations to the public with the intent of gauging their reaction in the breakout groups that followed. Approximately 75 people were in attendance, including media representation.

The public had an opportunity to hear a general overview of the study recommendations, which were divided into seven main categories, or planning themes. At the time of the public meeting, the City's relatively new requirement for sidewalks was receiving renewed public and media attention as "burdensome" and a call to build "sidewalks to nowhere." Meeting attendees acknowledged the need for the City to provide safe places for people to walk, but still expressed guarded support for sidewalks, especially for areas that are not intensely developed. Support appeared to be particularly strong for sidewalk facilities between the mall and high school portions of the study area. The issue of sidewalk construction in the study area received a wide range of responses, from those who support (46%) to those who do not (36%). A relatively high number (18%) did not know or were not sure what position the City should take on the issue.

Several of the plan's draft recommendations, such as access management and utility relocation, received across the board consensus for support.

The second potentially divisive issue involves a land development plan that, while technically is not part of the study per se, will still impact transportation and land use issues in an important part of the study area. The preliminary plan submission for the McConnell Upper Woods Phase 2 single family residential land development would in effect complete a missing link between McConnell Road and North Keel Ridge Road. Meeting participants charged the City with being able to walk a line between providing connectivity while protecting residential areas. The approved draft land development plan already includes a traffic circle as a traffic calming device to discourage through trips.

### **6.1 Public Survey**

As in prior public involvement opportunities, the study team administered a public opinion survey (*see appendix*) in order to gauge public support for proposed study recommendations. The survey was administered during the public meeting, as well as at a display table at the Shenango Valley Mall. A total of 61 surveys were completed and submitted. Survey participants were asked to rate their level of support for a variety of recommended project and policy-related recommendations. Respondents were also asked if they were residents of the





study area, the City of Hermitage, Mercer County, or if they resided outside the county. The results of the public survey were then queried in an Excel database to form some conclusions about the disposition of public opinion on the draft study recommendations.

The following two tables summarize the survey results, by residents of the study area, and by overall respondents. The draft recommendations are listed in order of their level of support versus opposition.

**Table 10 : Results of Public Meeting Survey # 2 (in %) - Study Area Residents**

<b>Recommendation Area</b>	<b>Strongly Support</b>	<b>Support</b>	<b>Oppose</b>	<b>Strongly Oppose</b>	<b>Don't Know/ Not Sure</b>
Revise Zoning Ordinance	24	64	0	0	12
Introduce Pedestrian Safety training in City Schools	24	53	0	6	18
Move Utility Lines Underground	41	29	6	6	24
Update City Comprehensive Plan	41	29	6	0	23
Develop a Greenway or Trail along Pine Hollow Run	53	12	0	0	36
Reduce Setbacks along PA 18	35	29	6	0	29
Slow Speeds and Reduce Cut-Through Traffic	41	18	18	5	18
Develop a Network of Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths	24	35	6	6	30
Increase Driveway Spacing Requirements	18	41	12	18	30
Encourage the Planting of Street Trees	29	24	18	6	24
Administer an Economic Development Study	24	29	12	12	24
Create a Town Center Revitalization Master Plan	24	29	12	12	24
Cooperatively Plan with Neighboring Municipalities	12	41	6	6	36
Allow Conversion of Residential Properties north of Lamor Road into Commercial	29	18	24	12	18
Build Sidewalks along PA 18 and Highland Road	12	18	24	35	12





**Table 11 : Results of Public Involvement Survey #2 (in %) – All Survey Respondents**

Total Survey Participants (%)	Strongly Support	Support	Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Don't Know/ Not Sure
Revise Zoning Ordinance	36	51	2	2	10
Update City Comprehensive Plan	38	43	2	0	18
Introduce Pedestrian Safety training in City Schools	31	48	3	3	17
Develop a Network of Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths	46	33	2	3	17
Move Utility Lines Underground	51	26	3	0	19
Slow Speeds and Reduce Cut-Through Traffic	36	39	8	2	15
Develop a Greenway or Trail along Pine Hollow Run	33	39	5	3	19
Encourage the Planting of Street Trees	36	30	8	3	23
Reduce Setbacks along PA 18	25	43	15	3	15
Increase Driveway Spacing Requirements	26	39	5	0	29
Create a Town Center Revitalization Master Plan	30	34	10	3	23
Cooperatively Plan with Neighboring Municipalities	28	36	5	2	29
Administer an Economic Development Study	26	38	8	3	24
Allow Conversion of Residential Properties north of Lamor Road into Commercial	23	30	13	11	23
Build Sidewalks along PA 18 and Highland Road	30	16	16	20	18

The survey results also identified areas where there is strong consensus. These include moving utility lines underground and developing a network of bicycle and pedestrian paths.

The study issue receiving the strongest level of support from people living within the survey area was that of developing a greenway/trail along Pine Hollow Run. Fifty-three percent of survey area residents sampled said they would “strongly support” such an initiative if undertaken by the City. This initiative was just one of two (revising the zoning ordinance was



The study team collected intercept surveys at the Shenango Valley Mall as part of the public involvement effort.



the other) that did not receive any votes of opposition by study area survey respondents.

The survey revealed that, respondents had a relatively high level of uncertainty regarding many issues (as an example, 36 percent were not sure if the City should “cooperatively plan with neighboring municipalities,” etc.). Two areas where respondents were sure of their position included revising the zoning ordinance in meeting the plan’s objectives (88 percent support) and the aforementioned issue of sidewalks. The issue of sidewalk construction in the study area received a wide range of responses, from those who support (46 percent), to those who do not (36 percent). Eighteen percent were not sure what position the City should take on the issue.

The overall survey itself and its results represented just one component – yet an important one - of public input that was used in revising the draft recommendations.



## **7.0 Recommendations**

A plan is only as strong as its related action or implementation component. As a matter of good public policy and economic common sense, “getting it done” needs to be paired with “doing it right.” The development of an action plan constitutes a proactive, strategic approach to moving from the planning and design stages to implementation and construction (if applicable). As important challenges and decisions are faced in the months and years ahead, the action plan should be the frame of reference to which the City and County’s elected officials and transportation planning officials can refer in implementing new policies and programming transportation projects. The purpose of the action plans will be to provide the framework for many of the decisions that will need to be made along the way. The action plan also provides the basis for tracking progress over time.

### **7.1 Implementation Caveats**

Planning for the safe and orderly development of a community is an awesome responsibility. The community must manage current development and growth while maintaining a vision for the future. The recommendations contained in this section of the report provide a future vision for the PA 18 North Study Area in the City of Hermitage based upon the input of study area property owners, professional planners and the general public. Now that the vision has been developed, the City must consider the implementation timing of its recommendations in shaping the City’s future.

The City must balance the commercial “demand” for additional developable land and the financial interests of individual property owners with the viability of existing commercial properties in the City. Regional market demand must exist to support new commercial retail and office space before opening new land for commercial development or the City may compromise the viability of its existing commercial core. The City should consider establishing a policy for commercial rezoning requests requiring a commercial market demand analysis (a step similar to a traffic impact study) before allowing additional land for commercial development. This type of analysis will at least allow the City Planning Commission and City Commissioners to make better-informed recommendations and decisions. Long- and short-term costs and benefits should be considered, as well as impacts to the City as a whole.

This report makes recommendations on the future land use for the study area. After performing an assessment of existing conditions, working with the project steering committee, and listening to public reaction, the project team identified the following major issue areas to be acted upon by a variety of agencies for implementation. In no particular order, these include:

- 1) Access Management
- 2) Connectivity/New Roads
- 3) Greenways Development



- 4) Bicycle/Pedestrian
- 5) Future Development Considerations
- 6) Policy-related Concerns
- 7) Economic Development Study.

These seven issue areas serve as banner heads for the study recommendations, based directly on collective input of the outreach meetings. This is an important point, as these recommendation areas are fully intended to be strategic and a fairly comprehensive response to the variety of issues that surfaced throughout the course of the study process. Each area contains background information, a rationale for its inclusion, and a series of recommendations and/or options related to the issue. The intent of this chapter is to provide the County and City with a series of recommendations to consider as they continue their efforts to improve accessibility and mobility in the PA 18 North Corridor.

## 7.2 Access Management

From the study's outset, the issue of access management emerged as a major area of concern for the study to address. Improved access management in the study area accomplishes two main study objectives, that of preserving PA 18's capacity as well as its safety. Managing access to and from the highway's abutting properties is a valuable planning tool as it manages the safety and capacity of the highway. As such, the City and PennDOT need to balance the needs of property owners who require access, and highway travelers who need mobility and freedom of movement.

This is the definition of good access management: Providing access to land while preserving the flow of traffic on the adjacent highway network. Implementation of an access management program along the PA 18 corridor will help preserve the capacity of PA 18 while managing the overall number of potential conflict points by reducing the number of driveway access points and providing driveway connections between properties along the corridor.



Access management along the PA 18 corridor is widely recognized as a pressing need that must be addressed to improve the safety and capacity of the roadway.

Multiple driveways and points of access along an arterial can be a negative factor in maintaining safety through the introduction of potential points of conflicting movements in the corridor. The existing, pre-construction PA 18 has 96 points of access between U.S. 62 and the City line. PennDOT manages the creation of these highway access points through its Highway Occupancy Permit Program. The City, however, can also play a major role in improving access management



through the policy actions described below in the recommendation/ option section of this heading.

Some of the key access problems along PA 18 include:

- Multiple property driveways
- Driveway spacing
- Intersection spacing
- Inter-property connections
- Shoulders and curbs.

### 7.2.1 Key Access Management Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety</li> <li>• Improve traffic flow</li> <li>• Manage Long –term capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Improve Roadway Safety” ranked as a medium to high priority by 98% of survey respondents</li> <li>• Elected officials noted PA 18 has too many access points – intersections are too close to one another</li> <li>• Too many curb cuts create problems for through traffic, particularly for business and industry north of the study requiring easy access to I-80</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access management:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improves safety</li> <li>○ Increases highway capacity</li> <li>○ Reduces delay</li> <li>○ Fewer decision points; more predictable travel patterns</li> <li>○ Extends life of roadway</li> <li>○ Allows higher volumes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increased mobility makes local industry more competitive and City more attractive to speculation</li> </ul>

### 7.2.2 Recommendations/Options

The improvement of PA 18 to five-lane facility will help address some of the existing access management concerns. The proposed project includes curbs that will close some of the driveway access points to some properties along the corridor. Other issues beyond the widening project can be addressed by the following:

#### 7.2.2.1 Cross Access Drives

Many of the major traffic generators within the study area such as retail office and highway commercial uses are not connected by a service drive or sidewalk, making “one-stop shopping” an impossibility for consumers. The City should continue to support the implementation of the landscaping ordinance which includes a provision to provide for the creation of cross access drives and easements, particularly in areas zoned as “Highway Commercial.”

These driveways and easements would reduce traffic on major thoroughfares (such as PA 18 and U.S. 62) and offer improved safety. Adjacent businesses with complementary services would also benefit from improved circulation between sites. Owners of new development would then need to record an easement on the



deed, allowing joint use and access, as well as a maintenance agreement, outlining maintenance responsibilities. Access points should be planned for adjacent parcels as site plans are submitted to encourage joint driveways.

For existing properties, the City will have to work with the individual property owners and businesses to encourage them to create drive connections between their properties and potential opportunities for joint parking. The City should develop an incentive package to encourage existing adjacent property owners to create joint driveways. Because the development already is in place, property owners already have highway occupancy permits or driveway permits, there is no easy or acceptable legal way to force joint driveway creation and/or development of frontage roads. The City has a tremendous opportunity before it to create a comprehensive partnership incentive package to work with existing property owners toward improving the overall transportation system in the community. Some of the incentives that could be considered are as follows:

- Define a **Hermitage Transportation Improvement District** for application of this incentive package with criteria for improvements (so all potential participants are treated equally).
- For property owners that are willing to consider combining their driveways and potentially sharing parking, the City should consider **committing funding** to those property owners to construct sidewalks for their properties. In addition, the City should agree to a maintenance agreement for the joint portion of the driveway and any frontage road connections for snow removal, paving and curb maintenance. The City should also consider actually absorbing the cost of building the combined driveways, where 5 or more property owners have formed a partnership for such improvements.

This program should be implemented incrementally with a certain budget set aside each year. The program should only apply to Major arterials in the City that are within the designated improvement district.

This program if applied would result in a reduced number of access points along PA 18 North for existing properties and will reduce the overall number of traffic conflict points caused by closely spaced driveways. The City should attempt to obtain an average spacing of 250 feet between access drives. This standard should be included in the incentive program to determine eligibility.

#### **7.2.2.2 Shared Parking Areas**

The City should consider revising its zoning ordinance to allow for shared parking areas, particularly when it can be demonstrated that peak demand periods would not occur at the same distinct time periods, i.e. church and restaurant, etc.

#### **7.2.2.3 Driveway Spacing**

The City should include in its subdivision ordinance a driveway spacing requirement of at least 500 feet for city streets that are classified as Major Arterials or higher. This would provide a safe distance between driveways and





limit the overall number of access points preserving capacity and reducing congestion.

### 7.3 New Roads/Connectivity

This issue area is closely related to access management, in that a high degree of connectivity can provide for increased safety and performance of the study area's roadway network. As previously noted, the study area's roadway network has evolved and developed independently from the traditional grid design.

The City's degree of connectivity – arguably more than any other issue - has a major impact on the City's built form, its land use patterns and traffic circulation. Poor accessibility is a trademark of an area that does not have a high degree of connectivity. This affects the City's travel patterns. As with the issue of access management, the City must find a balance between enhancing accessibility and limiting excessive through traffic in residential areas.

The study area has a limited number of East-West connecting roads that provide for cross traffic and options for local traffic movements. This can cause longer travel distances for local trips and more delay. Many of the traditional towns and cities were originally laid out in grid patterns to provide many options for traffic movement.

In addition, many of the recent housing developments are being designed and constructed providing for only one major drive point of access without connecting to adjacent developments. This lack of connectivity is often designed to “protect” the neighborhood(s) from through traffic. The result is that residents end up driving longer distances to reach their destinations and arterials end up becoming a mix of local and through travel resulting in higher congestion and higher frequencies of turning movements.

#### 7.3.1 Key New Roads/ Connectivity Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City needs an overall concept for the evolution of its street network and its degree of connectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School students in particular noted a need for more neighborhood connectivity</li> <li>Increasing traffic congestion is a concern</li> <li>No alternate routes exist between Highland and Lamor. areas of heavy congestion</li> <li>Altering configuration of Dutch Lane behind Hickory Grill to PA 518 may be a consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connectivity encourages shorter trips and precludes long, circuitous routes between origins and destinations</li> <li>Connectivity makes City less auto-dependent</li> <li>Extends life of the roadway</li> </ul>



### **7.3.2 Recommendations/Options**

This recommendation/issue area is closely tied with access management as it provides for the coordinated development of the municipality's street network.

#### **7.3.3 70 Acre Commercial Site (TAZ #10)**

The pending development of a 70-acre site just north of the existing YMCA poses as an opportunity for constructive partnerships with a developer. This partnership is important not only for the sake of land use, but towards satisfying the City's need for additional connectivity between PA 18 and Dutch Lane. The study team has recommended two new roads (*see Ultimate Scenario map*) that would serve not only a land development, but provide for a higher degree of connectivity between Dutch Lane and PA 18. Although not part of the existing site, the property's main access off of PA 18 has been envisioned for extending east to provide a two-lane connection to North Keel Ridge Road. A new traffic signal that would probably be required for the site anyway will manage the capacity of the new intersection. It is anticipated that the costs for the new development's roads, as well as the signal, would be borne by the site developer, who would in turn dedicate the new facilities to the City for ongoing operation and maintenance responsibilities.

##### **7.3.3.1 McConnell Upper Woods Phase 2**

The southern part of the study area (specifically, the McConnell Upper Woods Phase 2 land development) features a tract that, when developed as a low-density residential neighborhood, will also provide an east-west through connection from North Keel Ridge Road to McConnell Road, and PA 18. Preliminary plans for this tract feature three cul-de-sacs and a traffic circle – a traffic-calming device designed to discourage through trips in these new residential neighborhoods. Upon construction, the City Planning & Development Office should closely monitor the effectiveness of this traffic calming device and its ability to prevent "cut-through" traffic through these residential neighborhoods (*see also "Neighborhood Traffic Calming"*).

##### **7.3.3.2 PA 18 and Valley View Rd**

An additional new connector road is being recommended for the area between PA 18 and Valley View Road. A new, two-lane facility here would accomplish two things, 1) alleviate Valley View Road's problematic intersection with Lamor Road, and 2) provide new access to the current "Planned Technical Park" property (*see also Future Land Use and Development*).

##### **7.3.3.3 Network Development**

A policy consideration for the City should include the continued development of a network of local and collector streets that would provide sufficient direct access to local land developments and take more local traffic off of arterial PA 18. As the City's highway network matures and develops, it will provide more opportunity for access to local businesses, and limit the need for additional curb cuts on PA 18.





#### **7.3.3.4 Official Map**

Aligned with this option is the development of an Official Map, a declaration by the City Commissioners of the projected areas within the City that will eventually be needed for public purposes. Development of an official map would accomplish several things for the City:

- Provide a tool for planning public capital investments
- Identify areas where open spaces are desired or where public improvements are envisioned
- Strengthen its position with developers
- Identify areas where public improvements are envisioned i.e., road improvements or widenings, parks, playgrounds and sites for other public purposes.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Code (MPC) describes an official map as a “land use ordinance” and is prepared and adopted in accordance with the procedures set forth in Article IV of the MPC. The official map would supplement the City’s existing land use control ordinances (subdivision & land development, zoning, landscaping, etc.) already in place and give the Planning & Development Office a powerful tool in shaping the highway network in undeveloped land. Only three cities in Pennsylvania have adopted an official map.

To prepare an official map the municipality must make surveys and maps sufficient to identify the location of property for description and publication in map form. An official map allows the municipality to reserve private land for certain future uses. There is a two step process: regulatory and acquisition. The regulatory phase notifies developers and land owners of the municipalities intent to map and reserve land for future public purposes. This action clearly demonstrates municipal interest in acquiring the property for public purposes sometime in the future.

Acquisition is the second step in the process. This can be done by negotiation or through the eminent domain powers of the municipality. A municipality can deny a building permit for a proposed structure to be located within the areas identified for future purchase on the official map for a short period of time. Following notification of a land owner’s intent to build, subdivide or perform other work on the property the municipality has one year to either acquire the property or begin condemnation proceedings.

#### **7.3.3.5 Neighborhood Traffic Calming**

A valid concern of residents on through streets is the volume and speed of neighborhood traffic and potential for through traffic. Traffic calming techniques have been developed over time to slow traffic and in some cases (depending on the device used) reduce the volume of traffic using streets. The City should consider adopting a toolbox of traffic calming devices with guidelines for implementation. The City should work with developers on proposed subdivisions to promote connectivity through developments while managing traffic speeds and



volumes with traffic calming techniques. The following table of devices and potential applications should be considered:

**Table 12: Characteristics and costs of selected traffic calming techniques**

<b>Traffic Calming Technique</b>	<b>Benefit/When Used</b>	<b>Estimated Costs*</b>
Bulb-Out	Keeps vehicles from entering a neighborhood while still allowing egress	\$10,000
Diagonal Diverter	Discourages commuter traffic by forcing turns; returns streets to pedestrian use	\$85,000
Channelization	Prevents left turns from an arterial to a residential street	\$15,000
Guardrail closure	Eliminates through traffic	\$5,000
Speed humps	Promotes smooth flow of traffic at slow speeds	\$2,000
Speed Tables	Used at intersections, a speed table will reduce intersection approach speeds and result in improved intersection safety.	\$5,000
Chokers	Narrows the street to slow traffic, reduce pedestrian crossing times, improves safety	\$10,000
Chicanes	Curb bulb-outs at mid-block locations to reduce traffic speeds and improve safety	\$14,000
Traffic Circles	Improve intersection capacity, reduces head on collision potential.	\$15,000 - \$30,000

Source: Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)

\* not a substitute for detailed cost estimates

Traffic calming devices should not be used everywhere in the City, but should be implemented within the guidelines of an overall development plan to discourage through traffic in residential neighborhoods and protect those same neighborhoods from high traffic speeds.

The implementation of a traffic calming program can also help to reduce traffic violations (e.g. speeding and stop sign running) and also reduce the number and severity of crashes. When used, traffic calming devices should be applied uniformly and be spaced regularly along a roadway to achieve the desired effect of reducing speed and improving safety.



A speed table is recommended for construction at the future intersection of Audubon Drive and McConnell Road extension.

Traffic calming devices are especially desirable in neighborhood applications to allow for street connectivity and at the same time controlling through traffic



potential. If traffic calming is planned properly for a community, maximum speeds of 20 to 25 m.p.h. can be enforced through proper application and device spacing. For the PA 18 North Study area, a traffic calming plan is recommended for McConnell Road and its connecting neighborhood streets as follows:

- McConnell Road connects existing as well as planned residential areas in the City to PA 18.
- McConnell Road also has the potential to connect these same residential areas to North Keel Ridge Road providing property owners with options to enter and exit their developments.
- It is understood that there is concern among property owners along McConnell Road that when McConnell is extended to Keel Ridge Road it will result in high levels of through traffic and high neighborhood speeds, changing McConnell Road's function as a residential street. If high levels of through traffic end up using McConnell, it would have a negative effect on the quality of life for residential property owners in this part of the study area.
- Specifically, two speed humps and a speed table are recommended for McConnell Road. The first hump should be located 500 feet from the intersection of McConnell Road and PA 18. The second hump should be located 500 feet east of the first hump on McConnell Road. In addition, a speed table should be located at the intersection of McConnell Road and Audubon Drive.

These devices, when spaced at approximately 500 feet along McConnell Road will provide for a 20 to 25 mph maximum speed between the humps and speed table.



## 7.4 Bicycle/Pedestrian

A reevaluation of the role and safe accommodation of bicycle and pedestrian transportation has been taking place in recent years in Hermitage, throughout Pennsylvania, and nationally. Federal transportation legislation has placed an unprecedented premium on what historically has been viewed today as “non-traditional” modes of transportation. PennDOT too has been moving away from a predominantly highway focus towards a more systematic consideration of all modes of



The middle school's proximity to the shopping mall is a good example of study area locations where a high latent demand for good pedestrian facilities exists. Planners and developers must take into consideration the pedestrian impacts that will be created as a result of their construction.

transportation and how they must interact with the highway mode. A transportation system works most efficiently when all modes are properly planned for and accommodated in design. Bicycle and pedestrian transportation is also increasingly seen as a proxy indicator of a community's livability or quality of life.

In Hermitage, the desire for planning a more comprehensive and interconnected transportation system was expressed at many public involvement venues conducted throughout the duration of the study. The juxtaposition of uses in the corridor includes trip generators (from residential and educational uses) and trip attractors (to retail and educational sites). This mix of uses in close proximity to each other creates a demand for cycling and walking trips that will be suppressed until properly accommodated.

Hermitage's transportation system should provide for the accommodation of these modes and move towards a community that is “walkable” and safe. The City's street network can be used in part to provide for these modes. The community visioning activities clearly demonstrated a shared belief that facilities should better accommodate the community's young people.



## 7.4.1 Key Bicycle/Pedestrian Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lessen City's dependence on the private automobile</li> <li>▪ Improve the safety and efficiency of traffic flow in the study area</li> <li>▪ City should build on the steps already being taken to provide for non-motorized modes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 68% of survey respondents said "Accommodating Bicyclists and Pedestrians" and "Creating Walking and Biking Trails" should be a medium to high priority for the City</li> <li>▪ The City needs to provide better accommodation for bicyclists and pedestrians in its transportation system</li> <li>▪ County needs to address ownership and maintenance issues regarding trails</li> <li>▪ Currently the study area lacks pedestrian and bicycle facilities resulting in demand not being served.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Design that aids bicyclists can benefit motorists as well, i.e. wider shoulders</li> <li>▪ Accommodation of bicyclists and pedestrians reduces reliance on auto modes and school district busing</li> <li>▪ Improves overall quality of life</li> <li>▪ Complements prospective trail expansion</li> <li>▪ Improves overall attractiveness of City to businesses and industries</li> <li>▪ Benefits health and wellness to the community (reduce air pollution, exercise)</li> </ul>

## 7.4.2 Recommendations/Options

### 7.4.3 Bike/Pedestrian/Greenways Committee

The City should institutionalize a bicycle/pedestrian/greenways subcommittee to serve as an advisory group to its planning commission and the Shenango Valley MPO. This Committee would oversee the implementation of the bicycle/pedestrian and greenways elements of this plan, establish short and long term priorities, and administer future public involvement and outreach. The Committee would also provide technical guidance on matters related to bicycle and pedestrian planning, and provide assistance on any plan updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan. Typically the group should consist of representatives from: MPO/planning commission, transit providers, City parks and recreation office, PennDOT District 1, area bicycle/pedestrian advocacy groups, realtors, and the Rails to Trails Conservancy, to name a few.

### 7.4.4 Bicycle/Pedestrian Workshops

As part of its regular planning work program, the City's Department of Planning & Development should hold a series of community workshops designed to elicit input on the ongoing development of a City-wide bicycle and pedestrian network. The purpose of these meetings would be to determine where any gaps exist within a preferred bicycle and pedestrian network and develop an action plan to move the project suggestions from concept to construction. PennDOT's Mercer County Maintenance Manager should be invited to participate -- often, valuable improvements like shoulder paving can represent a significant closure on a bike-ped priority network plan.



### **7.4.5 Pedestrian Safety Education**

While engineering and encouragement are major implementation areas for bicycle/pedestrian transportation, *education* is also a major need identified through the study's public involvement efforts.

The Hermitage School District should investigate the possibility of introducing remedial pedestrian safety curriculum to middle school students as part of physical education and/or health and wellness classes. The Northwest Regional Highway Safety Network is a comprehensive safety project funded by PennDOT's Bureau of Highway Safety and Traffic Engineering and administered through the Erie County Department of Health. The grant program is free, and can provide school district officials with a variety of programs from which to choose – from a one-day class period to a more comprehensive approach. They have curriculums for all age groups, from pre-kindergarten to senior citizens.

### **7.4.6 Pre-existing Development Sidewalk Retrofit**

A functional need exists to accommodate pedestrians in the PA 18 North study area, especially in the area between the Shenango Valley Mall and Highland Road. The City should consider building sidewalks within the existing right-of-way to accommodate the pedestrian trips that are being generated between the mall and Hickory High School.

The City's new Landscaping Ordinance already requires the construction of sidewalks for all new non-residential land developments. For pre-existing development along highways in the study area, the City could consider several approaches for installing sidewalks:

- Apply for PennDOT Transportation Enhancement funding under the third round of TEA-21 in 2002
- Encourage usage of the City Revolving Loan Fund to help finance sidewalk improvements. The loans are provided by the City at 50% of the prime rate up to \$10,000 per project. Any business operating within the city is eligible.
- Sources within the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)
- Private donations
- City matching funds to encourage landowner buy-in
- General funds
- Redevelopment of properties

The City should pursue avenues for providing sidewalk retrofit assistance to property owners along the study area routes identified for improvement.

All of these approaches will require the City taking a lead role in marshalling community support and consensus for providing sidewalks on developed properties and addressing the "gaps" in the study area's pedestrian facility network. The City should also seek to establish a policy for the construction of





facilities that would be able to safely accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists.

The City should pursue avenues for providing assistance to property owners along the study area routes identified for these improvements. New sidewalks should then be constructed in provisions outlined in the landscaping ordinance.

The limits of this sidewalk recommendation include:

- PA 18 and U.S. 62 in the study area
- The entirety of Highland Road within the study area (between PA 18 and Dutch Lane)
- PA 518 between Trout Island Road and the Joy Cone Company property
- Dutch Lane between PA 18 and proposed Pine Hollow Run greenway

See Ultimate Scenario map for graphic presentation of these recommendations.

#### **7.4.7 Subdivision Bicycle/Pedestrian Checklist**

As part of the ordinance-related recommendations located elsewhere in this report, the City Planning & Development office should consider developing and implementing a bicycle/pedestrian checklist to be distributed at the pre-meeting for major subdivision proposals. Such a checklist would ensure that bicycle and pedestrian considerations are made up front, before final plans are submitted for approval by the planning commission. A sample checklist should ask the following questions:

- Are sidewalks needed in the area?
  - Presence of worn paths in the area
  - Adjacent land uses generating pedestrian trips
  - Possible linkages/continuity with other pedestrian facilities
- Is the development in a high-density land use area that has a high level of bicycle/pedestrian traffic?
- Is the land development located within walking distance of a school or other community facility?
- Are there signage needs?

Technical references for this recommendation include:

- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (1999)
- Highway Capacity Manual
- PennDOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Training Manual and Statewide Master Plan





## **7.5 Greenways Development**

The development of a system of off-road trails and greenways emerged as a key study issue, being raised by many people during the focus group sessions and public meetings. While the accommodation of non-motorized modes along PA 18 is a primary study concern, the development of an off-road trails system was also raised as a possibility for future implementation. State policy will likely place greater emphasis and opportunity for local greenway development as PennDOT and DCNR have recently finalized a statewide greenways development plan.

Multi-objective greenways possess the ability to provide Hermitage residents and visitors with a “green infrastructure” that connects popular origins and destinations, preserves open space, protects natural resources and provides recreational opportunities. Community greenways are often planned and implemented in a “hubs and spokes” systems, with community activity centers such as parks, schools, and residential neighborhoods as the hubs of the system while greenways and trails form the spokes.

Given its proximity to the Shenango watershed, Hermitage is blessed with several tributaries that could serve as spokes for a local greenways and trails system. Pine Hollow Run, in particular, negotiates its way from Artman and Hermitage Elementary and Hermitage Middle School northward through areas planned for major commercial retail development as well as a planned, 120-unit residential subdivision north of Lamor Road/PA 518.

The public also voiced the desire for expanded recreational opportunities, in particular school students, who would benefit from linear open spaces and a greater degree of connectivity to residential neighborhoods than would be possible through a roadway only facility. A greenway paralleling the PA 18 Corridor would link important educational, institutional, residential and commercial hubs while providing a significant tourist attraction.

As already noted, many of Hermitage’s residential developments east of PA 18 are not interconnected. A system of greenways or trails connecting these developments with parks and ballfields to the west would add to the livability of the neighborhoods while providing for alternate modes for home-based trips.



## 7.5.1 Greenway Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessen City's dependence on the private automobile</li> <li>• Development of a network of paths or trails to connect the whole valley should be looked at in the future.</li> <li>• Improve the quality of life and "livability" of the community</li> <li>• Respond to the expressed desire of Hermitage's youth for greater facilities. Such issues will only get more serious attention in the wake of growing national violence among youth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 68% of survey respondents said "Accommodating Bicyclists and Pedestrians" and "Creating Walking and Biking Trails" should be a medium to high priority for the City</li> <li>• An aesthetic use of existing streams with riverwalks and greenways is needed</li> <li>• Residents identified their desire for trails and greenways that their children would be safe using.</li> <li>• Developers need to start thinking about incorporating greenways into their land developments</li> <li>• City needs a quality <i>built</i> environment and quality <i>natural</i> environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Protect natural resources and open space</li> <li>○ Provide connectivity</li> <li>○ provide opportunities for public recreation, health and fitness</li> <li>○ Provide alternative and safe forms of transportation for people to access nearby destinations</li> <li>○ Promote economic development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 7.5.2 Recommendations/Options

### 7.5.2.1 Bicycle/Pedestrian/Greenways Steering Committee

The City Planning & Development Office in coordination with bicycle/pedestrian issues should form a bicycle/pedestrian/greenways steering committee to provide guidance on the implementation of the greenways-related recommendations from this plan. The City should lead a citywide greenway planning process that identifies places of interest/activity, environmentally sensitive features, and cultural features and identifies greenway corridors to connect these features to build on the recommended greenway/trails in this study. The two corridors mentioned below should be considered for initial implementation/funding. Having a greenway plan (even an informal one) helps with funding possibilities for future greenways development. A City-wide greenways plan should be developed and adopted as part of the City's comprehensive plan.

"Developers need to start thinking about incorporating greenways as part of their land developments." – *comment made at school district focus group meeting*

The City should conduct a feasibility study for developing a 2.4-mile, shared-use greenway along Pine Hollow Run between Shenango Dam and the Shenango Valley Mall. The study will provide the City with an assessment of community support and acceptance, as well as local official acceptance and technical support. Implementation steps for this recommendation would include:

The City Planning Commission will meet to establish a basic scope for the planned greenway completion. Invitees should include resource people from DCNR and MCRPC. Key items covered in the kick-off meeting would include:



- Project objectives
- Potential community issues and concerns
- Potential partners—especially private partners in relation to planned development—commercial and<sup>1</sup> residential.
- Public involvement ideas and strategies—with a special focus on involvement of schools and kids
- Project schedule
- Other potential problems and issues – including physical and natural features for the proposed trail area(s) and landowner concerns.
- Project feasibility
- Master plan for the trail

Potential funding sources for this study include: DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership, PennDOT's Transportation Enhancement Program, private contributions, or the City's general fund.

The City Planning and Development office could provide oversight in the implementation and management of a contract to have a greenway designed that will tie into local facilities, i.e. Shenango Lake, new residential and commercial retail development, the middle and elementary schools, and Shenango Valley Mall. Greenway development would include the acquisition of any needed rights-of-way as well as maintenance issues that must be addressed for after the trail's completion (*see Ultimate Scenario map for limits of the proposed greenway*).

The City should involve stakeholders in the planning process for the greenway, including the planning commission, the greenways/bike/ped committee, City engineer, DCNR, and any corporate sponsors involved in the project. A citizens advisory group should be considered as well.

Estimated cost of trail feasibility study - \$35,000 - \$50,000.

#### **7.5.2.2 Neighborhood Greenway Development**

In addition to the proposed Pine Hollow Run Trail, is the need to provide greenway connections among the low-density, residential neighborhoods between PA 18 and North Keel Ridge Road.

The City Planning & Development Commission should work with future developers and existing homeowner associations in acquiring the needed easements or rights-of-way for providing greenways connections between these neighborhoods and particularly with the Shenango Valley Mall, Hickory High School and other uses in the City's Institutional District. Neighborhood

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<sup>1</sup> The opportunity to properly plan for prospective commercial development in ways that integrate greenways, pedestrian, and bikes can not be overstated. This has the potential to be a statewide model approach and attract the potential interest of state agencies.



developments that could be better served by greenways connections include Hunter's Woods and McConnell's Upper Woods Phases 1 and 2.

#### **7.5.2.3 Greenway Development Fact Sheet**

The city should develop a fact sheet that would be provided to developers outlining key city objectives in this area that developers should consider in their subdivision plans. A sample fact sheet has been included as part of this plan (*see appendix*), although other good examples can be obtained from the Rails to Trails Conservancy and DCNR.

## **7.6 Economic Development**

As this study progressed, the issue of economic development emerged as a dark horse in the coordination between land use and transportation. Yet the impacts of a planning issue such as economic development covers a geographic area far larger than the PA 18 North corridor study area. Any planning for this issue must be performed on an integrated county-wide or even regional scale.

The Top Three changes needed to retain young people:

- Entertainment
- Recreation
- Jobs

PA 18's unique function as one of the region's sole north/south highways makes its future planning even more important in light of economic development potential. From an economic standpoint, the focus for PA 18 needs to be on the major economic drivers – the basic industries that export products and are able to provide residents with higher living wages. PA 18 also needs to be perceived and recognized as a corridor with easy access to the Interstate system. The study area's diversity – in appearance as well as in employment choices – will be key in improving the City's ability to attract and retain business and industry, as well as improve quality of life.

In today's economy, municipalities need to be more responsive than ever to the needs of business and industry. At the same time, local governments must engage prospective development in terms of addressing key local planning issues as partners. Industries today are more footloose than ever, and not necessary bound by "industrial inertia" to remain in one place or another. The availability of transportation facilities and developable land are key factors in attracting and retaining employers. Improperly zoned land within the study area and elsewhere could have negative consequences for economic development potential.

The short supply of land available for job creation within the city and region makes this issue all the more important as there are just three prime sites available in the city.

Areas north of the study area also depend on the efficient performance of PA 18 to ship raw materials and goods between areas such as Greenville and I-80. Poor mobility and lowered speeds can discourage new employment sitings; a well-functioning PA 18 is necessary in order for the region's businesses to remain viable and competitive.



In the retail service sector, growth in Hermitage has been outpacing that of most other municipalities in the region. Much of that growth has occurred in the PA 18 North corridor. The study area (particularly the southern portion) boasts of a number of stores with regional trade areas, while commercial establishments to the north are almost entirely locally owned. The driving forces for the retail sector growth along PA 18 is a direct result of the volume of traffic created by the PA 18 and U.S. 62 intersection and the PA 18 connection to I-80 and Toll 60.

Data from the U.S. Census of Retail Trade & Services and County Business Patterns would seem to suggest that the City should be cautious about expectations for net commercial growth as opposed to mere shifts and relocations of existing commercial activity from elsewhere within the Shenango Valley. This concern was echoed in a local business leader focus group, where one local businessperson warned that Hermitage's retail growth has been at the expense of other Shenango Valley communities and local business ownership. The threat of empty "Big Boxes" also looms if the City provides too much of an opportunity for such expansion, yet is not able to sustain, additional retail development over the long term. An economic development study would respond to the uncertainties surrounding this issue.

### 7.6.1 Key Economic Development Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proper zoning of land for job creation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of study survey respondents noted "Attracting technology industries" as a medium to high priority for the City. "Industrial and Commercial Development" each scored 76%.</li> <li>School students noted the area's lack of meaningful employment opportunities</li> <li>Hermitage should be known for more than just the area's "retail center"</li> <li>Land should be reserved for quality job creation opportunities</li> <li>Something is needed other than retail uses to draw people into the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would provide guidance to decision-makers as to the highest and best use of vacant land or sites awaiting redevelopment</li> <li>Would serve to make Hermitage less of a bedroom community</li> <li>Maintain and improve employment base</li> <li>Retain young people</li> </ul>

### 7.6.2 Recommendations/Options

One of the most difficult issues for the City of Hermitage and its surrounding neighbors is the ability to attract and retain business and industry that result in family sustaining jobs. Attracting "good quality" development is a difficult formula, based on a combination of factors including transportation, education levels, amenities, schools and others. The Shenango Valley has a long industrial history that had a strong base in the steel industry. As the region lost its industrial advantage to foreign competitors, it lost many of the higher paying wage jobs that sustained the blue collar family.



As already experienced, zoning alone is not enough to attract industry to the region including the PA 18 North Corridor. The municipalities in the region need to build a close working relationship focused on regional economic development in order to attract and build a strong industrial base for the region.

This study recognizes that the County does have its economic development initiatives and successes, however, based on the input received from the community during this effort, the region needs to have a stronger unified approach towards economic development and job creation to be competitive in today's market place.

The County should take the lead to analyze and quantify the industrial location advantages and opportunities for business and industry within the City of Hermitage in relation to the rest of the County. The study should develop an economic development strategy and marketing plan for the City and County as a whole. The study should compare the operating costs for industries within the study area vis-à-vis other areas of the region, as well as qualify any locational advantages for industrial/manufacturing development within the PA 18 corridor. A major focus should be placed on marketing business and industry including the development of a regional incentive package. A regional approach to economic development in the region could also attract scarce state resources to the region for industrial development. Other components of the study would include:

- Interviews with key business officials, civic leaders and other key business leaders from throughout the region
- Data collection from federal and state agencies and commercial databases
- Identification of strengths and weaknesses of locating within the PA 18 North study area
- Definition of economic vision, goals, and strategies
- Development of an external growth strategy (recruiting new firms from target industries)
- Development of an internal growth strategy (retaining and expanding existing firms and the start-up of new firms)
- Development of a complete external and internal economic development marketing plan
- Assessment of the available industrial sites in the area and recommendations on the best sites to market
- Development of an economic impact model to assist in the cost/benefit evaluation of incentives
- Assessment of the role of the tourism and retail sectors in economic development.
- Estimated Cost: \$50,000 to \$75,000.





### **7.6.3 Joint Planning**

In the recently adopted amendments to the municipalities planning code, there is a provision to provide for increased joint planning and zoning between municipalities. The key to this provision is that if municipalities agree to plan and zone together, each of them will no longer have to provide for every use individually. This joint planning approach would work well with a regional strategy for marketing to targeted industries and businesses. Municipalities could then plan regionally to identify the best locations in the region for industrial development and jointly work together to attract those businesses to the region. To accomplish this the County and municipal leaders should open a dialog on regional economic development and planning to attract high quality jobs. The above described economic development strategy planning study could be the basis for the development of a regional strategy.

### **7.6.4 Tax Base and Cost Sharing**

To support a regional economic development strategy, the municipalities will need to consider developing a strategic regional tax base and cost sharing plan. The regional tax-base sharing plan would provide the incentive for the municipalities in the region to support a regional industrial economic development strategy. The tax base sharing formula could be designed to share tax revenue generated by specifically identified regional planned industrial development zones. The sharing arrangement could also include cost sharing so municipalities - along with the County - could jointly afford to plan and develop incentives that make sites attractive to businesses. These incentives could include publicly funded infrastructure improvements such as water/sewer service expansion. This would be a monumental task to accomplish, but the rewards to the region could be higher average family income, stabilization of municipal population and the development of a diversified regional economic base.





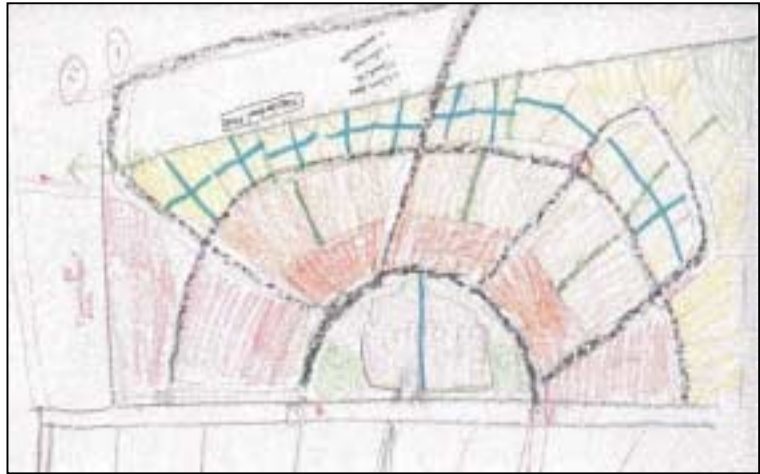
## 7.7 Future Land Use and Development

The zoning ordinance's *raison d'être* is to segregate different uses of land to protect the health safety and welfare of the residents and prevent incompatible uses of land from locating adjacent to one another.

However, the noxious smokestack industries of yesterday have given way to more footloose, clean service and light manufacturing centers that in some cases can co-exist in large, self-contained developments that may also include residential, retail and office uses.

Modern trends now allow for a “mixing” of differing uses, whereby zoning districts that were once created on an automotive scale can now be scaled back to include a mixing of traditional land-use categories into a single zoning district. These designations have been called more flexible “Planned Unit Developments” (PUD) or “Multi-Use Opportunity Zones.” Such zones are still regulated by the zoning ordinance, but given more flexibility under conditional use provisions as provided for in the ordinance. This type of zone provides a special opportunity to make Hermitage more pedestrian oriented and to provide a model for future expansion in ways that will further enhance the area’s quality of life.

Related to this issue is that of the City’s town center, located at the southern portion of the study area. With most of Hermitage’s growth taking place in the post-war period, the City does not have an easily identifiable town center as compared to the urban cores of nearby Farrelle or Sharon. As a case in point, the City’s main intersection features a service station, shopping plaza and a regional shopping mall - - uses that are land intensive and heavily dependent upon the private automobile. The City’s lack of a definable downtown center with pedestrian gathering places was noted throughout the study process. While it may be difficult to retrofit an entire developed area, there may be opportunities to provide for the same type of classic town center model – or at least its positive design principles—in other parts of the city yet to be developed.



A conceptual look at what the existing Planned Technical Property west of PA 18 could evolve into shows a mix of limited commercial, office, retail and residential areas flanked by strips of pedestrian greenways and concentric roadways. Such a development would require the addition of two signals along PA 18.

“You can’t buy a loaf of bread without getting into a car to do it.” – Thomas Hylton, *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns*



### 7.7.1 Key Future Land Use and Development Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study objectives should focus on the quality of land development and how it should be managed</li> <li>Recommendations should be made to lessen the City's dependence on the private automobile</li> <li>Undeveloped land must be looked at with an eye towards trip generation potential and its impact on the highway network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>89% of study survey respondents listed the attraction of technology industries as a "medium to high" priority for the City</li> <li>Attracting industrial and commercial development to the study area also scored as a high priority among survey respondents (76%)</li> <li>There needs to be better design standards for a clearly-defined downtown area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More sustainable development</li> <li>Less reliance on the private automobile lessens congestion</li> <li>Improved sense of place, or community</li> </ul>

### 7.7.2 Recommendations and Options

#### 7.7.3 Town Center

The City should consider establishing an identifiable town center for the area centered on the intersection of PA 18 and U.S. 62 (*see Ultimate Scenario map*). A town center concept will serve to promote a greater sense of identity and community pride for the residents of the City of Hermitage, as well as promote increased business opportunities and strengthen the local economy.

There are many examples of communities from around the Commonwealth that are in various stages of planning for the development of a town or village center that promotes pedestrian scale development. Towmencin Township, located off Interchange 31 of the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, recently won a Certificate of Environmental Achievement from Renew America for their Towamencin Village Plan. The plan resulted in a new zoning overlay district, which provides for structured parking, common stormwater management, preservation of parklands and trails, common parking areas and a progressive mix of land uses. The plan's focus is to provide a sustainable development where people can live, shop, work and play without being overly reliant upon automobiles and roadways. The graphic shown above is an architectural rendering of the Towamencin Village Plan.



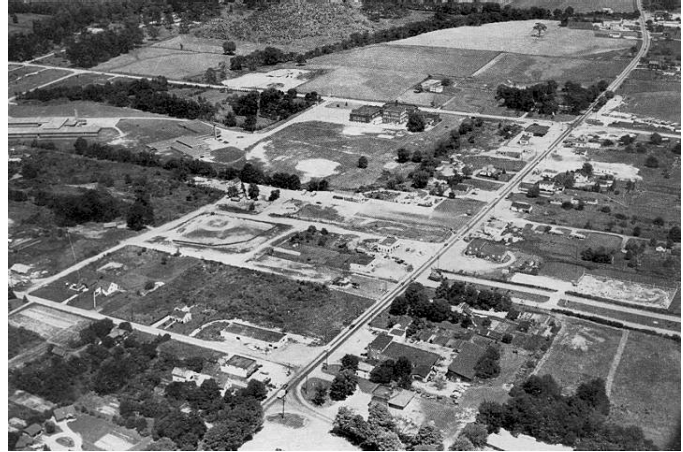
Towamencin Township Village Plan developed in 1996.

While the development of an identifiable town center can often be initially seen as a series of "brick and mortar" type improvements, a genuinely successful town revitalization effort should reflect what the community is about; particularly, the



small town values that underscore the history and promise of Hermitage. To this extent, the following implementation options are presented as a series of steps that should be followed in developing an identifiable town center.

The City should first consider developing a Town Center Design Plan that would establish how the community envisions an identifiable Town Center. An important feature of this *community-based* master plan would establish and define the boundary limits of the downtown center and develop a series of downtown functional areas that would serve as the center's foundation. Hermitage has many residents who could provide the core of a team to develop this master plan. A large, civic-minded group participated in the public meetings in November 2000. Uniformly, this group cares about its community and has a vision for new and better approaches.



An oblique view of the study area in 1956, looking east at the intersection of US 62 and PA 18.

A Design Plan would be the result of a series of community based design activities that would focus on developing drawings and renderings (pictures) of how the town center portion of the City could evolve over time. The plan would define the details of design. These are the details that cannot be described in words but must be made a visual part of the City's long range plan.

This type of plan can be best accomplished in a community design charrette. The resulting drawings should be used to focus the development of this part of the City beyond what the zoning and subdivision ordinance can provide in regulation and requirement.

Such functional areas may include the following:

- Arts and entertainment development
- Office development
- Retail development
- Residential development
- Civic events and festivals
- Parking and transportation infrastructure development facilities
- Landscaping improvements

Once these functional areas are defined, the master plan would then provide the strategic approaches for building the downtown center. The master plan would also identify design details and motifs to be used in future development.

The master planning approach will:



- Provide a comprehensive layout and design guideline for identifying and revitalizing Hermitage's town center
- Enhance the town center's physical appeal and image
- Strengthen the town center's retail and professional service base and encourage the clustering of related businesses
- Encourage moderate income residential development in the town center
- Establish a supportive transportation system, including adequate public parking, enhanced public transit, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the town center area.
- Strengthen small business growth and diversity, rather than encourage large scale commercial/retail development in the town center
- Estimated Cost for a Town Center Master Plan - \$30,000 - \$50,000 (as noted above, it may be possible to carry out this plan with a corps of volunteers with technical support from the City and/or MCRPC.) This type of planning activity is eligible for funding under DCED's State Planning Assistance Grant Program.
- Estimated costs for Associated Zoning and Land Development Ordinance Amendments – \$5,000 – \$10,000.



Hermitage features a non-traditional downtown, with auto-oriented, land-intensive uses and large set-backs. As a regional commercial center, the Shenango Valley Mall is among the study area's major traffic generators. Communities that have concentrated facilities and services in activity centers such as a downtown business district encourage non-motorized trips, as well as efficient automobile trips.

#### **7.7.4 Mixed Use Land Development**

The City should consider amending its zoning ordinance to enhance the land development opportunities for the properties located north of Lamor Road (including the current Planned Technical Park property) within the study area. As such, the City should consider creating a transitional zone with the intent of accommodating a *planned* mixture of complementary residential and light commercial uses. The proposed "transitional business" district would promote "neighborhood-compatible" businesses, restricted in size and limited in operational aspects from overwhelming nearby home owners already located on Trout Island and Valley View Roads, as well as in South Pymatuning Township.

The following is a proposed definition of such a "transitional district":

The intent of the Transitional District is to accommodate a limited range of commercial retail, office, medical, medical support and similar uses that are compatible with moderate density residential uses. The district is for the general purposes of





accommodating existing concentrations of office-related uses, providing opportunities for new mixed use development, and providing alternatives for conversion of dwellings or for new construction in areas that are undergoing change and are no longer viable exclusively as residences. The district is also intended as a means to ease the transition between residential and commercial areas by providing for a mix of residential and nonresidential uses with development standards that foster economic development and convenient services for area residents, while maintaining compatibility with adjacent residential zones.

Benefits of implementing such a recommendation would allow for some commercial uses in the zone while restricting businesses to major arteries and collector streets rather than smaller neighborhood streets. This type of development scheme then, would see more intensive commercial uses located adjacent to PA 18 and gradually lessen in intensity towards the residential uses. Other potential restrictions could include a ban on drive-through window service and limiting operating hours to no later than 9 p.m. for retail businesses and 11 p.m. for restaurants.

The timing of implementing such an ordinance and rezoning should be strongly considered by the City to ensure true market demand for the commercial space and protect the City's existing commercial areas from blight. The City should strongly consider the type and size of retail uses that should be developed in this portion of the study area.

The traffic generating ability of the property should also be considered in deciding the intensity of development allowed for this combined tract. As a study goal, the City must consider protecting the future capacity of the widened and improved PA 18. Table 4 provides the projected trip generation of the site upon build-out. TAZ's 1, 2 and 5 were used as well for trip generation. The entire site should be developed at intensities that will generate traffic not to exceed the peak traffic for TAZ's 1, 2 and 5 combined.

Benefits of this approach include:

- Allows City to provide for innovative development methods not permitted under traditional zoning. These practices recognize that large-scale developments can be planned to include a variety of housing types and supporting commercial services.
- Minimizes traffic congestion, infrastructure costs and environmental impacts
- Increases opportunities for open space and recreation, and access to goods and services.
- Provides for more sustainable development patterns.
- Provides a creative response to the issues frequently repeated in each public meeting regarding quality of life, pedestrian scale development, and the need for local amenities and design standards.
- Estimated cost for Associated Zoning and Land Development Ordinance Amendments – \$5,000 – \$10,000.



### **7.7.5 YMCA Property**

The YMCA property is currently zoned Institutional and is bordered to the north by a vacant parcel zoned Highway Commercial and to the south by existing commercial office use. The study team, based on input received from the public, recommended that the property allow more office or limited-type commercial uses not presently permitted under the Institutional zoning classification. The change would allow for a greater use of the property while still protecting the institutional character of the existing zoning district. This also supports Section 7.8.13 of this report.

The YMCA Board of Directors has recently requested that the City consider re-zoning the parcel to Highway Commercial.

## **7.8 Ordinance Recommendations**

The study area is regulated by a variety of plans and ordinances that provide for its safe and orderly development. Chief among these include: the comprehensive plan, subdivision and land development ordinance, zoning ordinance and landscaping ordinance. Each of these regulatory ordinances has an impact on the size, appearance, and use of the land in the City of Hermitage. These provisions also have ancillary impacts on the City's transportation system, environment and quality of life. While the subdivision and land development ordinance regulates the geometry and other features of new lots, it is the zoning ordinance that describes and dictates what land uses are permissible and at what density throughout the City's limits. As such, the zoning ordinance is the most powerful tool the City has at its disposal for influencing the land use and development patterns within the study area. The zoning ordinance is the best mechanism to address the land use related issues that were raised during the study, such as:

- Setbacks
- Landscaping and buffering
- Street trees
- Underground utilities
- Access management
- Mixed-use development areas.

A good ordinance should be responsive to the needs of City residents, visitors and businesses and should be sufficiently flexible to allow for reasonable exceptions for unusual circumstances.



### 7.8.1 Key Ordinance Related Issues Study Objectives and Findings

Study Objectives	Community Response	Benefits and Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The City needs standards to address street lighting and overhead power lines</li> <li>▪ The study area needs more urban characteristics such as street trees, trails and sidewalks</li> <li>▪ The City needs buffer zones to mitigate impacts of incompatible land uses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The City needs an identifiable town center that provides a “sense of place” and lets people know they’re in the heart of the City</li> <li>▪ There are no neighborhood-type places for people to recreate – recreation emerged as a significant issue area for retaining young people</li> <li>▪ There are aesthetic concerns outside of land use and transportation</li> <li>▪ The quality and appearance of the study area indirectly impacts tourists and business visitors – landscape improvements to the highway or a landscaping plan for property owners would help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved aesthetics and sense of community</li> <li>▪ Compatible land uses that minimize quality of life impacts</li> <li>▪ Improved safety</li> <li>▪ Clean, healthy environment</li> </ul>

### 7.8.2 Recommendations/Options

#### 7.8.3 Support Landscaping/Buffering

One of the City’s newest ordinances is a landscaping ordinance. Adopted as an amendment to the zoning ordinance in 2000, the ordinance enacted new standards for all new non-residential development with regard to provisions for: access drives, greenways, buffering, and general site landscaping around buildings and parking areas. The aesthetic value alone of this new ordinance will add to the livability and quality of life of the study area, as well as the City. The role of buffering and landscaping will become more acute in the study area as there are many existing residential neighborhoods located adjacent to vacant parcels.

The City Commissioners should continue to support the objectives of the Landscaping Ordinance, while the Planning & Development office should continue to monitor its effectiveness. Any problem areas should be documented and forwarded to the City’s Planning Commission for its review and recommendations for amending the ordinance. Efforts to inform and educate developers and others as to the rationale and specific applications of this new ordinance can pay dividends with respect to long term application of the ordinance. Simple fact sheets or workshops can be effective ways to communicate these changes.

#### 7.8.4 Develop Partnerships with Developers

In an area such as Hermitage where development pressure is relatively strong, the City Planning Commission should mitigate these growing pains by fostering a





stronger rapport with private developers and corporations. Informal partnerships with developers can result in additional funding or in-kind services for needed transportation or community-related improvements.

The City Planning Commission should consider implementing informal partnership agreements with private developers and corporations as developments are being planned. Developers should be encouraged to meet with the City early and often to discuss development plan ideas and concerns. We recommend that the City include a checklist of items for developers to include in a sketch plan for a initial meeting with the City. In addition, we recommend that the City consider amending their subdivision regulations to include a pre-application conference with the developer. Informal partnership agreements with developers can result in additional funding or in-kind services for needed transportation or community-related improvements.

The following list should be provided to prospective developers for their use in developing a sketch plan of their development idea.

Specifications - The Sketch Plan, which need not be drawn to scale, shall show the following information:

General Information - The individual shall provide a narrative describing the proposed subdivision or land development that shall address the following items:

- a) Purpose and scope of the subdivision or land development
  - b) Existing land use patterns and conditions of subject tract area and contiguous parcels
  - c) Major development feature(s)
  - d) Provisions for water supply and sewage disposal
  - e) Historical sites
- 2) Location Map - Provide a map (Minimum scale 1" = 2,000') showing the proposed subdivision or land development's location with respect to the existing community facilities, local street systems and municipal boundaries.
- 3) Sketch Plan - Provide a drawing of the proposed land development with the following features:
- a) Name and address of applicant and/or owner, name of municipality, proposed name of the development, north arrow and date
  - b) Tract boundaries
  - c) Number of acres in tract, average lot size, approximate number of lots, anticipated type of development
  - d) Existing and proposed streets, highways, railroads, right-of-way, sewers, water mains, fire hydrants and storm sewers
  - e) Proposed general lot layout
  - f) All public facilities such as schools and parks
  - g) Predominant natural features such as wooded areas, streams, wetlands, floodplains and others as addressed in the adopted comprehensive plan
  - h) A location map for the purpose of locating other streets, developments, recreation areas and right-of-way to better plan the proper locations of the same



- i) Topography, showing contours at vertical intervals of five (5) feet, or as required by the County Engineer
  - j) Name of the engineer, surveyor or other qualified person responsible for the map(s)
- 4) The sketch plan need not be drawn to scale. However, precise dimensions shall be shown if possible. The plan may be a simple sketch drawn on a topographic map.

### **7.8.5 Pre Application Conference**

The City should consider amending its subdivision ordinance to include a section requiring a pre-application conference as follows:

As part of the subdivision and land development process, a pre-application conference shall be scheduled with the City Planning Commission's staff prior to submission of the Preliminary and Final subdivision and/or land development plan. The purpose of the pre-application conference is to: (1) foster a confidential and informal plan review between the applicant and the City staff, (2) reduce the subdivision processing time and costs for the applicant, and (3) expedite the County's review and approval process once the plan is formally submitted. The following procedures and information should be addressed in the pre-application conference:

1. The applicant shall have prepared a complete subdivision and/or land development plan in accordance with the provisions of the ordinance.
2. The pre-application conference shall be scheduled at least twenty-eight (28) days prior to the regularly scheduled City Planning Commission meeting.
3. Due to the informal nature of the pre-application conference, the applicant or the City shall not be bound by any determination of the pre-application conference.

### **7.8.6 Reduce Setbacks / Encourage Side and Rear Parking**

A reduction in setbacks can have diverse benefits and profound impacts on the function and appearance of a corridor such as PA 18. This recommendation is supportive of creating a pedestrian friendly environment and general traffic calming principles.

Setback Recommendation: the City should consider reducing the minimum setback requirements for commercial, institutional and technical park properties in the PA 18 North Study area and the rest of the City. The City should also consider including a note on all subdivision plans requiring that the development conform to the setback requirements as defined in the current zoning ordinance when the development is actually built.

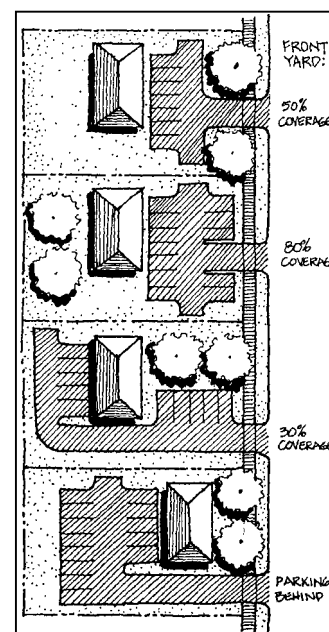


Zoning District	Current Requirement	Recommended Minimum	Recommended Maximum
Highway Commercial	90 Feet	25 Feet	50 Feet
Central Commercial	50 Feet	25 Feet	50 Feet
Institutional	60 Feet	25 Feet	50 Feet
Planned Technical Park	50 Feet	25 Feet	50 Feet

### 7.8.7 Parking Recommendation

The City should consider amending the zoning ordinance to encourage the following off-street parking principles along the PA 18 North Corridor:

- Encourage parking in rear yard and side yard as opposed to the front yard of commercial, institutional and planned technical developments to support a pedestrian oriented environment and reduce the dominance of the parking areas in the Corridor.
- Develop incentives for developers that are willing to provide side and/or rear parking instead of front parking such as a density bonuses to allow for a higher floor area ratio and higher maximum lot coverage percentages to accommodate the increased driveway lengths.
- Encourage the development of shared parking lots for adjacent properties consistent with the recommendations in the Access Management Section of this Report.



To accomplish these recommendations with developers, the City will need to educate and inform developers and landowners about the pros and cons for shared parking facilities. The following table identifies shared parking pros and cons.

**Table 13: Pros and Cons of Shared Parking**

Pros of Shared Parking	Cons of Shared Parking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced impervious coverage</li> <li>• Reduced construction and maintenance costs.</li> <li>• Increased land available for buildings</li> <li>• Increased attractiveness of city-scape</li> <li>• Increased ability for developers to complete projects that otherwise would have been denied due to insufficient parking.</li> <li>• Ability to utilize a single driveway access point for multiple properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible shortage of parking if land ownership and/or land uses change</li> <li>• Parking cannot be reserved for 24 hours for a particular use</li> <li>• Potential difficulty in dealing with multiple developers</li> <li>• Developers' perceptions that large parking lots are a necessity</li> </ul>



### **7.8.8 Benefits**

Some intrinsic benefits of more compact land use patterns include:

- Open space preservation
- Less land consumed for transportation facilities (including parking)
- Improvement in community image and interaction providing a “Sense of Place”
- Creation of a “pedestrian scale” streetscape that facilitates walking and bicycling to destinations
- Less infrastructure needed, such as sewer and water lines, pavement and curbing and stormwater conveyance systems
- Reduction in the number of secondary trips
- Better efficiency in providing transit service

### **7.8.9 Encourage Street Trees**

Streets in urban areas can provide for more than just accommodation of the automobile. A street that is well designed can accommodate not only motorists, but pedestrians and bicyclists as well. When streets are engineered for fewer purposes, focused on moving traffic and little else, they fail the greater needs of the City.\* Street trees can: provide shade and aesthetic value, provide traffic calming, and cool street temperatures, thus extending the life of the pavement.

The City should organize a Shade Tree Commission to oversee the preservation of existing trees and the planting of new ones as they relate to the City’s Landscaping Ordinance. (Perhaps adopt a “no net loss” policy of trees whereby developers are required to replace any trees destroyed during construction.) Local chapters of the Audubon Club, the Cooperative Extension Service, and other conservation groups provide a starting point for forming such a group on a volunteer basis. Other non-environmental groups like the chamber of commerce also stand to benefit from such green improvements and should as well be encouraged to participate in plant a tree type efforts. Other civic organizations like Lions or Rotary clubs will usually take an active interest in this type of initiative if asked to do so.

The City should consider amending its zoning ordinance to enhance the provisions for street trees, such as:

- Including a list of tree species as recommended by the American Association of Nurserymen, Inc., in the American Standard for Nursery Stock, ANSI Z60, current edition, as amended.
- Establishing a minimum number of tree plantings per linear feet of public

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\*Dan Burden, “Building Communities with Transportation,” TRB Conference Presentation, January 8, 2001



right-of-way (e.g., 2 deciduous trees per 100 linear feet of public right-of-way).

### **7.8.10 Benefits**

Strengthens the City's existing ordinance provisions for street trees.

Estimated Cost: \$400-\$800

### **7.8.11 Move Utility Lines Underground**

Aesthetics play an important role in a perception of a community. Just as the study's public input process revealed a desire for the study area to have street trees and an identifiable town center, hopes were also raised that the City could have utility lines moved underground – particularly on U.S. 62 between PA 18 and North Keel Ridge Road. Underground utilities also foster safer conditions for driving, walking, and cycling. A State Transportation Advisory Committee report on fixed objects near roadways demonstrated the value of transitioning to underground utilities over time.

A long-range goal of the City should be for the City Engineer to work with the Penn Power Electric Company and the PennDOT District Right of Way Units in developing a plan for relocating existing utility lines underground. Priority might be assigned based on a number of factors, including sight distance, improved aesthetics along the corridor and safety.

### **7.8.12 Update Planning Tools**

The City should consider updating its local planning tools such as the Comprehensive Plan, zoning ordinance, and adopting an official map to support the land use, transportation, and community improvements suggested by the community as part of this study.

Master planning in the study area is accomplished through the City's overall Comprehensive Plan. The Plan – adopted in 1993 – is now eight years old and moderately outdated for a community as dynamic as Hermitage. The City should consider an update of this master plan to more accurately address the changes that have taken place over the past decade and support the community vision communicated through this planning effort. Public interest also seems ripe based on the forums held in November for a broad based planning effort. This effort would encompass greenways development, identification of bicycle and pedestrian needs and facilities, recreational areas, re-zoning needs and economic development, as well as establishing priorities for project and policy implementation. Moreover, the master plan would also serve as a mechanism for creating the vision and strategic actions necessary for creating a downtown center for the City. Community planning since 1993 has also seen a notable resurgence as the general public realizes the tremendous opportunity to shape their



communities and the pressing need to do so in light of many of our current problems ranging from brain-drain, to crime, to traffic congestion.

Recent state policy promotes the benefits of sound land use planning at the municipal level. In support of this policy, Governor Ridge has appropriated \$2 million in state funding for local land use planning through DCED's Land Use Planning Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP). LUPTAP provides interested municipalities with 50% state funding to update local land use planning documents, in addition to other activities that promote sound land use. The City should take advantage of these current resources to update their existing planning documents and create an official map. As of this time, the City can still, in fact, be on the leading edge of this planning renaissance in Pennsylvania as only a handful of communities have endeavored to link transportation and land use planning to any significant degree.

### **7.8.13 Protect Institutional Core**

The City has been developing an Institutional Core district by the intersection of PA 18 and Highland Road. While mixed uses are being touted elsewhere in this plan, the City Planning Commission should continue to protect the character of this district from further highway commercial encroachment.

Future developers should be constructively engaged to participate in the planning process rather than simply complying with the sub-division ordinance.

### **7.8.14 Enact Fee-In-Lieu Requirements**

Along with entertainment and job creation, the need for recreational areas surfaced as a major issue for retaining the community's young people. This points back to the type of development that has been taking place in the study area in recent years – low-density residential areas with self-contained neighborhoods having limited open space/public recreational areas as part of the development.

*"Hermitage is a relatively wealthy area, yet we have no recreational areas for our young people," – comment made at a study focus group session*

The City should consider amending its subdivision and land development ordinance to enact a fee-in-lieu requirement for the provision of neighborhood recreational facilities. This action should be taken in conjunction with either the development of a comprehensive open space (recreation, greenways) plan or the update of the City's comprehensive plan. [As an alternative, the City could adopt a recreation and open space plan (again as part of its planning document update) and it would be eligible to assess recreation impact fees on developers.] Many municipalities in Pennsylvania use this provision.

Estimated Cost: \$500



### **7.8.15 Regulate Street Lighting**

One of the most striking characteristics of the urban environment is its nighttime illumination, which can greatly diminish the health, safety and quality of life enjoy by its residents. To this extent, the City's subdivision and land development ordinance does not regulate the impacts of streetlights on residential neighborhoods.

The City should consider amending its subdivision and land development ordinance to control street lighting impacts on residential neighborhoods. The following bullets summarize the key provisions that should be included:

- Intensities and uniformity ratios in accordance with the current recommended practices of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) as contained in their Lighting Handbook
- Glare and direct illumination controls (e.g, none in excess of 0.5 footcandles for residential uses)
- Photocell control of lighting
- Shading and Shielding of lighting
- Lighting Aesthetic Design Standard
- Safety and Security Lighting guidelines for public spaces, trails/greenways and areas with sidewalks.

### **7.8.16 Benefit**

This will control the lighting impacts on residential neighborhoods, thus increasing the residents' health, safety and overall quality of life. This will become ever more important as new sidewalks are built.

Estimated Cost: \$500





## **8.0 Appendix**

The appendix contains the following project materials:

- 1) Public Involvement Opportunity #1, including:
  - Focus Group Meeting Summaries
    - Business Representatives
    - Elected Officials
    - School District Officials
    - School Students
    - Public Meeting Comments
  - Intercept Survey
  - Power Point Slides
- 2) Public Involvement Opportunity #2, including:
  - Public Meeting Comments
  - Intercept Survey
  - Power Point Slides
- 3) Steering Committee Meeting Summaries
- 4) Greenways Fact Sheet
- 5) Project Related Newspaper Articles
- 6) Project Flow Chart/Methodology