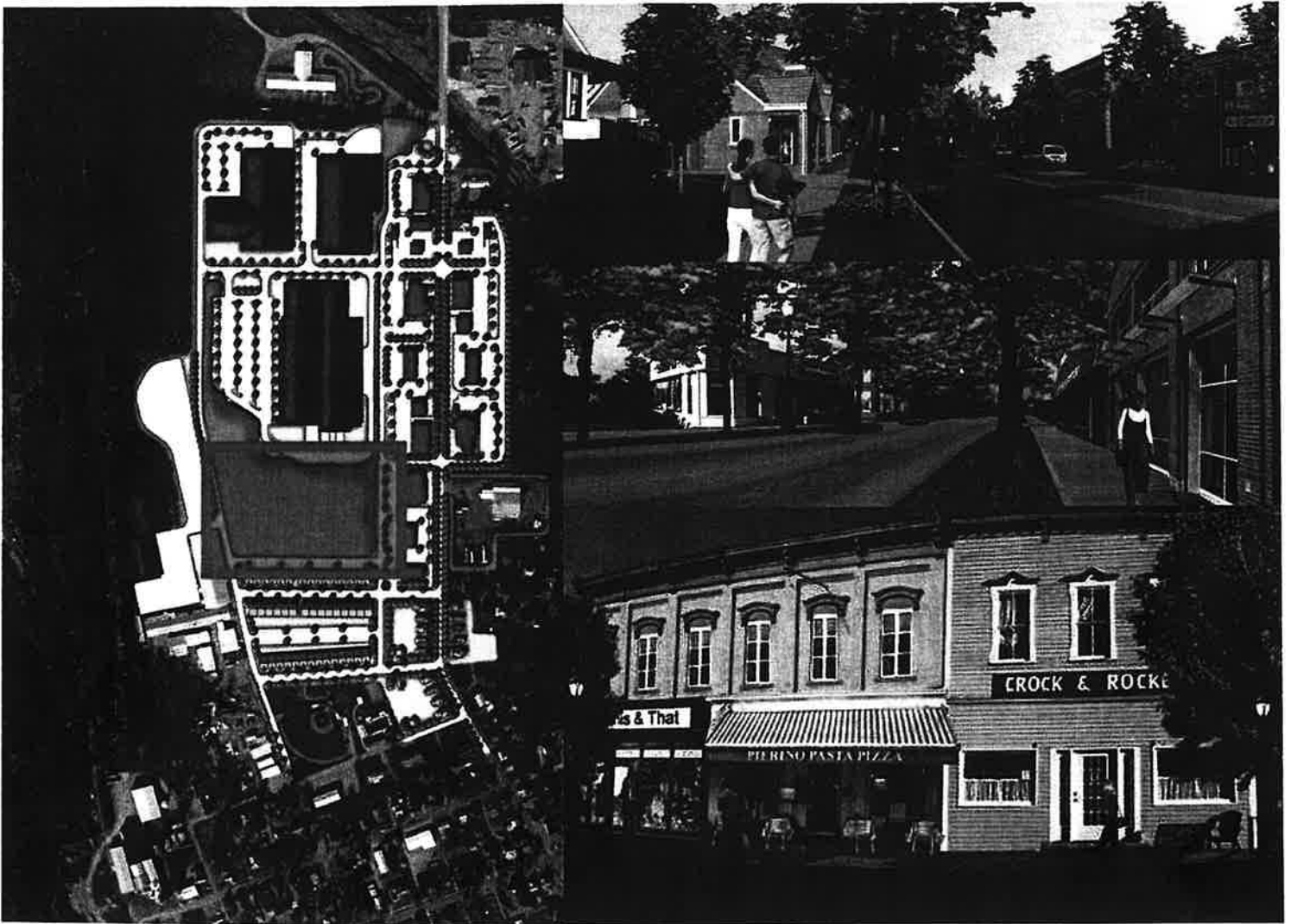


# SHENANGO TOWNSHIP and WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2008



Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough

RESOLUTION NO. 36 OF 2008

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SHENANGO, COUNTY OF MERCER, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA ADOPTING THE SHENANGO TOWNSHIP/WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, DATED THIS 13<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF OCTOBER, 2008 AS PREPARED BY THE SHENANGO TOWNSHIP/WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE, AND FACILITATED BY THE TWO PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES, THE MERCER COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION AND SPOTTS, STEVENS AND MCCOY, INC., PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III AND ARTICLE XI OF THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE.

Whereas, the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan includes these two municipalities in Mercer County, Pennsylvania; and,

Whereas, a copy of the comprehensive plan, which includes the text, maps, charts and any other items which form the whole of the comprehensive plan and was made available for public review in the offices of the above-mentioned municipalities is attached hereto as exhibit "A"; and,

Whereas, the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan was reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Shenango Township Planning Commission to the Shenango Township Supervisors on February 5, 2008 ; and,

Whereas, the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan was sent to all contiguous municipalities, the local school district, and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission for review and comment on May 7, 2008; and,

Whereas, the Township has received no substantial comments from the contiguous municipalities, the local school district, and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission within forty-five (45) days of submission of the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan; and,

Whereas, notice of a public hearing was forwarded to the Sharon Herald newspaper to be advertised and published on September 3, 2008 and September 13, 2008; and

Whereas, the Shenango Township Supervisors held a public hearing on Monday, September 22, 2008 to hear and consider public comments, and that the comments received at the public hearing were duly noted; and,

Whereas, Shenango Township has found that the comprehensive plan is beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Township,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SUPERVISORS OF SHENANGO TOWNSHIP AND IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ENACTED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME:

SECTION I. The Supervisors of Shenango Township, by this resolution, adopt the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan as attached hereto as Exhibit "A", as pursuant to Article III and Article XI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

SECTION II. Any and all previous comprehensive planning documents are hereby repealed.

Resolved and enacted this 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2008.

ATTEST:

Lynnette Buck  
Secretary

Supervisors of Shenango Township

[Signature]  
Chairperson

Walter R. Healey

Bill Williams

Courina Harrison

\_\_\_\_\_

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOROUGH OF WEST MIDDLESEX, COUNTY OF MERCER, COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA ADOPTING THE SHENANGO TOWNSHIP/ WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, DATED THIS 22<sup>nd</sup> DAY OF September, 2008 AS PREPARED BY THE SHENANGO TOWNSHIP/ WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE, AND FACILITATED BY THE TWO PARTICIPATING MUNICIPALITIES, THE MERCER COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION AND SPOTTS, STEVENS AND MCCOY, INC., PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III AND ARTICLE XI OF THE PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPALITIES PLANNING CODE.

WHEREAS, the Shenango Township/ West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan includes these two municipalities in Mercer County, Pennsylvania; and,

WHEREAS, a copy of the comprehensive plan, which includes the text, maps, charts and any other items which form the whole of the comprehensive plan and was made available for public review in the offices of the above-mentioned municipalities is attached hereto as exhibit "A"; and,

WHEREAS, the Shenango Township/ West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan was reviewed and recommended for adoption by the West Middlesex Borough Planning Commission to the West Middlesex Borough Council on April 7, 2008 ; and,

WHEREAS, the Shenango Township/ West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan was sent to all contiguous municipalities, the local school district, and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission for review and comment on May 7, 2008; and,

WHEREAS, the Borough has received no substantial comments from the contiguous municipalities, the local school district, and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission within forty-five (45) days of submission of the Shenango Township/ West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan; and,

WHEREAS, notice of a public hearing was forwarded to the Sharon Herald newspaper to be advertised and published on September 3, 2008 and September 13, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the West Middlesex Borough Council held a public hearing on Monday, September 22, 2008 to hear and consider public comments, and that the comments received at the public hearing were duly noted; and,

WHEREAS, the Borough Council has found that the comprehensive plan is beneficial to the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Borough,

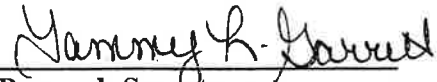
**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH COUNCIL AND IS HEREBY RESOLVED AND ENACTED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAME:**

SECTION I. The West Middlesex Borough Council, by this resolution, adopts the Shenango Township/ West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan as attached hereto as Exhibit "A", as pursuant to Article III and Article XI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

SECTION II. Any and all previous comprehensive planning documents are hereby repealed.

ATTEST:

BOROUGH OF WEST MIDDLESEX,  
MERCER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

  
Borough Secretary

  
President of Council

APPROVED by me on this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of September, 2008.

  
Mayor

I, Tammy Garrett, Secretary of the Borough of West Middlesex, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution that was duly and regularly adopted and enacted by the affirmative vote of the majority of the members of the West Middlesex Borough Council, at a regular meeting thereof duly convened on the 22nd day of September, 2008.



## FOREWORD

*"We must ask where we are and whether we are tending."*

– Abraham Lincoln

*"I have a dream."*

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*"...the simultaneous goals of environmental quality, personal and community well being and economic prosperity – goals that are not in conflict but, we recognize, mutually dependent."*

*"We are all stewards, charged with the care of something that belongs to someone else. To be good stewards, we must begin now, with purpose and urgency, to build on the foundations we have."*

– Report of the Pennsylvania 21<sup>st</sup> Century Environment Commission

The four statements above sum up what comprehensive planning is all about – we look at existing conditions and current trends, create a vision for the future based on the premise that planning must have as its end the well being of the Region's residents, outline a plan to protect and enhance our assets, and "with purpose and urgency" act to realize the vision, goals, and plan.

Certain chapters in this plan are critical to read if this planning effort is to contribute to the well-being of the Region's residents. Chapter 4 presents the regional vision of managed growth; a range of housing opportunities; balanced residential, institutional, commercial, office, and industrial development; variety in employment opportunities; retention of rural character and agricultural activities; managed corridors with gateway and streetscape enhancements; utilization of smart growth techniques; enhancement of the Shenango River as an important and accessible community asset; and West Middlesex as a unique, vital, and livable center.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 discuss major principles of this Comprehensive Plan. Chapter 5 emphasizes the importance of enhancing community image and the quality of development. Chapter 6 outlines the elements of smart growth and what makes communities livable. The concepts of centers, linkages, and corridors are essential when planning for the future of this Region, and Chapter 7 discusses those concepts. The center of the Region is West Middlesex Borough. Corridors include Route 318, Route 18, the Shenango River, and planned bicycle/pedestrian corridors. Gateway treatments at entries to corridors are stressed.

Basic plan elements are found in Chapters 8 through 13. Chapter 8 is the Future Land Use and Housing Plan. Chapter 9 discusses the importance of agricultural and scenic

resources in the Region. Chapter 10 is the Community Facilities and Services Plan. Chapter 11 is the Transportation and Circulation Plan. Chapter 12 is the Economic Development Plan. Chapter 13 is the Historic Preservation and Natural Resources Plan. These chapters contain goals and objectives, policies, recommended actions and projects, and techniques to use in plan implementation.

Implementation of this plan is discussed in Chapter 14. Implementation is critical, and is discussed in detail in the next section.

“To Begin Now, With Purpose and Urgency”

**(or, How To Make This Plan A Living Document and Keep It Off The Shelf)**

Chapter 14 is, arguably, the most important chapter in this plan. It summarizes the major comprehensive plan principles, presents broad implementation strategies identified by the Steering Committee, lists prior plans in the Region supported by this plan, lists additional plans recommended by this plan, lists the priority projects of the municipalities participating in this plan, ranks priority projects identified by the public at a public meeting, identifies some of the programs and agencies which can help implement this plan, describes some of the governmental grant programs which can facilitate implementation, and summarizes recommended projects listed in the various plan element chapters.

**Organizational linkages** are crucial to the implementation of this plan. Chapter 7 lists the following examples of such linkages:

- Continuation of a regional planning group representing both municipalities, working with the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, to oversee implementation of this Plan.
- Designating responsibility to a new or existing agency to develop the plan to enhance the Shenango River on a regional basis.
- Increased intermunicipal cooperation in grantsmanship; staff utilization; recreation and other municipal services; regional promotion; and project planning, such as corridor enhancement plans and Regional Park, open space, and recreation plans.

**Cooperative municipal efforts** recommended by this plan are discussed at the beginning of Chapter 10 and include, among others,

- Promotion of the Region as a place to live, work, and visit, with presentation of positive public relations information.
- Grantsmanship.
- Review and implement opportunities for the provision of coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective public services, such as comprehensive park and recreation systems; sharing of equipment, code enforcement, and staff utilization.
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- Regional Environmental Advisory Council.
- Regional Historical Commission.
- Streetscape planning for the Route 18 and Route 318 Corridors, including coordinated corridor overlay zoning.

Upon adoption of this Comprehensive Plan, the **highest priority is to execute an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement to implement the Plan**, as discussed in the Municipalities Planning Code. A Regional Planning Committee is established by that agreement.

Per the Planning Code, **the two municipalities have two years from the adoption of the Plan to make sure that their zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, Act 537 plans, capital improvement plans, and official maps are generally consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.** The municipalities may act individually, or they could cooperate to draft consistent zoning and subdivision and land development ordinance language. Achieving this general consistency with the plan is the next priority after executing the Agreement.

Achieving general consistency with this plan is really just the starting point to plan implementation. **IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL THAT SOMEONE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN.** As noted above, it could be the regional planning committee working with a support group(s), such as the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission and/or Council of Governments. It could be a municipal governing body, planning commission, or staff.

The plans and projects listed in Chapter 14 are critical to achieving the vision for this Region. The group taking responsibility for plan implementation should **make contact with the identified regional partners and state agencies can assist in implementation.** Contact with DCED (Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development) is necessary, as many programs for implementation start with DCED.

Some of the plans recommended by this plan include:

- Route 318 streetscape enhancement plan
- Route 18 streetscape enhancement plan.
- Shenango River plan

- Regional trail system plan.
- Regional Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Plan.
- Design guidelines for Route 18 and West Middlesex.

The Steering Committee and residents have identified the following projects/strategies as of highest priority:

- Increase grant opportunities
- West Middlesex Streetscape Enhancements
- Economic development opportunities at Route 60, Route 318, and I-80 interchanges.
- Completion of the Route 60-Route 318 interchange.

To build momentum toward implementation of this plan, a project related to the above priorities should be chosen for implementation within the next six (6) months, a champion for the project designated, funding secured, and the project begun. An enhancement activity along Route 18 or Route 318 could be appropriate.

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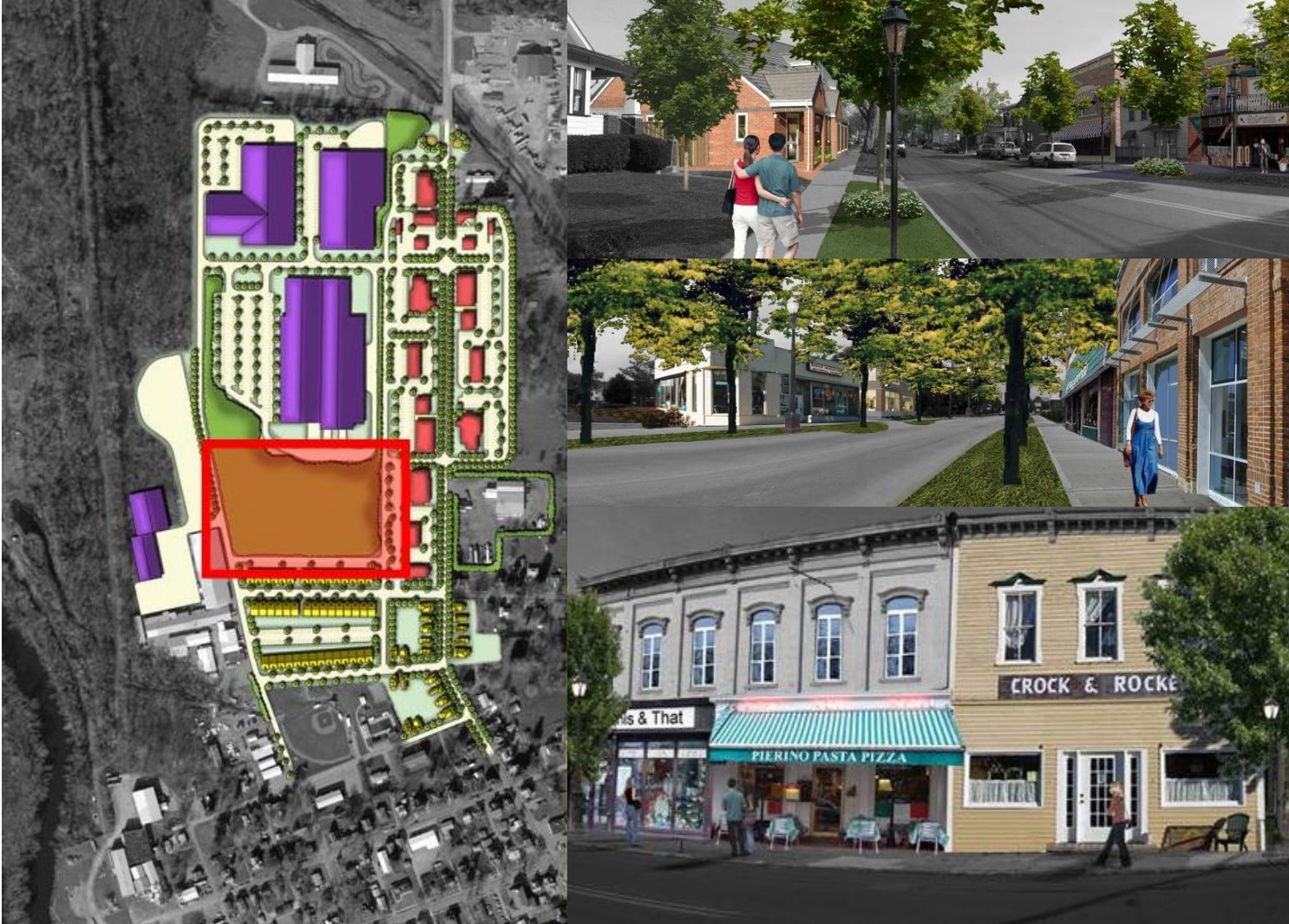
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# SHENANGO TOWNSHIP and WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

JULY 2007



Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough

*Funding for this project was provided through a Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development Land Use Planning & Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP) Grant and local funds from the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.*

## FOREWORD

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# **Chapter 1**

## **The Joint Comprehensive Plan**

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### **Introduction & Purpose**

The Shenango/West Middlesex Region contains a variety of landscapes which make the Region unique in many ways: the small town atmosphere of West Middlesex Borough, the Shenango River Corridor, interchange areas with Interstate 80 and PA Route 60, partially commercialized PA Route 18, and the rural and agricultural areas of Shenango Township. The potential for sanitary sewer extension and the potential construction of a new interchange in the eastern part of the Township present challenges as well as opportunities for future land use planning. Growth management will become more of an issue in the future. Issues such as economic growth, job creation, agricultural and open space preservation, infrastructure improvements, cultural resource development, and the continuation of the quality of life in the face of a currently decreasing population makes this plan a challenging one.

In 1968, the Pennsylvania legislature passed Act 247, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. This was the legislation that enabled local governments to develop Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances, and Official Maps. In the years since then, the Act has been amended numerous times, providing municipalities with more means to implement their plans, but these original planning tools remain the foundation of local planning.

In 2000, Pennsylvania adopted amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code, specifically Acts 67 and 68, known as “Smart Growth” legislation. This new legislation allows municipalities to work together to plan regionally across municipal borders using “smart growth principles” and specifically enabled the creation of joint municipal Comprehensive Plans. A Joint Comprehensive Plan can address both development and preservation issues with the flexibility of allocating land uses over the entire planning area, rather than the traditional method of providing for all land uses within each municipality. Additionally, a Joint Comprehensive Plan allows for regional coordination of transportation and community facilities issues, which helps to prevent overlap of municipal resources. The Action Plan will address specific recommendations pertaining to these new planning tools.

A Joint Comprehensive Plan is more than just a plan for development. The Plan is a means granted to local governments by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by which participating communities may work together to create a vision of what they want to become and how they intend to achieve that vision. Surrounding communities are changing as well. This Joint Comprehensive Plan will help to anticipate change, to identify community goals, and to examine local resources. It will provide the guidance that allows a higher degree of control in *how* change occurs in the Shenango Valley.

This Joint Comprehensive Plan was initiated because of the recognized need to update and examine overall planning for the area in light of development trends and issues in the Region, and to determine common goals and objectives for land use.

### **Contents of a Comprehensive Plan**

The State allows local governments to address virtually any issue that is of municipal concern, but Act 247 established certain minimum requirements. According to §301 of Act 247, a valid Comprehensive Plan must include:

- a statement of objectives concerning future development;
- a plan for land use;
- a plan to meet the housing needs of present residents and of any anticipated increase of population;
- a plan for the movement of people and goods, which may address automobile travel, parking facilities, non-motorized trail systems, and public transportation facilities;
- a plan for community facilities and services, which may address public and private education, recreation, municipal buildings, fire and police services, libraries, hospitals, water supply and distribution, sewerage and solid waste management, storm drainage, and utilities;
- a statement of the inter-relationships among the components of the plan;
- a discussion of short-range and long-range implementation strategies for the plan objectives;
- a review of how compatible the plan is with the existing and proposed development and plans in contiguous portions of neighboring municipalities outside of the planning region;
- a statement regarding consistency with the county comprehensive plan;
- a plan for the protection of natural and historic resources; and
- a plan for the reliable supply of water.

In addition, the municipalities may address virtually any area of local concern.

It is important to realize that this Joint Comprehensive Plan does not have the force of law, although it provides the foundation for ordinances and regulations that do. In fact, a sound Joint Comprehensive Plan becomes critical in the event that an ordinance of any of the participating municipalities is challenged in court: if the ordinance in question is

shown to be consistent with a duly adopted Joint Comprehensive Plan, a successful legal challenge is much more difficult than it would be otherwise.

### **What does a Comprehensive Plan Accomplish?**

The Comprehensive Plan contains a vision of what Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough want to achieve and includes goals, policies and strategies for realizing that vision.

The Comprehensive Plan is an educational document, providing discussion of conditions, issues, and opportunities, and identifying resources that are worthy of protection and preservation.

The Comprehensive Plan contains policies for land use, housing, circulation and community facilities which will serve as a guide for public and private decision-making to accomplish the goals and objectives, and thus the vision for the municipalities. The Plan is a guideline as to how to shape the future of the Region in accordance with that vision.

The Comprehensive Plan provides a basis for implementation techniques, such as land use ordinances, official maps and capital improvements programs, which will implement the policies contained in this plan. It is critical that the Action Plan be implemented. The Plan also provides a framework for the creation of partnerships to implement the plan.

Planning jointly allows allocation of land uses, housing types, densities, and development patterns over the entire region, rather than trying to fit all types of uses and densities into each municipality. It also allows for coordinated land use planning along municipal boundaries; coordinated planning for trails, recreation and open space, and transportation throughout the Region; and coordinated planning along the common road corridors in the Region. Coordinated input can be provided to County and State agencies and an overall approach to economic development can be presented, addressing retention of major components of the economy and allowing for appropriate commercial and industrial development, which complements rather than detracts from existing commercial areas. The following list summarizes benefits of multi-municipal planning:

## **Benefits of Multi-Municipal Planning**

- Provides a regional planning approach and allocation of land uses
  - Where
  - How much to accommodate population projections
  - Patterns of development
- Establishes growth areas and future growth areas regionally
  - Coordination with infrastructure
  - Opportunities for infill
- Provides coordinated planning along the common boundaries of the municipalities
- Supports existing centers rather than weaken them
- Coordinates road corridor planning, standards, and management
- Provides for linkages between municipalities
- The Plan and implementing ordinances are considered by state agencies in permitting decisions
- Addresses review of “developments of regional impact”
- Identifies opportunities for future joint efforts
- Promotes common land use designations and definitions
- Establish goals for economic character over the entire Region
- Provides support for municipalities in zoning challenges
- Enables Transportation Impact Fees across municipal boundaries
- Enables Transfer of Development Rights across municipal boundaries
- Enables priority consideration in state funding programs
- Provides opportunity to learn from neighbors’ shared experiences
- Enhances the Region’s attractiveness to quality development

- Enables developing a “specific plan” for an area designated for non-residential development, preparing regulations for that area, and streamlining the approval process

### **Arrangement of This Document**

This Joint Comprehensive Plan has been arranged in that the conclusions and plan elements are presented first, with the research and documentation provided at the end. This arrangement may be confusing for someone attempting to read the Plan straight through – and it is certainly not the order in which the document was written – but the Plan will be used most efficiently when arranged like a research document. The Plan should be a reference document that users will consult for guidance or research on specific topics. Also, since this document is a *plan*, it is logical to give the plan elements prominence rather than precede it with research about conditions that will change over time and become increasingly irrelevant.

The initial introductory chapters are designed to provide the user with sufficient information on the planning process and planning terms to assure clear understanding of the document. A summary of the public participation information is provided to give a sense of the character of the community and of the issues that will be addressed by the plan, and finally the Vision, Goals and Objectives which name the more specific issues to be addressed by this Plan.

The middle chapters contain the plan elements required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. This section of the Plan then reviews the procedure by which policies were identified, and presents each of the actions that have been established, including a chapter for each plan element, as well as the overall Action Plan, as well as an interrelationship of plan components matrix.

The final chapters of background material for the plan elements are arranged by topic.

### **Methodology**

The Planning Committee began the planning process in 2005 by selecting Spotts, Stevens and McCoy (SSM) and Pashek Associates as the professional planning consultants to work with the County and municipalities. Local officials appointed a Planning Committee to work with the consultants, including representatives from Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough, and the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.

The Committee held meetings starting in the Fall of 2005 for the duration of the planning process. Among the earliest actions of the Committee was to identify ways to gain input

from local residents and business owners regarding their perceptions of the municipalities, and any critical issues they share.

- Pashek and Associates conducted a workshop in which committee members were given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of the good and bad aspects of their communities. Committee members presented their photos, and prioritized the key issues in each community, which assisted in the development of the community vision statements.
- The Committee and Pashek then facilitated another visioning session that was open to all interested residents. The session included a detailed presentation of the project scope followed by an exercise to ask the public in attendance to identify and prioritize critical issues faced by the communities.
- SSM conducted individual meetings with officials from each participating municipality to discuss issues and concerns that were unique to each community.
- Later in the planning process, the Committee, SSM and Pashek Associates held public information meetings to discuss the draft future land use and implementation projects.

A summary of all public meeting and visioning sessions is included in Chapter 3, *Identification of Issues – Public Participation*.

Once the planning process was underway, Committee meetings were largely occupied with discussion of the various plan issues and review of text as prepared by SSM and Pashek. Upon completion of the text and maps, the entire draft document was reviewed to assure that the plan elements created a coherent whole.

As required by Act 247, the complete draft was submitted to the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, the adjacent school districts, and each adjoining municipality in order to allow them to review and comment upon the Plan. Drafts were also available for public review. Each Municipal Planning Commission convened a public meeting for the purpose of presenting the draft as submitted by the Committee to the public, and to solicit comments. Following the Public Meetings, the governing bodies held official public hearings, as per the requirements of the Municipalities Planning Code, to hear any additional comments from their respective residents. **The Plan was officially adopted in**

### **Need for Continuing Planning**

This Comprehensive Plan is just a start. It is the foundation for the attainment of the goals and objectives established within the Plan, which can be accomplished only with the support of the municipal governments, municipal commissions, boards and

committees, area businesses, area residents, and surrounding municipalities and regional planning groups.

The objective has been to prepare a plan, which will not sit on a shelf and gather dust, but a plan that will be implemented and used by municipal governing bodies, planning commissions and other groups within the municipalities to guide their actions in attaining the goals of this Plan.

This Plan presents a strategy to guide municipal officials and other agencies in making decisions that will assure that the Shenango Valley Region will continue to be an attractive place in which to live, work, and visit. This Comprehensive Plan is not an ordinance or regulation, but is a basis for establishing regulations and undertaking specific functional plans designed to implement the policies set forth within the plan. Each municipality retains the right to control zoning within its municipality, whether through individual zoning ordinances or a joint zoning ordinance.

Planning is an ongoing process and this Joint Comprehensive Plan must be continually reviewed in light of unforeseen changes in development trends, the state of the economy, capacity of public infrastructure, changes in community goals, and the appropriateness of the Plan's objectives, policies, and implementation program. It is recommended that the recommendations of this Plan be reviewed every 5 years.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Regional Setting and Adjacent Planning**

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### **Introduction**

Although the jurisdiction of local government ends at the municipal line, the surrounding communities unavoidably affect the daily lives of the residents. Wise planning requires us to identify and to evaluate the effect of various features beyond the borders of Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough. This chapter will place the Region within the context of the larger community and will identify those regional features that have the most direct impact upon residents. This chapter also includes an analysis of the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Comprehensive Plans for those surrounding municipalities that are adjacent to the Planning Region.

### **Geographic Setting and Influences**

Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough are situated in southwestern Mercer County in Western Pennsylvania, and have relatively easy access to some of the midwest United States' most populous cities and markets. The Pittsburgh and Cleveland Metropolitan areas and the urban areas of Youngstown, Akron, and Erie, are all within about ninety minutes driving time. The PA Route 18 Corridor traverses the Region and provides access to the regional Interstate Highway System (Interstate 80), as well as a corridor for economic development. The Shenango Valley Region contains a variety of land uses. Agricultural and rural uses dominate much of the Township south of PA Route 318, while the Borough and PA Route 18 corridor are characterized by industrial, commercial, and residential development.

### **Commercial Areas and Employment Centers**

Most of the local commercial areas are located along the PA Route 18 and PA Route 318 Corridors, and are clustered mainly in the Borough of West Middlesex. There are some commercial and industrial areas along the PA Route 18 Corridor in northern Shenango Township near the interchange with Interstate 80 and south of the Borough, and also commercial uses on PA Route 318 to the east of the Borough.

The West Middlesex School District is a major employer in the Region. Industrial uses are found along Jones Way and along the Shenango River in the Borough.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING**

### **The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan**

The Growth and Development Policy Statement of the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan states that Mercer County and its communities should work to enhance the sense of place in each of the urban, suburban, and rural areas. This will be established by establishing policies that:

- Define existing developed areas and areas for future growth;
- Encourage redevelopment in existing developed areas and encourage new development near existing developed areas;
- Balance a variety of land uses and densities, as well as combinations of uses, appropriate to urban, suburban, and rural character;
- Encourage land uses that support a strong tax base, including agriculture and forest industries in rural areas;
- Encourage development patterns that complement and preserve existing natural, environmental, and historic features;
- Coordinate infrastructure upgrades and extensions in areas of existing development and those areas targeted for growth;
- Incorporate public participation in the decision-making and land development process.

The County's growth policy statement also encompasses sustainable smart growth principles where urban, suburban, and rural areas complement one another. The Future Land Use Map for the County is designed to guide development to appropriate areas which are targeted for preservation or development. The Future Land Use Map is also the foundation for municipalities to develop their own land use regulations, including comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision and land development ordinances. The Mercer County Future Land Use Plan designates the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Region with the following categories:

- Economic Revitalization Areas;
- Natural Resource Protection Areas;
- Suburban Preservation;
- Economic Growth Areas;
- Mixed Use Growth Areas.

The comprehensive plan for Shenango/West Middlesex will use the Mercer County Land Use Plan as a guide, and will expand upon the designations in greater detail. The purpose of this study is to provide the municipalities a mechanism to make future land use decisions, while remaining consistent with the County's regional land use goals.

## **ADJACENT MUNICIPAL PLANNING**

The Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough planning region is bordered by three municipalities in Mercer County: Wilmington and Lackawannock Townships to the east; and the City of Hermitage to the north. To the west of the region is Trumbull County, Ohio, and to the south is Lawrence County. The following is a brief summary of the land use recommendations of the comprehensive plans, where they exist, of adjacent municipalities.

### **Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland Joint Comprehensive Plan**

The northern border of Shenango Township is shared with the City of Hermitage. The joint comprehensive plan, including Hermitage, Farrell, Sharon, and Wheatland designate the border with Shenango Township as Industrial; Rural/Agriculture; Corridor Enhancement, and Suburban Residential.

### **Lackawannock/Wilmington Township**

The eastern border of Shenango Township is shared by Lackawannock and Wilmington Townships. Both are predominately rural municipalities, and the designation given to the border areas, by the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan is Natural Resource Protection (Open Spaces).

### **Summary/Planning Implications**

The Region's location adjacent to population centers, including Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Cleveland, combined with the high degree of access provided by Interstate 80, the present and future availability of public sewer and water service in and around the Borough, and the presence of vacant land, will have a powerful influence upon development. The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan designates the Borough and northern portion of the Township as a Growth Area. The goals and objectives of this Joint Comprehensive Plan are generally consistent with the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan designations. The surrounding municipalities land uses are also generally compatible and consistent.

## Chapter 3

### **Identification of Issues - Public Participation**

For a Joint Comprehensive Plan to be a useful tool for guiding future development and policy in an area, it must represent a consensus among the Region's stakeholders. The residents, business owners, community service providers, and municipal officials must each have a part in forming the policies of the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires public input at the *end* of the process, in the form of public meetings and public hearings. Restricting public involvement to merely what is required is not likely to produce a successful plan, as the public will have little sense of participation in the process or ownership of the final document: they are being asked to approve a plan in which they had no voice. Early public participation is essential to the development of a practical, community-based Comprehensive Plan, regardless of the number of municipalities that are involved.

The public participation component of the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Borough Joint Comprehensive Plan went beyond the requirements of the MPC. Public input was sought early in the planning process, well before any policies or future land uses were determined.

- The Committee held meetings, which were open to the public, starting in 2005 for the duration of the planning process. Among the earliest actions of the Committee was to identify ways to gain input of residents of the Region, as well as business owners and community stakeholders identified by the committee, regarding their perceptions of the municipalities, and any critical issues they share.
- Pashek and Associates conducted a workshop in which committee members were given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of the good and bad aspects of their communities. Committee members presented their photos, and prioritized the key issues in each community, which assisted in the development of the community vision statements.
- The Committee and Pashek then facilitated another visioning session that was open to all interested residents. The session included a detailed presentation of the project scope followed by an exercise to ask the public in attendance to identify and prioritize critical issues faced by the communities.
- A public outreach meeting was held to receive comment on a draft vision, goals, and objectives, and future land use plans.

This chapter will include an analysis of the results of the public outreach, including a summary of the committee and citizen responses.

**Summary of Comments from Steering Committee Visioning Session.**

<i>Shenango Township/Borough of West Middlesex</i>	
Steering Committee Comment	Ranking
Need water/sewer - currently a combined sanitary/storm water sewer system - educate residents on benefits	3
Concern with landfills coming to town/protect open space	3
Preserve small villages - “hometown proud”	2
Interest businesses to come into area - keep kids with jobs - there is the perception that unions prevent businesses from locating here	2
Improve Routes 80/60 interchanges - encourage people to stop - small industries - existing development needs replaced - old gas stations - plenty of room to develop	2
Excellent location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland – a cultural center like the Youngstown Civic Center would be a boost for culture and tourism in the area	2
Concern with disposable buildings - waste of natural resources - quickly become unattractive – see if we can re-use buildings	2
More stores to bring in jobs/\$ shops - restaurants	1
Improve streets/sidewalks	1
Retain “sense of place” - remember past – there are special places that make this valley worth living in and need to be preserved	0
Quality of life must be retained	0
Preserve historic structures	0
There is a need for awareness of benefits of stopping in the Valley - signage – marketing - on Route 80 drivers don’t really know about Farrell/Sharon – poor first impression with old abandoned car building at Route 80 exit into the valley	0

## Summary of Comments from Public Visioning Session

<i>Shenango Valley Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans</i>	
Public Comments (April 26, 2006)	Ranking
Economic stability for the Region requires obtaining a variety of new businesses, including some of the past industries; attract better paying jobs including sectors like the medical field (elderly population) or hi-tech; what is “plan B” if we do not bring back the large employers of years ago?	14
Encourage redevelopment of existing brownfield sites as opposed to greenfield (agricultural) sites	12
PSU Shenango campus - promote the development of a full 4-year degree curriculum with residence halls, cultural entertainment, shopping opportunities for students, a thriving campus might save Sharon; other secondary education facilities are an asset too, like Butler County Community College	10
More public transportation, especially in the outer areas- reconfigure service system - longer hours; it was reported that transit authority is studying issues of hours, locations of need	10
Shenango River - provide better access/greater use - “wild spot” in the Region that is special	8
Community image needs work, the Region is a great place to live - must find marketing niche, we don’t have beaches or mountains to sell	6
Adult education is important - can take place at libraries - help to live better (for example - computer education for seniors); support for libraries is important – programs for the public	6
There is a need for a supermarket near senior housing in Sharon	5
“Dress for success” concept for the valley is needed – community pride, clean-up the area	5
Signage and attractive portals are needed into Shenango Valley from Rt. 80, Routes 60/18, from Ohio border 62/82 into Sharon - people don’t know what they are passing by	4
Another newspaper is needed	4
Deteriorating housing stock needs to be repaired and rehabilitated in all the communities of this study	4

Aging infrastructure needs replaced	4
Housing for seniors/disabled needs to be larger than 1 bedroom	3
There should be a valley-wide economic plan - sharing of results, eliminate competition between individual communities	3
Farrell- abandon Act 47 designation and develop a community plan for economic development	3
Government reactive, not proactive - wait until properties are too far gone to save, strip development – everything so spread out - public transit difficult	3
Close proximity to Pittsburgh/Cleveland is an asset	2
Restaurant in mall is needed	2
Need more park and recreation sites- attractive parks draw employers - Farrell is very deficient in providing parks	2
Directory for services for seniors is needed	2
Industrial parks in Columbus are attractively done - we need the same high level of quality development here	2
Absentee landlords a problem in Sharon	2
Concern with encouraging businesses to move here by providing business tax cuts for 10 years, then after ten years, the business moves out	2
More, better bike/hike facilities are needed	2
Attitude - one community is better than another – we should be thinking as a Region and put less focus on the individual community	1
Great at “surviving”- not sure we can “thrive” – we need to be continually learning, risk tolerant, open processes	1
We need a Community College system run by the County	1
We need to keep people here	1

Rich history - preserve and promote	1
Have lots of low cost housing – an asset - encourage people to move here - market to “new Americans”	1
Pymatuning Lake is a recreational asset	1
With decreasing student population – we can no longer afford 5 school districts	1
More government information online would be helpful - like MCRPC	1
There are old industrial sites that may be causing long term health problems in the community – we cannot ignore these problems	1
Buhl Park - asset, helps bring whole valley together	0
“Small scale” of our valley is an asset - not urban; people know each other – small town character	0
Entertainment for teens- activities and gathering places are needed	0
Better stormwater management needed – heavy rain results in rivers down streets	0
Traditional feeling of safety in our towns is declining as businesses leave and communities become poorer	0
Fixing up buildings for seniors is important – locate in high traffic areas	0
Celebrate ethnic diversity of valley	0
Mix of suburbs and nearby rural areas is an asset	0

### **ADDRESSING MEETING FINDINGS IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The following are common themes expressed at the Steering Committee and Public Visioning meetings. The following issues were considered important by both the committee and the public. The issues are divided by topic, which will be addressed in the Plan Elements of this Comprehensive Plan.

## **Economic Development**

- Economic stability for the Region was the highest priority at the public meeting.
- A desire to see programs that attract new businesses, especially higher paying jobs in fields like nursing (serving an increasing older population) and high technology sectors was suggested. The assumption by most was that the Region should be seeking smaller businesses and not the large industries of the past.
- Incentives should be provided to restore existing buildings for new uses and businesses.
- Local agricultural businesses may benefit from farmers markets and development of new market niches like “organically grown” products.
- Cultural activities for the Region would be enhanced through the restoration of a downtown theater.
- Provide incentives to encourage the opening of a grocery store in Sharon, located near the senior public housing.
- Economic development should be addressed on a regional basis – it is counter productive for individual municipalities to compete for businesses.
- Encourage changing PSU Shenango into a four year degree school with residence halls, cultural entertainment and businesses geared toward young adults.

## **Community Facilities and Infrastructure**

- Existing sewer systems need updated, especially in the older communities – separate storm water from sewerage.
- For communities without public utilities, identify the benefits (especially economic benefits) and publicize those benefits.
- Improve sidewalks to create more walkable communities and safer routes to school.

## **Land Use**

- Encourage development of existing sites, including brownfield sites over development in agricultural areas (Greenfield sites).
- Develop land use controls that preserve and strengthen existing villages.
- Preserve agricultural lands – maintaining present rural character.
- Control/encourage development along Route 60 corridor – through design standards for more attractive development and safer access. This is a corridor that impacts all of the communities in the study.
- There is a concern that landfills may be located in Shenango Township – residents prefer to maintain proposed landfill sites as open space.
- Protect the existing cluster of housing in Wheatland Borough from encroaching industrial/commercial land uses.

## **Transportation**

- Public transportation services could be improved – there is a study currently being conducted.
- Improve the Interstate 80/Route 60 interchange – this is an important gateway into the Region. The Route 62/82 gateway into Sharon is also important.
- Highway signage needs to be improved – let those driving by the Region know about the benefits of stopping.

## **Community Assets**

- The Region’s rich history needs to be preserved and promoted, especially the historic structures that are in jeopardy of collapsing or in need of repairs.
- The Region’s convenient location between Pittsburgh and Cleveland should be promoted.
- Strengthen higher education in the Region, including adult education.

## **Environment**

- The Shenango River is a “wild spot” in the Region that needs to be protected from encroachment; also more/better public access to this special resource is needed.
- Preservation of open space is important to retaining the rural character of parts of the Region.

## **Parks and Recreation**

- Need a “greenway” system along the Shenango River.
- Additional interconnecting trails throughout the Region are needed.
- A shared community center built for all ages is needed in the Region.
- Farrell needs more parks for the existing residents.

## **Community Image**

- We need to identify what is special in the Region and promote those qualities to others living outside the valley.
- Encourage community pride, especially “visual” pride – clean-up transportation corridors and improve design standards for the built environment.
- There are aspects of life that require a focus on the community you live in. Thinking as a Region is also often beneficial.

## Housing

- Senior housing is going to continue to be needed – provide easily accessible services to concentrations of senior housing.
- All communities have housing areas that need to be improved. These areas are assets (low cost housing) – encourage first time homeowners and reduce absentee property owners.
- Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing with more land being preserved for open space.



Housing Opportunities

## Services

- With a declining enrollment in the public schools, residents should consider the efficiencies of school consolidation, reducing the tax burden on some communities.
- Support libraries in the Region.
- Provide better public access to government through websites and other methods of communication.

## Regional Assets

A number of assets of the Region can be listed:

- Relatively low cost of living and housing costs.
- Proximity to Pittsburgh and Cleveland.
- Shenango River.
- Existing industries.

- Historic sites.
- Higher educational opportunities in the Region (Penn State Shenango, Thiel College, Grove City College, Westminster College, Slipper Rock University, Youngstown State University, Butler Community College).
- Rural character/agricultural lands in the Township.
- Small town character of West Middlesex Borough



Charming East Main Street

- Opportunities presented by vacant or underutilized land in the Route 18 corridor.
- Proximity to I-80, I-79, Route 60.
- Nearby recreational opportunities, such as Shenango Lake.
- Golfing opportunities.
- Nearby health care system (Sharon Regional Health System and UPMC Horizon Farrell Campus).
- Proximity to Pittsburgh and Cleveland international airports and Youngstown/Warren Regional Airport.

- Shopping opportunities in Sharon, Hermitage, and Grove City.
- Existing infrastructure systems.
- Keystone opportunity zones/enterprise zone/economic development agencies.
- Recreational, school, and other community resources.
- Potential for Shenango River Rail Trail.
- Attractive building stock along Main Street.

*West Middlesex assets*



## **Chapter 4**

### **Regional Vision**

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The following chapters of the Comprehensive Plan will address future land use, community facilities, economic development, transportation, and natural and historic resource preservation. The policies in those plan elements are implemented by addressing the actions presented in the Action Plan. Those plan elements and actions, however, are all based on the regional vision and the goals and objectives for the Region.

This Comprehensive Plan is an important document for the community, and sets forth a program to improve the quality of life for residents, link residents together, and identify and promote the assets of the Region to help retain and attract people to the Region. This Plan also contains a program to enhance the image of the community and promote infrastructure and educational enhancements to support increased economic development within the Region. Negative factors in the community will be mitigated, housing opportunities expanded, and neighborhoods revitalized. As growth occurs within greenfields and infill occurs in open land among existing developed areas, development will be managed using smart growth techniques.

#### **REGIONAL VISION**

The preceding chapter on public participation discusses how input was gathered from committee members and the public to arrive at a regional vision. What follows is the regional vision for Shenango/West Middlesex:

The Shenango/West Middlesex community is a desirable community in which to live and work with a high quality of life. Growth in the Region occurs within designated growth areas, is managed and is coordinated with available adequate infrastructure. Housing is available for people in all stages of life. Balanced residential, commercial, office, and industrial development enables a reasonable tax structure which supports outstanding recreational, cultural, public safety, and other facilities and services for residents, provided in a coordinated manner.

The areas of the interchanges with Interstate 80 and Route 60 are focuses of business development with a variety of employment opportunities. Outside of designated growth areas, the Region retains its rural character and agriculture remains an important part of the economy. The Route 18 and 318 corridors provide attractive gateways to the community, with streetscapes reflecting planned, quality development with managed access.

Utilizing Smart Growth techniques, development which occurs respects traditional development patterns and community character, incorporates significant open spaces, supports alternative modes of transportation, and respects, complements, and protects existing natural, environmental, and historic features. Developers analyze and mitigate the impacts of development, provide

appropriate landscaping and buffering, and address recreation and road improvement needs.

West Middlesex is a unique, vital, and livable center which has retained its quaint, small-town character. It is characterized by enhanced streetscapes, well-maintained properties, attractive residential neighborhoods, and commercial and community facilities which serve the Region's residents. Revitalization and marketing programs attract businesses which serve both residents and tourists to locate along the main streets and the Shenango River, an important and accessible community asset.

## COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After preparation of the Vision, the Steering Committee worked on the preparation of a draft Statement of Community Goals and Objectives. The draft statement was presented to the public at public meeting for input and necessary revisions. Goals are general aspirations for the Region that set desired direction. Objectives are more specific guidelines for the Region to follow in order to realize those goals. Goals and objectives are basic to formulating policies and strategies.

The following table is provided as an aid in locating the Goals and Objectives found in the Plan Element Chapters.

Goal	Chapter Name	Chapter Number	Page Number
Land Use	Future Land Use and Housing Plan	8	8
Housing	Future Land Use and Housing Plan	8	17
Regional Cooperation	Community Facilities and Services Plan	10	1
Community Facilities, Services and Utilities	Community Facilities and Services Plan	10	5
Open Space and Recreation	Community Facilities and Services Plan	10	6
Community Development	Community Facilities and Services Plan	10	14
Transportation	Transportation and Circulation Plan	11	1
Economic Development	Economic Development Plan	12	5
Workforce Education and Training	Economic Development Plan	12	7
Historic Preservation	Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Plan	13	2
Natural Resources	Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Plan	13	6
Environmental Education	Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Plan	13	10

## **Chapter 5**

# **Community Image and Quality of Development**

### **QUALITY DEVELOPMENT**

Quality development is important to the image of the Region, and ensuing economic development. Also, the residents of the Region deserve quality development. There are several approaches to encouraging quality development in the Region.

Quality development often begins with a vision for an area. It is important for a municipality to establish locally appropriate standards for development, which are discussed in a relatively general way in this plan, but also specifically established within municipal ordinances. Ordinances can contain standards that must be met (“stick” approach) and/or have incentives for good design (“carrot” approach). It is important that municipalities and developers work together to try to establish a high quality of development. Pre-development site meetings and workshops are crucial. Municipalities can also pursue grants to implement the projects identified in this plan. Generally, the municipalities in the Region have very limited financial resources, and are dependent upon grant money to implement major projects. Streetscape plans can provide an overall framework for improvements to road corridors implemented through specific projects.

### **MAIN STREET AND PA ROUTE 18 ENHANCEMENTS**

The Concept Plan for the Region shows Corridor Enhancements along Routes 18 and 318. Streetscape plans should be prepared for the enhancement of these corridors. These plans could include:

#### **Street Corridors**

- concrete sidewalks and crosswalks with decorative brick paving
- decorative street lights and traffic signals with underground service
- concrete curbs and pedestrian access ramps
- utility modifications (i.e., catch basins and manholes)
- street pavements (i.e., milling and resurfacing)
- traffic signage and pavement markings

- site furnishings (i.e., benches and trash receptacles)
- trees and landscaping
- the underground placement of overhead utilities (i.e., electric, telephone and cable TV)

### **Parking Areas**

- decorative street lights with underground service
- parking pavements (i.e., milling and resurfacing)
- concrete curbs and utility modifications (i.e., catch basins and manholes)
- parking signage and pavement markings
- site furnishings (i.e., benches and trash receptacles)
- trees and landscape plantings

### **Opportunity for Parking Area Enhancements:**



## **Commercial Building Exterior Renovations** (In accordance with appropriate design standards)

- signs and awnings
- storefront windows and doors
- upper floor windows and cornice
- cleaning and painting

### **Façade Improvements:**



Existing



Potential

## **WEST MIDDLESEX TOWN CENTER**

When planning for enhancements of the Town Center section of West Middlesex Borough, the following additional elements should be considered in streetscape plans, new development projects, redevelopment projects, and reviewing building projects of developers, including:

- public spaces, which could take the form of a plaza or green or community park (Development of a community park and gathering place at the site of the recycling center, for instance.)
- maintaining mixed uses
- maintaining narrower pedestrian intersections
- creating buffers between traffic and pedestrians
- developing design and development standards for retail development which will encourage development consistent in character with the existing community.
- coordinated signage

- build to lines (requiring new development to build a set distance from the street edge)
- incremental redevelopment

### **Infill and Streetscape Improvements**



### **ROUTE 18 CORRIDOR**

In approaching enhancement of the Route 18 corridor, the following elements should be addressed. Enhancement efforts in the Shenango/West Middlesex and Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Wheatland Regions should be coordinated, including construction of sidewalks.

- Create a vision for the corridor
- Gateway Treatment at north entrance to Region
- Streetscape plan
- Gateway Treatment at Rt. 551 area
- Enhance pedestrian scale, make bicycle/pedestrian friendly from the northern regional boundary to Route 551
- Unify Route 18, tie to Borough streetscape enhancements
- Enact consistent design guidelines
- Promote economic development of open land, underutilized land, land capable of redevelopment
- Enhance intersection of Routes 18 and 318, including southeast quadrant and northeast quadrant

- Enact consistent signage regulations
- Manage access to the roadway

### **Route 18 Gateway and Corridor**



### **Area of Environmental Restraints**



**Example of Environmental Conditions being used as opportunities:**





**Route 18 Enhancement**



**Infill Quality Residential Development:**



The Route 18 - South Corridor Study, performed in Hermitage, suggests the following elements in enhancing the PA Route 18 corridor. They can be considered for the portions of PA Route 18 in Shenango Township and West Middlesex as well:

- Require off-street parking areas to be generally located to the rear and side of structures
- Promote the incremental interconnection of uses and shared curb cuts in order to manage number of access points
- Promote the function and use of pedestrian traffic between uses
- Reduce the negative visual environmental effects of large masses of asphalt
- Encourage off-street parking lot design to be segmented into smaller lots by the use of trees and landscape islands
- Incorporate existing natural areas
- Design new developments so that they contribute to, and have a relationship to the community as a whole
- Increase the spacing permitted between curb cuts
- Develop pedestrian pathway connections to residential areas
- Limit signage
- Establish appropriate regulations for conversions of residences to non-residential use

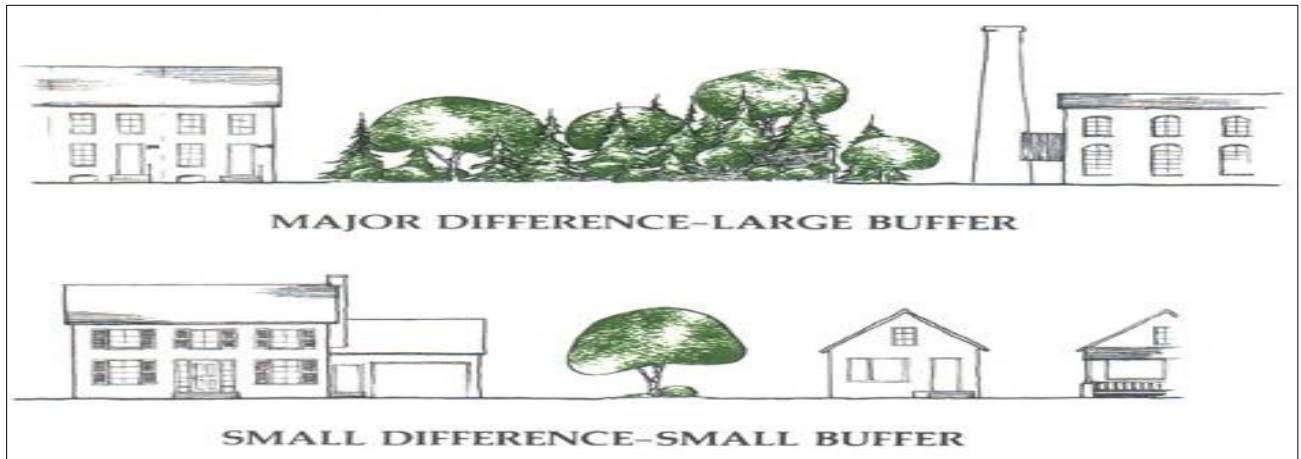
Buffering of residential areas when commercial development occurs is of concern in the Region, especially along the PA Route 18 Corridor. When commercial development occurs, buffer yards which contain sufficiently tall landscape buffers should be provided along residential properties.

Big Box Retail without Buffering:



Big Box Retail with Buffering:





### Examples of Buffer Types



## **I-80 CORRIDOR**

I-80 is a major route through and to the Region, and a positive image of the Region should be projected by development along I-80. This can be accomplished by use regulations; lighting, signage, and landscaping standards; and design and performance standards.

### **Regulation of Architecture**

Each municipality will have to determine the extent to which architecture and building design should be regulated and whether architecture is consistent with existing community and/or architectural character. Limitations could be placed on the size of buildings in some areas, where large buildings would not be appropriate to the character of the neighborhood. “Big box” architecture could be discouraged through architectural treatments of building facades.

Elements to discuss include:

- a. Allow only appropriate uses in scale that are compatible with existing appropriate uses. Discourage uses which would transform the character of the area.
- b. Utilize coverage, density, intensity, and yard bonuses for architectural treatments, building design, amenities, street furniture, open spaces and parking designs consistent with the character of the area.
- c. Require signage appropriate to the community.
- d. Minimize use of drive-through facilities.
- e. Encourage new development to be compatible with, and integrated into, existing attractive streetscapes when appropriate, with consideration of:
  - Maintaining appropriate siting patterns including setbacks on lots
  - Respecting the massing (volume created by sections of the building) within the neighborhood
  - Using materials of similar appearance and texture to those on existing attractive buildings
  - Using similar architectural details as other buildings in the neighborhood
  - Maintaining the scale and proportion of buildings near new structures. Scale deals with the relationship of each building to other buildings in the area; and,

proportion deals with the relationship of the height to the width of a building and with the relationship of each part to the whole

- Use of similar roof shapes
- Maintaining similar footprints of buildings and rooflines (matching façade masses with existing buildings)
- Using similar building heights
- Having store fronts of commercial buildings compatible with existing buildings

It does need to be recognized that the implementation and enforcement of design standards is a very difficult task, and requires the commitment of the community leaders to stand up to the continuous political pressure to relax or remove the standards – and it also requires a trained staff (or consultant) with sufficient resources and time to review plans for adherence to the standards, and to administer the endless minutiae of design changes, design details, construction inspection, communication of requirements and enforcement when plans or standards are not followed.

Adoption of an ordinance is only the first step. The real work takes place after that. A community can pass some of the administration costs back to a developer in the form of fees, but then the complaint to the community officials could be that the fees are too high. A community has to be willing to have some developers abandon their projects, and if they do not have the will to do that, the standards will not hold.

Municipal Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances should contain provisions requiring predesign meetings and joint site visits between planning commissions and developers prior to preparation and submission of subdivision and land development plans. These up-front discussions with developers will allow discussions regarding municipal expectations as to design quality, architecture, landscaping, signage, and required improvements/contributions.

Where municipalities have adopted streetscape plans, street furniture and pedestrian amenities should be required improvements pursuant to those plans



Design Enhancements along a Driveway

## **Residential Conversions**

The stability of residential neighborhoods can be adversely affected when single family homes are converted to multiple family dwellings, particularly when such buildings are owned by absentee landlords. Commitment to maintaining buildings and caring for the neighborhood is often diminished, and the intensity of usage may reach undesirable levels.

Each municipality should be sure that its zoning ordinance appropriately regulates the conversion of residential buildings, addressing:

- Locations where permitted
- How use is treated procedurally
- What type of building can be converted
- Density of converted units
- Lot size for converted building
- Impervious surface/open space requirements
- Units per structure allowed
- Structure size requirements
- Dwelling unit size minimum
- Neighborhood compatibility standards
- Parking requirements to assure adequacy
- Screening of parking and common areas
- Structural revisions limits on buildings

## **Mixed Use**

Mixed use is not appropriate in all areas, such as introducing industrial development into the heart of a residential neighborhood, but in the Town Center area of West Middlesex Borough, shown on the Future Land Use Plan, Mixed Use is appropriate. A mixed use environment places living, working, shopping, and recreating in the same environment, eliminating the requirement that all travel be by automobile and establishes a walkable community. Having residents in the Town Center increases activity in the center and adds pedestrians to the streets. Mixed use can increase the vitality of an area and extend the periods of activity, reduce vehicular trips, promote walkability, and provide support or work forces for various uses.

## **Corridor Overlay Zoning**

Given the importance given to corridor planning within the Region, each municipality should have appropriate corridor overlay zoning. The municipalities should adopt common overlay zoning provisions for those corridors to assure consistency of regulation within the corridors. Such zoning should be in place to support the plan for enhancement of the PA Route 18 and 318 corridors. Such overlay zoning should address:

- a. Coordinate landscaping, signage, lighting, street furniture, paving materials, design of site improvements, and building façade appearance throughout the road corridors
- b. Increase pedestrian and vehicular connections to adjoining properties and within properties
- c. Increase size and quantity of landscape material
- d. Integrate historic resources into development
- e. Provide site amenities
- f. Renovate building facades
- g. Minimize curb cuts and unrestricted access
- h. Provide more attractive signage
- i. Locate parking to the rear and side of buildings where appropriate and feasible
- j. Integrate architecture, landscaping and screening
- k. Encourage pedestrian oriented design (e.g., sidewalks and benches)
- l. Encourage pedestrian oriented spaces
- m. Screen loading areas, outdoor storage and dumpsters
- n. As appropriate, provide safe bus stops with shelters, with pedestrian connections to buildings
- o. Require buffers where there are conflicting uses

### **Infill Development**

The importance of infill development varies throughout the Region. It is not a major issue in Shenango Township outside of the Route 18 corridor; however, it is very important in West Middlesex Borough.

Where infill occurs it should be appropriate to and in character with the neighborhood and strive to provide benefits to the community and the streetscape. What follow are potential infill promotion strategies which can be used to facilitate public projects or encourage private projects.

### **Potential Infill Promotion Strategies**

#### ***Zoning Strategies***

1. Determine types of development desired.
2. Zone areas appropriately to allow desired land uses.
3. Create infill development opportunities overlay districts as necessary.
4. Consider whether more design flexibility in ordinances is necessary to achieve the desired end – such as flexibility in setbacks, yard requirements, lot widths, and lot size.

5. Consider allowing convenience services in designated economic development, mixed use, or infill overlay areas.
6. Apply appropriate standards to non-conforming lots which can allow reasonable development when existing lot sizes are not considered too small.
7. Where appropriate, consider well-designed, buffered mixed uses.
8. Consider appropriateness of transfer of development rights with bonuses to target development areas from areas targeted for preservation or conservation. Transfer of rights would have to occur from Shenango Township into the Borough.

### ***Subdivision and Land Development Strategies***

9. Streamline procedures and permitting.
  - reduce delays and hearings
  - have expeditor to oversee process
10. Review level of service standards or design standards for appropriateness in each situation.
11. Consider appropriateness of incentives for infill projects:
  - reduced development/permit fees
  - reduced impact fees
  - reduced infrastructure connection fees
12. Consider appropriateness of providing incentives for resubdivision or redesign of target tracts to desired land use patterns.

### ***Public Relations Strategies***

13. Stimulate developer interest in infill development and educate consumer/public regarding benefits and availability of infill:
  - promotional/publicity campaign for infill
  - make parcel data available
  - establish cooperative demonstration project
  - seminars
  - training programs
  - design competition for demonstration project

14. Prepare neighborhood strategies with input from residents; cooperation with, involvement of, and information to existing residents.
15. Inform existing residents of projects, invite participation in review, hold project meetings with developers at initial stages.
16. Prepare appropriate protective design standards such as traffic calming, landscaping, vegetation retention or replacement, and permissible land uses.
17. Encourage banks to be supportive of infill initiative in providing lending.

***Municipal (Borough, Township, County, State, Federal) Financial Policies***

18. Consider appropriateness of real estate transfer tax relief for purchase of properties in target areas.
19. Consider appropriateness of property tax abatement in target areas.
20. Foster programs which encourage building renovation and rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods.

***Municipal Infrastructure Policies***

21. Identify need for Infrastructure improvements (new or improved roads, parks, utilities, streetscape improvements, drainage facilities, pathways).
22. Facilitate transit or paratransit service.
23. Facilitate accessibility to community facilities and services (senior centers, community centers, etc.).
24. Locate municipal services near target areas.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Livable Communities**

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#### **QUALITY OF LIFE**

One of the major objectives of this comprehensive plan is to increase the quality of life for the Region's residents. The comprehensive plan is concerned about increasing the quality of life for existing residents and making the Region more attractive for new residents to move into the area.

Quality of life is achieved by meeting the needs of residents, such as providing family sustaining jobs; having pleasant residential neighborhoods in which to live; maintaining a reasonable tax structure; having stores where people can shop at convenient locations; facilitating movement of residents throughout the Region through alternative modes of travel, including vehicular, bicycle, transit, and pedestrian; providing recreational and cultural opportunities; providing public spaces where people can meet and interact; and maintaining rural character and protection of environmental resources. Crucial to enhancing the quality of life in the Region are enhancing and fostering more of a town center in West Middlesex; taking advantage of economic development opportunities; maintaining and revitalizing neighborhoods; retaining rural character and agriculture outside of growth areas; and enhancing the major linkages between the communities in the Region, including Route 18, Route 318, and the Shenango River corridor.

#### **LIVABLE COMMUNITIES MATRIX**

The table on the following two pages is from the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan. The Ingredients for Livable Communities Matrix indicates important aspects in maintaining livable communities, including recreational opportunities; cultural, historic, and entertainment resources protection; economic development; smart growth and maintenance of community character; intergovernmental cooperation; environmental and natural resources protection; infrastructure improvements (including transportation, water, and sewer), and maintaining community social fabric. This Comprehensive Plan supports the ingredients for livable communities listed within the matrix.

## Ingredients for Livable Communities Matrix

VISION THEMES								
	Recreational Opportunities	Cultural, Historic, and Entertainment Resources	Economic Development	Smart Growth & Community Character	Inter-Governmental Cooperation	Environmental and Natural Resources	Infrastructure (transportation, water, sewer)	Community Social Fabric
Ingredients for Livable Communities	Well-maintained, well-connected parks, trails and recreational facilities	Cultural and artistic events	Healthy, diverse, economy	Innovative land use regulations (zoning and SALDO)	Regionally consistent (possibly joint) land use policies and tools	Sustainable agricultural and forestry activities	Safe ease of movement for all modes of transportation (automotive, rail, air, bicycle, pedestrian)	Safe, friendly Communities
	Variety of recreational programs for all ages	Preserved cultural and historic sites, structures, and landscapes	Variety of job opportunities	Strong sense of community character (unique features)	Regional cooperation to deliver services (police, fire, recreation)	Available resource preservation tools (purchase conservation easements, ASAs)	Well-maintained water and sewer infrastructure	Good schools, libraries, and educational opportunities
	Recreational opportunities available to visitors/tourists	Variety of event venues	Entrepreneurs working to initiate new business ideas	Sound, affordable, diverse housing	Tax-base Sharing	Good water quality	Planned infrastructure expansion in areas targeted for growth	Encourage diversity and a feeling of openness
		Cultural, Historic, and Entertainment Resources available to visitors and tourists	Public-private partnerships	Conserved natural and historic resources within developed areas	Open and clear communication mechanisms	Programs that encourage private resource stewardship	Inter-modal connections	Good, locally available health care and human services
			Government policies and regulations that support economic development	Attractive vibrant downtowns		Detailed, up-to-date environmental resource inventory	Public transit in densely developed areas and for elderly and ADA persons	Attractive public spaces

VISION THEMES							
Recreational Opportunities	Cultural, Historic, and Entertainment Resources	Economic Development	Smart Growth & Community Character	Inter-Governmental Cooperation	Environmental and Natural Resources	Infrastructure (transportation, water, sewer)	Community Social Fabric
		Productive rural industries (agri-businesses, forest industries, etc.)	Mixed use community centers		Regulations that protect sensitive environmental resources	Managed corridor Access	
		Business development/re development assistance services	Quality design		Recycling services/programs		
					Designated greenway networks		

## **ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

The ingredients listed in the matrix are generally broad, and must be incorporated in initiatives within the Region. Elements of livable communities can also be more specific, and elements which should be addressed in new development and redevelopment include:

1. Methods of controlling the safety and esthetic impacts of automobiles. Ways of doing this include providing residents a choice of mobility, such as using bicycles and walking; use of alleys; providing sidewalks and/or walking paths; incorporating traffic calming techniques; and reducing curb cuts through sidewalks.
2. Provision for interconnected, multi-purpose streets. This allows use of streets for vehicular travel, parking, and walking on safe, protected walkways. Alternative routes to destinations are provided and traffic dispersed. Street trees are provided. Collector streets are placed at the periphery of neighborhoods.
3. Provision for community gathering places and settings for public, market, or institutional uses, such as greens and squares.
4. Consideration of traditional setback and lot size to dwelling footprint ratios which allow greater utilization of developed land.
5. Provision for mixed uses and range of housing opportunities in terms of type, cost, and type of household targeted. Appropriate uses might include convenience and neighborhood service businesses and civic and community functions.
6. Physical and visual access to and incorporation of natural resources.
7. Provision of useful open space which is safe, comfortable, and linked to other uses.
8. Incorporation of prominent buildings such as schools, civic buildings, and places of worship which serve as community activity and cultural centers.
9. Architectural elements and appearance which complement the existing built environment.
10. Preservation of important character-defining historic, architectural, and landscape features. New development should fit into its environment rather than destroy and/or redefine it.

11. Connections between private living spaces and public spaces, such as porches and pathways.

## **CONCEPT OF SMART GROWTH**

This Comprehensive Plan is also about growing smartly in greenfields and redeveloped areas. The Smart Growth Network, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and International City/County Management Association (ICMA) have described smart growth as “development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. It provides a framework for communities to make informed decisions about how and where they grow. Smart growth makes it possible for communities to grow in ways that support economic development and jobs; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial, and transportation options; and achieve healthy communities that provide families with a clean environment.” The concept of smart growth has many of the same elements as livable communities.

*The following Smart Growth Principles have been established:*

1. *Plan for mixed land uses.*
2. *Take advantage of compact building design.*
3. *Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.*
4. *Create walkable neighborhoods.*
5. *Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.*
6. *Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.*
7. *Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.*
8. *Provide a variety of transportation choices.*
9. *Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.*
10. *Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.*

## **Chapter 7**

### **Centers, Linkages and Corridors Within the Region**

Corridors in the Region, such as Route 18, Route 318, and the Shenango River play several major roles. They provide a means of access to the Region and access to other areas outside the Region, they link portions of the Region together, they provide access to the town center of West Middlesex, and they contribute to the image of the Region. Image of a region is crucial to how it is viewed as a place in which to invest or a place in which to live.

A gateway is an entrance corridor that defines the arrival point as a destination. Gateway planning concerns arranging the landscape and visual experience to help create a sense of arrival at the destination and provide a positive image of the destination.

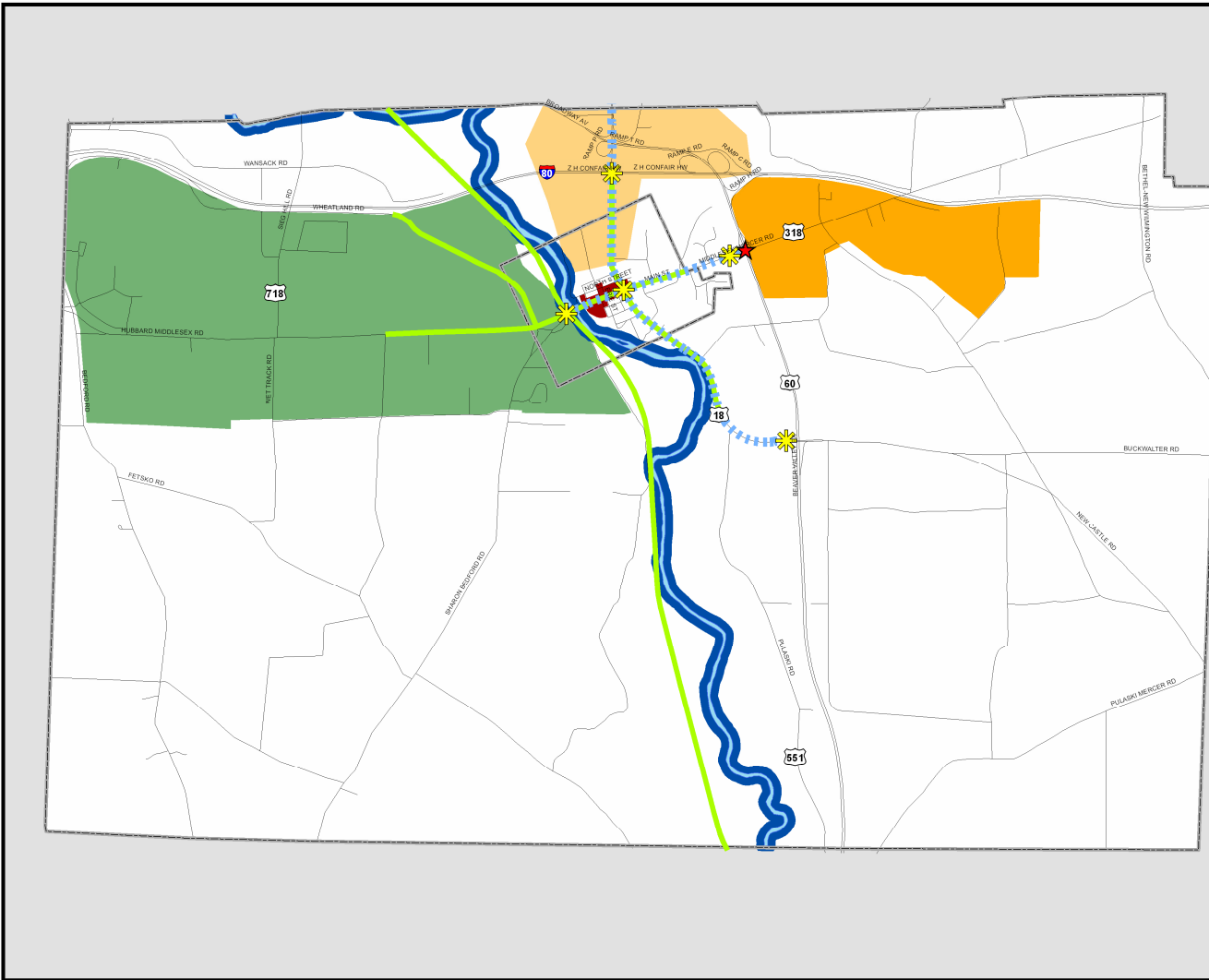
The concepts discussed in this Chapter, such as gateway treatments, corridor enhancements, and Shenango River enhancement, are found on Figure 7-1, the Concept Map.

#### **CENTERS**

The Borough of West Middlesex is the ‘center’ of the Region. A strong town center is important to the future of the Region. Elements in enhancing the Borough town center include:

- Maintain attractive buildings, street corridors and riverfront.
- Enhance street-life activity including residents, shoppers and tourists.
- Encourage a strong economy based on offices, retail businesses, and industries.
- A district that is fun and hospitable for adults and children.
- Establish a recognizable and unique character, creating a sense of place.
- Create a common public space in the community.
- Define gateways and entries that clearly delineate a downtown district with a sense of arrival and place.
- Enhance and promote walkability within the downtown through streetscape improvements that create connectivity between the various pieces of the downtown area.

**Figure 7-1  
Concept Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



**Legend**

- Gateway Treatments
- Interchange Completion
- Corridor Enhancements
- Conceptual Major Regional Pedestrian/Bicycle System
- Town Center
- Shenango River
- Shenango River Enhancement and Access

**Concept Areas**

- Economic Growth Corridor/Interchange Enhancement
- Economic Enhancement
- Residential Growth Corridor
- Municipal Boundary

N

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

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- Use landscaping and other amenities along the streets of the Borough.
- Maintain mixed uses.
- Calm vehicular traffic.

Physical improvements can provide the downtown with a stronger sense of place, help to support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and enable further objectives such as downtown district marketing and promotion. Of particular concern are downtown entryways, street corridors, parking areas, the riverfront and improving exterior building renovations.

## **CORRIDORS**

### **PA Routes 18 and 318**

PA Route 18 will be a major economic development corridor, provide access to community facilities, link to West Middlesex Borough, and connect interchange areas. PA Route 318 traverses the Region and will link the economic growth areas to the Borough and the PA Route 18 corridor. It is recommended that a concept plan be prepared for both the PA Route 18 and 318 corridors. Elements include:

- the appropriate land uses for the corridors
- access management
- design standards and principles
- streetscape enhancement
- pedestrian friendly environment
- concept plans for redevelopment opportunities
- coordinated and attractive signage

## Examples of Corridor Enhancement



Landscaping, sidewalks, buildings near street with parking to side or rear.



Landscaping, pedestrian and bicycle facilities



Infill with similar architecture and setback

## Shenango River

The Shenango River traverses both municipalities in the Region. Recreational development along the river has been limited, including a boat launch and recreation field along the west bank of the River. A West Middlesex/Sharon/Shenango River rail trail has been proposed, and is discussed below. The Mercer County Greenways, Open Space,

and Outdoor Recreation Plan suggests that the Shenango River Corridor is a candidate for an active greenway, where people can travel the corridor on land and water trails to experience its natural and cultural significance. A number of communities have used riverside development as a spur to economic development and tourism.



There is limited access to the River at this time. In some cases the River flows next to industrial properties. In other cases, the River is not very visible because of vegetation growth along the banks of the River. Access points should be identified in accordance with a Region-wide plan for river access, enhancement, recreational use, and economic development which contains a unified vision for the River corridor and will help to develop a positive identity for the River corridor. Consideration should be given to participating in such a plan with Wheatland, Hermitage, Farrell, and Sharon.

The River Plan should address the following concepts:

- Facilitate public access, both physical and visual.
- Remove barriers to access and create viewsheds. Consider the merits of creating a usable public gathering space at the site of the recycling center in the Borough.

- Connect neighborhoods to the River. Enhance the sidewalk system in the Borough to connect to the River.
- Link communities together.
- Build upon other assets in the Region. This would involve facilitating access from such assets as the town center of West Middlesex, the PA Route 318 growth corridor, and the future economic development area along PA Route 18.
- Be a major aspect of the West Middlesex town center.
- Incorporate the communities' history and culture.

This would involve interpretive kiosks regarding the history of development along the River.

- Foster new mixed use development in the River corridor which contributes to the riverfront environment, derives benefit from the River, and helps create a positive environment for investing.

As redevelopment or infill development occurs along the River corridor, mixed use development should be considered rather than single uses, where appropriate. Uses for consideration include industrial, tourist-oriented commercial, multiple-family and townhouse, entertainment, residence-serving businesses, and institutional uses.

- Provide opportunities for parks, recreation facilities, ecological education, parking, venues for entertainment, and pedestrian amenities.
- Encouraging landowners along the River to enhance their properties and to consider increased access, where appropriate.
- Encourage buildings along the River to be designed to address the River rather than turn their backs to it.
- Investigate the feasibility of making the River navigable for watercraft from Hermitage to New Castle.
- Capitalize on the River for recreational purposes, such as developing canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboat opportunities. Determine where recreational access could be provided in the Borough.
- Promote accelerated clean-up of the River and surrounding areas.

A regional agency should be created and given responsibility to begin the process of River enhancement. The group should be comprised of people who are passionate about making the River part of the everyday lives of the Region's residents and a realized asset to the community. Without a champion, the necessary planning and implementation for the River enhancement could be delayed and fragmented.

### **Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridors**

The Mercer County MPO Bicycle/Pedestrian Action Plan identified a corridor which would link municipalities within and outside of the Region, which is the West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Rail Trail. This plan supports development of this concept as detailed below:

#### **West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Rail Trail**

The proposed trail is the former right-of-way of the Penn Central Railroad and has been abandoned since 1982. The study corridor parallels the Shenango River for approximately 10½ miles between the Shenango Dam and Reservoir and the Borough of West Middlesex. The corridor surface is typically eight feet wide and is well compacted. It is abandoned between the boroughs of West Middlesex and Wheatland but has active Norfolk Southern rail lines northward to the City of Sharon and beyond.

In West Middlesex, a connection should be made from a potential trail head west of the river to the sidewalk on the PA Route 318 bridge that would facilitate a connection to the Borough's town center. A parking lot could be constructed to compliment the existing boat launch. The trail could potentially be extended south to New Castle.

### **Gateways**

We previously touched on the concept of gateways. The Concept Plan Map shows gateways at either end of the PA Route 318 enhancement, at either end of the Route 18 enhancement, and at the intersection of PA Routes 18 and 318. Gateway treatments will vary with goals that have been established for an area as well as existing conditions.

Examples of typical gateway area improvements include:

- concrete sidewalks and crosswalks with decorative brick paving
- decorative street lights and traffic signals with underground service
- concrete curbs and pedestrian access ramps

- utility modifications (i.e., catch basins and manholes)
- public spaces
- parking lots oriented to the side and rear of properties
- street pavements (i.e., milling and resurfacing)
- traffic signage and pavement markings
- gateway signage and site furnishings
- trees and landscaping
- identification of local attractions

## **ORGANIZATIONAL LINKAGES**

Previous discussion focused on physical linkages within the Region. However, if this Plan is to be successful and implemented, there must be organizational linkages within the Region as well. Examples of the linkages include:

- Continuation of a regional planning group representing both municipalities, working with the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, to oversee implementation of this Plan.
- Designating responsibility to a new or existing agency to develop the plan to enhance the Shenango River on a regional basis.
- Increased intermunicipal cooperation in grantsmanship; staff utilization; recreation and other municipal services; regional promotion; and project planning, such as corridor enhancement plans and regional park, open space, and recreation plans.

## Chapter 8

### Future Land Use and Housing Plan

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The Future Land Use Plan is one of the most important elements of the comprehensive plan. It graphically brings together all of the chapters of the plan and evaluates all of the information that has been mapped and gathered during this planning process. Based on stated goals and objectives, this Plan will determine what future land uses would be most appropriate throughout the Region and at what density. Factors such as existing land use, natural features, soil conditions, demographics, housing, economic development trends, road conditions, sewer and water capacities, and downtown and neighborhood vitality all play a role in the development of the Future Land Use Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan will serve as a guide for future municipal ordinance amendments and regulations. Municipal regulatory controls such as zoning, sewer and water facilities planning, transportation planning, and recreation planning should be based upon the recommendations of the Future Land Use Plan.

It is important to stress that the Future Land Use Plan is **not** a zoning map, nor does it change the zoning ordinances and maps that have been previously adopted by the municipalities in the Region. It is a reference tool and a guide that may be used by municipal officials and planners when making decisions regarding future development.

Future Land Use recommendations are based on a variety of factors: The patterns of development and existing conditions within the Shenango Valley; the anticipated path of future growth in the Region; existing environmental conditions and natural resources; capacity of public facilities, such as sewer and water service, and other infrastructure; and goals of this plan and the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan.

## **FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

The principal benefit of multi-municipal planning is the opportunity to coordinate land uses among the participating municipalities. Even if the implementation process does not include a joint zoning ordinance, much is gained if the individual ordinances define land uses in the same way. The following text is *not* recommended ordinance language, but indicates the type of use and general function of each land use identified on the Future Land Use map.

While it is not required to specify lot sizes in the Comprehensive Plan, doing so makes it much easier to draft the implementing zoning ordinances. The target densities for every category should be used as a starting point when amending zoning district requirements. Areas with recommendations for higher density development are contingent on the availability of public sewer and water service.

The Future Land Use Plan for the Shenango Township/West Middlesex Joint Comprehensive Plan, Figure 8-1, includes the following Land Use Categories:

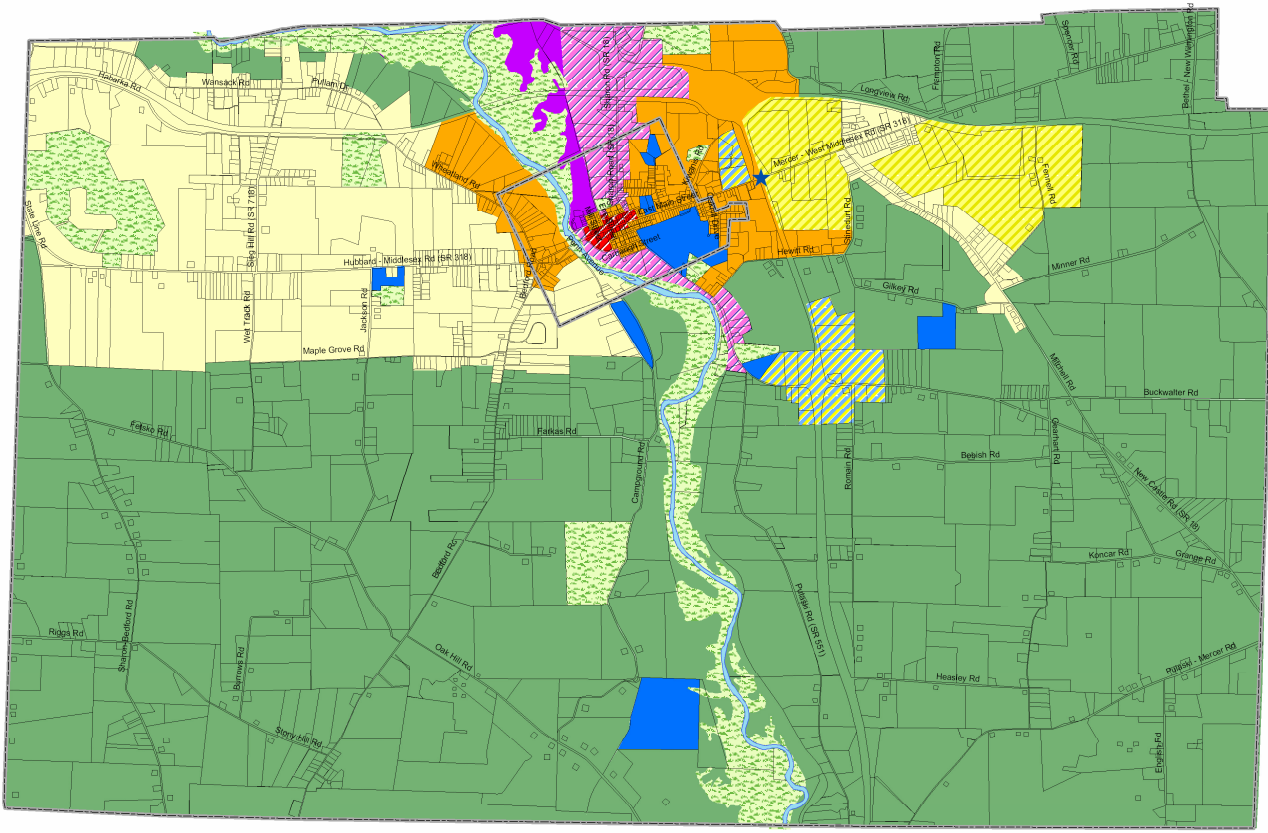
- Rural/Agriculture
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Recreation/River Conservation
- Economic Development Corridor
- Corridor Enhancement
- Planned Business
- Town Center

### ***RURAL/AGRICULTURE***

Description - These areas contain a mixture of agricultural, woodland, open space, and low density residential uses. Factors such as the presence of steep slopes, woodlands, farms, wetlands, and/or floodplains limit the development potential of some of these areas.

Planning Objective – Accommodate agricultural uses; rural resources; open space and recreation; and limited low density development.

**Figure 8-1  
Future Land Use Plan  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



- ★ Interchange Completion
- ▭ Municipal Boundary
- ▬ Shenango River
- Future Land Use Categories**
- Rural / Agricultural
- Industrial
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation/River Conservation
- Corridor Enhancement
- Economic Development Corridor
- Planned Business
- Town Center

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Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

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Recommended Land Uses – Cropland; pastureland; open space; farm-related structures and businesses; woodlands; public, semi-public; and municipal use; and limited low density residential.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Continuation of agricultural activities should be supported and encouraged. Agricultural preservation strategies should be identified. Larger lots of at least one acre or more per dwelling unit where appropriate. Conservation Development techniques and/or effective agricultural zoning are encouraged in this district. Public sewer and water service is not recommended for Rural /Ag areas.

***LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:***

Definition - The lowest density residential areas. The defining characteristic of this district is that only single-family detached homes (and accessory uses) are permitted.

Planning Objective – To accommodate continued low-density residential development where such development is occurring, in a setting that will continue to contain some rural characteristics such as woodland and open space.

Recommended Land Uses – Single family detached dwellings; woodlands; parks/open space; municipal use.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density of 20,000 square feet to one acre minimum per lot, however, higher densities can be accommodated through conservation zoning techniques.

***MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:***

Definition - This area contains higher densities than the Low Density Residential District, in and around West Middlesex Borough, due to the availability of public sewer and water. Also, single-family semi-detached homes, townhouses, and apartments are permitted as well as fully detached houses.

Planning Objective – Recommended growth area where most of the residential development should occur in the future. Flexibility in densities should be provided to accommodate a wide range of housing opportunities that are consistent with the character of existing neighborhoods.

Recommended Land Uses – Single family detached dwellings; single family semi-detached dwellings; townhouses; apartments; park/open space uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density range of 2-8 units per acre

dependent upon neighborhood conditions and availability of public sewer and water services. Several zoning districts may be created to allow the different types of dwelling units and densities.

### ***CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT:***

Definition – Road and river corridors and /or gateways which are predominately developed and in need of beautification, upgrades, and access management.

Planning Objective – Convert unaesthetic developed strip areas into attractive, functional mixed commercial, residential, and business corridors that are consistent in character with the surrounding neighborhoods. Emphasis on access management, gateway enhancements, and sign regulations are critical. Enhance access to areas with potential for economic development. Enhance access to riverside areas and allow appropriate river-orientated uses and enhancements. This area will provide for job creation and tax base increase.

Recommended Land Uses - General commercial (excluding strip malls); office; limited residential; mixed uses; second floor residences; municipal use; tourism and river-oriented commercial; industrial.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – In general, more intensive uses are most appropriate in these areas, however, rear-parking lots and landscaping may require larger lot sizes where applicable. Several different zoning districts may be appropriate.

### ***ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR:***

Definition - Corridors where economic development activities and investment are encouraged.

Planning Objective – These areas should be the focus of job creation, capital improvements, and infrastructure investment. The target areas include the interchanges of Route 60, Interstate 80, and Route 318. The zoning in this corridor should be flexible enough to allow a wide variety of uses, with the common goal being job creation and increase of the tax base.

Recommended Land Uses - Light manufacturing, office, and limited warehousing in business and industrial parks depending on zoning.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - Flexible, depending on uses proposed. Light manufacturing and office uses in a planned business park setting should be the primary uses. This area is not intended for extensive warehousing/distribution uses nor heavy manufacturing.

### ***PLANNED BUSINESS:***

Definition - This area surrounding the Route 60 and Route 18 interchange in Shenango Township is an appropriate location for economic development and job creation activities.

Planning Objective – Provide a flexible area to market professional offices, limited commercial, or technology-based businesses, research facilities, limited warehousing, and flex buildings. Due to the economic development potential of the interchange zone, residential development and extensive warehousing/distribution are not recommended in this district. Investigate the potential of KIZ implementation within these areas.

Recommended Land Uses - Research and technology-based firms, professional offices, limited warehousing, and flex buildings. Extensive warehousing, distribution facilities, and trucking terminals are not recommended.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Minimum lot sizes 20,000 square feet to 2 acres depending on use and availability of public sewer and water facilities.

### ***TOWN CENTER (WEST MIDDLESEX):***

Definition - This area will be a mixed neighborhood commercial area, but professional offices, municipal uses, and mixed use residential and light industry will also be accommodated, and at a high density.

Planning Objective – Provide areas to encourage a mixture of commercial and business uses, consistent with the Borough's unique character. The critical element here is the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment where the commercial uses are compatible with existing residential uses. Commercial uses within this district will be at a smaller neighborhood scale and should include uses such as corner grocery stores, coffee shops, specialty shops, and post offices. Development should not detract from the Borough's historic character. Streetscape enhancements should be explored in these areas.

Recommended Land Uses – Small-scale retail and local commercial uses; professional offices; mixed use residential; parks and recreation; river-based tourism.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density requirements should be flexible in this area, depending on the use. Lot sizes of 5,000 square feet to an acre on average provided pedestrian facilities are provided. Neo-Traditional Neighborhood Design, which encourages bicycling and walking while discouraging automobile-dependent uses and large parking lots, may be appropriate in these areas to protect the character of the Borough.

***INDUSTRIAL:***

Definition - This will be the least restrictive district and will be intended to accommodate heavy industrial uses.

Planning Objective – Provide areas to accommodate a wide range of industrial uses.

Recommended Land Uses – Steel processing; offices; printing and publishing uses; warehousing and distribution; manufacturing; food processing; processing industries, and other uses deemed appropriate.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – One acre minimum lot size, or appropriate for use.

***RECREATION/RIVER CONSERVATION:***

Definition - These are open space, recreational and sensitive natural resource areas that should remain in such use for the foreseeable future.

Planning Objective – Provide for existing public and semi-public owned parks and open space.

Recommended Land Uses - Parks; pavilions; greenways; natural areas; municipal use.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Not recommended for development other than low-impact accessory uses related to the recommended land uses.

***PUBLIC/ INSTITUTIONAL:***

Definition - This area is not intended to be established as a separate zoning district. It depicts on the future land use map the West Middlesex Area school district and municipal facilities, churches, cemeteries, and other cultural features.

Planning Objective – To provide areas for public or semi-public uses.

Recommended Land Uses – School district facilities; churches; cemeteries; municipal use; recreational uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Not applicable.

## **Land Use**

**Goal:** Prepare a land use plan that is consistent with the character of the Region and will protect the health, safety, and welfare of the Region's residents.

### **Objectives:**

- Promote safe, vibrant, and livable neighborhoods.
- Encourage new uses within neighborhoods to be compatible with existing development patterns.
- Protect productive farmland from incompatible, adjacent land uses or activities that will adversely affect the long-term viability and investment in land and improvements.
- Discourage uncoordinated strip development along major road corridors.
- Guide new development in such a way as to minimize impacts on existing community character.
- Develop and implement Smart Growth Policies.
- Ensure consistency between land use designation and the availability of public sewer and water capacity.
- Establish growth area boundaries and discourage development outside those boundaries.
- Achieve consistency with the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan.
- Identify areas for agricultural preservation.
- Implement land use controls to guide uses toward suitable sites and away from sensitive natural resources.
- Identify sites for economic development.
- Determine appropriate land use strategies for riverfront development and supportive improvements.
- Attain consistency of land use along municipal boundaries.

- Create a common vision for the major road corridors in the Region.
- Maintain the integrity and enhance visual aesthetics of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Identify appropriate implementation techniques, such as official maps, for use in the Region.
- Retain the rural character of designated rural areas within the Region.
- Maintain the quaint character of West Middlesex and allow appropriate commercial development consistent with that character.
- Encourage a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses to address tax base issues.
- Consider costs and benefits of land use decisions, distribution effects, and the impact on the social fabric of the community and the environment.
- Encourage agricultural practices which benefit wildlife and the environment.

**Actions:**

- A. Update zoning maps and zoning district provisions, to reflect the Future Land Use Plan as necessary.
- B. Update Statements of Community Development Objectives contained in zoning ordinances to be consistent with this Plan.
- C. In zoning ordinances, provide for land development techniques designed to protect existing resources, provide open spaces, enhance streetscapes, and protect the character of existing developed areas:

- 1. Conservation Zoning (Growing Greener Concept of Natural Lands Trust) in the Region:

Determine whether Conservation Development should be the default and/or encouraged method of development, with density disincentives given to other methods of development which result in less open space and protection of resources. The typical Conservation Development process is:

- a. Net out natural resources

- b. Establish maximum overall density
  - c. Establish minimum substantial open space requirement
  - d. Establish alternative methods of development
  - e. Require important natural features and resources, such as scenic vistas, historic sites, agriculture, steep slopes, wetlands, and woodland, to be contained in open space
  - f. Provide visual and physical access to open space areas
2. Traditional Neighborhood Development (Neotraditional Development). This method promotes the following concepts:
- a. Creation of a sense of community
  - b. Pedestrian oriented design
  - c. Central community facilities
  - d. Public spaces
  - e. Shallow setbacks
  - f. Street trees
  - g. Alleys where appropriate
  - h. Compact development
  - i. Interconnected streets, closer to a grid pattern
3. Adopt corridor overlay zoning along major commercial roads, such as PA Routes 18 and 318 to enhance the appearance of these corridors, enhance safety and traffic movement, and maintain economic viability. Such overlay zoning would address:
- a. Coordinate landscaping, signage, lighting, street furniture, paving materials, design of site improvements, building façade and windows displays throughout the road corridors

- b. Increase pedestrian and vehicular connections to adjoining properties and within properties
  - c. Increase size and quantity of landscape material
  - d. Integrate historic resources into development
  - e. Provide site amenities
  - f. Renovate building facades
  - g. Minimize curb cuts and unrestricted access
  - h. Provide more attractive signage
  - i. Locate parking to the rear and side of buildings where appropriate and feasible
  - j. Integrate architecture, landscaping, and screening
  - k. Encourage pedestrian oriented design (e.g., sidewalks and benches) and handicapped accessibility.
  - l. Encourage pedestrian oriented spaces
  - m. Screen loading areas, outdoor storage, and dumpsters
  - n. Provide safe bus stops with shelters, with pedestrian connections to buildings
- D. In zoning ordinances, require areas for economic development to be developed through coordinated, attractive commercial and business parks and discourage additional strip commercial development.
- E. Consider allowing convenience commercial uses in or near residential developments and neighborhood revitalization areas to reduce traffic to and from commercial areas in the Region.
- F. The municipalities should continue to monitor zoning along municipal boundaries to provide for compatible zoning districts.
- G. Within zoning district provisions, considering the entire Region as a whole, provide for the accommodation of housing in different dwelling types and at

appropriate densities for households from all economic and demographic groups within the Region.

H. Address architectural and related issues within zoning ordinances. For example:

1. In some zoning districts, such as but not limited to neighborhood commercial and residential zoning districts, limits on building size will be appropriate to maintain existing character.
2. In some zoning districts, emphasis should be placed on encouraging architecture consistent with existing community and/or architectural character.

I. Additional zoning actions include:

1. Requiring buffers and/or performance and design standards where there will be potentially conflicting uses. As an example, industrial development within the Borough should have sufficient use, buffering, design, and performance standards to protect adjacent residential properties.
2. Requiring impact statements (environmental, traffic, services, fiscal, etc.) with requested zoning amendments requiring a zoning district change, to address the impacts of the requested amendment.
3. Promote serving by public sewer and public water, rather than development served by package/private systems or individual systems.

J. Update municipal Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances, as necessary. Options include:

1. Require street furniture/pedestrian amenities as required improvements pursuant to streetscape plans.
2. Adopt appropriate refinements to implement the Growing Greener Conservation Development Concept.

If the Conservation concept is used, the design procedure is:

- Identify conservation areas
- Locate house sites
- Align streets and trails
- Draw lot lines

3. Require pre-design meetings between planning commissions and developers prior to preparation and submission of subdivision and land development plans.
  4. Stormwater management ordinances prepared in accordance with Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans should be consistent with the objectives of this Plan.
- K. Municipal Act 537 plans and water supply planning should be coordinated with this plan, particularly the Future Land Use Plan, to promote compact, efficient, orderly, and phased development within and contiguous to existing developed areas.

## **DESIGNATED GROWTH AREAS**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code introduced the concept of Designated Growth Areas, which are regions within a multi-municipal plan that preferably includes or is adjacent to existing developed areas. In Designated Growth Areas, residential and mixed use development is permitted or planned for at densities of more than one unit per acre, commercial, industrial and institutional uses are permitted or planned for, and public infrastructure services are provided or planned. The intent of the Designated Growth Area is to provide for orderly and efficient development to accommodate the projected growth of the area within the next 20 years.

In this Region, the Designated Growth Areas include all areas outside of the Rural/Agriculture areas and Recreation/River Conservation areas, as shown on Figure 8.1, the Future Land Use Map.

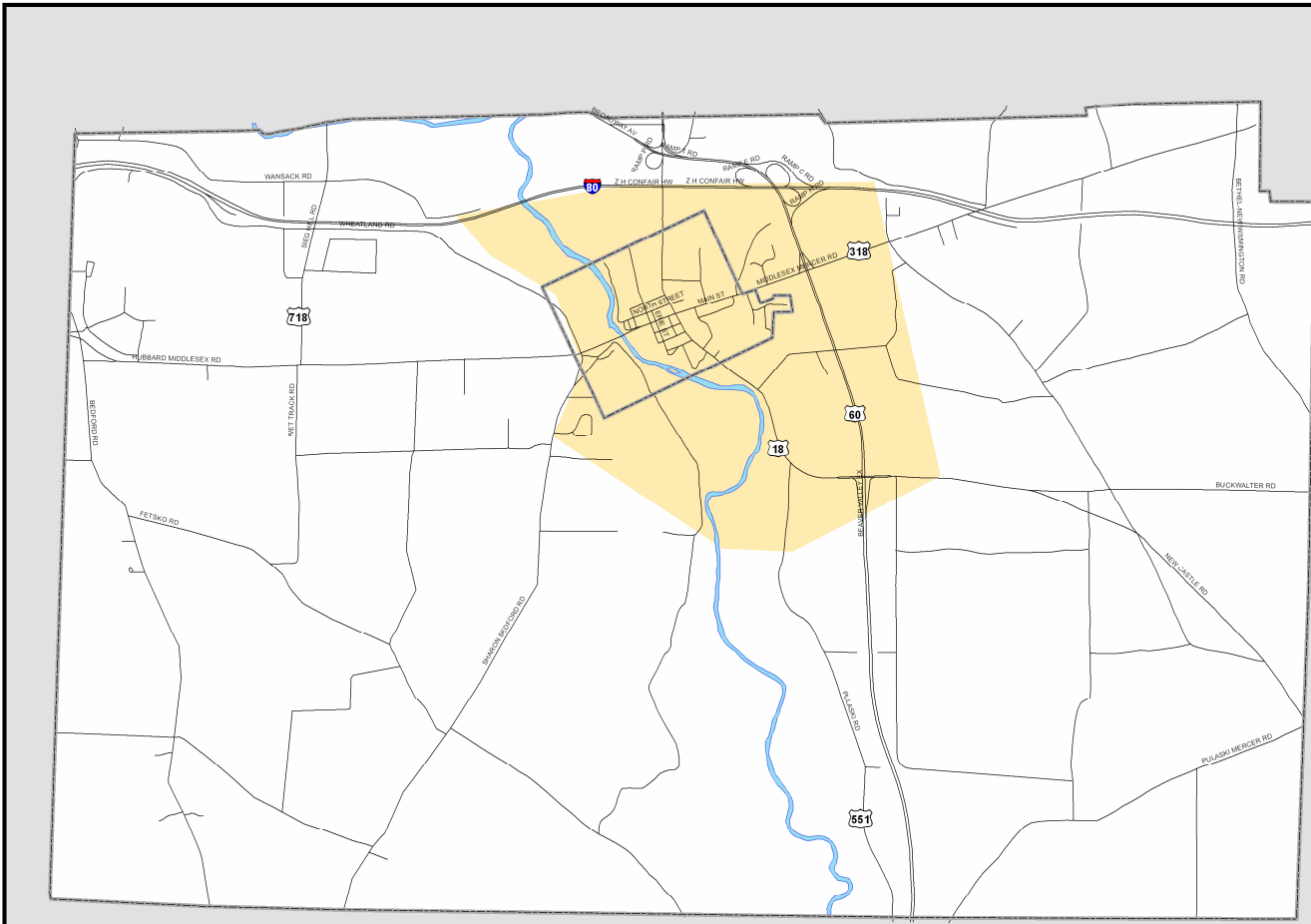
Sewer and water service areas, which affect delineation of growth areas, are shown on Figures 8-2 and 8-3.




## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

The Future Land Use Plan is implemented through several key strategies.


- Adopt municipal zoning maps and corresponding zoning district provisions consistent with the Plan.
- Assure Act 537 Plans are compatible with the growth areas designated on the Future Land Use Plan.

**Figure 8-2**  
**Sewer Service Area Map**  
**West Middlesex & Shenango**  
**Joint Comprehensive Plan**  
**Mercer County, PA**



	Sewer Service Area
	Shenango River
	Municipal Boundary

N



0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1  
Miles

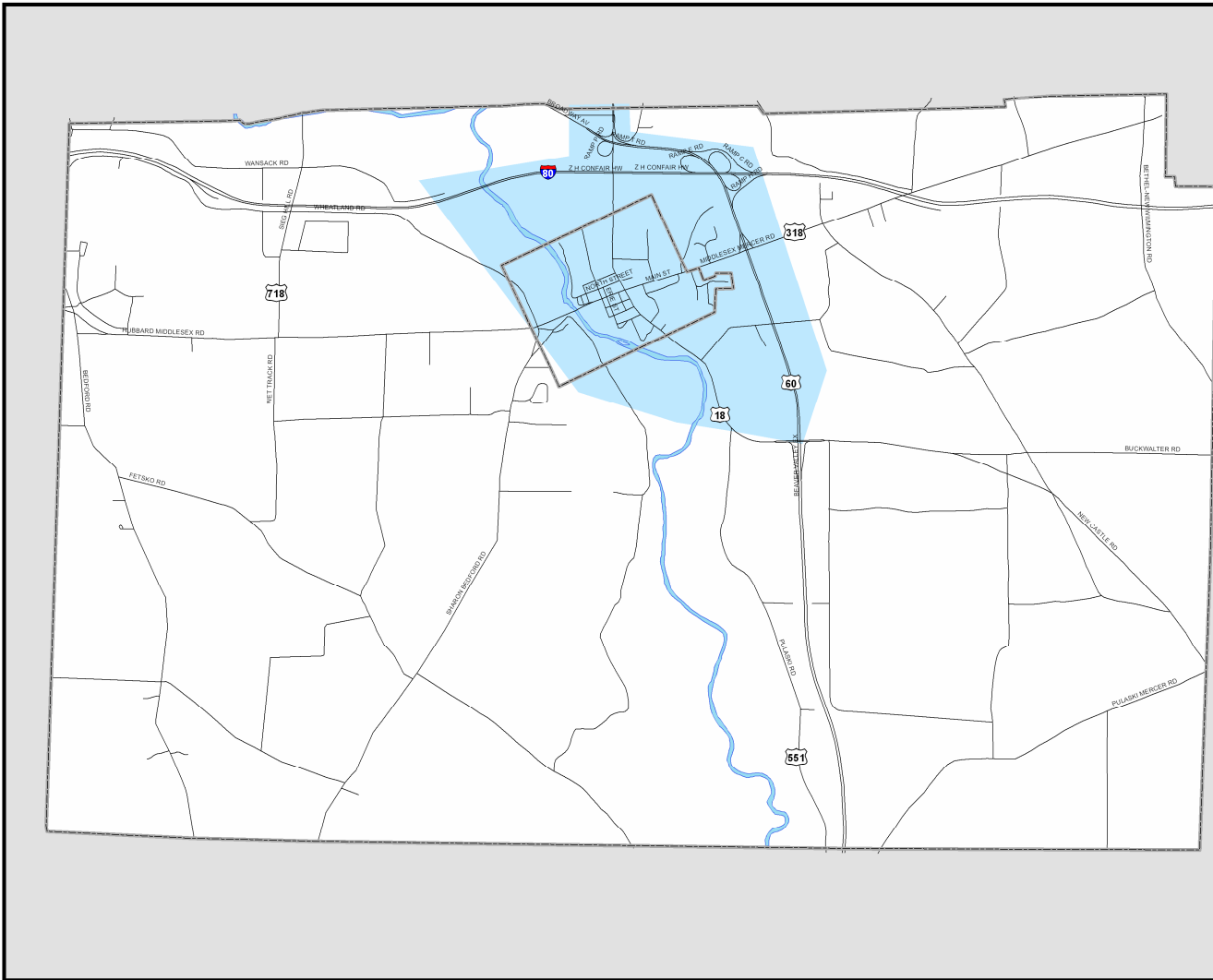
Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

 <b>SSM</b> SPOTTS   STEVENS   McCOY Engineers and Consultants ssmgroup.com	 <b>PASHEK</b> ASSOCIATES
<b>READING</b> 1047 North Park Road PO Box 5307 Reading, PA 19610-0307 610.373.2000 F: 610.821.2001	<b>LEHIGH VALLEY</b> Municipal Office Plaza, Suite 401 2727 Lehigh Street Whitehall, PA 18552-3439 610.424.4180 F: 610.433.2469

7/25/07

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**Figure 8-3**  
**Water Service Area Map**  
**West Middlesex & Shenango**  
**Joint Comprehensive Plan**  
**Mercer County, PA**



	Water Service Area
	Shenango River
	Municipal Boundary

N

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles

Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

 <b>SSM</b> SPOTTS   STEVENS   McCOY Engineers and Consultants ssmgroup.com	 <b>PASHEK</b> ASSOCIATES
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- Assure government and school district policies for major land uses are consistent with the Plan.
- Increase density and intensity of development only when public sewer and water and other necessary infrastructure of sufficient capacity can be made available.

## **HOUSING PLAN**

The objectives for housing include providing for adequate, safe and sound housing for present and future residents; to allow for a variety of housing densities, development patterns, and attractive residential housing types for all age groups in appropriately designated areas within the infrastructure service area constraints of the municipalities; to provide for maintenance of the character of existing neighborhoods and housing stock through appropriate coordinated land use controls, and address the housing needs of the elderly and disabled in the community.

Provision for a variety of housing densities, housing types, and development patterns in appropriately designated areas is accomplished through the Land Use Plan. Maintenance of the existing housing stock and adequacy of new housing can be accomplished through enforcement of building codes and utilization of property maintenance codes.

Another concern is providing for housing for people trying to enter the housing market and housing for those families living and working in the Region. Allowing for a variety of housing types, including multiple family, and higher densities of development when public sewer and water is available, is important to addressing this need.

While housing affordability issues typically reflect market conditions, the municipalities can maintain construction and housing codes which are reasonably based on protecting public health, safety, and general welfare, and which do not contain provisions solely to increase the luxury of dwelling units. This is facilitated by use of the Uniform Construction Code. Excessive standards in municipal regulations can unnecessarily raise housing costs.

New housing developments should be well-planned, attractive living environments. A variety of development options can be made available, such as conservation development, traditional neighborhood development, and infill residential development, in addition to more typical single family development.

The existing character of residential areas can be maintained through appropriate zoning provisions and review of subdivision and land development plans. Special concern should be given to the preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods.

## **Housing**

**Goal:** Encourage a variety of housing designs, types and values to meet the residential needs of all segments of the Region's present and future population.

### **Objectives**

- Support development of new housing in designated growth areas.
- Develop alternative zoning/subdivision and land development techniques that provide for flexible housing designs.
- Promote sound maintenance, renovation, and modernization of existing housing.
- Eliminate and prevent conditions that contribute to and perpetuate blight in residential areas.
- Develop and enforce property maintenance codes.
- Provide a wide range of housing choices for seniors.
- Encourage home ownership and retention of the single family housing stock in the Borough, and discourage absentee property ownership.
- Identify gaps in the current housing market and develop a strategy to fill them.

### **Actions:**

- A. Establish and maintain adequate housing and property maintenance codes and zoning ordinance provisions as necessary to maintain the building stock and properties within the Region.
- B. Foster programs which encourage home renovation and rehabilitation in existing neighborhoods. Enact land use regulations that provide adequate opportunities for affordable workforce housing. Encourage more inclusive housing rehabilitation programs to fix up elements of homes most in need of repair.
- C. Work with residents of the Region and regional taxing entities to identify programs and policies that will help residents maintain and enhance their

properties, and meet housing expenses and retain their homes as owner-occupied single family residences.

- D. Regulate housing conversions through zoning provisions and require adequate parking to be provided.
- E. Provide for a variety of housing types and densities through zoning.
- F. Enact zoning regulations that provide incentives for senior housing in the Designated Growth Areas on the Future Land Use Map. Consider appropriateness of such techniques or density incentives or overlay treatments. Provide for independent housing, congregate care, personal care, and nursing care.
- G. Encourage housing development in existing neighborhoods at densities consistent with the Future Land Use Map.
- H. Encourage one-level affordable senior housing.

### **Capacity for Future Development**

The Future Land Use and Housing Plan must provide documentation that there is a sufficient amount of available land for future development to accommodate the future population projected up to the year 2020. Table 8.1 illustrates the Region's population projections (from the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission) for 2010 and 2020. The projections in Table 8.1 show the Region's population will decrease by 14.1% by the year 2020. This trend makes predicting capacity for future development problematic, because judging strictly by population projections, one could assume that there is no need to provide for additional acreage for future residential development. This assumption, however, does not take into consideration the recent trend of migration within the Region from higher density housing to lower density housing. Coupled with the desire to reverse this population decline and attract more people to the Region, it is important that there is a provision of open land suitable for attractive residential development.

**TABLE 8.1**

**POPULATION PROJECTIONS;  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU ESTIMATED 2005 POPULATION**

	<b>2000 Census</b>	<b>2005 Estimate</b>	<b>2010 Projection</b>	<b>2020 Projection</b>	<b>2000-2020 % Change</b>
Shenango Township	4,037	3,986	3,740	3,444	-14.7%
West Middlesex Borough	929	884	878	826	-11.1%
<b>Total Region</b>	<b>4,966</b>	<b>4,870</b>	<b>4,618</b>	<b>4,270</b>	<b>-14.1%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau; Projections- Mercer County Regional Planning Commission

**TABLE 8.2**

**BUILD OUT CAPACITY FOR POPULATION GROWTH**

<b>Future Land Use Plan Category</b>	<b>Approx. Available Undeveloped Acres</b>	<b>Available Acres Minus 20%</b>	<b>Likely Average Development Density</b>	<b>Likely Maximum Potential for Dwelling Units at Build Out</b>	<b>Likely Maximum Potential for People*</b>
Medium Density Residential	263.7	210.9	4 dwelling units per acre	843	2,082
Low Density Residential	1,018.3	814.6	2 dwelling units per acre	1,629	4,024
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,282</b>	<b>1,025.5</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>2,472</b>	<b>6,106</b>

\*Used 2.47 persons per dwelling unit

Source: US Census Bureau.

- assumed 20% of tract would not be available for inclusion within residential lots
- likely maximum density from Future Land Use Plan categories

Table 8.2 calculates a maximum build out capacity for population growth in the proposed Residential Areas to the year 2020 as 6,106 additional persons. This figure does NOT

include additional available acreage within other categories on the Future Land Use Plan, nor does it include any lands outside of the approximate Growth Areas. The projected 2000-2020 population change for the Region shows a *decline* in population of 696 persons. It is a safe assumption that the Region will have more than enough capacity to handle anticipated future growth for the life span of this Plan and beyond, even if development occurs at half of the maximum density which may be allowed. It is still important for the municipalities to require responsible development to preserve the character of existing neighborhoods, keep the Region a desirable place to live for current and future residents, and retain young people in the Region.

### **Environmental Considerations for Future Development**

As development occurs in the Region, particularly in the Rural and Agriculture areas, which contain the greatest extent of sensitive environmental resources in the Region, care must be taken to preserve and protect the resources identified within each tract of land. The following approaches should be taken, in a consistent manner within the Region, to development in these areas:

- An ongoing awareness of and sensitivity toward the natural resources of the area should be encouraged.
- Development should be concerned with geologic stability, soils suitability, groundwater supplies and stream flows.
- Groundwater resources should be protected against depletion and contamination.
- Methods of encouraging replenishment of the groundwater supply should be utilized.
- Streams, ponds, and wetlands should be protected against pollution from point sources and runoff. Point source pollution occurs from an identifiable source that is measurable while runoff is an example of non-point source pollution, which is a pollutant that lacks a single identifiable origin.
- Floodplains and poorly drained soils should be protected from encroachment.
- The loss of topsoil should be minimized.
- The retention and establishment of trees and other vegetation should be encouraged to control erosion, shade surface waters, control stormwater flow, create wind breaks, provide animal habitats, and provide visual amenities.

- The preservation of scenic viewsheds and scenic road corridors should be encouraged.
- Steep slopes should generally be avoided.
- The protection, preservation, and enhancement of historic resources should be encouraged.
- The adaptive reuse of historic structures should be encouraged where appropriate.
- Innovative land development techniques should be used to minimize land consumption, preserve ecosystems, preserve agricultural lands and preserve natural resources and open space.
- The provision of open space and recreation areas for active and passive recreation should be encouraged. Visual and physical access to the open space system should be provided.
- The coordination of open space and circulation systems among adjoining developments should be encouraged.
- A system of bicycle paths and sidewalks should be encouraged.
- Incorporation of resources into development plans should be encouraged.
- Flexible approaches to site design to recognize resources should be encouraged.
- Not permitting invasive species to be planted by developers as part of landscaping plans.

### **Recommended Development Concepts**

The Action Plan contains recommendations for land development techniques and processes designed to protect existing resources, provide open spaces, encourage appropriate development which is consistent with existing development patterns, and enhance streetscapes. Because of the rural character of much of the Region and the existing population centers in the Borough, techniques which are especially recommended include Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and Conservation Development. TND is particularly appropriate within and surrounding existing settlements and would be appropriate in designated growth areas in the Region. Conservation Development could be used to help preserve open space and agricultural resources when development occurs in more rural areas of the Region.

## The Elements of Traditional Neighborhood Design

- **Limited Size:** A village or neighborhood is limited to a 1/4 mile radius (up to 200 acres), or a five minute walk from the center to the edge.
- **Mixed Uses:** The inclusion of retail and commercial activity with residential uses brings the needs of life within walking distance for all ages and social groups. A variety of housing types is a standard element, including single family, duplex, townhouses, and apartments over shops, which can bring safety and vitality to the town center.
- **Street Network:** A traditional grid or web pattern creates a more understandable system and more choices for travel routes, which is effective for pedestrians as well as the automobile.
- **On-Street Parking:** Helps to slow down traffic, acts as a buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic, and increases opportunities for drivers to find convenient parking.
- **Alleys and Lanes:** Give secondary access to property for deliveries: locating parking garages, utilities, and garbage collection here preserves the beauty of the streetscape.
- **Sidewalks and Pedestrian Paths:** An emphasis on "walkability," or the needs of the pedestrian, makes destinations accessible to residents, including children and the elderly.
- **Town Center and Square:** A central focal point for community life, providing a special place for public events, and is the appropriate place for mixing retail, civic and business life.
- **Shallow Setbacks:** Placing buildings close to sidewalks creates a friendlier "outdoor room." Distances across streets, from building to building, do not exceed five times the building height.
- **Outbuildings:** Secondary structures normally located at a rear alley allow for parking, storage, workshop space, home offices or a rental apartment.
- **Porches:** Create spaces for a sociable transition from the public street to the private home and provide shelter and shade.
- **Building Types:** Designed to allow for adaptation from one use to another, as markets dictate, with an emphasis on local historical style.

- **Open Space:** A variety of types are included for specific needs, from the regional parks, to the neighborhood playground, to a green buffer, bringing nature into the human environment.

### Net Out Provisions

A method to encourage environmentally sensitive developments that preserve open space by partially subtracting constrained land from the gross acreage of a tract. The Township can develop multipliers to net out the sensitive lands. Once this constrained land is ‘netted out’ of the gross acreage, the remaining acreage is called the adjusted tract area. Examples of constrained land include floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes.

The following is an example of potential net out multipliers to use when determining the amount of constrained land on a parcel:<sup>1</sup>

<u>Constrained land</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>
Public Streets	1.0
Utility right-of-way	1.0
Floodways in 100 year floodplain	1.0
Floodplain (flood fringe)	0.5
Wetlands and poorly drained soils	0.95
Steep slopes greater than 80%	0.8
Moderate slopes (15%-25%)	0.25
Rock outcrops	0.9

If a 50 gross acre parcel contains 8.96 acres of constrained land after the multiplier is factored in, the ‘net’ available land for development is 41.04 acres (see example below).

<u>Constraint</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>	<u>Constrained Land</u>
Public Street	2.0	1.0	2.0
Utility right-of-way	1.0	1.0	1.0
Floodways	1.25	1.0	1.25
Flood fringe (floodplains not in floodway)	2.75	0.5	1.37
Wetlands and poorly drained soils	1.33	0.95	1.26
Rock outcrops	0.25	0.9	0.22
Steep slopes greater than 25%	1.4	0.8	1.12
Moderate slopes (15%-25%)	2.96	0.25	0.74
<b>TOTAL CONSTRAINED LAND</b>			<b>8.96 Acres</b>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Growing Greener- Natural Lands Trust, Media, PA

TOTAL GROSS TRACT AREA	50 Acres
CONSTRAINED LAND	-8.96 Acres
TOTAL ADJUSTED TRACT AREA	41.04 Acres

The net out multipliers used above are not set values, and should be adjusted based on individual Township priorities

**Open Space Development (Growing Greener)**

Growing Greener<sup>2</sup> is a statewide community planning initiative which is designed to help communities use the development regulation process to their advantage to protect interconnected networks of greenways and permanent open space.

Each time a property is developed into a residential subdivision, an opportunity exists for adding land to a community-wide network of open space. Although such opportunities are seldom taken in many municipalities, this situation could be reversed fairly easily by making several small but significant changes to Shenango Township’s basic local land-use documents – the zoning ordinance and the subdivision and land development ordinance. Conservation design rearranges the density on each development parcel as it is being planned so that only half (or less) of the buildable land is consumed by house lots and streets. Without controversial “down zoning” (decreasing the number of house lots), the same number of homes can be built in a less land-consumptive manner, allowing the balance of the property to be permanently protected and added to an interconnected network of community green spaces. This “density-neutral” approach provides a fair and equitable way to balance conservation and development objectives.

**Infill Policies**

Two of the objectives for land use are to encourage new residential development to take place as infill within and near existing developed neighborhoods with infrastructure of adequate capacity and functionality and promote infill and revitalization within the existing center of West Middlesex, in conformity with the general character of the Borough. There are a number of strategies which can be used to promote infill, as noted in Chapter 5. Land consumption for new development can be minimized if development or redevelopment occurs on vacant or underutilized parcels within existing developed areas. Development costs can sometimes be reduced because of the accessibility of existing infrastructure and services.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Natural Lands Trust, Media, PA

## **Official Map**

Article IV of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code authorizes the governing body of each Township with power to create an official map of all or a portion of the municipality which may show elements of the Joint Comprehensive Plan with regard to public lands and facilities, and which may include, but need not be limited to:

1. Existing and proposed public streets, watercourses, and public grounds, including widening, narrowing, extensions, diminutions, openings, or closings.
2. Existing and proposed public parks, playgrounds, and open space reservations.
3. Pedestrian ways and easements.
4. Railroad and transit rights-of-way and easements.
5. Flood control basins, floodways and floodplains, stormwater management areas and drainage easements.
6. Support facilities, easements and other properties held by public bodies undertaking the elements described in the Joint Comprehensive Plan.

The municipalities may make surveys and maps to identify the location of property, traffic way alignment, or utility easement by use of property records, aerial photography, photogrammetric mapping, or other method sufficient for identification, description, and publication of the map components. For acquisition of lands and easements, boundary descriptions by metes and bounds must be made and sealed by a licensed surveyor.

The adoption of any street lines or other public lands as part of the official map does not constitute the opening or establishment of any street nor the taking or acceptance of any land, nor does it obligate the municipality to improve or maintain any such street or land. The adoption of proposed watercourses or public grounds as part of the official map does not constitute a taking or acceptance of any land by the municipality.

For the purpose of maintaining the integrity of the official map of the municipality, no permit shall be issued for any building within the lines of any street, watercourse, or public ground shown or laid out on the official map. No person shall recover any damages for the taking for public use of any building or improvements constructed within the lines of any street, watercourse, or public ground after the same shall have been included in the official map, and any such building or improvements shall be removed at the expense of the owner. However, when the property of which the reserved location forms a part cannot yield a reasonable return to the owner unless a permit shall be

granted, the owner may apply to the governing body for the grant of a special encroachment permit to build.

The municipalities may fix the time for which streets, watercourses, and public grounds on the official map shall be deemed reserved for future taking or acquisition for public use. However, the reservation for public grounds shall lapse and become void one year after an owner of such property has submitted a written notice to the governing body announcing his intentions to build, subdivide or otherwise develop the land covered by the reservation, or has made formal application for an official permit to build a structure for private use, unless the governing body shall have acquired the property or begun condemnation proceedings to acquire such property before the end of the year.

## **Chapter 9**

# **Agricultural and Scenic Resources**

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### **Introduction**

Agricultural and scenic resources within the Region are shown on the Agricultural, Historic, and Scenic Resources Map, Figure 9-1. This map identifies prime agricultural soils, Agricultural Security Areas, and soils of statewide importance. Because of the built-out nature and limited available lands within the Borough, this discussion primarily pertains to Shenango Township.

### **Agricultural Resources in The Region**

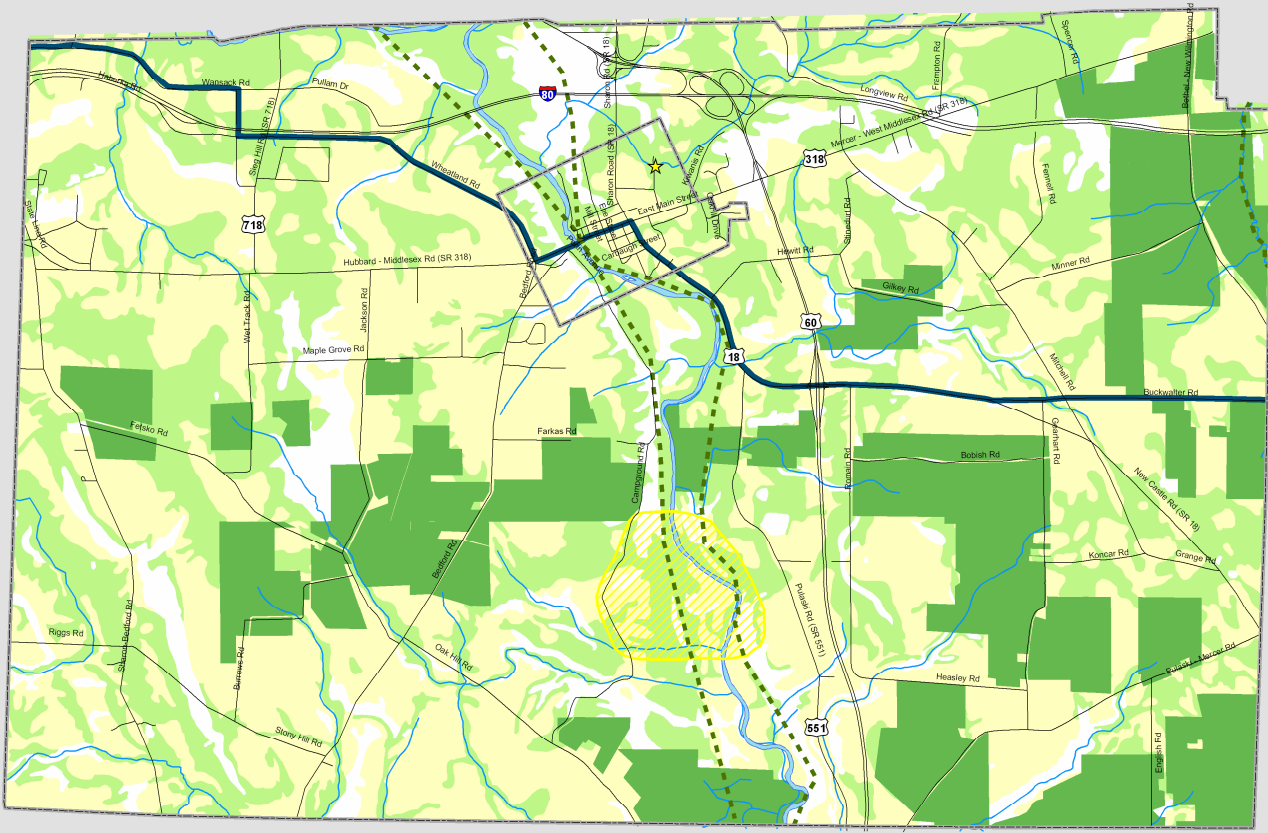
#### ***Prime Agricultural Soils and Soils of Statewide Importance***

Prime agricultural soils and soils of statewide importance cover most of the Region. Prime Agricultural Soils are soils in Capability Classes 1, 2 or 3 as identified by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. Prime agricultural land is often easily developable land, and without protection, prime agricultural soils are subject to development.

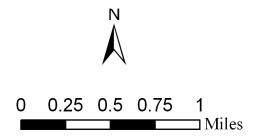
#### ***Agricultural Security Areas***

Many parcels within the Township are designated as Agricultural Security Areas. These areas are shown as green on the map. This is the first step to getting lands preserved through the conservation easement program administered by Mercer County. Agricultural Security Areas contain properties in which owners voluntarily enroll in an agricultural security program created by a municipality. The enrollment in an Agricultural Security Area typically demonstrates a commitment to keeping a property in agricultural use and affords some protection for agricultural properties, but does not prevent development of the Agricultural Security areas. Property owners may leave the program and develop their land. Some protection is afforded to properties in Agricultural Security Areas. The Agricultural Area Security Law prohibits local government units from enacting nuisance regulations; addresses the use of eminent domain by government units; requires inclusion in an Agricultural Security Area for easement purchase; and provides for all agricultural conservation easements to be perpetual. Hazardous waste sites may not be located in any municipality that has an established Agricultural Security Area.

**Figure 9-1  
Agricultural, Historic,  
and Scenic Resources Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



- Historic Site
- Roads
- Streams
- Scenic Corridor
- Potential Greenway
- Biological Diversity Area
- Agricultural Security Areas
- Prime agricultural soils
- Soils of statewide importance
- Municipal Boundary



Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

**SSM**  
SPOTTS | STEVENS | McCOY  
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## ***Farmed Areas***

Much of the Township is actively farmed. These areas are shown in olive green on the Existing Land Use Map, found in Chapter 16. Agriculture is the major land use and a significant part of the economy in Shenango Township.



## **Importance of Agricultural Resources in the Area**

In the study *Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses*, prepared by the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences and the Cooperative Extension, it was found that residential development in general does not pay for itself. Residential development increases costs more than it increases tax revenue, and other land uses must help subsidize school expenses. Current residents may end up paying higher taxes to cover the costs associated with new residents moving into the Region. Farmland and open land provided more in tax revenue than they required back in expenditures, and can help keep residents' taxes low, even if the Clean and Green program reduces the real estate tax paid by farmers.

Another report which looked at the relationship of land use and cost to residents is *The Cost of Sprawl in Pennsylvania*, prepared for 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania. Sprawl is the pattern of low density, scattered development requiring travel by motor vehicle, typically consuming agricultural land and segregating residential uses from other types of land use.

The costs, which were found to result from the sprawl, are increases in costs of roads, schools, utilities, and transportation, increases in air pollution and water pollution, and consumption of agricultural lands, natural areas and open space. Sprawl affects the quality of life in rural areas and results in direct costs such as higher school taxes.

As additional residential development occurs, the loss of farmland diminishes a major component of the economy of the Region. When agricultural operations are continued, they help maintain local agricultural supplies, make it easier for remaining farmers to

continue to farm, maintain a cultural heritage and lifestyle of the region, and help maintain open space, rural character and the beauty of the landscape.

### **Agricultural Zoning**

The Township will need to decide whether it should utilize effective agricultural zoning. Effective agricultural zoning allows agricultural uses and those uses compatible with farming, strongly limits dwellings and discourages subdivision of farms into parcels smaller than can typically be farmed.

Agricultural preservation zoning can keep large areas relatively free of non-farm development, lessening conflicts with farming operations which result from increased traffic, litter, complaints and damage to crops. It can also assure a supply of agricultural land for purchase or rental by farmers and protects the investment that is made in the purchase of agricultural easements. Agricultural preservation protects natural systems, helps replenish groundwater and maintain stream flow, and conserves prime agricultural soils that are a resource that once lost, cannot be recovered.

### **Administrative Means For Agricultural Preservation**

Effective Agricultural Zoning is just one means of preserving existing agricultural activities in the Region. The following are examples of administrative and supplemental zoning techniques to encourage and protect agriculture:

- Promote the inclusion of farms in Agricultural Security Areas.
- Support measures to relieve property tax burden for farmers.
- Limit extension of public sewer and water facilities to agricultural areas.
- Permit businesses which support agricultural operations, such as farm equipment sales and service, farm supply stores, and businesses which market or process farm products.
- Allow farmers to supplement incomes through home businesses, home occupations and farm related businesses.
- Permit appropriate recreational activities, such as hayrides, corn mazes, and festivals.
- Limit non-farm uses which could cause conflicts with agricultural practices and/or require buffers for non-farm uses around the perimeter of farms. Direct any non-farm development to parcels least suited to farming.

- Promote smart growth techniques.
- Promote enrollment in Clean and Green tax relief program.
- Allow and give incentives to compact development and higher densities where public sewer and water are available in areas designated for development.
- Support establishment and continuation of farm-related programs and organizations.
- Minimize construction of roads through and interchanges within agricultural areas.
- Limit expansion of residential development into surrounding agricultural areas.
- Work to improve relationships between farmers and non-farm neighbors.
- Make information available on the Pennsylvania agricultural loan program which permits farmers to borrow funds for land, buildings, machinery, or equipment bought, built or renovated for the benefit of the business.
- Encourage farmers to utilize the Pennsylvania Farm Link program created by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. This program is designed to help match farmers planning for retirement, and other interested landowners, with farmers hoping to work into farm ownership or long-term leasing.

### **Alternatives to “Traditional Agriculture”**

Often agriculture has been equated with “traditional” methods such as dairy farming, raising of steers, and cultivating such crops as corn, hay, wheat, alfalfa, soy beans, barley, and oats. Increasingly, there are a number of alternatives which can be practiced to supplement farm income or utilize smaller parcels of land, including:

- Nursery/Greenhouse
- Horse Farm
- Equestrian Center
- Orchard
- Winery

- Christmas Tree Farm
- Pick-Your-Own Operation
- Herb Farm
- Wildflower/Flower Farm
- “Gentleman’s” Farm
- “Agritainment” (using crafts, corn mazes, petting zoos, entertainers, hay tunnels, and hayrides to generate income and attract purchase of produce).
- Deer Farm
- Meat/cheese/milk Goats
- Hydroponics
- Ornamental Crops

### **Scenic Roads**

Scenic roads are an important element in the circulation system within the Region and should be maintained. Scenic roads include roadways that offer picturesque views of the surrounding countryside, or offer a pleasant drive under a canopy of trees. The Township should decide whether it would be appropriate to adopt scenic road overlay zoning along scenic roads. Within such overlay areas, greater setbacks along the roads may be required, additional landscaping and screening requirements may be established, and design standards for siting of buildings may be established in order to minimize visual impacts of any development.

The scenic roads identified in the Region by County-wide planning include:

- Portion of PA Route 18 from West Middlesex Borough east to the Township Line;
- East Main Street in West Middlesex Borough from PA Route 18 west to Wheatland Road;
- Wheatland Road between PA Route 318 and Wansack Road;
- Wansack Road between Wheatland Road and the Ohio Border.

It will be necessary to determine to what extent preservation of scenic resources will be made a priority within the Region. Preservation of scenic resources can be accomplished through broad land use policies such as open space, farmland, stream valley and woodland preservation and/or through attention to developments as they are proposed. Performance and design standards for developments, including siting of buildings, and conservation and cluster subdivision design, can encourage retention of scenic areas and protection of viewsheds.



## **Chapter 10**

# **Community Facilities & Services Plan**

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### **Introduction**

The availability of key community facilities and infrastructure such as water, sewer, schools, parks, and roads, is important to providing the necessary services to residents and businesses. The provision of adequate facilities and services allows municipalities to develop at a higher density, in a more compact and efficient pattern, and is often tied to economic well-being. However, these facilities may also attract development to rural areas and sensitive open space that are not appropriate for such high intensity uses. The challenge to municipal governments is to provide these services in an efficient and cost-effective manner, while still protecting the character of the Region.

Existing community facilities are shown on Figure 10-1.

### **Cooperative Efforts**

The municipalities should continue to review opportunities for regional cooperation in the provision of services and facilities as both the demand and the cost of such services increase. The municipalities can also work with the school district in providing facilities and programs to area residents. A number of the objectives found later in this chapter relate to cooperative efforts. The following goal and objectives have been established for Regional Cooperation.

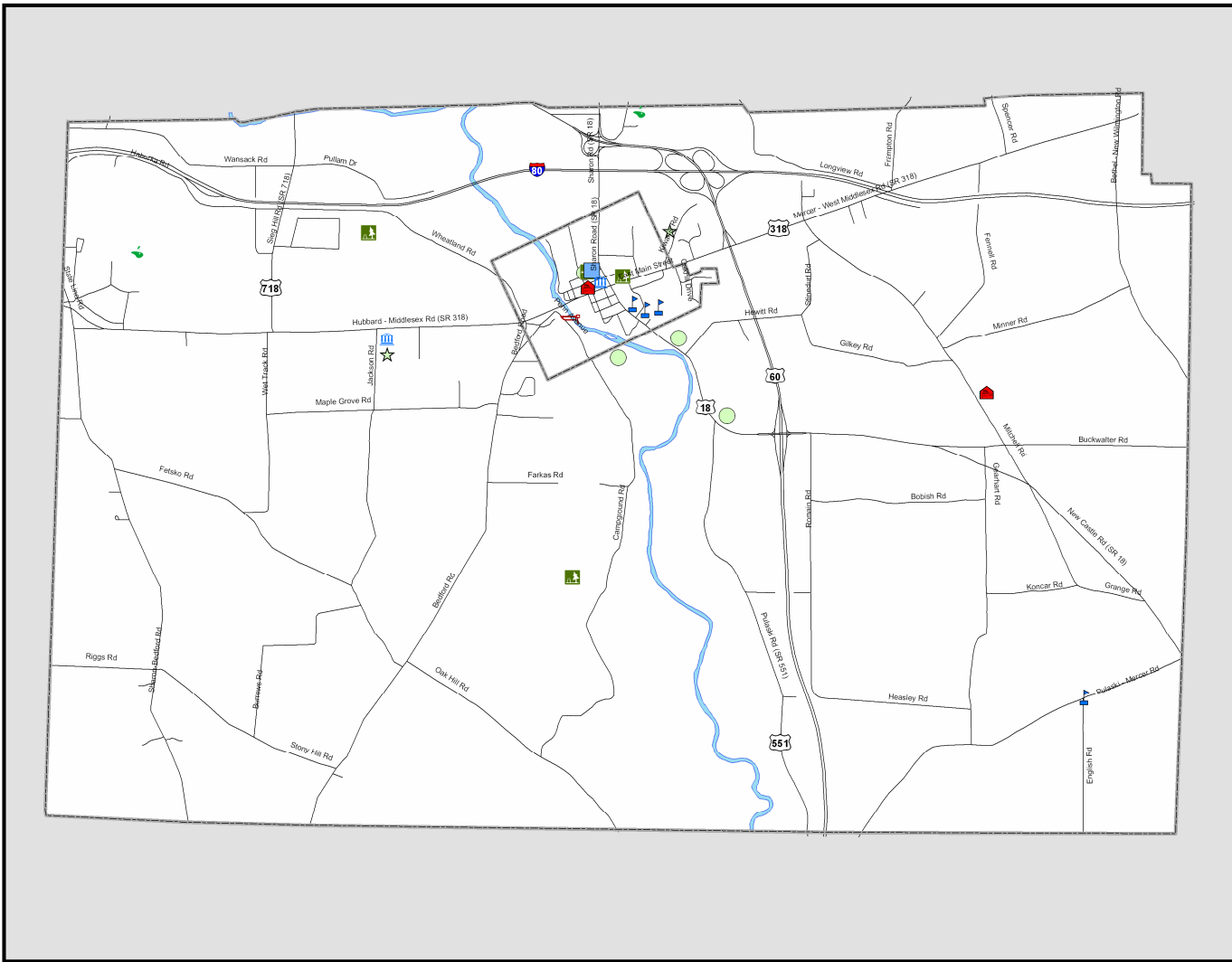
### **Regional Cooperation**

**Goal:** Develop shared and coordinated courses of action to improve and sustain the long-term vitality of the community and manage future growth and development in the Region.

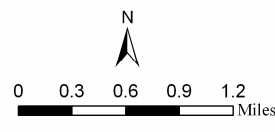
**Objectives:**

- Plan for and develop recreational opportunities on a regional basis.
- Outline a cooperative program for making capital improvements to water systems, sanitary sewer systems, and community and economic development for the long-term benefit of the community.
- Encourage coordination in municipal regulations for land use and development to promote quality development throughout the community.

**Figure 10-1  
Community Facilities Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



- Boat Launch
- Fire Station
- Golf Course
- Municipal Building
- Ballfield
- Park
- Playground
- Pool
- Recreation Area
- School
- Roads
- Municipal Boundary



Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM



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- Position the Township and the Borough to be able to utilize the tools and incentives afforded to multi-municipal plan participants in accord with Article XI and other sections of the Municipalities Planning Code.
- Address economic development on a regional basis.
- Pursue joint opportunities for funding of projects through grant programs.
- Foster coordination with school boards with regard to use of and planning for facilities.
- Address the protection of the Shenango River Watershed on a regional basis.
- Review recommendations of prior planning efforts in the Region to determine their relevance.

Potential opportunities for regional cooperation include purchase or use of equipment, such as road equipment or road salt, emergency services planning and coordination, police, fire, and ambulance services, recreation facilities and programs, and building code administration.

Volunteer fire companies are finding it increasingly difficult to get personnel in adequate numbers. The municipalities should encourage cooperation among local volunteer departments, perhaps in areas such as recruiting and acquisition of compatible equipment, in order to meet the fire protection needs of the community.

The municipalities should work with the school district to assure that school facilities are located to be consistent with the objectives of this Comprehensive Plan.

To facilitate implementation of this Joint Comprehensive Plan and to address the needs and possibilities for cooperation in the future, the municipalities should formalize the joint planning process that began with the formation of the Joint Municipal Planning Committee. A committee comprised of representatives from both municipalities should be created that will meet on a regular basis to review this Comprehensive Plan and to identify what steps should be taken to promote its implementation. The concept of using committees composed of area residents to address major issues of concern within the area may be used on other issues.

#### **COOPERATIVE MUNICIPAL EFFORTS RECOMMENDED BY THIS PLAN**

- Regional Park, Open Space, and Recreation Plan, including regional-wide pedestrian and bicycle circulation planning.

- Shenango River access, enhancement, and development plan and Shenango River Trail.
- Promotion of the Region as a place to live, work, and visit, with presentation of positive public relations information.
- Grantsmanship.
- Review and implement opportunities for the provision of coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective public services, such as comprehensive park and recreation systems, sharing of equipment, code enforcement, and staff utilization.
- Review and implement opportunities for development, maintenance, and improvement of community infrastructure.
- Investigate opportunities for Keystone Innovation Zones with Penn State Shenango and other institutions of higher learning.
- Regional Environmental Advisory Council.
- Regional Historical Commission.
- Create/designate a regional agency to spearhead efforts to enhance the role of the Shenango River in the Region.
- Streetscape planning for the Route 18 and Route 318 Corridors, including coordinated corridor overlay zoning.

## **Community Facilities, Services and Utilities**

**Goal:** Provide coordinated, efficient, and cost effective public services and facilities to the Region's residents and develop, maintain, and improve community infrastructures.

### **Objectives:**

- Support training of public safety professionals.
- Encourage sanitary sewer and water systems that are cost-efficient, meet residents' needs, and maintain community health.
- Provide cost-effective public safety services that meet the needs of the Region's residents.
- Encourage cooperation and shared facility use by government entities or agencies.
- Update Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans as necessary.
- Encourage innovative approaches to managing on-lot sewage disposal systems.
- Encourage consistency between water and sewer infrastructure improvements and expansions and the growth management policies reflected in the Future Land Use Plan.
- Manage development to minimize site disturbance and stormwater generation, maximize infiltration (where appropriate) and maintain water quality.
- Update stormwater regulations to adequately address water quality as required by government agencies.
- Encourage best practices and innovative stormwater management techniques to minimize runoff from new land development, thereby reducing potential for increased flooding and flood damage.
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities and interconnections within the Region.
- Minimize erosion potential from existing development and construction sites.

- Support adequate solid waste disposal and collection systems to serve the needs of the Region's residents while maintaining public health, environmental, and land use compatibility standards.
- Support the development and continuation of recycling programs.
- Encourage proper handling and location of disposal sites for solid waste.
- Encourage disaster preparedness planning in the region.
- Provide better public access to government.
- Support the needed maintenance, updating and expansion of water and sewer infrastructure, in a cost-efficient manner, to meet the needs of residents and businesses in the Region.
- Protect water supplies for the Region.

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

As population increases within the region, so does the need for open space and recreation facilities. Communities that provide open space and recreation opportunities for their citizens enjoy a higher quality of life, which has a positive influence on the local economy. It is important to achieve a balance between active recreation facilities and open space and hiking trails for passive recreation.

### **Open Space and Recreation**

**Goal:** Support development and sustainable management of a recreational network within the Region.

#### **Objectives**

- Support provision of year-round recreational programs for residents of all ages. Support recreational and leisure programs for specific age groups and for intergenerational groups.
- Provide recreational facilities for residents of all ages as part of a recreational network within the Region and Mercer County.

- Promote a guideline of 10 acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents in urbanized areas.
- Strive to provide neighborhood parks within walking or short-driving distance (10 minute walk or 5 minute drive) of residential areas within urbanized areas.
- Develop and support development of on-road and off-road trails that link residential neighborhoods with park facilities.
- Encourage the development of accessible resource-based recreation opportunities, e.g., fishing piers, playgrounds, etc.
- Encourage the development of adequate recreational infrastructure, e.g., parking, trash receptacles, picnic and seating benches, restrooms, etc.
- Explore funding options for facility maintenance and policing.
- Encourage new development to incorporate trail connections with adjacent properties.
- Encourage re-development of underused or substandard recreation facilities.
- Encourage shared use of specialized recreational facilities (e.g., indoor swimming pools) that require significant investment and operations/maintenance support.
- Integrate environmental education and historical interpretation efforts with the recreation network.

It is a recommendation of this plan to preserve land now, while the land is still undeveloped, creating an open space system consisting of a network of connected active and passive open space and recreation opportunities.

Passive recreation and/or undeveloped open space may include stream corridors, wetlands, slopes, and groundwater recharge areas. Active recreation areas are characterized by property that is suited for athletic fields or playgrounds (flat and well-drained); has adequate public access; and closer to population centers.

## Lack of Pedestrian Facilities leading to Recreation Facilities and the River



## Greenways and Creek Conservation Corridors

### What is a Greenway?

The Pennsylvania Greenway Partnership Commission defines a greenway as follows:

A greenway is a corridor of open space. Greenways vary greatly in scale, from narrow ribbons of green that run through urban, suburban, and rural areas to wide corridors that incorporate diverse natural, cultural, and scenic features. Greenways can be land- or water-based, running along stream corridors, shorelines, lakes, waterfalls, or wetlands. Some follow old

railways, canals, ridgelines, or other features. They can incorporate both public and private property. Some greenways are primarily recreational corridors, while others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designed for human passage. Greenways differ in their location and function, but overall, a greenway network will protect natural, cultural, and scenic resources, provide recreational benefits, enhance the natural beauty and the quality of life in neighborhoods and communities, and stimulate economic development opportunities.

### **Benefits of Greenways**

Greenways can have a number of benefits:

- Protect natural, cultural, and scenic resources.
- Link communities together.
- Provide for recreational opportunities such as walking, biking, picnicking, camping, skiing, fishing, equestrian trails, snowmobile trails, and links to recreation resources.
- Enhance the quality of life and promote revitalization in communities.
- Provide educational and interpretive opportunities.
- Enhance tourism and economic development opportunities.
- Maintain habitat linkages (wildlife corridors) and ecosystems.
- Allow access to natural, scenic and cultural resources.
- Preserve and build upon existing trail networks.
- Provide alternatives to vehicular travel.
- Provide riparian buffers to protect water quality.
- Provide linkages to trails of regional significance.

The municipalities should work toward the establishment of a greenway/bike path system, based upon the Shenango River and its' tributaries, with highest priority given to the linking of existing parks and open space facilities, as well as creating links to trail systems outside of the Region. Not all corridors will be developed as active greenways

with trails, nor will they all exist along a creek – these corridors should exist to preserve vital natural features, particularly ridge lines, woodlands, wetlands, and native vegetation.

Green Infrastructure is a natural life support system. It is an interconnected network of protected land and water that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources and contributes to the health and quality of life for the Region’s communities and people. Within this infrastructure, streams and rivers, ridgelines, hiking and biking trails, passive open space, as well as wildlife migration corridors can be found.

### **Community Facilities/Open Space and Recreation Actions**

- A. Support efforts of regional Open Space and Recreation Organizations to plan for and seek funding for the continued acquisition, improvement and appropriate development of recreation facilities, greenways, and recreation programs in the Region.
- B. Maintain language in Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances to require developers to dedicate land or pay a fee in lieu of land for all new subdivisions.

Each subdivision or land development would have to be reviewed to determine whether the dedication of land or the fee-in-lieu of land would be more appropriate, based upon the size and location of the development.

Maintain standards for recreation facilities. Review National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards for appropriateness.

- C. Where appropriate, work with PennDOT to widen and improve road shoulders and require developers to improve shoulders along their properties in order to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- D. Maintain a dialog with the school district regarding development activities, school facilities needs, location of school facilities, and school bus routes.
- E. Promote and support efforts of community organizations to provide recreational facilities and programs for all area residents and services and programs for seniors and youth.
- F. Provide for public areas within the Region through provision of open spaces, village greens, mini-parks, recreation facilities, greenways, improved pathways, and indoor facilities.

- G. Involve local fire companies and school district personnel in review of subdivision and land development plans, where appropriate.
- H. Encourage volunteerism for non-profit agencies and increased coordination of volunteer services among agencies.
- I. Continue to promote recycling activities and maintain recycling centers that are convenient and well managed.
- J. Address the need for fire and emergency medical personnel as fewer volunteers become available. Cooperate regionally to ensure adequate service throughout the Region. Identify additional funding sources for fire companies.
- K. Coordinate policies of governing bodies, municipal authorities, and Aqua water company, regarding the development of public sewer and water facilities within the Growth Areas, as depicted on the Future Land Use Plan, to assure consistency and provide economic development. Encourage Aqua to be more proactive in providing service for economic development.
- L. Bring together citizens, the business community, and the school districts to plan and organize community-wide activities, events, and programs to foster community spirit, economic development, and community attractiveness.
- M. Maintain current and workable emergency operations plans.
- N. Require all wastes to be treated and/or disposed of in an approved, environmentally responsible manner.
- O. Promote efficient, effective, and professional management of public facilities. Identify opportunities for technological enhancements for municipal government.
- P. Continue cooperative efforts to provide cost effective public safety services and maintain adequate numbers of fire and police personnel.
- Q. Coordinate with the school board to provide greater public access to school athletic facilities.
- R. Increase opportunities for residents and visitors to access the history of the Region through museum and other types of displays.
- S. Continue to make residents aware of programs and resources available to them.

## **RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

- Update and expand water infrastructure capacity in West Middlesex and surrounding portions of Shenango Township.
- Enhance setting of Sweesy little league field.
- Create a public space/park/green at the area of the West Middlesex recycling depot along the Shenango River to serve as a gathering place and place to hold events. Enhance pedestrian access to the site.
- Upgrade sidewalks where necessary such as along Route 18, North Street, and East Main Street. Construct walkways to fill in gaps and to provide access to community facilities, such as construction of sidewalks on Walnut Street and Erie Street to area of park, pool, and little league field, and enhancing sidewalks on Garfield Street approaching Route 18. Construct or enhance curbs along walkways as feasible.
- Eventually establish a tree planting program to supplement existing street trees, particularly along routes to public facilities.
- Encourage riverside enhancements on the east bank of the Shenango River in the industrial area.
- Enhance pedestrian access to Kiwanis Park.
- Further develop Shenango Township Park.
- Establish educational and informational center for the West Middlesex Area Historical Society.
- Make improvements to West Middlesex sanitary and storm sewer systems, including new pump stations.
- Construct water supply lines in Jones Way.
- Maintain code enforcement program to keep properties from deteriorating.
- Continue program of rehabilitation of units.
- Remove blighted structures.

- Provide accessibility for the handicapped at all public facilities.
- Develop teen recreational programs, before/after school programs, preschool programs, and senior programs within the Region.
- Require land dedication or recreation fees in lieu of dedication for all new land developments.
- Conduct community clean-ups as needed.
- Build a footbridge across the Shenango River connecting the Shenango Rail Trail to the West Middlesex Town Center.

### **Monitoring of Needs**

Monitoring the need and opportunity for additional, expanded, or improved community services and facilities will help the municipalities plan for their efficient and economical provision. The goal for community facilities and services is to provide them on a coordinated, regional basis, where possible, to meet the existing and future needs of the residents of the Region in a manner consistent with financial resources.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY**

This plan supports efforts to bring people together at events in the community, promote involvement of new residents in community programs, and enhance community cohesion. This can be accomplished in part by creating appropriate locations for community activities, such as parks and recreation facilities, greens or sitting areas established through streetscape improvements, and the provision of social and cultural facilities. Facilities could be provided by developers, municipalities and/or social service agencies through the development of senior centers and youth centers and the implementation of open space and recreation plans.

Community cohesion and spirit can be fostered by bringing together citizens, the business community, school districts, governments, and volunteer groups, to plan and organize community-wide activities, events, and programs. Economic development and community attractiveness can also be fostered through such efforts.

The following goal and objectives have been established for Community Development.

## **Community Development**

**Goal:** Improve the perception of the Region, and work to instill a sense of pride in the community and neighborhoods and feeling of optimism for the future of the Region.

### **Objectives**

- Promote a culture of connectedness to community.
- Promote community vision and values statements, as defined by this multi-municipal planning effort.
- Promote strong community leadership and volunteerism.
- Promote participation in community decision-making and dissemination of information to citizens.
- Promote heritage events and other cultural activities.
- Promote community coordination and cooperation where common values and objectives exist.
- Enhance the quality of life for all the Region's residents, at all stages of life, to increase the attractiveness of the community to existing and potential residents. Promote and develop community, entertainment, shopping, and dining and cultural amenities that will encourage young adults, retirees, and other demographic groups to remain in or relocate to the Region.
- Improve community living and stability by enhancing neighborhoods, increasing safety, involving residents, and addressing the needs of families with school-age children.
- Promote the qualities of the greater region to those living outside the Shenango Valley. Promote the Region as a destination through coordinated identification, enhancement, and promotion of the Region's assets and distinguishing characteristics, such as proximity to Pittsburgh and Cleveland and low cost of living.
- Establish and/or implement, as applicable, design guidelines for development consistent with the character of existing streetscapes.

- Encourage streetscape projects in West Middlesex and the Route 18 and Route 318 corridors.
- Promote high quality, coordinated development, landscaping, and signage at gateways to and along the major roadway corridors to provide a sense of place, create a favorable impression, and foster pride in the community.
- Determine the role that the Shenango River should play in community and economic development efforts in the Region and promote the River as a catalyst for community and economic development.

### **Plan for the Reliable Supply of Water**

The 2000 amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) state that a County or multi-municipal comprehensive plan *shall* include a plan for the reliable supply of water.

Portions of the Region are served by Aqua PA, and this is expected to continue in the future.

Where developments, businesses, or other entities propose to utilize ground water or surface water supplies in substantial amounts, hydrologic studies should be required and the party causing the extraction is required to demonstrate that such use will have no adverse effects on the water supplies of other entities in the Region.

In cases in which watershed areas are used for public recreation purposes, public access and usage should be consistent with the need to protect water supplies.

Land use regulations and education programs can play a key role in protecting groundwater. Examples of land use control activities include the following:

- Zoning ordinance and site plan review standards related to aboveground secondary containment, interior floor drains, and other topics;
- Public education through public meetings, school-based classroom programs, library displays, cable television videos, public information flyers, and municipal newsletters.

Municipal zoning ordinances should contain provisions to protect sources of water supply through the following techniques:

1. Natural resource protection standards (net out provisions) protecting floodplains, wetlands, wetland margins, steep slopes, watercourses, water bodies, and lake and pond shores.
2. Stream Corridor Overlay Zoning.
3. Floodplain, wetland, and hydric soil protection provisions.
4. Environmental performance standards and environmental assessment requirements for industrial and commercial uses. Businesses should have Spill and Pollution Prevention Plans.
5. Provisions to minimize impervious cover.

When development plans are reviewed, developers must indicate proper management of stormwater runoff as well as control of erosion and sedimentation to protect local water resources.

An Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan should be prepared for the Shenango River watershed.

In accordance with current best management practices, stormwater management should be considered part of the hydrologic cycle with less emphasis on detention and more emphasis on infiltration to reduce the volume and the rate of runoff, pollution, and thermal impacts. Developers must identify the resources within their tracts, and to analyze and mitigate the impacts of development. Natural resources should be incorporated into the open space system.

It should be noted that lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources. Such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.

The following chart (Table 10.2) provides a reference for zoning ordinance policy recommendations and techniques for water resource protection.

### **Overlay Zoning**

Overlay zoning is the application of an additional set of regulations to an established zoning district. Overlay zones supplement, but do not replace, the existing applicable zoning regulations. Overlay zones can be used for any number of objectives, including stream corridor and wellhead protection efforts. Areas commonly targeted for overlay zoning include: floodplains, watersheds, environmental areas, and stream corridors. The use of an overlay zone can be especially effective to ensure consistent regulation of land uses within multiple zoning districts.

## Growth Areas

The municipalities and Aqua PA should cooperate to encourage the provision of public water service in Growth Areas and support economic development.

Table 10.2 - Recommendations for Protecting Water Supplies

Stream Corridor Overlay Zoning	Zoning Policies	Water Resource Protection Provisions	Impact Analyses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrict development and impervious surfaces</li> <li>• Require riparian vegetative buffers</li> <li>• Encourage use of best management practices</li> <li>• Encourage stream habitat improvement</li> <li>• Encourage conservation easements/donations/dedications</li> <li>• Protect wetlands and wetland margins</li> <li>• Require floodplain and wetland studies based on soil types</li> <li>• Employ Innovative stormwater management techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage development where public sewer and water exist; discourage on-site sewer and water</li> <li>• Limit impervious surfaces</li> <li>• Establish performance standards for uses</li> <li>• Protect aquifers through controlling uses and potential polluting activities</li> <li>• Establish an overlay protection zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulation/restriction of potential contaminating uses and substances</li> <li>• Performance standards</li> <li>• Design standards</li> <li>• Operating requirements</li> <li>• Review process</li> <li>• Water source protection ordinance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply locations</li> <li>• Geologic conditions, recharge rate, degree of renovation of water supply after withdrawal</li> <li>• Aquifer characteristics: groundwater movement, use, yield, quality, quantity, well interference</li> <li>• Test well results and impacts</li> <li>• Plan to protect groundwater system underlying and adjacent to the site: prevention, remediation, emergency management</li> <li>• Monitoring of groundwater quality and quantity</li> </ul>

## **Chapter 11**

### **Transportation and Circulation Plan**

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#### **Introduction**

There is a direct connection between land use planning and transportation; one cannot plan for one and ignore the other. The transportation system needs to provide each community with adequate access to the system; support economic development and revitalization efforts; serve but not adversely affect residential areas; and provide access to destinations within the Region. The identification of necessary improvements throughout a Region's transportation network, as well as a logical land use plan that enables residents to make fewer vehicle trips, are key components to a comprehensive plan. The Transportation Improvements Projects (TIP) Map, Figure 11-1, displays listed TIP projects for the Region.

#### **Transportation**

**Goal:** Identify and implement transportation projects that facilitate mobility and accessibility, improve safety, improve the Region's economic viability, and enhance residents' quality of life.

#### **Objectives**

- Upgrade bridges as needed.
- Work with shippers in identifying transportation system improvement needs and advance projects in support of goods movement.
- Improve the safety of the highway system by implementing safety improvements and by considering safety concerns in TIP projects.
- Develop and maintain an integrated transportation system utilizing bicycle/ pedestrian, and highway networks. Support the development of adequate facilities for linking different modes of transportation.
- Improve accessibility of the circulation system for all users, including persons with disabilities.
- Coordinate land use and zoning with roadway network capacities.
- Enhance public transportation services, promote the use of public transportation, and inform people of transit opportunities.

**Figure 11-1  
 Transportation Improvement  
 Projects Map  
 West Middlesex & Shenango  
 Joint Comprehensive Plan  
 Mercer County, PA**



- Transportation Improvement Projects
- Municipal Boundary
- Shenango River

N

0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1  
 Miles

Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

**SSM**  
 SPOTTS | STEVENS | McCOY  
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- Preserve right-of-way for future highway projects.
- Improve accessibility to the interstate network, where consistent with desired growth and development objectives.
- Use access management techniques along the major road corridors in the Region.
- Provide input to PennDOT on regional maintenance and betterment needs.
- Support the county's rail freight network to ensure needed long-term capacity and current operability.
- Improve streetscapes along the roads in the Region through use of screening, landscaping, design standards, and street furniture enhancements.
- Create improved and enhanced Route 18 and Route 318 Corridors to serve new industrial, commercial, and residential development and create a favorable impression of the Region.
- Enhance the Route 60 corridor and interchange with PA 318 to foster economic development in that area.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Use the transportation system to support economic development and assist in orderly development of the Region.
- Support development of the Shenango Valley Rail-Trail and connections thereto.
- Improve and increase the connectivity of the Region's bicycle and pedestrian network.
- Enhance the Interstate 80/Route 60 interchange, which serves as a gateway to the region, and promote the area for economic development.

**Actions:**

- A. Update zoning ordinances as necessary.
  - 1. Include access management standards in zoning and/or subdivision and land development ordinances:
    - a. Establish access location standards
    - b. Establish access point separation requirements
    - c. Require access to streets of lower functional classification
    - d. Require internal road systems
    - e. Require coordinated/shared ingress and egress
    - f. Require interconnection of properties, including access, parking, loading
    - g. Establish separations from intersections
    - h. Require coordinated traffic movements
    - i. Require acceleration and deceleration lanes where appropriate
    - j. Require left and right turn lanes where appropriate
    - k. Refine design standards for intersections, driveways, internal circulation, and parking lot design
    - l. Minimize entrances to roads
    - m. Prohibit inappropriate turning movements
    - n. Consider signalization of high volume driveways
    - o. Refine location, size, and design requirements for billboards and signs.
  - 2. While particularly crucial along the PA Route 18 and PA Route 318 Corridors, access should be managed along all roads within the Region.

3. In mixed use areas, where pedestrian activity can be higher, discourage curb cuts over sidewalks to limit pedestrian/vehicular conflict.

B. Update subdivision and land development ordinances as necessary.

1. Establish appropriate design standards for each functional classification of road. Safe, buffered, and sufficiently set back bike and pedestrian lanes can be included in the cross-sections with consideration given to the Pennsylvania Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Bike and pedestrian lanes may be required on those roads deemed appropriate by the municipality.
2. Require traffic impact studies for proposed developments. Such studies require analysis of existing circulation conditions, the impact of proposed development and resulting circulation conditions, and the need for traffic improvements to adequately support the development.
3. Establish appropriate standards for driveway design and access to streets for access management. Coordinate with zoning ordinance design standards and access management provisions. Plans should be reviewed for access management concerns.
4. Require developers to recognize existing and planned trails and to provide new trails. Standards for trails can be included in the Ordinances. Sufficient rights-of-way and easements may be required during the review process.
5. Require developers to provide pedestrian paths and sidewalks to enhance foot traffic.
6. Request right-of-way dedication along existing roadways to meet design standards.
7. Require necessary roadway improvements along the frontage of developments.
8. Review setback and building location policies along major road corridors to refine regulations that will facilitate future road improvements.

- C. Consider the adoption of Official Maps designating proposed public facilities, streets, intersection and road improvements, bike paths, and trails.
- D. Implement the projects recommended by this plan.
- E. Establish pedestrian pathway improvement programs to enhance foot traffic in the Region, as well as provision of trails to provide improved access to schools, local shopping areas, community facilities, and employment opportunities. ADA requirements should be complied with.
- F. Work with PennDOT to ensure adequate maintenance of roads with substantial volumes of truck and school bus traffic as well as automobile traffic.
- G. Consider the merits of adoption of Transportation Impact Fee ordinances to be used by the Township and require land developers to address needed transportation improvements in the Region.
- H. Work with PennDOT and MCRPC to establish appropriate speed limits, reducing them as necessary, in developed areas.
- I. Prepare multi-year programs for street maintenance and improvement.
- J. Develop access management plans in cooperation with PennDOT to address access to major roads and access design standards. Encourage cooperative efforts of landowners to manage and share access.
- K. Encourage landowners to cooperate with PennDOT and the municipalities in the redesign of existing strip development areas to manage access and improve streetscapes.
- L. Coordinate utility and road improvements so that utilities are constructed before road improvements are made.
- M. Require property owners to keep street rights-of-way available for required improvements and pedestrian systems.
- N. Work together as a Region with the County, Legislators, and PennDOT to list needed transportation improvements on the Twelve-Year Transportation Program.
- O. Work with transportation organizations and agencies providing services to seniors to facilitate mobility of seniors by determining desired destinations and means of providing access to those destinations.

- P. Promote interconnections of developments.
- Q. Investigate whether angled parking in downtown West Middlesex would be feasible and appropriate.
- R. Work with PENNDOT to determine whether short-term solutions are possible to accommodate truck traffic at the intersection of Routes 18 and 318 until the Route 60-Route 318 interchange is completed.
- S. Address truck turning movements at the Route 318-Erie Street intersection.

### **Functional Classification of Roadways**

Roads are classified by the volume of traffic that they are designed to handle and the degree of access that they provide to abutting properties. The Functional Roads Classifications Map, Figure 11-2, includes the functional classification for the Region's roads.

### **Traffic Volumes**

Figure 11-3 indicates Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes in the Region.

### **Recommended Transportation Projects**

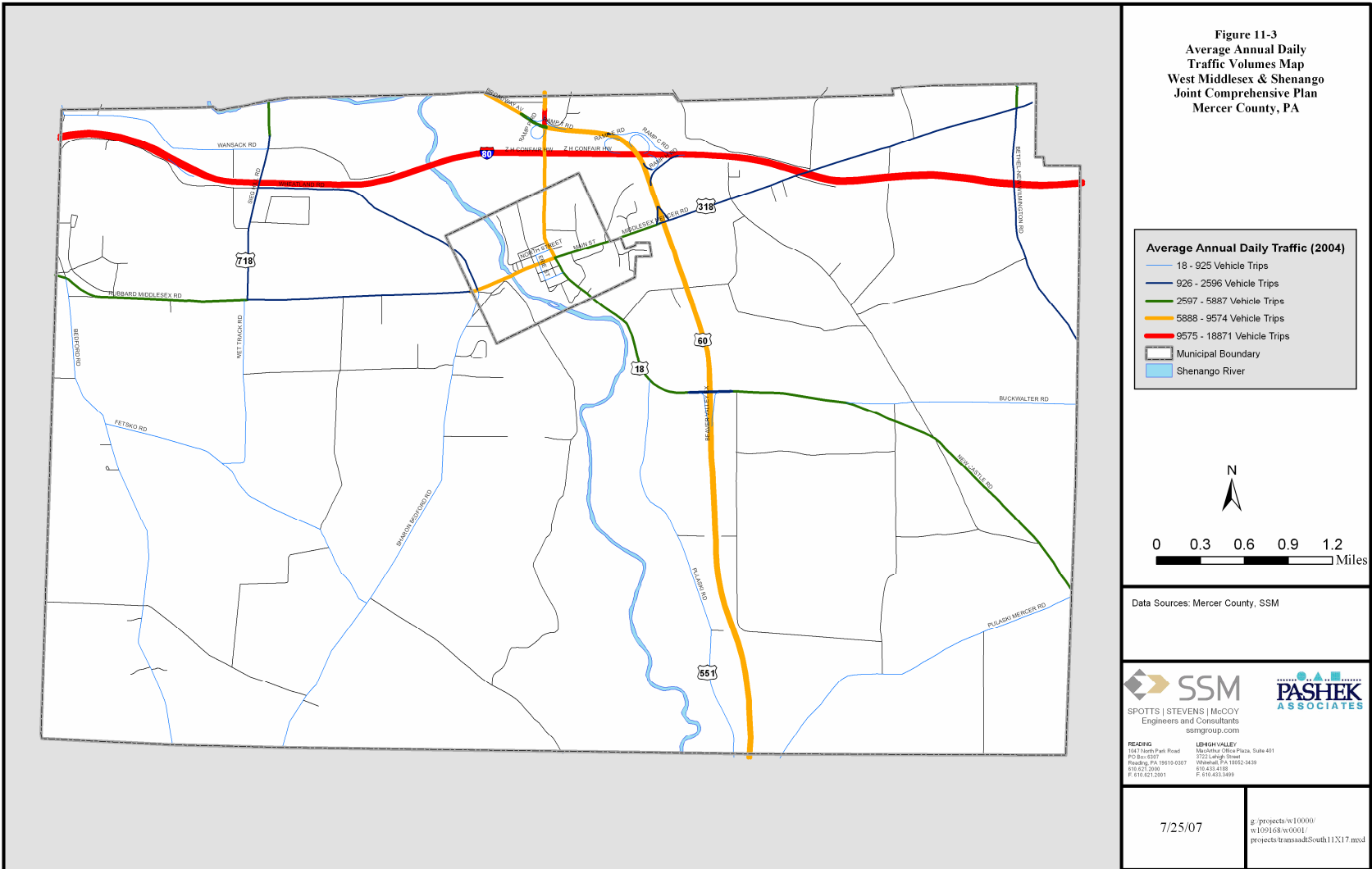
The following transportation improvements in the Region should be considered in future transportation capital improvement budgets. Projects not on the PennDOT Twelve-Year Program should be promoted for inclusion in the Program where applicable.

The following is a list of recommended transportation improvement projects for the Region:

- Shenango River Rail Trail Feasibility Study and West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Trail.
- Study if signalization is warranted at the intersection of PA Route 318 and PA Route 18.
- Develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways along Route 18 and Route 318 and evaluate the feasibility of creating means for pedestrians and bicycles to safely cross PA Route 18.
- Define and implement Transportation Improvement Districts along PA Route 18, where warranted, to implement the plans for that road.



**Figure 11-3  
Average Annual Daily  
Traffic Volumes Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



- Access management program along PA Route 18 and PA Route 318 corridors.
- Construct a connector road between Jones Way and Route 18 to open up land for economic development. Consider extension of Jones Way to open up additional land for economic development.
- Work with PENNDOT on design of the repairs to the viaduct in the Borough, determining whether realignment is desirable and whether a separated pedestrian walkway can be provided.
- Establish a street maintenance program to address streets in need of attention, such as Erie Street, South Street, Haywood Street, Carbough Street, Walker Lane, Chestnut Street, and Penn Avenue.
- Complete interchange of Route 60/Route 318. This is of particular importance to alleviate truck traffic through West Middlesex.
- Plan for access to remaining potential residential land in and around West Middlesex and place roads on official map. Determine whether a connection between Haywood and Kiwanis Streets is appropriate.
- Replace the Riggs Road Bridge.
- Enhance/construct a pedestrian system to link the recreation facilities along Route 18, Route 318, Kiwanis Road, Wheatland Road, Penn Avenue, Campground Road, and Central West Middlesex.
- Improve PA 60 to achieve interstate standards and designation. The Shenango Valley MPO should continue to work with PennDOT Districts 1-0 and 11-0, the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association and other industry advocates to improve PA 60 to interstate standards. An examination of Mercer County's three PA 60 interchanges will need to be accomplished as part of the designation effort.

PA 60's interchange with PA 318 is an urgent priority as it relates to economic development. A full diamond interchange has been programmed, yet a larger issue includes studies aimed at identifying improvement needs towards bringing an interstate designation to what is now PA 60. The re-designation would see PA 60 (and US 22/30 in the Pittsburgh area) become I-376.

- Continue bi-state coordination with Ohio on projects that impact communities on both sides of the border. The potential relocation of an existing I-80 weigh station (in Hubbard, OH) further east could encourage west-bound truckers to bypass the

scales by exiting the interstate in Mercer County and using PA 60 or PA 318 to travel through Sharon, Farrell or West Middlesex. The Shenango Valley MPO should continue to work with the Youngstown MPO and law enforcement officials to address this issue.

Construction of a new interchange on I-80 at Bethel-New Wilmington Road was discussed in detail at Steering Committee meetings and the March 2007 public meeting. Both the Committee and public were of the opinion that such an interchange should not be recommended. Construction of such an interchange conflicts with the objectives of encouraging continuation of agricultural activities and supporting economic development as infill, brownfield development, and further development in existing developed areas and communities.

## **LONG RANGE PLANNING**

The availability of developable open land presents potential for future development in the Region, which will undoubtedly have an impact on the transportation system in the Region. Therefore, it is important to discuss long range transportation recommendations to mitigate the implications of increased development. This section will present a vision for the future transportation network in the Region, including strategies for priority corridors, which were identified as the most critical to the Region in terms of a functioning transportation system.

### **Mercer County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

The Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study MPO is a federally mandated organization responsible for transportation related issues in Mercer County. Professional staff members of the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission run the daily business of the MPO.

The SVATS MPO is made up of two committees, the Coordinating and the Technical. The Coordinating Committee is responsible for insuring the maintenance of planning eligibility for state and federal grants and the maintenance of both the Long Range Plan (LRP) and current project lists (TIP). The Coordinating Committee is made up of 21 voting members (including two (2) from PENN DOT), Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Clark, Grove City, West Middlesex, Wheatland, Sharpsville, Findley, Liberty, Pine, Shenango, South Pymatuning, Springfield, Wilmington, Wolf Creek, Greenville, Mercer County and the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments.

The Technical Committee has the duty to study and report on technical aspects as directed by the Coordinating Committee and to initiate studies and recommendations on technical aspects in pursuance of the objectives of the SVATS MPO. The Technical

Committee is made up of 12 voting members; PENN DOT (2), Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Greenville, Grove City, Sharpsville, the Township Association, Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (2) and the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments.

The MPO deals in all modes of transportation, one key mode being transit. The SVATS MPO works closely with the major transit providers for the County. The two major providers are the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service (SVSS) and Mercer County Community Transit (MCCT). The SVSS runs several routes providing fixed route service to the Shenango Valley. The MCCT provides on demand service to all areas of Mercer County.

## **Mass Transit**

### ***Mercer County Community Transit***

MCCT is a door to door, advanced registration program that services all persons of Mercer County. Transit is funded by state and federal grants and the Mercer Co. Area Agency on Aging, Inc. Discounted service is available to Senior Citizens age 60 or older and qualified disabled residents.

## **Transportation Development Districts**

The Transportation Partnership Act (Act 47 of 1985 as amended) allows municipalities to create Transportation Development Districts to assist in the financing of transportation facilities and services including roads, railroads, and public transit systems. If municipalities propose a district, property owners who represent more than fifty percent of the assessed valuation in a proposed district must be in favor of the district. The creation of the Transportation Development District allows municipalities to impose assessments upon benefited properties in the District to construct transportation improvements. The needs for such districts along PA Route 18 and PA Route 318 should be monitored.

## **Congestion Management System Strategies**

Congestion management system strategies have been used by some communities to reduce traffic. The major elements are:

- Employee trip reduction plans to increase average vehicle occupancy
- Creation of transportation management associations in which municipalities work with local businesses to identify measures to reduce travel demand. These may include:

- reducing vehicle concentrations at peak periods by staggering work hours;
- encouraging commuting by carpool and public transit rather than by single occupancy vehicles;
- eliminating unnecessary commutes;
- funding informal paratransit/vanpool operations.

With the potential for more commercial and residential development in the Region, the appropriateness of these strategies should be reviewed. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) Volume Map shows average traffic volume numbers for major road segments in the Region. Such strategies might be of value should the economic development corridor in the eastern portion of the Township be realized.

### **Impact Fees and Negotiated Financial Contributions**

The Municipalities Planning Code allows municipalities to assess a traffic impact fee provided they have adopted a traffic impact fee ordinance. With a traffic impact fee system in place, a municipality can collect fees to finance improvements to the road system. The Township should monitor growth in the future to determine if such a program should be implemented.

In municipalities where traffic impact fee systems are not in place, financial contributions from developers for road improvements should be negotiated. Developer-financed road improvements at existing intersections and along road segments could correct current deficiencies and mitigate traffic increases associated with new development. Table 11.1 identifies the steps involved in setting up and implementing an impact fee ordinance.

**TABLE 11.1  
SUMMARY OF THE STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING  
TRAFFIC IMPACT FEE ORDINANCE**

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>
<p>1. Establish Transportation Service Area and appoint an advisory committee. <i>Note: Committee must be at least 7 members, can be the <u>entire</u> Planning Commission, with ad hoc members if necessary to meet the 40% builder/realtor requirement. Other than this, the committee <u>cannot</u> contain municipal officials or employees.</i></p>	<b>Governing Body</b>
<p>2. Public Notice of Intent to implement a Traffic Impact Fee Ordinance. <i>Note: This allows for fees to start being collected <u>and</u> starts an 18 month clock, by which time the Ordinance must be adopted.</i></p>	<b>Governing Body</b>
<p>3. Committee oversees preparation of Land Use Assumptions plan, holds public hearing, forwards to Governing Body for adoption.</p>	<b>Impact Fee Advisory Committee</b>
<p>4. Committee oversees preparation of Roadway Sufficiency Analysis and forwards to Governing Body for approval.</p>	<b>Impact Fee Advisory Committee</b>
<p>5. Committee oversees preparation of Capital Improvements Plan, holds public hearing, forwards to Governing Body for approval.</p>	<b>Impact Fee Advisory Committee</b>
<p>6. Impact Fee Ordinance text developed and Ordinance adopted.</p>	<b>Governing Body</b>

**Shoulder Improvements**

Developers should be required to improve shoulders along the frontages of the tracts they develop. In addition, the municipalities should improve the shoulders along existing local roads where appropriate. Shoulders should be wide enough to accommodate trails in accordance with the guidelines in the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

## **Gateways**

Formal gateways should be considered at the entrances to the Region along the major highways. A gateway is an entrance corridor that defines the arrival point as a destination. Gateway planning addresses the arrangement of the landscape to create a visual experience that establishes a sense of arrival at the destination and provides a positive image of the destination. The municipalities can work with property owners to enhance these gateways. Consistent road corridor overlay zoning could be adopted along the major roadways.

At these gateways, the municipalities can work with property owners to enhance commercial areas through coordinated landscaping, signage, lighting, street furniture, paving materials, site improvement design, building facades, and window displays. When infill, redevelopment, or new development occurs, developers should be required to comply with performance and design standards that would address these elements. When new parking facilities are constructed, they should be landscaped, buffered, and located to the side or rear of buildings.

Signage should be minimal, and appropriate to the character of the Region.

Property owners should be encouraged to maintain and improve properties, particularly those that may have negative impacts on surrounding properties. In places where the rear of commercial properties face or abut residential properties, the appearance of the commercial properties and their impact on the residences should be mitigated.

Specific recommended gateways are discussed in Chapter 7 - *Centers, Linkages, and Corridors Within the Region*.

## **Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation**

The municipalities should incorporate bicycle and pedestrian improvements into the transportation planning process. This Plan recommends that the municipalities strengthen their zoning and subdivision ordinances to ensure that bicyclists and pedestrians are accommodated in the transportation system. As roads are maintained and improved, design requirements for pedestrian and bicycle access should be considered, such as the provision of bike lanes, sidewalks, and appropriate curb radii at intersections. Limiting radii at intersections to the minimum necessary to allow safe traffic flow can make intersections more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Pedestrian crossings at street intersections, particularly along the trail routes, should be facilitated by crosswalks, stop signs, and pedestrian islands. Gaps in the sidewalk system should be eliminated (where feasible). New developments, particularly within the Growth Areas, should have sidewalks. Access to community facilities and commercial areas in the Region should be enhanced through expanded and repaired sidewalks and greenways and by establishing

crosswalks. Streetscape amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, information signs, and landscaping should be provided where appropriate.

The following approaches can be considered when installing sidewalks in pre-existing developments along roads:

- Apply for PennDOT Transportation Enhancement funding
- 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

### **Safe Routes to School**

This program is designed to work with school districts and pedestrian and bicycle safety advocates to make physical improvements that promote safe walking and biking passages to schools. Collectively, these efforts would save on school busing costs and promote a healthy lifestyle for children. In addition, some funding may be used for pedestrian education efforts. Examples of these types of improvements include sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes or trails, traffic diversion improvements, curb extensions, traffic circles, and raised median islands.

### **Traffic Calming**

As development in the Region occurs and traffic volumes increase, residential streets and roads will have more traffic. Means of dealing with this additional volume include road improvements, providing increased opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, supporting efforts to increase automobile occupancy rates, and managing access. If these steps are not sufficient, the municipalities may consider traffic calming techniques.

The purpose of traffic calming is to manage movement through an area in a way that is

compatible with the nearby land uses. Streets should be safe for local drivers, and traffic should not adversely affect the quality of life of residents.

The general methods of traffic calming include the following:

- Active speed reduction (constructing barriers to traffic movements)
- Passive speed reduction (installation of signage)
- Streetside design (landscaping that changes the appearance of the area and driver attitudes)
- Regional planning efforts that direct external traffic to other routes
- Opportunities for use of alternative modes (mass transportation, pedestrian, bicycle)

1. *Active Speed Reduction (constructing barriers)*

- a. Speed humps and speed tables are raised areas in the street surface that extend across the width of the street. Speed humps present liability and are also annoying to local residents. Speed tables, which are really raised pedestrian crosswalks, may be more successful. They are most appropriate in areas with substantial pedestrian traffic.
- b. Changes in roadway surface may include rumble strips, milling, and special roadway surfaces. These techniques can increase noise in areas and raise objections from area residents.
- c. Intersection diverters may involve a barrier placed across an intersection, typically to alter travel plans, such as permitting right turns only, to make travel through a neighborhood more indirect.
- d. Channelization may involve provision of pedestrian refuge areas, providing protected parking bays through landscaped islands, altering motor vehicle traffic movements, and restricting movements at intersections by narrowing the space available for vehicular movement.

The active controls require changes in driver behavior. Although active methods convey that the street is not just for through traffic, such methods are costly, and can be viewed negatively by some.

## 2. *Passive Methods of Control*

- a. Traffic signs saying “Do Not Enter”, “Stop”, “Not a Through Street”, “Local Access Only”, “No Trucks”, or signs establishing speed limits, indicating one-way street, or prohibiting turns.
- b. Traffic signals.
- c. Pavement markings, including crosswalks, edgelines, and use of different materials for pedestrian crosswalks.
- d. Permitting on-street parking.
- e. Speed watch.

These methods have lower costs and can apply to only certain times of the day, if appropriate; however, signs are often ignored and enforcement is necessary.

Prior to implementing any traffic calming program, it is necessary to identify the specific problems to be addressed; identify and evaluate the alternative techniques and their drawbacks, benefits, and cost; to identify alternative traffic patterns that could result from implementation of the techniques and the effects of those patterns on other streets and neighborhoods; and to involve residents in the evaluation and selection of techniques. Such techniques should not detract from the character or visual quality of a neighborhood.

### **Capital Improvements Planning**

Capital improvements planning should be considered for programmed transportation improvements. Capital improvements planning includes financial analysis of past trends in the community, present conditions, and a projection of the community's revenues and expenditures, debt limit, and tax rates, to determine what the financial capabilities of the municipality are. It also includes a capital improvements program which establishes a system of priorities. The final element is the capital budget which lists the schedule of improvements over a 5-year period on the basis of the community's financial capacity and availability of grant money.

In the capital improvements program, capital expenditures are separated from operational expenditures. Operational expenditures are those for administration, payroll, employee benefits, maintenance and similar functions, and are short term. Capital expenditures are for assets which have a substantial value compared to the total municipal budget and are expected to provide service for a number of years. The construction of a road is an example of a capital expenditure.

The capital improvements program schedules the purchase of capital items in a systematic manner rather than allocating a large amount of money for all expenditures in one year. Based on the assessment of future needs, future expenditures are planned so that the municipality can anticipate major expenditures prior to the budget year. The program is based on identified capital needs, goals for capital acquisitions, and a priority list of all proposed capital expenditures.

A time frame is established for the capital improvements program. Five-year programs are typical. Every year the schedule for capital improvements must be revised and updated as necessary, based on the current municipal priorities. For each project included in the program, estimated costs must be established and a budget prepared.

Benefits of capital improvements programs include the following:

- It ensures that projects will be based upon the ability to pay and upon a schedule of priorities determined in advance.
- It helps ensure that capital improvements are viewed comprehensively and in the best public interest of the municipality as a whole.
- It promotes financial stability by scheduling projects at the proper intervals.
- It avoids severe changes in the tax structure by the proper scheduling of projects and facilitates the best allocation of community resources.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Economic Development Plan**

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#### **Overall Approach to Economic Development in the Region.**

A coordinated economic development strategy will involve smaller scale uses directed to remaining sites in West Middlesex and the Executive Business Park, and larger-scale enterprises directed toward the Route 18 Corridor and interchanges at Route 60 and Route 18, Route 60 – I-80 – Route 18; and Route 60 and Route 318.

Anticipated uses include light industrial and heavy commercial uses, which are compatible with nearby residences, within the areas of similar use north and south of the West Middlesex Town Center, along Jones Way, and along future street extensions of and interconnections to Jones Way. In the town center of West Middlesex, including development near the Shenango River, small-scale retail office, and service businesses and institutional uses would be appropriate, oriented toward residents, businesses, and tourists.

#### **Jones Way Opportunities**



The Executive Business Park would be expected to accommodate uses similar to those that are there now. The Route 18 corridor would contain a mix of uses, including light industrial, retail, office, and service businesses, and some larger commercial uses.

## Route 18 Opportunities



In the area of the Route 60 – Route 318 interchange, light industrial, limited warehousing, and office uses are encouraged, similar to what has developed to date in those areas. In the area of the Route 60- Route 18 interchange, similar uses are anticipated, but as limited development has occurred in this area, development in a business park atmosphere is stressed.

An economic growth corridor would be south of I-80, from the area of Mitchell Road to east of Fennell Road. It is anticipated that this area would develop for light

manufacturing and office uses in a planned business park setting, and not for extensive warehousing/distribution uses nor heavy manufacturing.

Quality, attractive economic development within the Region is dependent upon a number of infrastructure enhancements:

- Enhancement of the Route 318 Corridor, including road improvements and streetscape enhancements.
- Enhancement of the Route 18 Corridor, including road improvements and streetscape enhancements.
- Completion of the Route 60 – Route 318 interchange (complete diamond).
- Continued expansion of public sanitary sewer and public water supply service areas beyond existing boundaries.
- Expansion of public water service in the Jones Way area.
- Enhancement of the Shenango River corridor and construction of the Shenango River Rail Trail.
- Enhancement of the West Middlesex Town Center, particularly areas along Main Street and the River.

The Region should work together to prioritize economic development projects, determine available regional funding, then work with the state’s Community Action Team to secure funding for reasonable, feasible projects.

Substantial acreage is available in the Region to accommodate economic development. Listed below are the available (vacant or agriculture categories on Existing Land Use Map) acres in the Future Land Use Plan categories which can accommodate economic development:

Future Land Use Plan Category	Available Acres
Corridor Enhancement	78
Economic Development Corridor	318
Industrial	235
Planned Business Park	124
<b>Total</b>	<b>755</b>

Redevelopment opportunities would also be available for currently underutilized properties.

## Elements of Economic Development

Key elements of economic development include **Formation** (Small Business Development Center [SBDC], Penn-Northwest, Small Business Administration [SBA], and Business Incubators); **Expansion** (variety of business venues available, such as flex rental buildings, multiple-tenant buildings, and shovel-ready sites); **Retention** (including workforce education and availability, promotions, and attention to needs); and **Attraction** (marketing).

Penn-Northwest Development Corporation is the primary economic development agency in Mercer County, and its mission is to attract new business and industrial investment, provide outreach and retention services to support the retention and expansion of value added business and industry, and provide coordination and support services in support of economic development attraction, retention and expansion activities throughout the Mercer County regional service area.

Penn-Northwest's primary operating goals stated in its 2006/2007 Action Plan are:

- Business Retention and Expansion
- Marketing, Prospect, and Project Management
- Infrastructure/Sites Development
- Administrative services Contracts
- Co-Location of Agencies and Organizations

Primary Progress goals are:

- Market Mercer County through a coordinated county-wide effort
- Improve the business climate by completing infrastructure to enable interstate development
- Improve the business climate by reducing the cost of locating, expanding, and operating a business in Mercer County

Some of the agency's objectives are to:

- Aggressively market Mercer County as the best place to locate and expand business operations between Pittsburgh and Cleveland;
- Aggressively market existing industrial sites and facilities in all geographic areas of Mercer County via a network of brokers, builders, developers, trade shows, regional and state economic development partners, Board of Directors and Members;

- Aggressively market, in cooperation with partners, incentives and assistance programs available to support expansion and relocation of new value added development projects to the region;
- Educate business and industry CEO's on public/private resources available to support business retention and expansion operations;
- Identify company specific retention and expansion issues and needs;
- Aggressively pursue value added advanced and high tech development opportunities with linkages to existing local business and industry.
- PNDC and business retention and expansion partners to coordinate and target delivery of support programs and services to address identified company specific needs.

### **Encouraging Economic Vitality**

Municipalities can support economic vitality through municipal ordinances. Zoning ordinances can allow additional commercial and industrial development, as well as adaptive reuse of older buildings. Streetscape enhancement of commercial areas and entry or "gateway" enhancements can increase economic investment. The municipalities must take advantage of the public/private partnerships that exist and provide leadership to the business community to help establish a common focus for future economic development.

A healthy economy requires a balance between residential and non-residential uses, preserving residential neighborhoods to support commercial areas and provide a workforce. Communities with high quality-of-life amenities can attract more skilled workers and retain existing workforces better than communities with poor quality-of-life amenities. Preserving and enhancing open space, architecture, and culture can help a community maintain a sense of place and attract people and businesses to the Region.

### **Economic Development**

**Goal:** Increase employment opportunities in all sectors of the economy, for all income and education levels.

**Objectives:**

- Encourage expansion of existing businesses.

- Provide support for new agri-businesses, marketing, and other agriculturally related activities to encourage the sustainability and livelihood of the industry.
- Support the development of agriculture niche markets.
- Designate a variety of land uses that will support an array of economic development possibilities through future land use maps and zoning ordinances.
- Promote timely transportation projects that support priority economic development initiatives.
- Explore innovative financing mechanisms and agency cooperation to obtain funding for water and sewer infrastructure that supports priority economic development projects.
- Incorporate natural areas, green infrastructure, and cultural and recreational opportunities into tourism initiatives.
- Participate in countywide tourism promotion programs.
- Streamline the process for review and approval for economic development projects. Eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers to development.
- Encourage coordination among public, private, and non-profit sectors to carry out economic development initiatives. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Promote inter-governmental cooperation to reduce duplication of resources, streamline review and approval processes, and maximize time and resources.
- Support coordination between the County, municipalities, developers, Penn-Northwest, and other economic development agencies to leverage and nurture new projects and achieve economic development goals.
- Encourage and support small business creation and entrepreneurialism in the Region. With local universities, encourage incubator development that will support existing and new small businesses.
- Implement strategic physical and aesthetic improvements and marketing promotion improvements in the Borough, to provide a stronger sense of place, support and solidify the viability of existing businesses, attract new businesses, and encourage investment.

- Address parking needs of businesses.
- Encourage a variety of commercial and professional services to locate in the communities in the Region to serve the needs of residential neighborhoods.
- Facilitate wayfinding and promote regional attractions through appropriate signage and marketing. Facilitate linkage of destinations within the region.
- Promote economic diversity to provide economic stability within the Region.

### **Workforce Education and Training**

**Goal:** Provide adequate training of the Region’s residents to enable them to be participants in the workforce.

**Objectives:**

- Improve workforce support and development to improve the employability of the Region’s residents. Promote pre-employment training, on-the-job training, and on-going educational programs.
- Link the local work force with existing businesses in the Region and County.
- Identify work force needs of businesses and coordinate with school districts, institutions of higher education within the Region, and job training programs to prepare skilled workers for employment.

### **Target Areas**

Economic development planning is not only the responsibility of the municipal officials. Local economic groups, non-profit organizations, business and property owners, and local and State legislators all have a stake in the economic well being of the Region. The region is home to several economic development groups such as the Mercer County and Shenango Valley Industrial Development Authorities; Penn Northwest Development Corporation; Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce; and Shenango Valley Enterprise Zone Corporation. These groups will need to work closely with the Region’s municipalities to recognize the Region’s economic potential.

The first step to improve the climate for economic development and develop a community wide vision is to identify the crucial or ‘target areas’ that present the most future economic development potential in the Region. These are identified at the beginning of the Chapter. Another area is the Shenango River corridor.

## *Shenango River Corridor*

The Shenango River is a key natural link through the Region, and could serve as the backbone of a Region-wide greenway system. Preservation of the river corridor is an important step in the creation of a linear system of connected green space, or green infrastructure. As has occurred in other communities in western Pennsylvania, the River can be used as an impetus for economic development activities. Uses such as environmental education, recreation, and recreation-oriented business, cultural activities, small shops, and restaurants and taverns, and loft-style housing should be explored.

### Opportunities for Enhancement along the River





The feasibility of a Shenango River Water Trail should be determined. Connections should be provided from the Shenango River Water Trail to the Shenango River Rail Trail and other elements of the County greenway and trail systems.

The North American Water Trails Organization defines a water trail as a *recreational waterway containing guided access points and day use and/or camping sites for the boating public*. A water trail provides launch ramps, parking areas, directional signage, and maps. A water trail map marks known hazards such as dams and indicates the level of difficulty (classes of rapids), as well as the location of natural, scenic and historical points of interest along a waterway.

The purpose of a River Water Trail project is to provide recreational boaters with a cohesive system of signage, river maps, a trail guide, and an interactive website. These tools will enable boaters to plan and enjoy safe, environmentally responsible river trips that eliminate or minimize impacts on the river's ecosystem and surrounding landscapes.

**Table 10**

**Benefits of Water Trails**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Water Trail promotes low-impact use of the rivers. A “leave no trace behind” ethic will reduce the potential for negative impacts to water quality and wildlife habitat.</li><li>• A strong emphasis on volunteer participation will reduce project costs, provide ongoing support and maintenance for the Water Trails, and encourage resource awareness and stewardship.</li><li>• The Water Trail Guide will emphasize respect for private property rights and encourage care and responsible use of public lands and facilities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The availability of accurate river maps and clearly marked day use and/or camp sites will reduce the potential for recreational user conflicts and trespassing on private land.</li><li>• Connecting people to the river for responsible recreational pursuits will contribute significantly to the local and regional ecotourism industry.</li><li>• The Water Trail Guide and interactive website will include information on the river’s natural and human history, low-impact camping guidelines, campgrounds, outfitters, bed &amp; breakfasts and other information.</li></ul>
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River-oriented businesses, landings, and support facilities would have to be developed within communities along the Water Trail. Landings should be tied to other destinations and attractions, serving to further economic development.

Specific economic development projects supported include:

- Utilize low interest Revolving Loan Funds for economic development and job creation.
- Promote infill in older commercial areas and active reuse of vacant buildings. In zoning ordinances, build in flexibility for use of vacant non-conforming commercial structures.
- Determining the viability of a revolving loan fund for starting micro-enterprises and addressing barriers to development of start-up businesses.
- Enhancing unattractive commercial properties along the Route 18 Corridor for reuse.
- Identifying regional assets to travelers on I-80 and Route 60.
- Determining whether the concept of a themed downtown should be used to market West Middlesex.
- Identifying sources of gap financing to make investment projects feasible.
- Develop Shenango Business Park.
- Promote economic development/redevelopment of the Route 18 corridor.
- Facilitate development of land east and north of Jones Way.
- Increase visibility and usability of the Shenango River.
- Preserve agricultural component of economy.
- Enhance the Route 318 corridor.
- Enhance the Route 18 corridor.
- Complete the Route 60 - Route 318 interchange.
- Expand public sanitary sewer and water service to economic growth areas as necessary.
- Expand public water service in the Jones Way area.

- Enhance the Shenango River Corridor.
- Implement the Shenango River Rail Trail and Shenango River Water Trail.
- Enhance the West Middlesex Town Center.

Encourage mixed use (apartments and offices on upper floors) and provide façade guidelines to minimize the negative impacts of poor design/construction of existing buildings.

Avoid suburban development along the main street like the doctor office set back with parking lot in front.

Provide better access to the River.

Provide a river park on the town side.

Construct a pedestrian bridge to get trail users across the River into town center.

Develop River/tourist-oriented businesses facing the River, across from the boat launch, creating a more welcoming environment.

- Develop Executive Court business park.
- Develop remaining potential at Route 18 and Route 318 interchanges with Route 60.
- List regional attractions at the intersection of Route 18 and 318.
- Develop a planned business park in the Economic Development Corridor.

**Actions:**

- A. Zone areas appropriate for economic development pursuant to the Future Land Use Plan designations. Develop environmental performance standards. Prepare Specific Plans where appropriate, as per Section 1106 of the Municipalities Planning Code.

Emphasize light industrial, health care, research and development, high technology, office and service development to supplement the existing commercial and industrial development in the Region.

Require new development to be designed and constructed to meet environmental performance standards, eliminate adverse impacts on adjacent land uses, and minimize highway access safety hazards.

- B. Maintain a dialog with businesses in the community to determine their needs and concerns in order to retain existing businesses, facilitate expansion, and ensure their experience in the Region is positive.
- C. Work with telecommunications companies to ensure that adequate telecommunications facilities, including fiber optics, are available to businesses in the Region.
- D. Strengthen relationships with and work with the local Industrial Development Authorities and the Penn Northwest Development Corporation to secure potential funding for land purchase and infrastructure improvements to support economic development in the Region and create an inventory of shovel-ready sites.
- E. Refine zoning policies for home employment and no-impact home-based businesses.
- F. Inform economic development agencies of areas and buildings zoned and available for commercial and industrial development in the Region.
- G. Investigate programs providing financial incentives for the re-use of old buildings and tax lien forgiveness to re-use buildings, and preserve historic sites. Work with PADCED.
- H. In recognition of the need to foster the economic viability of the Region, enhance the highway, rail, and air transportation systems within the Region pursuant to the transportation action items.
- I. Support the necessary legislation to authorize impact fees in addition to those which can now be charged. Work to establish consistent policies on use of impact fees within the Region.
- J. Streamline processes for economic development that will enhance the economy and quality of life of the Region.
- K. Review opportunities created with the recent passage of Pennsylvania's Economic Stimulus Package, including such programs as Business in Our Sites and Tax Increment Financing Guarantee Program.

- L. Continue to pursue funding assistance relative to the attraction and retention of businesses, and have coordinated regional economic development marketing.
- M. Encourage mixed use in the West Middlesex Town Center.
- N. Provide appropriate zoning at appropriate locations to attract Mercer County target industries of education and health services; professional and business services; information; and manufacturing.
- O. Take advantage of the Keystone Innovation Zone program with Penn State Shenango and other institutions of higher learning to attract economic development.
- P. Determine what kinds of events will attract people to the Region and plan for those events.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

The Pennsylvania Economic Stimulus Package has been recently passed and includes the following economic development programs and potential funding sources for the Region:

- Business in Our Sites will offer flexible loans and grants for local municipalities and their economic development partners to create future business growth and attract opportunities through the acquisition and preparation of key sites for development. The program would provide communities with grants and loans of up to \$250,000 to pay for the reclamation of industrial land.
- Building PA will provide funding for the development of real estate assets in the Commonwealth. Funds will be loaned to private investors and foundations who want to match funds to facilitate projects within the Commonwealth.
- New PA Venture Guarantee Program will allow the Commonwealth to more actively work with the investment community by providing guarantees to venture capital companies interested in Pennsylvania businesses. These guarantees will provide increased capital for Pennsylvania businesses to grow and create jobs.
- New PA Venture Capital Investment Program will provide capital to venture capital companies focused on Pennsylvania that agree to match those funds and invest in Pennsylvania businesses.
- First Industries Fund. First Industries will provide grants, low-interest loan financing, and loan guarantees for agriculture and tourism.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage Loan Program will provide guarantees for bank loans to second-stage manufacturers and technology companies for working capital and other financing needs. Targeted toward manufacturing, advanced technology, and biotechnology, these funds will support growth in these sectors.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Guarantee Program. Through TIF, communities can borrow funds for projects that will develop blighted areas and then repay those borrowed monies through the new tax revenues that will be generated as a result of the development. A combination of technical assistance and loan guarantee assistance will encourage small communities to use this program.
- Infrastructure & Facilities Improvement Program is a multi-year grant program that will provide grants to certain issuers of debt to assist with the payment of debt service.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) is the primary contact for these programs.

### **Specific Plans**

The Municipalities Planning Code enables municipalities that have participated in a multi-municipal plan to adopt specific plans. As part of the intergovernmental cooperative agreements, municipalities can choose to adopt specific plans individually or jointly. The MPC defines a specific plan as:

“a detailed plan for non-residential development of an area covered by a municipal or multi-municipal comprehensive plan, which when approved and adopted by the participating municipalities through ordinances and agreements, supersedes all other applications.”

A specific plan is a tool that can be used by municipal governments for the systematic implementation of a comprehensive plan. It establishes a link between the policies of the comprehensive plan and development proposals in a specifically defined area. Provisions of a specific plan shall include type, location and intensity of land uses, the design capability of infrastructure, the standards for preservation of natural resources, regulation of land development, and financing of capital improvements. A specific plan can be used to define the exact location most appropriate for economic development activities, particularly the non-residential areas found on the Future Land Use Map, and facilitate them through an ordinance that would supersede all other ordinances.

Specific plans do not create additional planning or permitting requirements. All data collection involved in creating a specific plan is information required as a prerequisite for

approval and recording of a final subdivision or land development plan. The specific plan facilitates the planning and permitting, without having to wait for a development application. When an appropriate development proposal occurs, permitting will move directly to the final plan, because all requirements for a preliminary plan (such as sewer, stormwater, sediment and erosion, highway occupancy) will have already been met.

### **“Main Street” Initiatives**

The key elements of programs to strengthen centers, such as Main Street Programs, are outlined below. Applicable in the West Middlesex Town Center, these elements could also be used in the Route 18 corridor in the Region.

- **Improving the image by enhancing physical appearance, as appropriate**

This includes enhancing the appearance of buildings, street lights, window displays, parking areas, signs, sidewalks, benches, landscaping, trash receptacles, utility poles and lines, and graphics. Design in the area should recognize existing desirable physical elements, be compatible with the area's character, and be unified.

- **Securing consensus and cooperation among the groups that are involved in economic development**

Parties which should be involved include municipal officials, business people, bankers, real estate agents, customers, the media, residents, and civic groups.

- **Promoting the Center or Corridor**

The unique characteristics should be promoted to customers, investors, existing businesses, and potential new businesses. A positive image can be fostered through appropriate special events, and other programs. A brochure promoting businesses can be prepared.

- **Strengthening the Economy of the Centers and Corridors**

If the economy is strong, it is possible to maintain and upgrade the buildings in the existing communities. Existing businesses should be helped to expand; new businesses should be recruited; and increased use of any underutilized buildings should be promoted.

- **Affecting Attitudes Towards the Centers and Corridors**

Consumers and investors have more positive attitudes as they see changes taking place such as building improvement projects and new street furniture. Owners of buildings will be more likely to make improvements to their buildings.

Specific tasks to help maintain economic vitality can include:

- Helping businesses identify new sales opportunities
- Promoting the centers and corridors as cohesive shopping areas to market groups
- Listing potential new businesses
- Keeping track of prospective businesses
- Improving the quality of businesses by helping them be more customer responsive and competitive
- Having coordinated business hours that meet consumer needs. Encourage businesses to work together
- Encouraging attractive window and interior merchandise displays
- Maintaining information on the centers and corridors
- Marketing and promoting businesses
- Conducting an advertising campaign
- Helping to maintain existing businesses and encouraging patronage of those businesses
- Working with financial institutions to establish loan pools
- Maintaining a good working relationship between public and private sectors
- Finding new uses for any underutilized or vacant buildings
- Recruiting businesses to complement the retail and service mix
- Identifying sources of grants for physical improvements or providing matching grants for such improvements, including building facades
- Assuring promotional activities create a consistent, positive image, consistent with community characteristics and history
- Scheduling events to bring people into the community on a regular basis
- Understanding the area's history
- Enhancing gateways to the centers or corridor
- Facilitating wayfinding
- Managing parking spaces
- Working with developers to assure attractive, well-planned development
- Enhancing alternatives to auto traffic, including enhanced transit service and enhanced transit hubs with shelters, parking areas, and pedestrian walkways
- Landscaping standards
- Signage standards
- Enhancing the pedestrian system and coordinating with open space, recreation, greenway planning, and River Trail planning
- Managing road corridors
- Providing connections to, and information at, river landings

- Protecting natural resources
- Encouraging appropriate mixed use
- Incorporating open space, natural features and public people-oriented spaces so they are visible and accessible in order to humanize areas and providing reminders of why the area has attracted so many residents and visitors
- Addressing parking needs
- Recognizing the assets and the defining characteristics. Enhance and build upon those identified features. Examples are building stock, architectural traditions, variety of available services, historic resources, walkability, and traditional development patterns.

## **Chapter 13**

# **Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Plan**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires that municipal Comprehensive Plans address resource preservation, specifically identifying natural, cultural, and historic resources. The natural resources noted by the MPC are wetlands and other aquifer recharge zones, woodlands, steep slope areas, prime agricultural land, floodplains, and “unique natural areas.” The MPC adds that municipalities are not limited by this list, but may provide for the protection of other resources of local importance.

### **Historic Resources**

The Region’s history is reflected in its architecture, people, and character. Historic resources connect us to the past, emphasize our sense of community, and often provide aesthetic value. In addition, historic resources can provide tourism benefits which often lead to economic development opportunities. Planning for the protection of historic resources is especially important because historical resources are not renewable.

Appendix II includes a detailed discussion of historic preservation programs at the state and federal level.

### **Historic Districts**

Local historic districts are areas in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review. Historic district ordinances are local laws adopted by communities using powers granted by the state. Historic districts consist of the Region's significant historic and architectural resources. Inclusion in a historic district signifies that a property contributes to a group of structures that is worth protecting because of its historic importance or architectural quality.

Potential areas where official ‘Historic District’ status can be pursued include the following:

- Main Street in West Middlesex
- West Middlesex Town Center

## **National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture.

There are no sites in the Region listed on the National Register.

No sites are currently listed as eligible for the National Register:

The West Middlesex Area Historical Society should investigate whether there are unlisted sites in the Region which are eligible and for which listing should be pursued.

## **Historic Preservation**

**Goal:** Protect and encourage active use of historic sites.

### **Objectives:**

- Support conservation easements and other protection methods of historic sites.
- Encourage innovative development approaches that integrate historic resources into new site and building design.
- Encourage innovative approaches to adaptive reuse and building rehabilitation/restoration.
- Promote cultural sites and events to residents and visitors.
- Integrate historical interpretation efforts with the recreation network.
- Inventory historic sites and districts in the Region, such as one-room schools at Route 318 and Mitchell Road, at Mitchell and Buckwalter Roads, and at Bethel-New Wilmington Road.

## **Historic and Cultural Resource Actions:**

- A. If and when historical resources are identified, update zoning ordinances as necessary to protect historic resources and community character. Options include:
1. Adopt Historic Resource Overlay Zoning.
    - a. Create historical commissions and/or committees where they do not exist or a joint historical commission
    - b. Identify historic resources
    - c. Require developers to analyze:
      - Nature of historic resources on and near property
      - Impact of proposals on historic resources, and
      - Mitigation measures
    - d. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings
    - e. Establish use, coverage, density, intensity, and yard bonuses for architectural treatments, building design, amenities, and open spaces/buffers compatible with existing resources, appropriate reuse of existing resources and donation of façade easements
    - f. Encourage architecture, materials, and development patterns characteristic to the area
  2. Adopt Demolition by Neglect Provisions:
    - a. Require property owners to protect and maintain historic properties to avoid demolition by vandalism or the elements by requiring unoccupied structures to be sealed or secured by fencing.
  3. Identify provisions to protect the character of neighborhoods, and have streets, buildings, and public spaces integrated to create a sense of place with pedestrian scale. Consideration can be given to adopting architectural design guidelines as standards or promoting them through incentives.
- B. Appoint a regional historical commission which is actively involved in historic preservation. The commission would be instrumental in administration of any historic resource overlay zoning that is adopted. The commission responsibilities would be to:

1. Identify, evaluate, mark and foster awareness of historic resources. Determine whether additional resources are eligible for National Register listing and support National Register listing.
  2. Investigate participation in the Certified Local Government Program
  3. Encourage retention, restoration, enhancement and appropriate adaptive re-use of historic resources and discourage removal of historic structures
  4. Develop programs, events and interpretive signage and exhibits that emphasize the history of the Region
  5. Evaluate the potential for historic districts and support their creation if warranted. If created, support the adoption of voluntary or mandatory Design Guidelines and Sign Controls for the Historic District.
- C. Support the activities of individuals and groups that identify, document, evaluate, and protect historical resources and increase public awareness of the area's history and historic resources, such as the West Middlesex Area Historical Society.

### **West Middlesex Area Historical Society**

The West Middlesex Area Historical Society was founded for the following purposes:

1. To preserve the history of the community by securing properties that have structural and/or historical significance in the community.
2. To restore landmark properties for the educational benefit of the community.
3. To conduct research to uncover historical events, people and/or property that affords a valuable educational and historical asset to the community.
4. To preserve the "Quaint" nature of old-fashioned small town living.
5. To provide educational resources to the community relevant to the area during past decades.
6. To secure grants for restoration of the community based on historical benefit and preservation.

Long term plans include obtaining a small centrally located space for meetings that will function as an office and educational and informational center for the community. The center or building shall be supported by donations and/or grants and fund raising events.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES PLAN**

Natural resources contribute to the economic activity, environmental health, and quality of life of a community. Parks, open space, woodlands, steep slopes, streams, wetlands, and farmlands are all resources that are aesthetically pleasing, and provide economic as well as environmental benefits. One example of this is the way that floodplains and wetlands act as natural storage basins in periods of high water and help to improve water quality by filtering out sediment and pollutants.

Mercer County has identified the Shenango River Oxbow biological diversity area as a County significant natural area along the Shenango River in the Township, as shown on Figure 13-1, the Land Resources Map. The wetland in the floodplain of the Shenango River has a county significant natural community. Figures 13-2 and 13-3 show water resources and composite natural features.

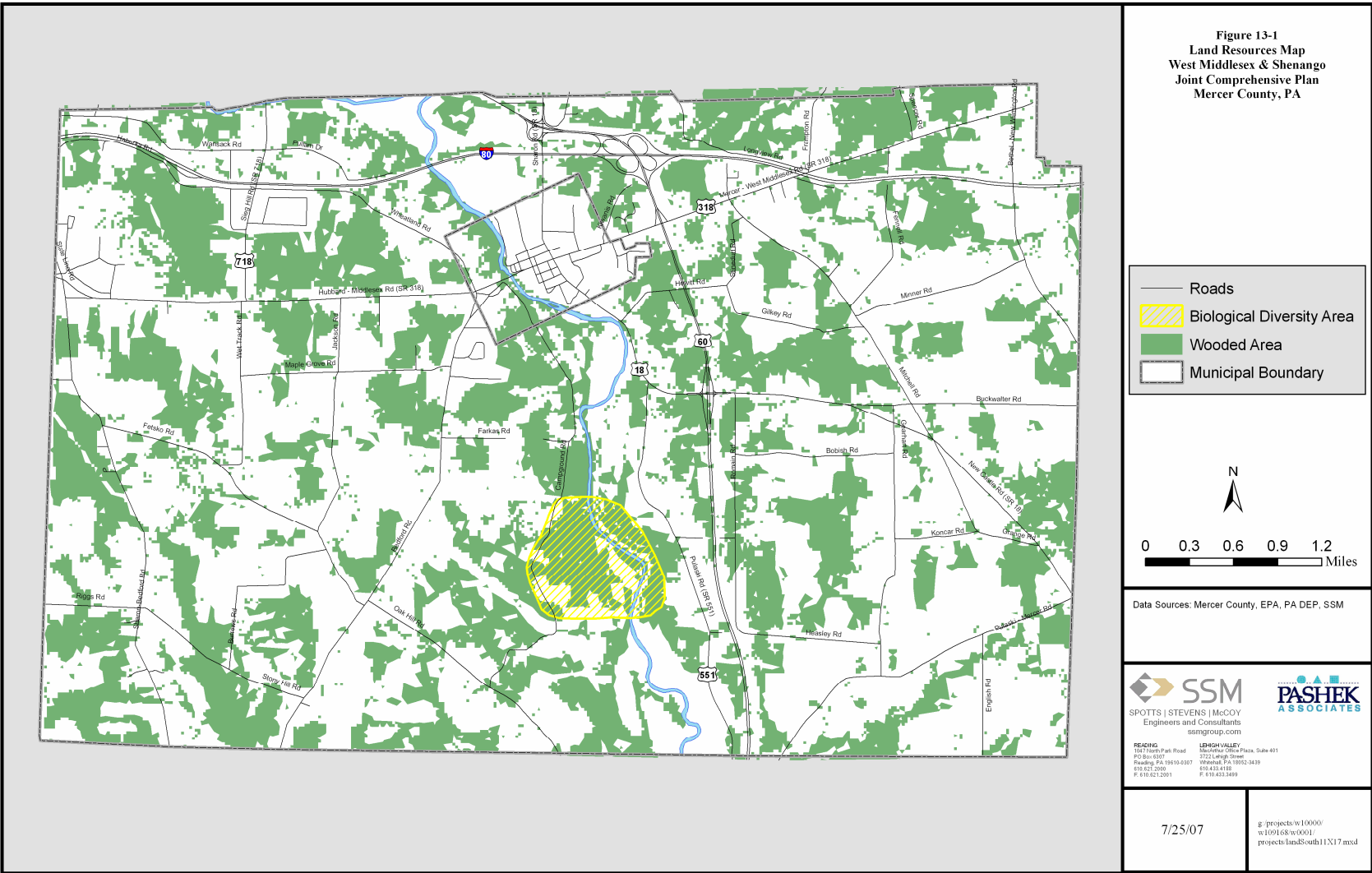
### **Natural Resources**

**Goal:** Retain natural landscape systems and sustain or improve the quality of natural environmental features.

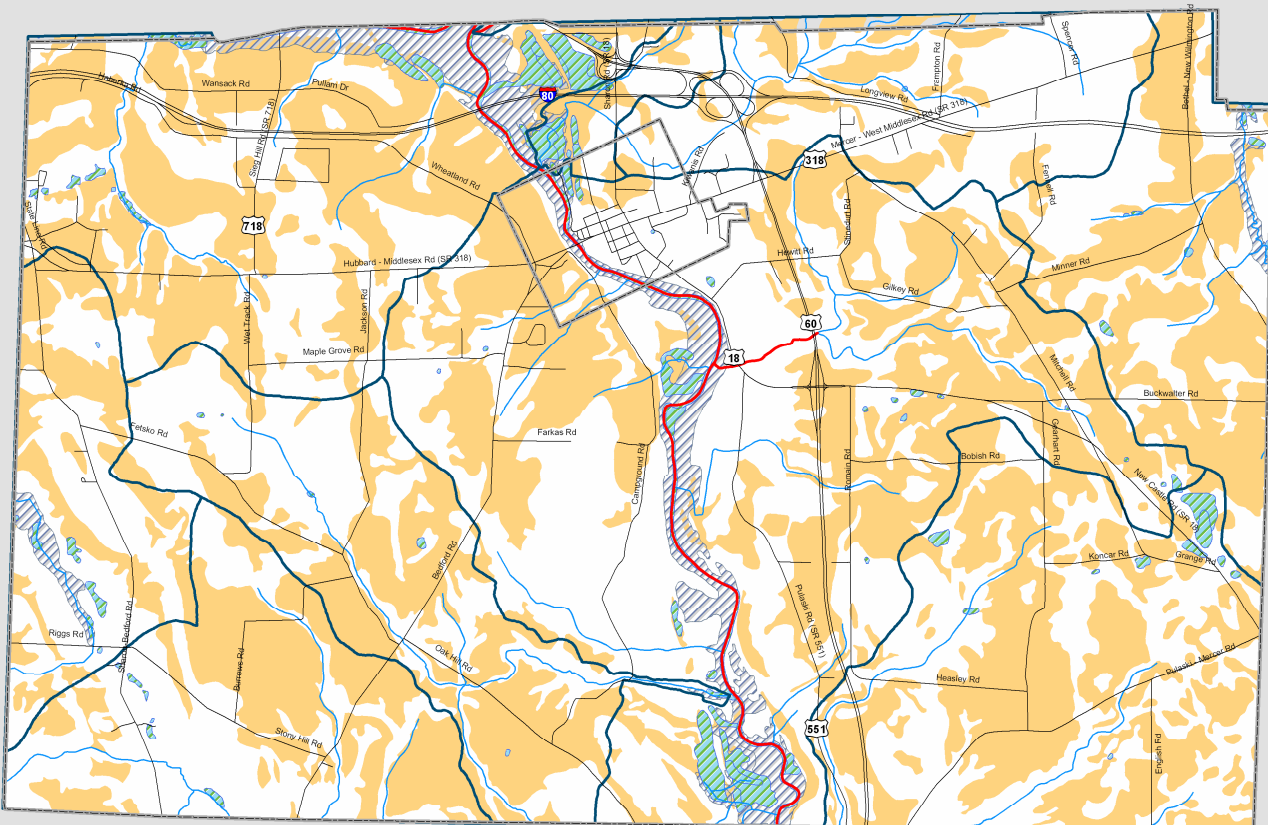
#### **Objectives:**

- Address opportunities to restore watersheds of impaired streams in order to restore water quality.
- Foster sound growth and development that respects open space and integrates recreational amenities.
- Coordinate land use planning with resource knowledge and management.
- Strengthen municipal regulations to minimize the impact of development on sensitive environmental features and their functions. Promote environmental performance and protection standards in municipal ordinances.
- Develop and maintain a detailed natural resource inventory and assemble essential data to support local regulations.
- Promote connectedness of landscape features and the Region's green infrastructure.
- Promote forest stewardship by landowners and residents for recreation, wildlife habitat, and water quality protection.

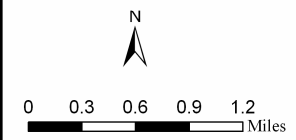
**Figure 13-1  
Land Resources Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



**Figure 13-2  
Water Resources Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



- Impaired Streams
- Streams
- Roads
- Watersheds
- National Wetlands Inventory
- 100 Year Floodplains
- Hydic Soils
- Municipal Boundary

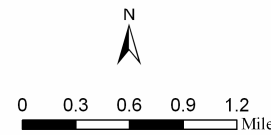
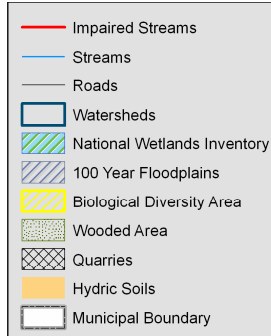
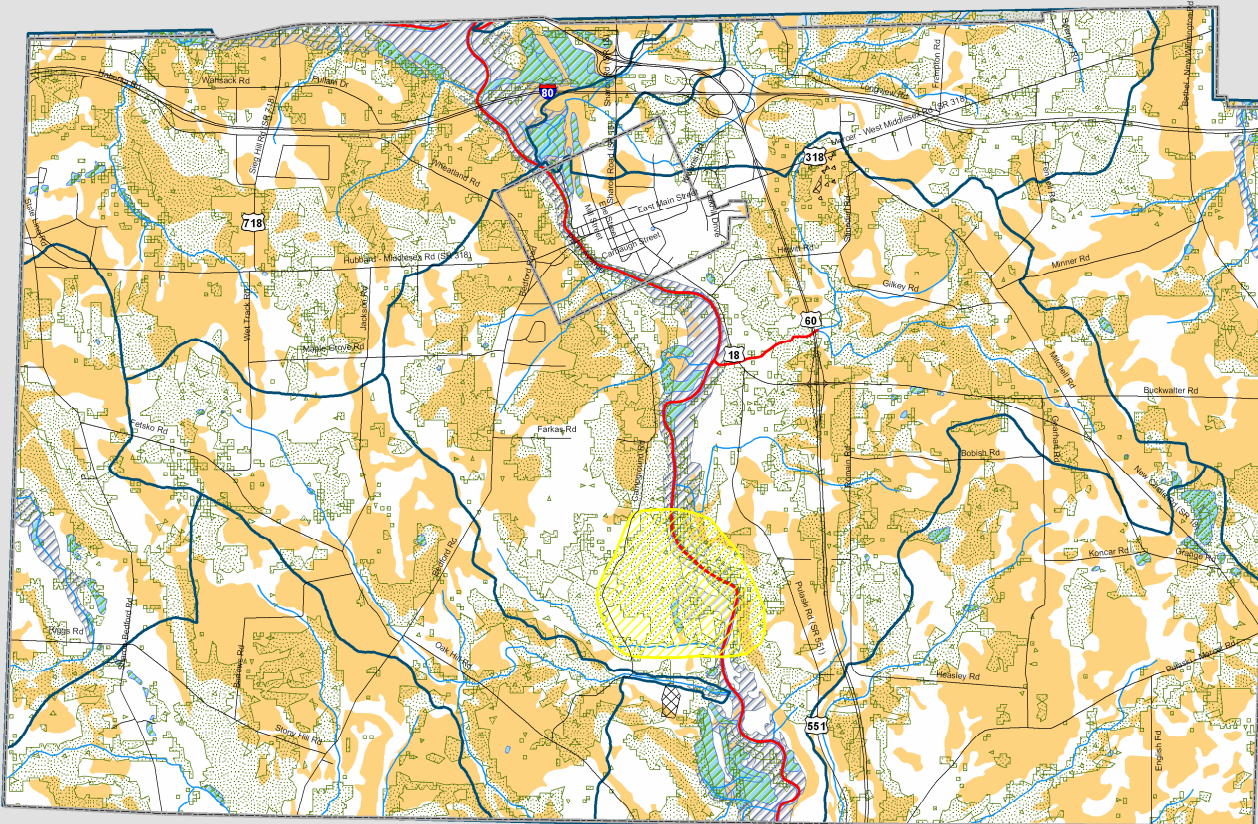


Data Sources: Mercer County, EPA, PA DEP, SSM

 <p><b>SSM</b> SPOTTS   STEVENS   McCOY Engineers and Consultants ssmgroup.com</p>	 <p><b>PASHEK ASSOCIATES</b></p>
<p><b>HEADQUARTERS</b> 107 South Park Road PO Box 6007 Shenandoah, PA 16150-0007 610.831.2000 F: 610.821.2001</p>	<p><b>LEHIGH VALLEY</b> Executive Office Plaza, Suite 401 3722 Lehigh Street Shenandoah, PA 16150-3439 610.831.4118 F: 610.433.3449</p>

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Figure 13-3  
 Composite Natural Features Map  
 West Middlesex & Shenango  
 Joint Comprehensive Plan  
 Mercer County, PA



Data Sources: Mercer County, EPA, PA DEP, SSM



<b>READING</b> 1017 Township Pike Road P.O. Box 4307 Reading, PA 19615-0307 610.621.2000 F: 610.621.2301	<b>LD-HIGH VALLEY</b> Mulberry Office Plaza, Suite 401 3722 Lehigh Street Whitehall, PA 18152-3439 610.433.4100 F: 610.433.3409
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- Utilize existing organizations to promote the use of sustainable forestry practices to woodland owners.
- Promote the accessibility and marketability of local agricultural products through farmers' markets, trade shows, and festivals.
- Protect the most sensitive natural resources.
- Designate and promote greenways as corridors for resource stewardship, recreation, and cultural interpretation.
- Support the efforts of the Shenango River Watchers and Shenango Conservancy to protect natural resources.

### **Environmental Education**

**Goal:** Facilitate implementation of this Comprehensive Plan through educational outreach within the Region.

### **Objectives**

- Integrate environmental education and historical interpretation efforts with the recreational network.
- Promote a thorough understanding of the functions and benefits of open space, greenways, outdoor recreation, and community development among residents.
- Assist and educate landowners in modifying management techniques within watersheds of impaired streams.
- Educate the public about land use issues within the Region and their implications for the future.
- Educate landowners, residents and prospective residents about the value of the agricultural industries.
- Encourage stewardship of agricultural land.
- Support demonstration of the value of the natural environment to landowners, residents, and visitors.

- Support integration of environmental education efforts with nature-based recreation sites.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF NATURAL FEATURES

The importance of protecting these natural features is summarized below:

<p><b>Floodplains</b></p>	<p>Areas adjacent to a watercourse (stream/river) temporarily covered by water when the waterway exceeds its bankfull stage (level where water begins to flow over the floodplain) The 100-year floodplain has been determined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as to where water would be during the 100-year flood event. This flood event has a 1% chance of occurring every year, and is not a flood that ‘occurs every 100 years’ as commonly believed.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Prohibiting and limiting development within the floodplain provides for protection of people and property from flood damage and minimizes downstream flood heights.</p> <p>Retention of natural stream/river floodplain corridors increases groundwater recharge and decreases stormwater runoff.</p> <p>Vegetated riparian corridors serve as buffers to sustain and improve water quality via nutrient removal and erosion and sedimentation control.</p> <p>Floodplain wildlife and plant habitats often support wetlands.</p> <p>Floodplain habitats can provide important open space and recreation areas.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Residential development within the floodplain endangers both people and property in the event of a flood.</p> <p>Building, structures and filling in the floodplain increase downstream flood elevations.</p> <p>Compaction of soils and increasing impervious surfaces along a floodway reduces infiltration and increases the rate of runoff, resulting in increased flooding downstream and higher flow velocities that cause increased flood damage.</p> <p>Removal of the natural vegetated riparian buffer along streams and rivers increases potential for water contamination from surface runoff and erosion.</p> <p>Erosion and storm runoff from development can deteriorate stream banks and cause sedimentation of waterways. Sedimentation of streambeds decreases habitat for aquatic life and navigable waterways.</p> <p>Development hinders aesthetic and recreational value of the waterway.</p>	

**Protection Strategies:**

Strengthen municipal floodplain ordinance provisions to prohibit buildings, structures and large amounts of impervious surfaces within the 100-year floodplain to prevent damage to life and property.

Limit impervious surfaces in developments adjacent to floodways through conservation zoning.

Prohibit mobile home developments from floodplain areas.

Monitor current developments for poor management practices and offer planning assistance.

Purchase conservation easements along streams to protect the floodplains and water quality.

Cooperate with watershed associations and conservancies to promote education and outreach and conduct watershed studies.

<b>Type of Natural Feature</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Potential Problems If Not Protected</b>	<b>Strategies For Protection</b>
Prime Agricultural Soils	For crop farming, Class I are the best soils. Class II are very good. Class III are good, while Class IV are fair. Classes V through VIII can be unsuitable for crop farming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent loss of land for raising food.</li> <li>• Loss of open space.</li> <li>• Loss of economic activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the continuation of farming through zoning incentives and disincentives.</li> <li>• Encourage farmers in the Township to establish “Agricultural Security Areas,” which provide protection against nuisance complaints and make them eligible for County purchase of development rights.</li> <li>• Seek to steer residential development away from clearly agricultural areas to avoid nuisance complaints against farmers.</li> </ul>

<b>Forests</b>	A forest is an area populated by trees and other wooded plants.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Large contiguous forested tracts play an important role in the protection of water quality and water resources.</p> <p>Forest canopy along stream and river corridors provides shade to minimize the warming of stream temperatures and reduce impacts to fish and other aquatic species.</p> <p>Forested riparian corridors help sustain stream and lake water quality by acting as nutrient filters and by stabilizing soil against erosion.</p> <p>Forested lands are part of the rural character and scenic relief of Shenango Township.</p> <p>Large forested tracts with proper forest management and good timber operations support the local forest products industry.</p> <p>Undeveloped, forested landscapes allow for relatively high rates of infiltration or groundwater recharge and decrease stormwater runoff.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Development of forested lands can fragment habitat for plant and animal species.</p> <p>Removal of forested riparian corridors has implications for water quality and clarity.</p> <p>Loss of these resources could have implications for quality of life.</p> <p>Poor forest management and timber harvest operations can have lasting impacts on long range sustainability.</p> <p>Improper development and management of forest resources can allow invasive species to proliferate.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Creation of Forest Conservation districts in municipal zoning regulations, guiding the type of development occurring in these forested areas.</p> <p>Ordinance provisions and standards which require construction standards, protection of trees during development, landscaping standards which require native species establishment, limit clearing until development plan approval, erosion/sedimentation plans, stormwater management, retention of forested canopy along waterway corridors, and best management practices for forest timber operations.</p> <p>Involving DCNR Bureau of Forestry prior to development to assess land and determine best management of resources during development and/or timbering.</p> <p>Create a municipal Best Management Practices guide for development along steep slopes, ridgelines and stream/river corridors.</p> <p>Provide for maximum lot coverage requirements and minimum open space areas in residential subdivisions.</p>		

<b>Groundwater</b>	The broadest definition for groundwater would be all water that resides below the surface. This water flows from subsurface into our streams, springs, and waterbodies, as well as flows through aquifers into wells.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Groundwater is a source of potable water supply.</p> <p>Groundwater is integrally connected to surface water providing the “base flow” for streams. This base flow is extremely important to the regular stream flows and aquatic communities within them most particularly during drought periods.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Maintenance of both quality and quantity of groundwater reserves sufficient for providing potable water supplies for the growing population will require proper management as development occurs.</p> <p>Increased impervious surfaces affect the ‘recharge’ zone for groundwater supplies increasing the potential groundwater may become contaminated.</p> <p>Potential underground and surface water sources of contamination can have a direct impact on groundwater quality.</p> <p>Increased withdrawals from groundwater aquifers can affect existing supplies and stress future provision of adequate supplies.</p> <p>Improper siting and construction of wells during development can impact potential for groundwater contamination.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Identify key groundwater recharge areas and create protection zones for these critical areas. Create wellhead protection districts to protect recharge zones from harmful development or land-use.</p> <p>Development of programs which seek to prevent groundwater contamination before it occurs. Provide ordinance standards for water well construction including setbacks from on-lot sewage systems, stormwater treatment and infiltration and open space conservation standards. Require wetland delineations and consider buffers for wetlands or other identified primary groundwater recharge zones.</p> <p>Establish a groundwater monitoring program to observe any changes in aquifers levels and quality.</p> <p>Develop a public education and outreach program which highlights groundwater conservation, identification of potential sources of contamination, proper sewage system management and other areas.</p>		

<b>Hydric Soils</b>	These are soils that are wet frequently enough to produce anaerobic (without oxygen) conditions and support unique habitats and influence the biology of the soil. Hydric soils may be an indication of the presence of a wetland.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Hydric soils provide natural groundwater recharge areas which can reduce flooding and manage stormwater runoff.</p> <p>The biologic organisms in hydric soils help to filter contaminants from water.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Hydric soils are associated with seasonally high water tables and may cause flooding in developed areas.</p> <p>These soils are unsuitable for development and on-lot sewage disposal.</p> <p>Hydric soils provide poor foundation stability if built upon.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Provide ordinance standards requiring wetland delineations by qualified professionals.</p> <p>Consider buffers for wetlands.</p>		

<b>Steep Slopes</b>	Steep Slopes of 15-25% have 15-25 feet of vertical change in elevation over 100 feet of horizontal distance. Very steep slopes of greater than 25% have a vertical change greater than 25 feet over 100 feet of horizontal distance.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Preserving natural vegetation on steep slopes not only protects the natural habitat along the slope but also helps protect adjacent areas from stormwater runoff related damage.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>These areas are prone to erosion if disturbed by development or timbering practices. In addition, changes in vegetation on steep slopes will affect the concentration time of stormwater runoff, potentially increasing flood, and storm damage to developments downslope.</p> <p>Once disturbed these areas are difficult to mitigate.</p> <p>These slopes present increased costs in development engineering and severe limitations with on-site sewage disposal and general road maintenance.</p> <p>Roadways and drives along steep slopes present many driving hazards, especially during the winter months.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Link zoning standards to protecting land values and local economy.</p> <p>Limit development on slopes greater than 25%.</p> <p>Require detailed engineering plans for any developments proposed on steep slopes.</p> <p>Require stormwater managements for individual building lots.</p> <p>Require deduction of steep slopes from minimum lot size.</p> <p>Make use of conservation subdivision design to focus development away from steep slopes.</p>		

<b>Wetlands</b>	Wetlands are areas where the soil is generally saturated with water for part or most of the year; and has had a significant impact on soil development and the types of plant and animal communities living within the area, which are specially adapted to residing in the moist habitat.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Wetlands protect water quality by acting as natural pollutant filters removing contaminants which may be conveyed into groundwater or other surface water if not filtered by the wetlands.</p> <p>Wetlands are important groundwater recharge areas.</p> <p>Wetland areas reduce potential flooding by detaining and infiltrating stormwater.</p> <p>Many unique species of plants and animals are only capable of survival in wetland habitats.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Potential encroachment into, filling in or draining of wetlands during development inhibits the continued important values and functions of wetlands.</p> <p>Disturbance of wetlands and surrounding areas by development increases the potential for introduction of non-native invasive plant species that crowd out beneficial native wetland plants.</p> <p>Development adjacent to wetlands can release pollutants that impact the water quality and the groundwater recharge capacity of wetlands.</p> <p>Groundwater withdrawals can impact water levels that would otherwise sustain wetlands, particularly during dry periods</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Create buffer areas adjacent to wetland areas to supplement state and federal regulations.</p> <p>Provide ordinance standards requiring wetland delineations by qualified professionals before development.</p> <p>Limit the amount of impervious surface area permitted in developments adjacent to wetland areas.</p> <p>Inventory the plant and animal species in wetland habitats to monitor changes caused by development.</p>		

<b>Watercourses</b>	Watercourses encompass bodies of water on the move, most commonly streams and rivers. These watercourses serve as habitat for aquatic plants and animals. In addition, the Shenango River can be important for the tourism and recreation economy.	
<p><b>Protection Importance:</b></p> <p>Protection of surface water quality directly protects groundwater water quality.</p> <p>Streams, rivers, lakes and other water bodies provide critical aquatic species breeding areas and habitat.</p> <p>Watercourses serve as important wildlife corridor connections and plant, bird and wildlife habitats.</p>	<p><b>Development Implications:</b></p> <p>Removal of the natural vegetated riparian buffer along streams and rivers increases potential for water contamination from surface runoff and erosion.</p> <p>Erosion and storm runoff from development can deteriorate stream banks and cause sedimentation of waterways. Sedimentation of streambeds decreases habitat for aquatic life.</p> <p>Development can impact the aesthetic and recreational value of the waterways.</p>	
<p><b>Protection Strategies:</b></p> <p>Develop programs and standards to retain riparian forest buffers along high quality and exceptional value watercourses.</p> <p>To lessen the impact on scenic and environmental value, limit the types and density of development along streams and rivers.</p> <p>Encourage Conservation Subdivision Design for developments along rivers and streams.</p>		

### Net Out Provisions

A method to encourage environmentally sensitive developments that preserve open space by partially subtracting constrained land from the gross acreage of a tract. The Regions can develop multipliers to net out the sensitive lands. Once this constrained land is 'netted out' of the gross acreage, the remaining acreage is called the adjusted tract area. Examples of constrained land include floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes.

The following is an example of potential net out multipliers to use when determining the amount of constrained land on a parcel:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Growing Greener- Natural Lands Trust, Media, PA

<u>Constrained land</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>
Public Streets	1.0
Utility right-of-way	1.0
Floodways in 100 year floodplain	1.0
Floodplain (flood fringe)	0.5
Wetlands and poorly drained soils	0.95
Steep slopes greater than 80%	0.8
Moderate slopes (15%-25%)	0.25
Rock outcrops	0.9

If a 50 gross acre parcel contains 8.96 acres of constrained land after multiplier is factored in, the 'net' available land for development is 41.04 acres (see example below).

<u>Constraint</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Multiplier</u>	<u>Constrained Land</u>
Public Street	2.0	1.0	2.0
Utility right-of-way	1.0	1.0	1.0
Floodways	1.25	1.0	1.25
Flood fringe (floodplains not in floodway)	2.75	0.5	1.37
Wetlands and poorly drained soils	1.33	0.95	1.26
Rock outcrops	0.25	0.9	0.22
Steep slopes greater than 25%	1.4	0.8	1.12
Moderate slopes (15%-25%)	2.96	0.25	0.74
<b>TOTAL CONSTRAINED LAND</b>			<b>8.96 Acres</b>

<b>TOTAL GROSS TRACT AREA</b>	50 Acres
<b>CONSTRAINED LAND</b>	-8.96 Acres
<b>TOTAL ADJUSTED TRACT AREA</b>	41.04 Acres

The net out multipliers used above are not set values, and should be adjusted based on individual Township and Borough priorities

### **Natural Resources Actions:**

- A. Update zoning ordinances as necessary, and consider adopting official maps to reflect the resource protection Goal and Objectives of this Plan and to be consistent with the Future Land Use Map (Figure 8-1). The resource protection provisions of municipal zoning ordinances vary, and the approach taken by each municipality will vary. Options include:

1. Adopt Natural Resource Protection Standards and/or Net-Out Provisions for the following resources:
  - a. Floodplains
  - b. Wetlands
  - c. Wetland Margins (buffers)
  - d. Watercourses
  - e. Water bodies
  - f. Greater than 25% slope
  - g. 15-25% slope
2. Adopt Steep Slope Protection Provisions:
  - a. Control and limit development on steep slopes
    - Require larger lot sizes and impose stricter impervious restrictions for steep slopes of 15 to 25%
    - Prohibit or severely restrict development on slopes greater than 25%
3. Adopt Groundwater Protection Provisions:
  - a. Protect aquifers through design standards, construction guidelines, use restrictions, impervious limits, and permit submission requirements.
4. Adopt Tree and Woodland Protection, Management and Planting Provisions:
  - a. Limit clearance for development in both subdivisions and land developments.
  - b. Require tree protection and replacement during development.
  - c. Encourage the use of native species in landscaping. Discourage invasive species.
  - d. Establish limited clearance buffer zones around the perimeter of new developments
5. Adopt provisions for Wetland, Wetland Buffer, and Hydric Soil Protection:

- a. Restrict development in wetlands.
  - b. Establish consistent wetland, wet area, and water body buffer (margin) requirements, such as 50 feet or 100 feet.
  - c. Require wetland delineation in hydric soil areas.
6. Adopt Floodplain Protection Provisions:
- a. Severely restrict development in floodplains to compatible open space uses.
7. Establish Stream Corridor Overlay Zoning and require Riparian Buffers:
- a. Restrict development and impervious surfaces.
  - b. Require riparian (vegetative) buffers to moderate water temperatures, protect wildlife habitats, control sedimentation, and reduce pollution.
  - c. Require greenways.
  - d. Utilize the Best Management Practices where practical, and implement Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans.
  - e. Protect the Shenango River and the Region's streams.
8. Adopt Outdoor Lighting Standards to control light pollution and protect the night sky:
- a. Establish illumination levels that are adequate but not excessive.
  - b. Require impacts on surrounding streets and properties to be mitigated by directing light down, not up or out to sides of fixtures.
  - c. Control glare.
9. Adopt Forestry Regulations:
- a. Require accepted silvicultural (forestry) practices.
  - b. Require a forestry management plan.

- c. Require stormwater and erosion and sedimentation control.
- d. Require properly constructed internal logging roads and protection of public roads.
- e. Require soil erosion protection during steep slope forestry.

B. Update subdivision and land development ordinances as necessary. Options include the following:

1. Expand plan data requirements to include a specific listing of environmental, scenic, historic, and cultural resources.
2. Require developers to identify the resources within their tracts, analyze the impacts of the development, and mitigate those impacts.
3. Require environmental assessment studies; hydrogeologic studies; scenic, historic and cultural resources impact studies; plans for preservation of environmental, historic, and cultural resources; and analysis of the site's ability to support the proposed use and intensity.
4. Require developers to identify natural, historic, scenic, architectural and cultural resources in their tracts and incorporate them into the open space system. Require management plans for open space as well as mechanisms to ensure the continuation as open space.

In review of Subdivision and Land Development Plans, requirements for setting aside open space can be used to preserve conservation corridors and provide for greenways.

Requirements for setting aside open space can also be used to protect targeted undeveloped areas and identified natural areas pursuant to municipal plans.

5. Establish development guidelines for development in groundwater recharge areas, including limits on impervious cover and limits on on-site sewage disposal.
6. Require protection of vegetation during site work.
7. Limit clearance on approved, but not developed, lots. Potential techniques include tree clearance ordinances, deed restrictions, net-out provisions, and

identification of permissible clearance areas during the development process.

- C. Create a regional Environmental Advisory Council to work with municipal officials to preserve key tracts of open space, protect environmental resources in the Region, and implement open space and recreation plans.

Act 148 of 1973 authorizes any municipality or group of municipalities to establish, by ordinance, an Environmental Advisory Council to advise the local planning commissions, park and recreation boards, and elected officials on matters dealing with the protection, conservation, management, promotion, and use of natural resources located in the municipality's territorial limits.

Act 148 of 1973 empowers Environmental Advisory Councils to:

- Identify environmental problems and recommend plans and programs to the appropriate municipal agencies for the promotion and conservation of natural resources and for the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment within its municipal boundaries;
- Keep an index of all open space, publicly and privately owned, including flood-prone areas, and other unique natural areas, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas;
- Advise the appropriate local government agencies, including, but not limited to, the planning commission and park and recreation board or, if none, the elected governing body, on the acquisition of property, both real and personal.

- D. Encourage formation of groups within the community to adopt a stream and provide monitoring and oversight along the stream corridor.

- E. Pursue joint watershed planning opportunities under the Growing Greener initiative and other programs in order to protect community water resources.

### **Green Infrastructure**

Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and managed network of parks, greenways, conservation easements, and working lands with conservation value that supports native species, maintains natural ecological processes, sustains air and water resources, and contributes to the health and quality of life of the community.

The Green Infrastructure network encompasses a wide range of landscape elements, including natural areas such as wetlands, woodlands, waterways, and wildlife habitat; public and private conservation lands such as nature preserves, wildlife corridors, greenways, and parks; and public and private working lands of conservation value such as forests and farms. It also incorporates outdoor recreation and trail networks.

### **Riparian Buffers**

A riparian buffer is an area of vegetation that is maintained along the shore of a water body to protect stream water quality and stabilize stream channels and banks. The buffers provide the following benefits:

- Filter runoff – Rain that runs off the land can be slowed and infiltrated in the buffer, settling out sediment, nutrients and pesticides (nonpoint source pollution) before they reach streams.
- Take up nutrients – Fertilizers and other pollutants that originate on the upslope land are taken up by tree roots. Nutrients are stored in leaves, limbs and roots instead of reaching the stream. Through a process called “denitrification,” bacteria in the forest floor convert nitrate to nitrogen gas, which is released into the air.
- Provide shade – The leaf canopy’s shade keeps the water cool, allowing it to retain more dissolved oxygen, and encouraging growth of plants and aquatic insects that provide food for fish.
- Contribute leaf food – Leaves that fall into the stream are trapped on fallen trees and rocks where they provide food and habitat for organisms critical to the aquatic food chain.
- Provide habitat – Streams that travel through woodlands provide more habitat for fish and wildlife. Woody debris provides cover for fish while stabilizing stream bottoms.
- Provides migration corridors for wildlife.
- Safeguard water supplies by protecting groundwater recharge areas.
- Provide flood control.
- Provide stormwater management potential – Natural vegetation provides a basis for innovative stormwater management systems. Stormwater flows from retention basins can be directed to, and allowed to flow through, buffers to reduce nutrient and sediment loads.

- Improve water and air quality.
- Stimulate economic opportunities such as providing valuable open space which may increase land values and, therefore, the tax base.
- Provide some federal tax incentives to landowners (depending on a landowner's financial situation) willing and able to place some of their lands under conservation easement.
- Reduce grounds maintenance.
- Provide recreational opportunities, and associated economic benefits for recreation-related businesses.
- Provide educational and research opportunities for local schools and colleges.
- Provide windbreaks, shade, and visual buffer.

## **PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

The information on natural and historical resources can be used in several ways. It can be used as a basis for efforts to create historic districts where concentrations of resources occur. It is also possible to have trail systems link historic sites and erect informal displays near historic sites. Efforts could be made to encourage developers to preserve historic resources and their context and mitigate impacts on historic resources. Efforts can be made to protect individual historic properties or sites. The appropriate adaptive reuse of historic structures can be encouraged where appropriate.

Natural resources can be protected through municipal ordinances, as described in the Natural Resource Plan Actions of this chapter. Efforts to preserve natural areas as green infrastructure, and greenways are important to preserving the Region's character as well as the quality of life.

## **Chapter 14**

### **Implementation/Priority Actions**

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In order for the vision for the Region to be realized and its goals and objectives accomplished, an action program must be established to implement this Plan. The chapters on Community Image and Quality of Development, Livable Communities, and Centers, Linkages, and Corridors within the Region discuss important principles, initiatives, and concepts basic to this plan. The individual plan elements discuss actions and projects to address specific topics. This chapter provides an overall view and summary of broad implementation strategies for the Region and then prioritizes actions which are necessary for the implementation of this plan. Sources of funding to implement the plan are also discussed.

#### **Major Comprehensive Plan Principles**

- Encourage Quality Development to Enhance Community Image
- Strengthen the Town Center of West Middlesex
- Allow Mixed Use in Appropriate Locations
- Provide Corridor Overlay Zoning in the Route 18 and Route 318 corridors
- Encourage Infill Development in the Borough
- Enhance Corridors – in particular, Route 18 and Route 318. Coordinate Route 18 enhancement in Shenango Township and the City of Hermitage.
- Enhance Shenango River
- Create Attractive Gateways
- Address Opportunities Provided by Vacant Properties
- Implement a Regional Pedestrian/Bicycle Trail based on the Shenango River
- Increase Organizational Linkages and Intermunicipal Cooperation in the Region
- Incorporate Elements of *Livable Communities*
- Utilize Smart Growth Principles

- Enhance Infrastructure
- Enhance Financial Capabilities and Resources
- Enhance Pedestrian/Bicycle Opportunities
- Encourage Continuation of Agriculture/Maintenance of Rural Character
- Protect Residential Uses from Detrimental Encroachments
- Promote Interchange Improvements and Development
- Promote Economic Development

### **Broad Implementation Strategies**

The municipalities in the Region have limited staff to support plan implementation and severe financial limitations for plan implementation. There are basic concerns for funding provision of day-to-day necessary municipal services, which typically limits maintenance and upgrading of basic infrastructure in the communities. Enhancement projects are even more difficult to fund, and providing matches for grants is often difficult or impossible. That is why the broad implementation strategies include increasing financial capabilities of the municipalities, increasing grant opportunities, and enhancing regional cooperation. Accomplishing these will help to enhance infrastructure and municipal services and address other strategies. The following strategies were identified with the Steering Committee at a series of workshop meetings.

- I. Increase Financial Capabilities of Municipalities
  - A. Achieve cost savings and expense management
  - B. Enhance tax base and improve revenues
    1. Attract additional businesses
    2. Retain and support existing businesses
      - a. Identify workforce and job training needs
      - b. Identify land for expansion and parking needs

- c. Identify vacant and underutilized land such as parking lots which could be developed
  - C. Support property value reassessment, which would involve reassessing all properties to better reflect current market values.
- II. Increase Grant Opportunities for Municipalities
  - A. Identify sources of partners for matches for grants
  - B. Identify and pursue grants
    - 1. Utilize existing staff capabilities, MCRPC, COG, Penn-Northwest, municipalities with available staff
    - 2. Utilize combined grant applications
    - 3. Designate responsibility for grantsmanship
- III. Enhance Infrastructure in the Region
  - A. Use Capital Improvements Programming
  - B. Prepare yearly schedules for street maintenance/improvements as part of a long range street maintenance plan.
  - C. Upgrade and replace infrastructure as necessary (Each municipality should identify what their needs are for each category so we can list them and plan for how to make improvements)
    - 1. Sanitary sewers
    - 2. Storm sewers
    - 3. Sidewalks
    - 4. Transportation Infrastructure
    - 5. Pump stations
  - D. Make infrastructure improvements in support of economic development and to enhance the quality of life
    - 1. Sanitary sewer and water to target areas

2. New road segments
3. I-80/Rt. 318 interchange improvements
4. Jones Way area in West Middlesex
5. I-80/Route 60/Future I-376 interchange
6. Implement strategic downtown physical improvements
  - a. Entryways
  - b. Street corridors
  - c. Parking areas
  - d. Riverfront
  - e. Building facades
  - f. Pedestrian access
  - g. Highest use of riverfront land
7. Make streetscape and neighborhood improvements
  - a. Enhancements of curbing and landscaping
  - b. Sidewalk replacement
  - c. Traffic calming
  - d. Nuisance tree removal
  - e. Façade improvement program
  - f. Install street and property lighting and upgrade street lighting
  - g. Upgrade and maintain green spaces
  - h. Neighborhood maintenance to include weatherization of homes, painting homes, increasing homeownership,

conducting neighborhood cleanups, and rehabilitating housing

i. Buffering/screening

IV. Identify and Promote Assets of the Region

- A. Proximity to Pittsburgh and Cleveland
- B. Shenango River
- C. Low cost of living/affordable housing prices
- D. Neighborhoods
- E. Educational opportunities
- F. Industrial heritage
- G. Tourist attractions
- H. Historic sites and districts

V. Provide Housing Alternatives and Reverse Decline in Population

- A. Support Ownership/First Time ownership programs, such as down payment assistance and rehabilitation grants
- B. Encourage senior housing options from single homes to nursing care
- C. Discourage absentee property ownership
- D. Encourage retention of single family detached housing
- E. Remove blighted housing
- F. Rehabilitate units with federal HOME funding
- G. Identify and target housing unit infill opportunities
- H. Discourage substandard rentals
- I. Allow for a variety of housing types through zoning

- VI. Targeted Land Use Policies and Improvements for Corridors, Infill, Greenfields, and Brownfields
  - A. Encourage continuation of agriculture
    - 1. Agricultural Security Areas
    - 2. Zoning policies
  - B. Continue to create visions for road corridors
  - C. Identify projects for Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)
  - D. Identify housing infill opportunities
  - E. Identify commercial land opportunities on underutilized industrial land
  - F. Clean up areas along Shenango River to increase access and usable land
  - G. Utilize Specific Plans and create shovel-ready sites for economic development
    - 1. Keystone Innovation Zones (KIZs)
    - 2. Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs)
    - 3. Keystone Opportunity Expansion Zones (KOEZs)
    - 4. Site Aesthetics
    - 5. Marketing promotion with Penn-Northwest; Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce
    - 6. Speculative structures, constructed prior to occupancy commitment to provide buildings ready to occupy.
    - 7. Below market loan programs
    - 8. Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) tax abatement
    - 9. Streamline review and approval process

10. Incubators

- H. Utilize Official Maps for road, park, trail and other improvements
- I. Recruit targeted businesses/services
- J. Coordination with School District planning to support neighborhood schools concept
- K. Accurate floodplain identification
- L. Protect residential uses from unwanted encroachments
- M. Appropriate Zoning and SALDO policies
  - 1. Environmental protection
  - 2. Performance and design standards
  - 3. Historic protection
  - 4. Signage/landscaping/buffering
  - 5. Growth area boundaries
  - 6. Consistent policies at municipal boundaries
  - 7. Mixed use where appropriate
  - 8. Discourage strip development
  - 9. Zoning and Act 537 planning coordination
  - 10. Implement land use plan through zoning

VII. Address Environmental Concerns

- A. Support cleanup of air, water, and ground pollution along Shenango River
- B. Support restoration of watersheds of impaired streams
- C. Protect sensitive environmental resources

D. Require stormwater management

VIII. Increase Linkages and Facilitate Mobility in the Region

A. Facilitate truck routes

B. Enhance public transportation and knowledge of opportunities

C. Expand sidewalk, trail, and greenway systems

D. Increase wayfinding signage

E. Connect developments

F. Construct corridor and interchange improvements and place projects on PENNDOT Congested Corridor Program per Long Range Transportation Plan and TIP

G. Support increased mobility for those with disabilities

H. Link modes of transportation

I. Widen Route 18, create plan for Route 18

IX. Enhance Municipal Services and Regional Cooperation

A. Obtain increased training for staff and public safety professionals

B. Enhance library systems

C. Utilize most cost effective means for public safety services

D. Utilize shared use of facilities

E. Enhance recycling (Support curbside programs and solid waste authority drop-off sites)

F. Continue disaster preparedness planning

G. Implement municipal park and recreation plans to provide a recreation network of programs and facilities for all groups

- H. Upgrade substandard recreation facilities and maintain adequate facilities
- X. Increase Citizen Participation
  - A. Conduct community leadership training
  - B. Hold heritage events and other cultural activities
  - C. Conduct public forums
  - D. Encourage volunteerism
  - E. Educate regarding this Plan
  - F. Educate regarding the benefits of historical preservation, environmental protection, open space, greenways and recreation, growth management, and agricultural preservation
  - G. Encourage enhancement of the street, social, and cultural life of the Region
  - H. Create community foundation to fund projects
  - I. Foster appreciation of community

### **Supporting Prior Planning Efforts**

Prior to this Plan, a number of other plans have been prepared in the region. Concepts and recommendations from them are included within this plan. The following listed plans are supported by this Plan:

#### **PRIOR AND CURRENT PLANS SUPPORTED BY THIS PLAN**

- Mercer County Comprehensive Plan.
- Mercer County MPO Bicycle/Pedestrian Action Plan.
- Mercer County Greenways, Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Mercer County Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Penn Northwest Development Corporation 2006/2007 Action Plan.

## **Planning Efforts Recommended by this Plan**

The following additional planning efforts are recommended by this Plan:

### **PLANS RECOMMENDED BY THIS PLAN**

- Route 318 streetscape enhancement plan and zoning.
- Route 18 streetscape enhancement plan and zoning.
- Shenango River access, enhancement, recreational use, and economic development plan.
- Regional Trail System Plan.
- Region-wide way finding system that directs residents and visitors to community facilities and attractions.
- Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans for regional watercourses.
- Regional Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Plan.
- Design guidelines for Route 18 and West Middlesex, including guidelines for infill development in West Middlesex.
- Plan to create more of a town center in the area bordered by Main, Erie, Fair and Garfield Streets, unifying the area, enhancing pedestrian circulation, and placing overhead lines underground.
- Official maps.
- Updates of municipal Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans if not consistent with this Plan.

## **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

Recommended Community Facilities and Infrastructure Projects, Recommended Transportation Projects, and Recommended Economic Development Projects discussed in this Plan are listed at the end of this Chapter. The following projects were identified by the Steering Committee as priority projects:

- West Middlesex streetscape enhancements

- Economic development opportunities at Route 60 and I-80 interchanges
- Route 60 gateway and economic development
- Completion of Route 60 – Route 318 interchange

At a public meeting held on March 19, 2007 at West Middlesex High School, attended by about 26 residents of the Region, the residents were asked to “vote” to identify which of the projects and strategies listed at the meeting were of the highest priority to them. Each resident identified four projects of the highest priority. The voting was as follows:

- Increase grant opportunities – 19
- West Middlesex streetscape enhancements – 17
- Economic development opportunities at Route 60, Route 318, and I-80 interchanges – 16
- Route 60 gateway and economic development – 13
- Targeted land use policies and improvements, including encouraging the continuation of agriculture, protecting residential uses from unwanted encroachments, and identifying projects for Transportation Improvement Program – 12
- Enhance infrastructure – 7
- Increase financial capabilities – 7
- Affordable fixed income senior citizen one floor housing – 6
- Increase linkages and facilitate mobility - 0

### **Partnerships**

In implementing this Plan, a number of partnerships will have to be formed to address the principles, strategies, actions, and projects listed in the Plan. The following list contains potential partners for plan implementation:

AGENCIES IN SUPPORT OF  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN

**Agencies**

- Mercer County Council of Governments programs
- Penn Northwest Development Corporation
- Shenango Valley Industrial Development Corporation
- Mercer County Housing Authority
- Community Action Partnership of Mercer County
- Mercer County Community Transit (on-demand services)
- Mercer County Regional Planning Commission
- Shenango Valley Shuttle Service (fixed-route)
- Mercer County Conservation District
- Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Shenango Conservancy
- West Middlesex Area Historical Society
- Shenango River Watchers
- Penn State Cooperative Extension
- Shenango Valley Initiative
- Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce
- F.H. Buhl Club
- Shenango Valley YMCA
- Shenango Valley Youth Soccer Association

- Mercer County Career Link
- Shenango Valley Center for Aging/Geriatric Health
- Shenango Valley Enterprise Zone Corporation
- Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Mercer County Industrial Development Authority
- Shenango Valley Foundation
- Mercer County Agricultural Development Committee
- Community Action Team
- Mercer County Career Center

A list of governmental grant programs for consideration follows:

## **GOVERNMENTAL GRANT PROGRAMS TO FACILITATE IMPLEMENTATION**

The following is a list of some of the state and federal programs for community and economic development. Programs can be modified or eliminated over time, so it is necessary to contact the responsible agency for availability and eligibility information.

- **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (DCED)**
  - **Communities of Opportunity** – This program is for state-funded grants for community revitalization and economic development and the development or rehabilitation of low-income housing.
  - **Infrastructure Development Program** – This program provides grants and low interest financing for the construction of public and private infrastructure needed for business to locate or expand to a specific site. It also provides financing for infrastructure costs to redevelop former industrial sites, including site clearance costs.
  - **Industrial Sites Reuse Program (Brownfields)** – This program provides grant and low interest loan financing for environmental site assessment and remediation work at former industrial sites.
  - **Community Revitalization Program** – This program is intended to fund infrastructure improvements, community revitalization, building rehabilitation, and demolition of blighted structures, in order to increase community tax base and promote community stability.
  - **Elm Street Program** – This program is intended to help revitalize residential neighborhoods near Main Street areas.
  - **HOME Program** – This program provides loan and technical assistance to municipalities for expanding the housing supply for low income persons.
  - **Small Business Development Centers** – Work with small firms to help them compete and grow.
  - **Small Business First Program** – This program provides low interest loans for projects such as site acquisition, building construction, machinery, and working capital for small businesses of less than 100 employees.

- **Local Government Capital Projects Loan Program** – This program provides low interest loans for equipment and municipal facilities.
- **Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program (LUPTAP)** – This program provides grant funds for the preparation of community comprehensive plans and the ordinances to implement them.
- **Regional Police Assistance Grant Program** – This program provides grants for the start-up of consolidated police departments.
- **Shared Municipal Services Program Code Enforcement Initiative Grants** – This program assists local governments in the initial administrative expenses of a shared or multi-municipal codes enforcement program.
- **Shared Municipal Services Program** – This program provides matching grants for cooperative municipal efforts to increase the efficiency of public services.
- **Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA)** – Local municipalities, school districts, and counties can offer tax abatements on improvements to property for up to 10 years.
- **Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA)** – Low-interest loan financing through industrial development corporations for land and building acquisition, construction and renovation resulting in the retention or the creation of jobs. Loans up to \$1.25 million (\$1.75 million for areas within Keystone Opportunity Zones, Act 47 Communities, Brownfield Sites, and Enterprise Zones).
- **Floodplain Land Use Assistance Program** – Provides grants and technical assistance to encourage the proper use of floodplains. Local governments may apply for up to 50% of eligible costs.
- **Weatherization Assistance Program** – Works to minimize the adverse effects of high energy costs on low-income, elderly, and handicapped citizens. Local governments and non-profit organizations are eligible.
- **Enterprise Zone Grant Program** – Provides grants to financially disadvantaged communities for business development strategies within Municipal Enterprise Zones. Municipal and redevelopment authorities are eligible.

- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** – Provides grant and technical assistance to aid municipalities in community and economic development efforts.
  - **Emergency Shelter Grants** – Provides grants to local governments and non-profit organizations to create or rehabilitate shelter space for the homeless.
  - **Act 47** – Municipalities Financial Recovery Act – Provides loans and grant funds to financially distressed local governments and technical assistance to formulate financial recovery Plans
  - **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)** – Provides grant funding to support development of Appalachia’s human and community infrastructure. Eligible uses include physical infrastructure, community capacity building, and dynamic local economies. The Appalachian Region within the Commonwealth consists of 52 counties served by seven Local Development Districts (LDD).
  - **Main Street Program** – 5-year program to fund main street and commercial reinvestment to preserve/strengthen retail, local government, and business centers. Utilize volunteer support, private dollars, strategic planning, and reuse of existing buildings. This program establishes a local organization for downtown revitalization, management of downtown revitalization by hiring coordinator. Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) collaborates with DCED to administer training and assistance for this program.
  - **Core Communities Housing Program** – Fund affordable housing activities in previously developed areas.
- **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY**
    - **Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC) Project Grant Program** – Grants for projects related to recreation, conservation, and historic preservation. Municipalities and school districts must provide a 25% match.
  - **PENNSYLVANIA COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY (PCCD)**
    - **Local Law Enforcement Block Grant Program** – Provides local governments with funds to hire and train additional law enforcement personnel; establish special task forces; and establish crime prevention programs.

- **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES** – The Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) includes the following elements:
  - **Community Recreation Grant Program** – This program provides grants for comprehensive recreation and park planning, greenways and master site development planning. Acquisition and Development Grants can be used for the rehabilitation and development of parks and recreation facilities and acquisition of land for park and conservation purposes.
  - **Rivers Conservation Grant Program** – This program provides grants for river conservation plans and non-acquisition, non-development implementation projects. Acquisition and Development Grants can be used for land acquisition and the development of river conservation projects.
  - **Heritage Parks Grant Program** – This program promotes public/private partnerships to preserve and enhance natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources to stimulate economic development through heritage tourism. Grants are awarded for purposes such as feasibility studies, development of management action plans, specialized studies, and implementation projects and management grants.
  - **Recreational Trail Program** – This program provides matching funding for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails.
  - **Rails to Trails, PA Program** – This program provides matching grants for feasibility studies, plans, acquisition, and improvement of former railroad lines for recreational trails.

**PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP)**

- **Stream Improvement Program** – This program provides design and construction projects to eliminate imminent threats due to flooding and stream bank erosion.
- **Stormwater Management Program** – This program provides grants for cooperative watershed level planning and municipal implementation programs.
- **Non-Point Source Pollution Control Program** – This program provides funding for projects that implement innovative practices to control non-point source pollution for impaired waters.

- **Pennsylvania Source Water Assessment and Protection Program (SWAP)** – This program provides grants for wellhead protection and watershed protection,
- **Environmental Stewardship and Watershed Protection Grant Program** – This program makes funds available to protect and restore watersheds.
- **Pennsylvania Green Project Bank** – This program is an interactive online marketplace where organizations seeking funding for environmental projects can be matched with organizations seeking to fund such projects.
- **Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant** – Grants for municipalities for costs associated with implementing alternative fuel program.
- **New or Innovative Technology Grants** – Funds to improve existing drinking water and sewage treatment facilities through new or innovative technology.
- **Sewage Management Grants (Act 537)** – reimbursements for municipalities completing sewage facilities planning and enforcement.
- **Recycling (Act 101)** – Municipalities are eligible for 90 percent reimbursement toward establishing a recycling program.
- **Act 108 (HSCA) Host Municipality Siting** – Payments to municipalities serving as hosts for hazardous waste facilities.
- **Act 198 Resource Recovery Development Fund** – Grants for municipalities and authorities to establish new and innovative resource recovery demonstration projects.
- **Waste Tire Remediation and Market Development Grants** – Reimbursement for cleanup and / or reuse of waste tires.
- **Formation of Water Authorities Grant Program** – Available to two or more municipalities or counties interested in forming a joint water authority.
- **Small Water Systems Regionalization Grant Program** – Reimbursement for feasibility studies by small water systems to study regionalization.
- **Growing Greener II** – Funds are allocated to counties for downtown revitalization projects that include brownfield sites.

- **PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION**
  - **Keystone Historic Preservation Grants** – This program provides matching grants to local government and nonprofit organizations that are rehabilitating or restoring historic properties on or eligible for the National Register.
  - **Certified Local Government Grants** – This program provides matching grants and technical assistance to protect historic resources.
  - **Historical Marker Program** – Nominations for historical markers are reviewed. When approved, staff works with nominator to prepare text and arrange ceremonies. Limited matching grants are available for markers.
  
- **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES**
  - **Software Licensing Program** – Program for local governments to save money on software purchases.
  - **Cooperative Purchasing Program (Act 57 of 1998)** – Permits local governments to jointly participate in contracts for supplies, services, or construction.
  
- **PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**
  - **Transportation Enhancements Program (TEA 21)** - The program provides funding for programs such as provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles; acquisition of scenic easements or historic sites; landscaping or other scenic beautification; historic preservation; rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities.
  - **Transit Assistance Programs** – A variety of programs provide assistance for Public Transportation
  - **Home Town Streets** – This program includes a variety of streetscape improvements that are vital to reestablishing downtown and commercial centers. These projects include activities undertaken within a defined “downtown” area that collectively enhance that environment and promote positive interactions with people in the area. Projects may include sidewalk improvements, planters, benches, street lighting, pedestrian crossings, transit bus shelters, traffic calming, bicycle amenities, kiosks, signage, and other visual elements.
  - **Safe Routes to School** – This program is designed to work with both school districts and pedestrian and bicycle safety advocates to make

physical improvements that promote safe walking and biking passages to schools. Collectively, these efforts would save on school busing costs and promote a healthy lifestyle for children. In addition, some funding may be used for pedestrian education efforts. Examples of these types of improvements include: sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes or trails, traffic diversion improvements, curb extensions, traffic circles and raised median islands.

- **PENNSYLVANIA INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AUTHORITY** – PENNVEST provides financing for drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater projects.
- **PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE PROGRAM** – This program provides discretion to State legislators to award limited amounts of State funds for projects in their home district.
- **PENNSYLVANIA HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY** – The Keystone Renovate and Repair program will offer below-market, fixed interest rates to borrowers for home improvement and renovation projects. Program participants will also receive counseling about which repairs are best, how to select a contractor, and how to determine if the work is satisfactory.

## **RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

- Update and expand water infrastructure capacity in West Middlesex and surrounding portions of Shenango Township.
- Enhance setting of Sweesy little league field.
- Create a public space/park/green at the area of the West Middlesex recycling depot along the Shenango River to serve as a gathering place and place to hold events. Enhance pedestrian access to the site.
- Upgrade sidewalks where necessary such as along Route 18, North Street, and East Main Street. Construct walkways to fill in gaps and to provide access to community facilities, such as construction of sidewalks on Walnut Street and Erie Street to area of park, pool, and little league field, and enhancing sidewalks on Garfield Street approaching Route 18. Construct or enhance curbs along walkways as feasible.
- Eventually establish a tree planting program to supplement existing street trees, particularly along routes to public facilities.

- Encourage riverside enhancements on the east bank of the Shenango River in the industrial area.
- Enhance pedestrian access to Kiwanis Park.
- Further develop Shenango Township Park.
- Establish educational and informational center for the West Middlesex Area Historical Society.
- Make improvements to West Middlesex sanitary and storm sewer systems, including new pump stations.
- Construct water supply lines in Jones Way.
- Maintain code enforcement program to keep properties from deteriorating.
- Continue program of rehabilitation of units.
- Remove blighted structures.
- Provide accessibility for the handicapped at all public facilities.
- Develop teen recreational programs, before/after school programs, preschool programs, and senior programs within the Region.
- Require land dedication or recreation fees in lieu of dedication for all new land developments.
- Conduct community clean-ups as needed.
- Build a footbridge across the Shenango River connecting the Shenango Rail Trail to the West Middlesex Town Center.

### **RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS**

- Shenango River Rail Trail Feasibility Study and West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Trail.
- Study if signalization is warranted at the intersection of PA Route 318 and PA Route 18.

- Develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways along Route 18 and Route 318 and evaluate the feasibility of creating means for pedestrians and bicycles to safely cross PA Route 18.
- Define and implement Transportation Improvement Districts along PA Route 18, where warranted, to implement the plans for that road.
- Access management program along PA Route 18 and PA Route 318 corridors.
- Construct a connector road between Jones Way and Route 18 to open up land for economic development. Consider extension of Jones Way to open up additional land for economic development.
- Work with PENNDOT on design of the repairs to the viaduct in the Borough, determining whether realignment is desirable and whether a separated pedestrian walkway can be provided.
- Establish a street maintenance program to address streets in need of attention, such as Erie Street, South Street, Haywood Street, Carbough Street, Walker Lane, Chestnut Street, and Penn Avenue.
- Complete interchange of Route 60/Route 318.
- Plan for access to remaining potential residential land in and around West Middlesex and place roads on official map. Determine whether a connection between Haywood and Kiwanis Streets is appropriate.
- Replace the Riggs Road Bridge.
- Enhance/construct a pedestrian system to link the recreation facilities along Route 18, Route 318, Kiwanis Road, Wheatland Road, Penn Avenue, Campground Road, and Central West Middlesex.
- Improve PA to 60 achieve interstate standards and designation. The Shenango Valley MPO should continue to work with PennDOT Districts 1-0 and 11-0, the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association and other industry advocates to improve PA 60 to interstate standards. An examination of Mercer County's three PA 60 interchanges will need to be accomplished as part of the designation effort.

PA 60's interchange with PA 318 is an urgent priority as it relates to economic development. A full diamond interchange has been programmed, yet a larger issue includes studies aimed at identifying improvement needs towards bringing an

interstate designation to what is now PA 60. The re-designation would see PA 60 (and US 22/30 in the Pittsburgh area) become I-376.

- Continue bi-state coordination with Ohio on projects that impact communities on both sides of the border. The potential relocation of an existing I-80 weigh station (in Hubbard, OH) further east could encourage west-bound truckers to bypass the scales by exiting the interstate in Mercer County and using PA 60 or PA 318 to travel through Sharon, Farrell or West Middlesex. The Shenango Valley MPO should continue to work with the Youngstown MPO and law enforcement officials to address this issue.

## **RECOMMENDED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

- Utilize low interest Revolving Loan Funds for economic development and job creation.
- Promote infill in older commercial areas and active reuse of vacant buildings. In zoning ordinances, build in flexibility for use of vacant non-conforming commercial structures.
- Determining the viability of a revolving loan fund for starting micro-enterprises and addressing barriers to development of start-up businesses.
- Enhancing unattractive commercial properties along the Route 18 Corridor for reuse.
- Identifying regional assets to travelers on I-80 and Route 60.
- Determining whether the concept of a themed downtown should be used to market West Middlesex.
- Identifying sources of gap financing to make investment projects feasible.
- Develop Shenango Business Park.
- Promote economic development/redevelopment of Route 18 corridor.
- Facilitate development of land east and north of Jones Way.
- Increase visibility and usability of Shenango River.
- Preserve agricultural component of economy.

- Enhance Route 318 corridor.
- Enhance Route 18 corridor.
- Complete the Route 60 - Route 318 interchange.
- Expand public sanitary sewer and water service to economic growth areas as necessary.
- Expand public water service in the Jones Way area.
- Enhance the Shenango River Corridor.
- Implement the Shenango River Rail Trail and Shenango River Water Trail.
- Enhance the West Middlesex Town Center.

Encourage mixed use (apartments and offices on upper floors) and provide façade guidelines to minimize the negative impacts of poor design/construction of existing buildings.

Avoid suburban development along the main street like the doctor office set back with parking lot in front.

Provide better access to the River.

Provide a river park on the town side.

Construct a pedestrian bridge to get trail users across the River into town center.

Develop River/tourist-oriented businesses facing the River, across from the boat launch, creating a more welcoming environment.

- Develop Executive Court Business Park.
- Develop remaining potential at Route 18 and Route 318 interchanges with Route 60.
- List regional attractions at the intersection of Route 18 and 318.
- Develop a planned business park in the Economic Development Corridor.

## **Chapter 15**

# **Interrelationships of Plan Components**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Municipalities Planning Code specifies that comprehensive plans include a discussion of the interrelationships among the various plan components. This requirement is intended to ensure that plan components are integrated and for the most part, not in conflict with the primary goals and objectives. Furthermore, this section requires the Plan to consider the impacts each component has upon the others so the potential consequences of future decisions are known. During the production of this Plan, the Steering Committee formulated and approved general goals, gathering information from prior planning documents, public input, and Mercer County Regional Planning Commission staff recommendations. More detailed objectives were derived from these goals and serve as the framework for the entire plan.

The following text and Interrelationship Chart give a brief description of how each of the individual plan elements relate to one another.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN COMPONENTS**

The Future Land Use Plan allocates general land uses and specifies the recommended types of land uses and densities for those uses. The availability of sanitary sewer and water facilities influence the shaping of development patterns, including location and density. It is critical to coordinate land use and infrastructure planning so future land use reflects the availability of public sewer and water facilities.

Through land use planning, such as designation of the rural areas, recharge areas for community water supplies can be established. Intensive residential development is not proposed where sewer infrastructure is not planned, available, or in close proximity, and where soils are not suitable for on-site sewage disposal. Intensive development should be directed to the Borough and surrounding areas with available public services.

It is important that community facilities, including recreation and open space, are available to serve the residents of the area. The Community Facilities Plan notes existing recreational facilities, proposed recreational facilities, and potential opportunities for recreational facilities. The Plan discusses the benefits of a potential greenway system for recreational purposes and to better link residential areas to community facilities. Future public facilities should be sited to be consistent with the objectives of the Future Land Use Plan, such as maintaining open space and recreation uses.

The Future Land Use Plan encourages economic vitality by providing areas for commercial and industrial development and priority economic development corridors. Preservation of residential neighborhoods can provide support for local businesses and provide a work force. The Future Land Use Plan identifies the neighborhoods that should be monitored. Providing for open space and preservation of community resources supports the quality of life in the area and can encourage additional investment.

It is necessary to maintain a circulation system, which can accommodate generated traffic volumes. In turn, future development should not adversely affect the circulation system. Land use decisions are influenced by the existing circulation system, while at the same time those land use decisions affect circulation systems and the functions which roads are expected to perform. Existing rural and residential areas should be protected as much as possible from the impacts of through traffic, which can be accomplished by proposed improvements to the circulation network. Efforts to link the various modes of transportation, such as pedestrian trails, additional local bus service, and multi-modal facilities should be explored and encouraged.

# Interrelationships of Plan Components

Plan Element	Land Use and Housing	Sewer and Water	Community Facilities	Transportation	Natural Environment	Economic Development
<b>Land Use and Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support existing neighborhoods in the Borough.</li> <li>▪ Provide a variety of housing opportunities for all</li> <li>▪ Target Growth Areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policies coordinated with land use goals to direct development to growth areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make available to serve area residents where necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Must consider impacts of growth on the system</li> <li>▪ Accommodate volumes at acceptable levels of service</li> <li>▪ Access management on priority corridors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide open space system through their protection</li> <li>▪ Protect the Shenango River corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts on residential areas should be mitigated</li> <li>▪ Provide jobs and services for residents</li> <li>▪ Focus on Economic Development corridors</li> </ul>
<b>Sewer and Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growth should occur where have adequate facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider existing facilities and plans, appropriate discharge standards and methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Locate with consideration of ability to serve, consistent with land use goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should be coordinated in support of growth areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water Supply sources should be protected and pollution prevented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should not overburden systems or deplete water supplies</li> </ul>
<b>Community Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include facilities to service residents and growth areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Major facilities should be adequately served</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider existing 537 plan for Shenango Township and potential for cooperative efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should adequately service facilities in the Region</li> <li>▪ Consider linkages of community facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can provide recreational opportunities</li> <li>▪ Green Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can provide a tax base to support provision of facilities</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growth should occur where have adequate capacity</li> <li>▪ Maintain functional operation and safety when growth occurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should be coordinated in support of designated growth areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Locate major facilities where can be adequately serviced</li> <li>▪ Concerns for school transportation system</li> <li>▪ Consider impacts on system from growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider existing facilities and plans, coordinate with MCRPC and PennDOT</li> <li>▪ Plan improvements to the system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement a greenway system</li> <li>▪ Provide non-motorized and public transportation alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access management on PA Routes 18 and 318</li> <li>▪ Streetscape improvements and corridor enhancement</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development should occur where land is suitable and resources will not be harmed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should not extend to areas where irreparably harm important resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can incorporate natural features</li> <li>▪ Shenango River Rail Trail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can facilitate access to resources</li> <li>▪ Design system with consideration of existing environment and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing natural resources should be protected, enhanced and interpreted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protect the natural environment</li> <li>▪ Tourism / promote rural character of the Region</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify appropriate land uses for sensitive areas</li> <li>▪ Provide for commercial, industrial, business uses</li> <li>▪ Neighborhoods provide workforce and market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can support development at appropriate locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contribute to quality of life and the attractiveness of the area</li> <li>▪ Implement a greenway system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Address system deficiencies to improve business climate</li> <li>▪ Improve intersections and access to industrial parks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contribute to quality of life and attractiveness of area to businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support existing business centers</li> <li>▪ Concentrate on developing industrial parks and economic development corridors</li> </ul>

## **Chapter 16**

### **Existing Land Use**

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#### **Introduction**

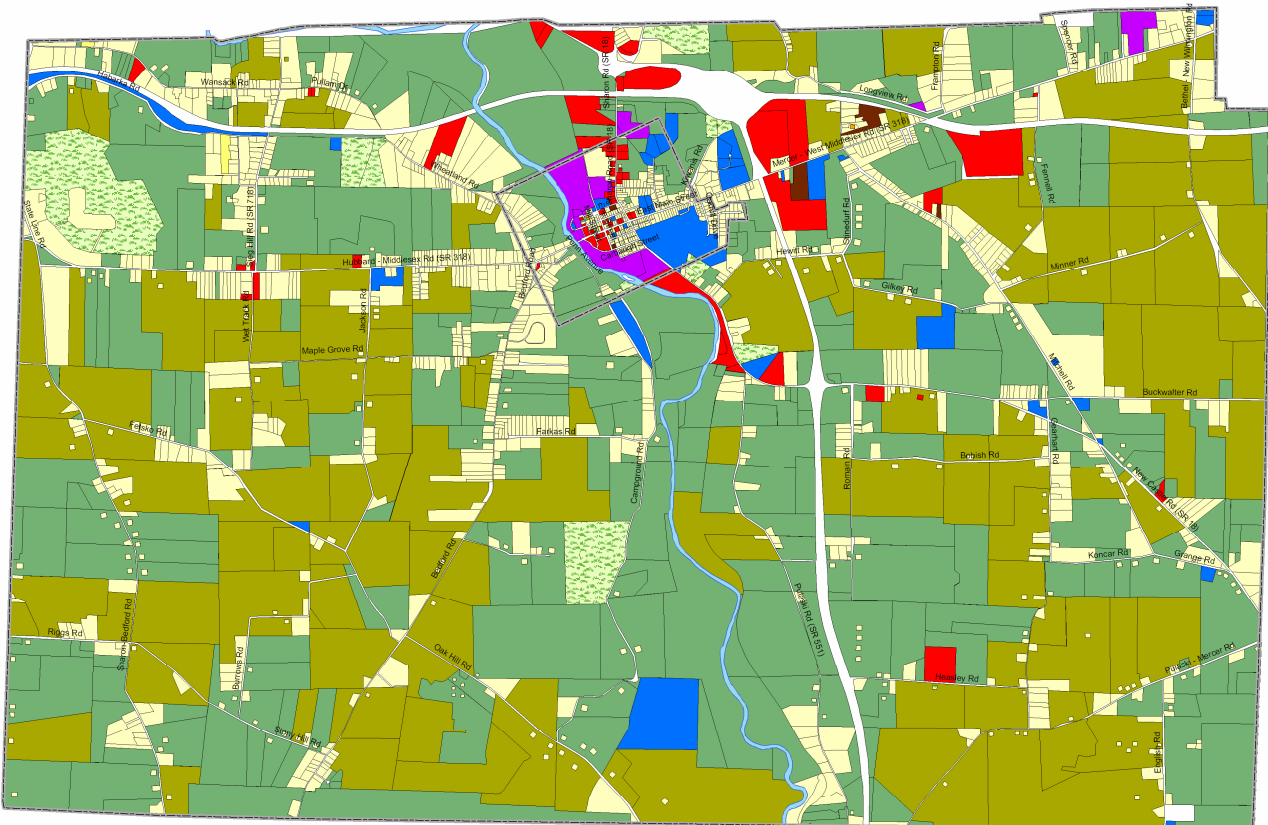
It is impossible to plan for the future land use without first understanding what patterns exist today. This chapter discusses the existing land uses by category and acreage in the Shenango Valley. The approximate acreage of each category is provided for a comprehensive overview of how land was utilized at the time this Plan was developed. Existing land use patterns not only have a significant impact on the development of the future land use plan, but they affect circulation within the area and the demand for community facilities and services as well. By understanding how land is utilized, one can plan for uses that may be desired or that are currently lacking in the region.

The Mercer County Regional Planning Commission supplied the GIS (Geographic Information System) information to create Figure 16-1, the Existing Land Use Map for the Region. This data was based on the Mercer County parcel data for the Region. Site verification was performed to confirm the accuracy of the data, and the Steering Committee provided insight as well.

Land Uses are classified into the following types for mapping purposes.

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Public/Institutional
- Single-Family Residential
- Duplex
- Multi-Family Residential
- Recreation/Public Open Space
- Vacant

**Figure 16-1  
Existing Land Use Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA**



**Existing Land Use Categories**

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Mixed Use
- Public/Institutional
- Single Family
- Duplex
- Multi-Family
- Recreational/Public Open
- Vacant
- Municipal Boundary

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Miles

Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

**SSM**  
SPOTTS | STEVENS | McCOY  
Engineers and Consultants  
ssmgroup.com

**PASHEK  
ASSOCIATES**

READING: 1017 North Park Road, P.O. Box 9377, Reading, PA 19610-0977, 610-673-2000, F: 610-671-3501

LEHIGH VALLEY: MacArthur Office Plaza, Suite 401, 2727 Langhorne Street, Whitehall, PA 18152-2439, 610-424-1150, F: 610-423-3409

7/25/07

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projects\cluSouth11X17.mxd

## **LAND USE PATTERNS**

Shenango Township and the Borough of West Middlesex have experienced a slight population decline over the last 10 years. Though the pressures of residential development have extended into some outlying areas of the Township, much of the Township remains rural. The Borough of West Middlesex contains a mix of land uses including residential, industrial, public, and commercial. The Borough also contains a number of historic structures that adds to its character.

Single family detached, and agricultural uses are most prevalent in the Region, however, there are other land use characteristics as well. The Borough contains a large amount of industrial land along the river, as well as the West Middlesex School District facilities. The Township contains a large amount of vacant parcels that are rural in nature and will most likely stay that way for the near future. The land use categories and approximate acreage of each are described in detail in the following table.

Figure 16-1, the Existing Land Use Map, shows the Region and its current land use patterns.

## **EXISTING LAND USE ALLOCATION**

Figures in acres\*; percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding. Categories are listed in order of dominance in the Region. Note that the “residential” category is divided into “single-family”, “duplex”, and “multi-family.”

	<b>Shenago Township</b>	<b>West Middlesex</b>	<b>REGION TOTAL</b>
Residential	2,690.8	145.8	<b>2,836.6</b>
<i>Single-Family</i>	2,667.8	144.6	2,812.4
<i>Duplex</i>	.34	.19	.53
<i>Multi-Family</i>	22.7	.96	23.7
Agriculture	6,858.3	0	<b>6,858.3</b>
Commercial	357.3	23.2	<b>380.5</b>
Industrial	34.8	81	<b>115.8</b>
Mixed Use	8.4	.61	<b>9.0</b>
Public / Institutional	252.6	91	<b>343.6</b>
Recreation/Public Open Space	391.5	3.4	<b>394.9</b>
Vacant	7,824.2	119.4	<b>7,943.6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,417.9</b>	<b>464.4</b>	<b>18,882.3</b>

SOURCE: Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, 2005; verified by planning staff, 2006. \*Acreage figures do not include roads.

The following are the descriptions of each of the land use categories displayed on the Existing Land Use Map, as well as acreage developed under each category. Trends are discussed following the descriptions

### **Agriculture**

The agriculture category consists of areas currently or typically in agricultural use (cropland, pastureland, dairy facilities, barns, and stables), along with agriculturally based businesses. All of the agricultural land in the Region is located in Shenango Township.

### **Single-Family Residential**

Single family residential development is the most prevalent residential type in the Region. Significant concentrations of single-family residential development are located in the Borough and northern part of Shenango Township. Smaller clusters of single family residential can be found scattered throughout the Township, most notably along Bedford Road and Mitchell Road.

## **Duplex**

This category includes the semi-detached and two-family houses. This region contains very little duplex development, roughly one-half acre.

## **Multi-Family Residential**

Multi-family residential uses are found in two areas in the Region: in West Middlesex Borough and Shenango Township off of Route 318. This category consists of the following specific development types: three-family residences, condominiums, apartments (including those over garages), and residential conversions. Multi-family developments can also be found scattered throughout established neighborhoods throughout the Borough.

## **Public/Institutional**

Public and semi-public lands include buildings and lands owned by the municipal, county, state, or federal governments; churches; recreational, cultural, and park facilities; libraries; schools; churches and adjacent properties; and fire stations. Specific descriptions and examples of this use are provided in Chapter 10, Community Facilities & Services. The majority of this land use includes the properties of the West Middlesex School District.

## **Commercial**

Commercial uses consist of all properties where goods and services are sold, ranging from restaurants, convenience stores, gas stations, and markets, to professional offices and golf courses. Commercial development is concentrated mostly along the PA Route 18 Corridor and the PA Route 318 Corridors.

## **Industrial**

The industrial land use category includes all properties being used for manufacturing and processing facilities, quarries, research and development facilities, metal and woodworking shops, truck terminals, steel mills, and office/warehouse uses. The Region's supply of industrial development includes industries located along the Shenango River and PA Route 18 in West Middlesex Borough.

## **Mixed Use**

Mixed use accounts for nine acres throughout the Region. This use includes parcels with two or more land uses, including conversions.

## **Recreation/Public Open Space**

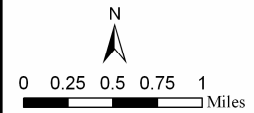
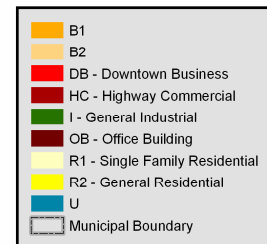
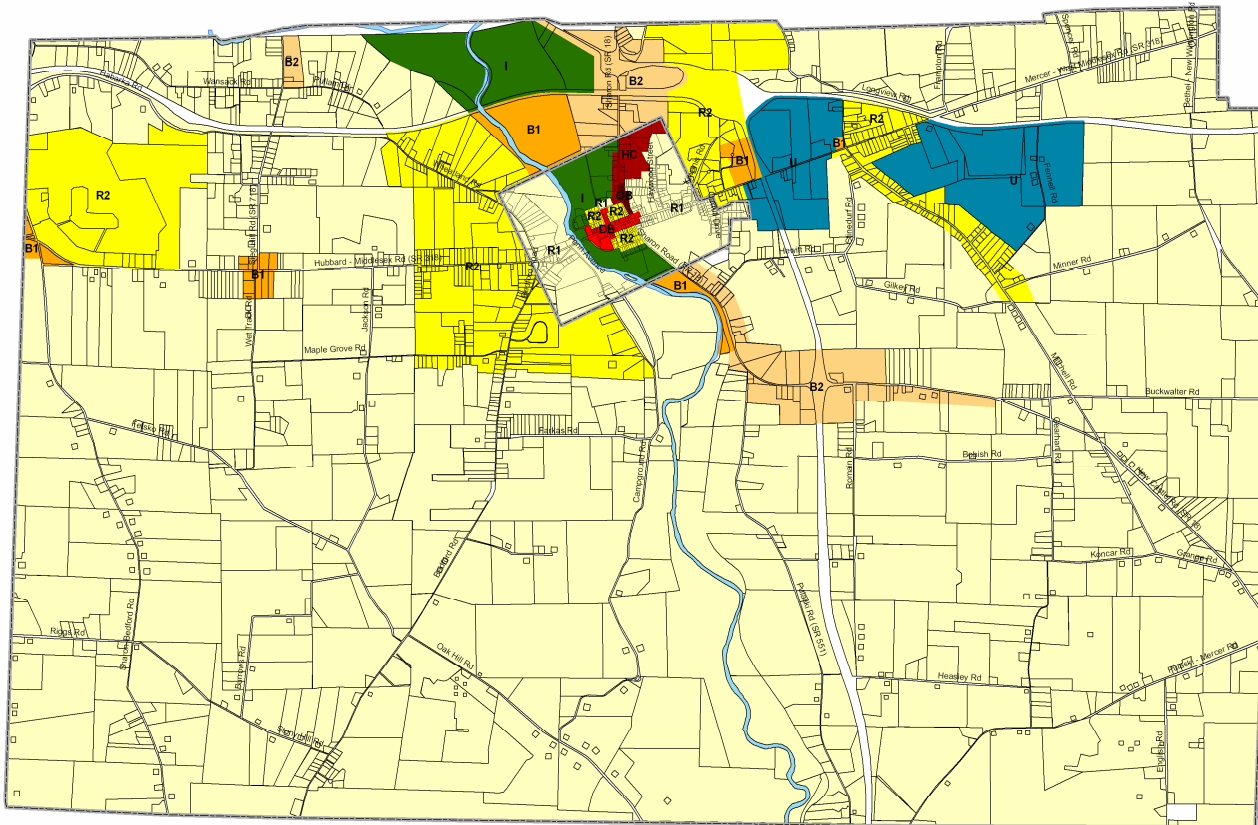
The Recreation/Open Space category consists of both publicly and privately open space and recreational lands, such as private golf courses, public parks, and municipally-owned lands.

## **Vacant**

Vacant parcels were identified by the County and are found scattered throughout both municipalities. There are significant concentrations of vacant lands throughout the Township. Most of this vacant land consists of undeveloped woodlots, meadows, or former agricultural lands.

Existing composite zoning for the Region is shown on Figure 16-2.

Figure 16-2  
Existing Composite Zoning Map  
West Middlesex & Shenango  
Joint Comprehensive Plan  
Mercer County, PA



Data Sources: Mercer County, SSM

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7/25/07

g: projects w10000  
w109168 w0001 projects/  
ZoningSouth11X17.mxd

## Chapter 17

### Demographic Analysis

This Section of the Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans examines the demographics of both the Shenango Valley and of six of the municipalities within the two individual comprehensive plans which are being prepared. It will look at overall population trends, as well as trends and figures for age, race, poverty, and family and household data. These figures provide the foundation for both understanding the six municipalities within the Shenango Valley plans, as they have developed, and for making planning decisions for the future of the region.

#### POPULATION

According to 2000 U.S. Census information, the population of the six communities in the Shenango Valley plans study is 44,249. The following paragraphs and tables explain the trends in total population for the regions and municipalities in the regions. Table 1 shows the population of the regions, as well as that of the County and the Commonwealth. Table 2 shows the rate of population change for the same areas.

<b>TABLE 1                      POPULATION – 1970 to 2000, With 2005 Estimates</b>					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
City of Farrell	11,000	8,645	6,841	6,050	5,999
City of Hermitage	15,421	16,365	15,300	16,157	16,571
City of Sharon	22,653	19,057	17,493	16,328	15,504
Wheatland Borough	1,421	1,132	760	748	724
Shenango Township	3,141	4,399	4,339	4,037	3,986
West Middlesex Borough	1,293	1,064	982	929	884
<b>Shenango Valley Region</b>	<b>54,929</b>	<b>50,662</b>	<b>45,715</b>	<b>44,249</b>	<b>43,668</b>
Mercer County	127,125	128,299	121,003	120,293	119,598
Pennsylvania	11,793,909	11,864,720	11,881,846	12,281,054	12,429,616

*Source: U.S. Census Data)*

<b>TABLE 2                      POPULATION CHANGE – 1970 to 2000</b>				
	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	TOTAL 1970-2000
City of Farrell	-21.4%	-20.9%	-11.6%	-45.0%
City of Hermitage	+6.1%	-6.5%	+5.6%	+4.8%
City of Sharon	-15.9%	-8.2%	-6.7%	-27.9%
Wheatland Borough	-20.3%	-32.9%	-1.6%	-47.4%
Shenango Township	+40.0%	-1.4%	-7.0%	+28.5%
West Middlesex Borough	-17.7%	-7.7%	-5.4%	-28.2%
<b>Shenango Valley Region</b>	<b>-7.8%</b>	<b>-9.8%</b>	<b>-3.2%</b>	<b>-19.4%</b>
Mercer County	+0.9%	-5.7%	-0.6%	-5.4%
Pennsylvania	+0.6%	+0.7%	+3.4%	+4.1%

*Source: U.S. Census Data)*

The Shenango Valley, with 44,249 residents, ranks first in Mercer County in population, ahead of the Mercer Region (which includes Mercer Borough and Coolspring, East Lackawannock, Findley and Jefferson Townships) and the Grove City Region (which includes Grove City Borough and Pine, Liberty, Springfield, and Wolf Creek Townships). While the County has lost population since 1970, the Shenango Valley has lost more numerically and percentage wise than any area in the county, with a population decrease of 10,680 persons, or 19.4% of its population.

These trends are a cause for concern. The fact is that most of the population growth that occurred in the region happened in the decade between 1970 and 1980, and the growth that did occur took place in only two communities—the City of Hermitage and Shenango Township. The overall population of the region still decreased by 7.8% between 1970 and 1980. The population decreased more dramatically (9.8%) in the decade between 1980 and 1990 (due mainly to the collapse of industry in Mercer County during this decade), followed by a moderate decrease of 3.2% between 1990 and 2000 and an increase of 5.6% in Hermitage. This suggests that although there has been some immigration to account for a portion of the population growth in Hermitage, there are also significant numbers of people moving out of the remaining five municipalities. This is a concern because when expansion of infrastructure occurs without real regional population growth, it can generally lead to increasing per-capita costs for public infrastructure such as water, sewer, and road maintenance, which in turn can translate into increased user fees and taxes that remaining residents are hard pressed to bear.

## AGE

This section examines the age characteristics of the region. Table 3 shows the median age for the study area, as well as the County and State figures.

<b>TABLE 3 MEDIAN AGE FOR STUDY AREA</b>	
<b>MUNICIPALITY</b>	<b>MEDIAN AGE (years)</b>
City of Farrell	40.1
City of Hermitage	44.1
City of Sharon	38.4
Wheatland Borough	45.8
Shenango Township	41.3
West Middlesex Borough	40.0
Shenango Valley (Average age)	39.8
Mercer County	39.6
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	38.0

*Source: U.S. Census Data*

As shown in Table 3, the approximate average age of a Shenango Valley resident is 39.8 years old, which is near the County median age, but almost two years older than the median for the Commonwealth. An older population traditionally requires more in the way of social services that need to be provided by either the municipality or the county, such as transportation, centers for activity and socialization and health care facilities. Additionally, older populations are often on fixed incomes. Conversely, a community with a larger concentration of children in the younger age cohorts should place a greater emphasis on recreation and childcare needs. Unlike the other communities in the study area, the population of the City of Sharon is of a relatively young age, slightly above the Commonwealth figure and between two and seven years younger than the surrounding municipalities. Tables 4 and 4A break down the 1990 and 2000 population counts for the individual municipalities, study area, the County, and the State into age cohorts that are commonly used by the U.S. Census Bureau to show the composition of each age group and the change to each group over the past decade.

**TABLE 4**  
**POPULATION BY AGE COHORTS IN 2000 (1990 Figures in parentheses)**

Age Groups	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Shenango Valley	Pennsylvania
<b>Total pop</b>	6,050 (6,841)	16,157 (15,300)	16,328 (17,493)	748 (760)	4,037 (4,339)	929 (982)	<b>44,249 (45,715)</b>	<b>12,281,054 (11,881,643)</b>
<b>Under 5 years</b>	401 (435)	787 (845)	1,101 (1,244)	44 (38)	227 (281)	37 (62)	<b>2,597 (2,905)</b>	<b>727,804 (797,058)</b>
<b>5-9 years</b>	458 (421)	957 (900)	1,121 (1,133)	37 (35)	262 (275)	53 (66)	<b>2,888 (2,830)</b>	<b>827,945 (788,301)</b>
<b>10-14 yrs.</b>	447 (450)	1,108 (880)	1,106 (1,077)	38 (29)	288 (306)	83 (58)	<b>3,070 (2,800)</b>	<b>863,849 (755,161)</b>
<b>15-19 yrs.</b>	376 (437)	938 (886)	1,029 (1,154)	34 (36)	222 (280)	64 (65)	<b>2,663 (2,858)</b>	<b>850,986 (818,058)</b>
<b>20-24 yrs.</b>	312 (362)	592 (757)	923 (1,146)	25 (28)	177 (258)	46 (58)	<b>2,075 (2,609)</b>	<b>746,086 (863,007)</b>
<b>25-34 yrs.</b>	652 (866)	1,485 (2,002)	2,125 (2,638)	82 (100)	437 (706)	103 (164)	<b>4,884 (6,476)</b>	<b>1,560,486 (1,912,456)</b>
<b>35-44 yrs.</b>	773 (882)	2,493 (2,100)	2,314 (2,265)	111 (78)	672 (665)	144 (117)	<b>6,507 (6,107)</b>	<b>1,948,076 (1,744,867)</b>
<b>45-54 yrs.</b>	760 (578)	2,276 (1,671)	2,167 (1,643)	86 (73)	615 (525)	140 (88)	<b>6,044 (4,578)</b>	<b>1,705,032 (1,213,845)</b>
<b>55-59 yrs.</b>	248 (338)	889 (844)	796 (826)	47 (55)	232 (237)	50 (55)	<b>2,262 (2,355)</b>	<b>619,969 (552,378)</b>
<b>60-64 yrs.</b>	253 (487)	824 (1,153)	626 (938)	37 (81)	219 (276)	43 (62)	<b>2,002 (2,997)</b>	<b>511,656 (607,406)</b>
<b>65-74 yrs.</b>	635 (949)	1,832 (2,003)	1,341 (1,962)	116 (141)	392 (369)	78 (121)	<b>4,394 (5,545)</b>	<b>969,272 (1,070,021)</b>
<b>75-84 yrs.</b>	580 (537)	1,530 (951)	1,245 (1,162)	77 (53)	251 (137)	75 (47)	<b>3,758 (2,887)</b>	<b>712,326 (587,249)</b>
<b>85 yrs +</b>	155 (99)	446 (308)	434 (305)	14 (13)	43 (24)	13 (19)	<b>1,105 (768)</b>	<b>237,567 (171,836)</b>

**TABLE 4A**  
**PERCENT POPULATION BY AGE GROUP FOR THE MUNICIPALITIES, COUNTY AND STATE**  
**(1990 Percentages in parentheses)**

Percent	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Mercer County	Pennsylvania
<b>Total population</b>	6,050 (6,841)	16,157 (15,300)	16,328 (17,493)	748 (760)	4,037 (4,339)	929 (982)	120,293 (121,003)	12,281,054 (11,881,643)
<b>Under 5 years</b>	6.6% (6.4%)	4.9% (5.5%)	6.7% (7.1%)	5.9% (5.0%)	5.6% (6.5%)	4.0% (6.3%)	5.7% (6.2%)	5.9% (6.7%)
<b>5-9 Years</b>	7.6% (6.2%)	5.9% (5.9%)	6.9% (6.5%)	4.9% (4.6%)	6.5% (6.3%)	5.7% (6.7%)	6.3% (6.6%)	6.7% (6.6%)
<b>10-14 years</b>	7.4% (6.6%)	6.9% (5.8%)	6.8% (6.2%)	5.1% (3.8%)	7.1% (7.1%)	8.9% (5.9%)	6.9% (6.5%)	7.0% (6.4%)
<b>15-19 years</b>	6.2% (6.4%)	5.8% (5.8%)	6.3% (6.6%)	4.5% (4.7%)	5.5% (5.5%)	6.9% (6.6%)	7.5% (7.5%)	6.9% (6.9%)
<b>20-24 years</b>	5.2% (5.3%)	3.7% (4.9%)	5.7% (6.6%)	3.3% (3.7%)	4.4% (5.9%)	5.0% (5.9%)	5.9% (7.0%)	6.1% (7.3%)
<b>25-34 years</b>	10.8% (12.6%)	9.2% (13.0%)	13.0% (15.1%)	11.0% (13.2%)	10.8% (16.3%)	11.1% (16.7%)	11.2% (14.2%)	12.7% (16.1%)
<b>35-44 years</b>	12.8% (12.9%)	15.4% (13.7%)	14.2% (12.9%)	14.8% (10.2%)	16.6% (15.3%)	15.5% (11.9%)	14.8% (13.8%)	15.9% (14.7%)
<b>45-54 years</b>	12.6% (8.4%)	14.1% (10.9%)	13.3% (9.4%)	11.5% (9.6%)	15.2% (12.1%)	15.1% (9.0%)	13.7% (10.3%)	13.9% (10.2%)
<b>55-59 years</b>	4.1% (4.9%)	5.5% (5.5%)	4.9% (4.7%)	6.3% (7.2%)	5.7% (5.5%)	5.4% (5.6%)	5.2% (5.0%)	5.0% (4.6%)
<b>60-64 years</b>	4.2% (7.1%)	5.1% (7.5%)	3.8% (5.4%)	4.9% (10.7%)	5.4% (6.4%)	4.6% (6.3%)	4.5% (5.7%)	4.2% (5.1%)
<b>65-74 years</b>	10.5% (13.9%)	11.3% (13.0%)	8.2% (11.2%)	15.5% (18.6%)	9.7% (8.5%)	8.4% (12.3%)	9.1% (10.0%)	7.9% (9.0%)
<b>75-84 years</b>	9.6% (7.9%)	9.5% (6.3%)	7.6% (6.6%)	10.3% (7.0%)	6.2% (3.1%)	8.1% (4.8%)	6.8% (5.5%)	5.8% (4.9%)
<b>85+</b>	2.6% (1.4%)	2.8% (2.0%)	2.7% (1.7%)	1.9% (1.7%)	1.1% (0.6%)	1.4% (1.9%)	2.2% (1.7%)	1.9% (1.4%)
<b>Under 18 years</b>	24.6% (23.0%)	21.7% (20.8%)	24.4% (23.6%)	18.3% (16.3%)	23.1% (24.0%)	23.1% (22.1%)	23.4% (23.5%)	23.8% (23.5%)
<b>18-64 years</b>	51.8% (53.8%)	54.7% (57.9%)	57.1% (56.8%)	54.0% (56.5%)	59.9% (63.8%)	59.0% (58.9%)	58.5% (59.4%)	60.6% (61.1%)
<b>65+</b>	22.6% (23.2%)	23.6% (21.3%)	18.5% (19.6%)	27.7% (27.2%)	17.0% (12.2%)	17.9% (19.0%)	18.1% (17.2%)	15.6% (15.4%)

In comparing the figures from 1990 and 2000, it is clear that the population of the Shenango Valley is getting older. Although the number of children in the Region between the ages of 5-14 increased by 328, the population in the under 5 age bracket decreased by 308, for a net gain of only 20 children in the under 5, 5-9 and 10-14 age cohorts combined. The population also decreased by 195 in the 15-19 cohort and in the younger brackets of working age adults: the 20-24 cohort dropped by 534 people, while the 25-34 cohort lost 1,592 people. This seems to indicate that out-migration is significantly outpacing in-migration in these age brackets.

At the local level, comparisons can be made between all six municipalities, the County and the Commonwealth. As previously stated, the municipalities do not fare well as a group in the under 5 age cohort. Wheatland Borough was the only entity to see an increase, and that increase was limited to 6 children. The County and the Commonwealth both saw decreases in the under 5 age cohort between 1990 and 2000. Three of the six municipalities in the study area gained population in the 5 to 9 age cohort. The City of Hermitage had the largest gain, with 57 5 to 9 year olds. The City of Farrell had the second largest increase with 37. Wheatland Borough's cohort increased by 2. Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough each decreased by 13, while the City of Sharon decreased by 12. The net gain of 5-9 year olds in the six municipalities was 58, which was more than offset by the countywide decrease of 343 5-9 year olds between 1990 and 2000. The Commonwealth population in that cohort increased by nearly 40,000.

The regional population in the 10-14 cohort increased by 270 between 1990 and 2000, with most of the increase (228) occurring in the City of Hermitage. The City of Sharon cohort increased by 29, and the Borough of West Middlesex population of 10 -14 year olds grew by 25. The County population of 10-14 year olds increased by 462 over the period. Somewhat more than one half of the countywide growth that took place in this age group occurred in Hermitage, Sharon, West Middlesex and Wheatland. Given that most of the growth took place in Hermitage, it is likely that in-migration is more common in Hermitage than in the other municipalities. The Commonwealth's population in this cohort increased by more than 103,000, or .08%, between 1990 and 2000. In comparison, the increase in the number of 10-14 year olds in Mercer County is only equal to a .038% increase, less than one half of Pennsylvania's rate of increase in that cohort.

The next three age groupings, the 15-19, 20-24 and 25-34 cohorts, all reflect decreases in population in the study area. The City of Hermitage is the only municipality to show any increase in the three cohorts, and that is limited to 52 teenagers in the 15-19 group. The six communities lost 5.2% of the study area's population (2,321 residents) in these age groups between 1990 and 2000. The County lost 5,090 residents in these cohorts, 4.2% of the County's population, while the State gained roughly 33,000 in the 15-19 age group and lost nearly 469,000 in the 20-24 and 25-34 cohorts. This net loss of 436,000 is 3.55% of the State's population, a rate of loss somewhat lower than that of Mercer County and significantly less than the percentage loss in the Shenango Valley.

The populations of the next two cohorts, the 35-44 and 45-54 age groups, increased in nearly all of the municipalities. The City of Farrell is the only municipality that did not see an increase in the 35-44 population, losing 109 from that cohort. The six communities together saw a net increase of 400 in the younger cohort and an increase of 1,466 in the older cohort. for a total of 1,866 residents. This number is 4.2% of the study area's population. The County experienced an increase of 5,130 in the two cohorts, or 4.3% of the County's population. The Commonwealth's increase in those cohorts totaled approximately 694,400, or 5.7% of the PA population, again indicating that the Region

and the County are lagging behind the State. This is a common situation in the counties of western Pennsylvania.

Within the 55-59 age cohort, the Shenango Valley experienced a net loss of 93 residents. The City of Hermitage was the only community (+45) to see an increase. The City of Farrell experienced the steepest decline, with a drop of 90. The City of Sharon lost 30, while Wheatland Borough dropped by 8. Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough each decreased by 5. The 60-64 and 65-74 cohorts lost much greater numbers than the 55-59 cohort. The six communities lost 995 60-64 year olds, and 1,151 65-74 year olds between 1990 and 2000. Shenango Township (+23) was the only community to see an increase in the older age group. In comparison, the County as a whole lost only 1,498 residents in the 60-64 cohort, meaning that the study area, with just over one third of the County's population, was responsible for two thirds of the countywide loss in that cohort. The Shenango Valley lost an even larger portion of the County's 65-74 year olds. The County's 65-74 cohort decreased by 1,215 between 1990 and 2000. The six communities in the study area accounted for nearly 95% of that decrease.

The two oldest age cohorts, 75-84 and 85+ years, have seen significant increases between 1990 and 2000. The tally for the 75-84 group has increased by 871, and by 337 for the 85+ group. By far the largest increases have taken place in the City of Hermitage, with 579 more 75-84 year olds and 138 more residents 85 and older. The City of Sharon experienced increases of 83 and 129 in the younger and older cohorts, respectively, while the City of Farrell saw increases of 43 and 56, respectively. Wheatland Borough had increases of 24 and 1, while Shenango Township's 75-84 cohort increased by 114 and the 85+ cohort grew by 19. West Middlesex Borough had an increase of 28 in the younger cohort and a decrease of 6 in the older cohort. Overall, the percentage of residents 75-84 in the study area increased by just over 30% between 1990 and 2000 (compared to an approximate 25% increase in the County and 7% increase in the State), while the 85+ age group increased by nearly 44% (compared to a 30%+ increase in Mercer County and just over 38% increase in the State). With growth rates in these cohorts exceeding both County and State rates, the municipalities are strongly encouraged to address the likelihood of increased demand for senior services both now and in the future in areas such as medical facilities and support, assisted living facilities and elderly housing, and transportation services.

## **RACE**

This section examines the racial makeup of the Region, and compares it to the County and State. Table 5 shows the 2000 data for racial makeup of the Region, the County and the State.

**TABLE 5  
RACIAL MAKEUP OF STUDY AREA**

	White	Black / African-American	American Indian	Asian	Pacific Islander	Other Races	Two or More	Hispanic
City of Farrell	50.3%	46.7%	0.1%	0.2%	---	0.3%	2.4%	0.7%
City of Hermitage	95.0%	3.1%	---	0.8%	---	0.2%	0.9%	0.7%
City of Sharon	86.4%	10.8%	0.2%	0.2%	---	0.2%	2.1%	0.9%
Wheatland Borough	86.0%	12.0%	---	0.1%	---	0.1%	1.7%	1.1%
Shenango Township	97.4%	1.8%	---	0.1%	---	0.2%	0.5%	0.4%
West Middlesex Borough	98.1%	0.3%	0.1%	1.0%	---	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
<b>Shenango Valley Region</b>	<b>85.8%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.42%</b>	<b>.01%</b>	<b>0.23%</b>	<b>1.48%</b>	<b>0.72%</b>
Mercer County	93.1%	5.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.9%	0.7%
Pennsylvania	85.4%	10.0%	0.1%	1.8%	0.0%	1.5%	1.2%	3.2%

*Source: U.S. Census Data*

Most of the communities in the Shenango Valley have a similar racial makeup. The City of Farrell’s numbers differ from the rest of the Region, with a nearly even split between the White and the Black/African-American groups. The Region is mostly made up of persons who are considered White (nearly 86%). The only other racial group in the Shenango Valley with more than 10% of the population is the Black/African-American group, which accounts for roughly 12% of the population. The remaining racial groups have only nominal populations within the Shenango Valley. The percentage of those listed as Blacks or African-Americans in the Shenango Valley is more than twice as high as in the rest of the County, and is nearly two percentage points higher than the State as a whole. The racial makeup of the State is, for the most part, more diverse than the Shenango Valley and the County.

## **POVERTY**

The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. For example, the poverty threshold in 2000 for a one person household is \$8,794, \$11,239 for a two person household, and \$13,738 for a three person household. This threshold keeps increasing until it reaches a maximum of \$35,060 for a household of nine or more. If the total income for a family or unrelated individual falls below the relevant poverty threshold, then the family or unrelated individual is classified as being below the poverty line. The Income and Poverty statistics show that the cities of Farrell and Sharon have levels of poverty higher than those at the County and Commonwealth levels, with Farrell having a much higher poverty rate than the other municipalities at 24%. The City of Sharon, at 14.4%, is the only other jurisdiction of the six to have more than 10% of its families in poverty. The City of Hermitage, along with Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough, display lower

poverty rates in most categories. West Middlesex is the clear leader in terms of having the lowest poverty rates among families and individuals in the six municipalities. Table 6 shows the poverty rates for various segments of the population in 2000.

**TABLE 6  
POVERTY STATISTICS**

	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Mercer County	State
<b>Families in poverty:</b>	24.0%	6.3%	14.4%	8.3%	7.9%	2.3%	8.8%	7.8%
<b>1. With children under 18</b>	40.4%	11.3%	21.5%	15.1%	10.6%	0.9%	14.9%	12.1%
<b>2. With children under 5</b>	54.2%	20.5%	23.7%	6.3%	22.8%	3.2%	19.3%	15.3%
<b>Families with female householder:</b>	51.3%	27.4%	33.8%	41.2%	29.8%	8.6%	32.0%	24.9%
<b>1. With children under 18</b>	66.9%	38.2%	47.3%	50.0%	35.8%	7.1%	14.9%	12.1%
<b>2. With children under 5:</b>	83.9%	68.0%	62.9%	27.3%	50.9%	100.0% **	63.8%	47.4%
<b>Individuals in poverty:</b>	26.4%	8.2%	17.6%	14.4%	9.7%	4.7%	11.5%	11.0%
<b>18 years and older:</b>	19.1%	7.0%	14.9%	12.9%	7.6%	5.4%	9.5%	9.8%
<b>65 years and older:</b>	9.6%	6.5%	8.8%	12.7%	8.3%	7.6%	7.2%	9.1%

Source: U.S. Census Data 2000

**\*\*In West Middlesex, only 1 female h. holder in poverty has children under 5, equaling 100% of that specific population**

## HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

While the previous sections have largely focused on the individual, this section focuses on the households and families that populate the study area. In order to understand the following tables, it is necessary to define several terms. A **household** is defined by the Census Bureau as all of the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. A **family householder** is a householder living with one or more people related to him/her by birth, marriage or adoption. A **nonfamily householder** is a householder living alone or with nonrelatives only. A **family** is defined as a group of two people or more related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together. The Household Characteristics of the six municipalities are shown in Table 7. The Shenango Valley as a whole has a lower percentage of households with children under 18, and a lower percentage of households with individuals over 65 than Mercer County or Pennsylvania. On a municipal level, however, the cities of Farrell, Hermitage and Sharon all have a lower percentage of households with children under 18 than Mercer County and Pennsylvania. Fewer than 18% of Wheatland Borough households have children under 18

years of age, while Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough fall between the County and State percentages. The percentage of households with individuals 65 years of age or older varies widely by municipality. The cities of Farrell and Hermitage are well above the County and State figures, with 40.1% and 37.0% of their households housing residents 65 or over, respectively. West Middlesex Borough is again between the County and State figures, with 30.9%, while Wheatland Borough (20.9%), the City of Sharon (15.5%) and Shenango Township (9.2%) are all significantly below County and State percentages.

**TABLE 7  
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

Household Type	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Shenango Valley	Mercer County	State
Total Number of Households	2,504	6,809	6,791	349	1,637	372	<b>18,462</b>	46,712	4,777,003
Households w/children under 18	27.0% 676	26.4% 1,795	28.1% 1,911	17.8% 62	29.9% 490	29.6% 110	<b>27.3% 5,044</b>	29.3% 13,689	30.0% 1,430,808
Households w/individuals 65+	40.1% 1,003	37.0% 2,517	15.5% 1,056	20.9% 73	9.2% 151	30.9% 115	<b>26.6% 4,915</b>	31.4% 14,672	27.8% 1,328,237
Average size Household	2.37	2.32	2.56	2.14	2.47	2.47	----	2.44	2.48
Average family size	2.96	2.87	2.93	2.85	2.88	2.91	----	2.96	3.04

Source: U.S. Census Data

**TABLE 8  
FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS**

Type of Family Household	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Shenango Valley	Mercer County	State
Family Households	64.7% 1,620	67.8% 4,618	61.7% 4,189	57.9% 202	74.2% 1,215	73.9% 275	65.6% 12,119	69.3% 32,387	67.2% 3,208,388
-with own children <18	27.0% 676	26.4% 1,795	28.1% 1,911	17.8% 62	29.9% 490	29.6% 110	27.3% 5,044	29.3% 13,689	30.0% 1,430,808
Married couples	36.0% 902	54.9% 3,740	40.7% 2,763	41.5% 145	62.1% 1,016	57.0% 212	47.5% 8,778	54.8% 25,609	51.7% 2,467,673
-with own children <18	10.9% 273	19.9% 1,354	16.0% 1,087	12.9% 45	23.0% 377	22.3% 83	17.4% 3,219	21.4% 9,993	21.8% 1,043,071
Female h.holder, no husband	24.4% 611	10.2% 693	16.6% 1,128	11.2% 39	8.9% 145	12.4% 46	14.4% 2,662	10.9% 5,094	11.6% 554,693
-with own children <18	14.5% 362	5.5% 373	9.9% 672	3.4% 12	5.1% 84	5.4% 20	8.2% 1,523	6.1% 2,848	6.2% 298,091

Table 8 shows the statistics of family households in the six communities within the Shenango Valley Region, the County and the State. The Region has a lower percentage of both family households and married couples, as nearly 66% of the households are family households and just over 47% of the households consist of married couples. The Region also has a lower percentage of families with their own children, both for married couples and for all families, and a higher percentage of families with a female householder. In addition, there is a higher percentage of families run by a female householder with children under 18 years of age. At a municipal level, however, the picture is much more variable. For example, the percentage of family households in the City of Hermitage (67.8%) slightly exceeds the State percentage (67.2%), but lags behind Mercer County (69.3%). Shenango Township, with 74.2% family households, and West Middlesex Borough, with 73.9%, both significantly exceed the County and State figures. Hermitage, Shenango and West Middlesex also exceed the County and State percentages for married couples, while Farrell, Sharon and Wheatland have percentages of married couples well below the Region, County and State. Shenango and West Middlesex also exceed the County and State percentages for married couples living with their own children under the age of 18. Farrell and Sharon also have much higher percentages of female householders without husbands and female householders with children under 18. This is an area of concern because, as shown in Table 6, female householders both with and without children have higher poverty rates than the average individual or family.

**TABLE 9  
NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS**

Family	City of Farrell	City of Hermitage	City of Sharon	Wheatland Borough	Shenango Township	West Middlesex Borough	Mercer County	Pennsylvania
Non- Family Households	35.3%	32.2%	38.3%	42.1%	25.8%	26.1%	30.7%	32.8%
Householder living alone	31.5%	29.4%	33.7%	38.1%	22.7%	24.2%	27.0%	27.7%
Householder living alone & 65+	17.9%	15.7%	15.5%	20.9%	9.2%	10.8%	13.2%	11.6%

Table 9 shows the statistics for non-family households in the Region. Both Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough have lower percentages of their populations in non-family households, such as living alone or with a roommate, than the County and Commonwealth as a whole. The two municipalities also have a lower percentage of elderly householders living alone than the County and State. The City of Hermitage's percentages are slightly higher than those of the County in all three categories and those of the State in two out of three categories. The cities of Farrell and Sharon, along with Wheatland Borough, have noticeably higher percentages in all categories than the other

municipalities, which could partly be due to the higher percentage of rental housing present in the three municipalities.

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Instead of looking at current population figures to describe the state of the Shenango Valley, this section looks at projections of what the future of the Region might hold. These projections, which are shown in Table 10, are taken from the recently adopted Mercer County Comprehensive Plan Update (2006), and are independent from those issued by the State prior to the 2000 Census. The reason for this is simple--State projected growth for Mercer County from 1990-2000 did not occur. County population projections carried out by the Pennsylvania State Data Center indicated that moderate growth at a rate of 1.1% would occur between 1990 and 2000, and would continue at a similar rate until the projection horizon of 2020. More specifically, these projections indicated that Mercer County could expect an additional 859 residents (a 0.7 percent increase) by 2010, and another 1,457 residents (a 1.2 percent increase) by 2020. This 2010-2020 projected growth rate would have nearly matched the statewide projected growth rate of 1.3 %. The 2000 Census demonstrated that such growth did not take place during the 1990-2000 period. This information, along with later U.S. Census Bureau estimates that show a likely loss of population in most of the counties making up western Pennsylvania, make the accuracy of the older projections from the Pennsylvania State Data Center for 2010-2020 doubtful.

**TABLE 10  
POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR MERCER COUNTY, 2010-2025**

Jurisdiction	Census Counts			Population Projections				Percent Change		
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2000-2010	2010-2020	2000-2020
Pennsylvania	11,864,720	11,882,643	12,241,488	12,407,523	12,490,248	12,569,017	-	1.4	1.3	2.6
Mercer County	128,299	121,036	120,293	119,711	119,256	118,938	118,638	-0.9	-0.6	-1.1
City of Farrell	8,645	6,841	6,050	5,299	4,927	4,570	4,223	-18.6	-13.7	-24.5
City of Hermitage	16,365	15,300	16,157	17,050	17,462	17,885	18,301	8.1	4.9	10.7
City of Sharon	19,057	17,493	16,328	15,159	14,564	13,994	13,435	-10.8	-7.7	-14.3
Wheatland Borough	1,132	760	748	730	720	711	702	-3.7	-2.6	-4.9
Shenango Township	4,399	4,339	4,037	3,740	3,588	3,444	3,302	-11.1	-7.9	-14.7
West Middlesex Borough	1,064	982	929	878	851	826	801	-8.4	-5.9	-11.1
Shenango Valley Region	50,662	45,715	44,249	42,856	42,112	41,430	40,764	-3.2	-3.4	-6.8

Source: Mercer County Comprehensive Plan Update, 2006

The population projections for the six communities show a loss of residents in the Region as well as in five of the six municipalities. The population for the Region from the 2000 Census is 44,249 and the projection for 2010 is 42,856. The projection for 2020 shows a population of 41,430, with a continued decline to 40,764 in 2025. This would be a decrease of 3.2% between 2000 and 2010 and of 3.4% between 2010 and 2020, with a total decrease in population from 2000 to 2025 of more than 8%. This compares with an expected overall decrease in the County of 1.4% over the period from 2000 to 2025.

The growth in the Shenango Valley is expected to take place in the City of Hermitage. The City of Farrell is expected to experience the highest rates of population loss, with a projected percentage decrease of almost 19% between 2000 and 2010 and 14% between 2010 and 2020. Shenango Township is not far behind, with a projected rate of decrease of 11.1% between 2000 and 2010 and 7.9% between 2010 and 2020. The City of Sharon is expected to lose roughly 11% of its population between 2000 and 2010, and another 8% by 2020.

## **Appendix I**

# **POTENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS**

The general elements presented below could be applied as appropriate in corridors in the Region, including PA Route 18, and PA Route 318.

- Coordination of traffic signals.
- Construction of a center turn lane or left turn bays to decrease queuing and create space for emergency vehicle travel.
- Construction of a bike path or multi-use trail running parallel to the corridor.
- Evaluation of a transit shuttle or other transit system that will run along the corridor.
- Employ land use tools:
  - Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to help preserve transportation capacity (sprawl isolates uses and increases reliance on automobile travel between low density, single use areas). TND's, with a mix of residential, commercial, and professional uses within walking distance of each other, could reduce the need for automobile trips.

- Site plan guidelines

Site design guidelines and standards are important in corridor management programs, and include:

- Lots that do not require direct access to the arterial.
- Siting commercial buildings nearer to roads and provide for parking to the rear of lots with access to secondary roads and/or interconnected parking areas (requiring cross-easements over properties for common use of areas).
- Providing adequate driveway length to allow stacking.
- Establishing limits for vertical alignment of major roadways at curb cuts.
- Installing mid-block crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Requiring connections between parking lots and building entrances.
  - Limiting service road widths and curb radii and minimizing the number of conflict points.
  - Providing incentives for smaller and fewer signs by allowing a reduced setback from roads.
  - Encouraging attractive, interesting building design.
- Access management plans

Access management plans address provision of access to adjacent land while simultaneously preserving the flow of traffic on the road system in terms of safety, capacity, and speed. Intent is to increase capacity of transportation infrastructure, create shorter travel times, and prolong functional life of the infrastructure.

Typical access management strategies include:

- Utilizing service roads with limited access points, shared driveways for adjacent parcels, and cross access among adjoining businesses as alternatives to individual curb cuts.
- Requiring developers to provide a connected and sufficient local road system to minimize using the main arterial that is designed to accommodate through traffic.
- Reducing/limiting the number of curb cuts by considering the location, design, and spacing of driveways.
- Requiring shared access points and connectivity between parcels.
- Reducing the number of parking spaces by permitting shared parking arrangements among individual businesses.
- Planning for a new street network.
- Aligning driveways and creating regular offsets.
- Relating driveway designs to travel speeds and traffic volumes.
- Prohibiting direct parking access from a parking space to the road.

- Providing pedestrian and transit friendly accommodations, and
  - Planning for public parking.
- Corridor preservation techniques to allow for future capacity improvements.

Corridor preservation techniques minimize or prevent development in areas likely to be needed to meet future transportation needs, such as capacity expansion of roadways, parallel service roads, and bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements.

Methods of corridor preservation include:

- Purchase of land
- Official Mapping
- Building Setback Standards
- Developer Dedications
- Traffic impact fees
- Land use policies to provide and operate infrastructure more efficiently
  - mixed development
  - residential, commercial and industrial growth in close proximity
  - range of housing types and use of clustering to provide open space
  - compact activity centers which encourage alternative travel patterns and provide cross-access at arterials
- Avoid the creation of narrow, commercial strips along the corridor by focusing development on major intersections;
- Encourage mixed uses and higher densities in the TNDs;
- Redesign existing strip development areas and adjacent land areas;
- Plan for an integrated, community street network that links to adjacent areas;
- Require master planning for large tracts of land;

- Identify critical areas for open space conservation and create natural buffers between activity centers;
- Reflect the desired community character;
- Use corridor preservation techniques to allow for future capacity improvements.

**APPENDIX II**

**NATIONAL AND STATE EFFORTS AND  
LEGISLATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

## NATIONAL AND STATE EFFORTS AND LEGISLATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Federal programs encouraging historic preservation include:

- Maintenance of the National Register of Historic Places.
- Section 106 Review of federally funded or assisted projects that impact historic resources.
- Historic Preservation Tax Credits on federal income tax for qualifying rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings used for income-producing purposes.
- The Certified Local Government Program was created to facilitate historic preservation at the local level.

The earliest Federal preservation statute was the Antiquities Act of 1906, which authorized the President to set aside historic landmarks, structures, and objects located on lands controlled by the United States as national monuments. It required permits for archeological activities on Federal lands, and established criminal and civil penalties for violation of the act.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 was the second major piece of Federal historic preservation legislation. This act declared it national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance and directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct various programs with respect to historic preservation.

In 1964, The United States Conference of Mayors undertook a study of historic preservation in the United States. The resulting report, "With Heritage So Rich," revealed a growing public interest in preservation and the need for a unified approach to the protection of historic resources. This report influenced Congress to enact a strong new statute establishing a nationwide preservation policy: The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

### **National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA)**

The National Historic Preservation Act (1966) and its subsequent amendments established a legal basis for the protection and preservation of historic and cultural resources. Historic resources are defined as *"any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structures or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register; the term includes artifacts, records, and remains which are related to such a district, site, building, structure or object."*

The Act promoted the use of historic properties to meet the contemporary needs of society. It directed the Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local

governments, Native Americans, and the public, to take a leadership role in preservation. First, the Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to expand and maintain the National Register of Historic Places. This is an inventory of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant on a national, State, or local level in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Once a property is eligible to be placed on the list, the property, site, or object can be qualified for Federal grants, loans, and tax incentives.

Second, NHPA encourages State and local preservation programs. States may prepare and submit for approval, programs for historic preservation to the Secretary of the Interior. Approval can be granted if they provide for the designation of a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to administer the State preservation program; establish a State historic preservation review board; and provide for adequate public participation in the State program. The SHPO must identify and inventory historic properties in the State; nominate eligible properties to the National Register; prepare and implement a statewide historic preservation plan; serve as a liaison with Federal agencies on preservation matters; and provide public information, education, and technical assistance. The NHPA also authorized a grant program, supported by the Historic Preservation Fund, to provide monies to States for historic preservation projects and to individuals for the preservation of properties listed in the National Register.

Since 1966, Congress has strengthened national preservation policy further by recognizing the importance of preserving historic aspects of the Nation's heritage in several other statutes, among them the National Environmental Policy Act and several transportation acts, and by enacting statutes directed toward the protection and preservation of archeological resources. These laws require Federal agencies to consider historic resources in their planning and decision-making and overlap with provisions of NHPA.

### ***Section 106 Review***

Section 106 of the NHPA requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties and provide the Council an opportunity to comment on Federal projects prior to implementation. Section 106 review encourages, but does not mandate, preservation.

To successfully complete Section 106 review, Federal agencies must:

- Determine if Section 106 of NHPA applies to a given project and, if so, initiate the review;
- Gather information to decide which properties in the project area are listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places;
- Determine how historic properties might be affected;
- Explore alternatives to avoid or reduce harm to historic properties; and

- Reach agreement with the SHPO/tribe (and the Council in some cases) on measures to deal with any adverse effects or obtain advisory comments from the Council, which are sent to the head of the agency.

The Executive Branch has also expressed support for preservation through several Executive Orders. Examples include Executive Order No. 11593 that President Nixon signed in 1971, which instituted procedures Federal agencies must follow in their property management activities. In 1996, President Clinton signed another important Executive Order No. 13006, which put forth support for locating Federal offices and facilities in historic districts and properties in the Nation's inner cities. Executive Order No. 13006 also directs Federal agencies to use and rehabilitate properties in such areas wherever feasible and reaffirms the commitment to Federal leadership in the preservation of historic properties set forth in NHPA. Another 1996 Executive Order, No. 13007, expresses support for the protection of Native American sacred sites.

### **Federal Tax Incentives for Historic Buildings**

According to the Tax Reform Act of 1986, a property owner is eligible for a 20% tax credit, along with a 27.5 to 31.5% straight-line depreciation for the substantial rehabilitation of historic buildings for commercial, industrial, and rental residential purposes (but not owner-occupied buildings), and a 10% tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of nonresidential buildings built before 1936. The 10% tax credit is not available for rehabilitations of certified structures.

Two Federal Tax Incentive Programs currently apply to preservation activities in Pennsylvania: the rehabilitation investment tax credit and the charitable contribution deduction.

**Rehabilitation investment tax credits** are the most widely used incentive program. Certain expenses incurred in connection with the rehabilitation of an old building are eligible for a tax credit. Rehabilitation investment tax credits are available to owners and certain long-term leases of incoming-producing properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There are two rates: 20% for historic buildings and 10% for nonresidential, nonhistoric buildings built before 1936.

The **charitable contribution deduction** is taken in the form of a conservation easement and enables the owner of a "certified historic structure" to receive a one-time tax deduction. A conservation easement usually involves the preservation of a building's facade by restricting the right to alter its appearance.

The Federal Tax Incentive Programs are coordinated through the State Historic Preservation Office, Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and

Museum Commission in conjunction with the National Park Service. Federal Historic Preservation Certification Applications are available on-line.

**The National Park Service “Certified Local Government” (CLG) Program**

This program was created in 1980 under the National Historic Preservation Act and administered in the Commonwealth by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; the Certified Local Government Program provides additional benefits to municipalities interested in historic preservation. Once certified, the local government is then eligible to:

- Participate directly in the federal historic preservation program;
- Have greater access to Historic Preservation Funds;
- Have greater level of information exchange with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO);
- Get technical assistance and training from the SHPO; and
- Have a higher degree of participation in statewide preservation programs and planning.

**Several critical requirements for CLG designation are:**

- Adopt and enforce appropriate legislation for designation and protection of historic properties;
- Establish a qualified historic preservation commission;
- Enact a system for surveying historic properties;
- Enact a public participation component as part of the local program;
- Adequately perform duties and responsibilities delegated through the certification process;
- Continuing in-service historic preservation training for Historical Architecture Review Board (HARB) and Historical Commission members (8 hrs training annually per member);
- Regular attendance at HARB or Historical Commission meetings;
- A good faith effort by the governing body to appoint HARB members with professional qualifications and historic preservation backgrounds;
- Submittal of an annual report of the municipality’s historic preservation activities;
- Continuing enforcement of the historic district ordinance.

This was established to allow local governments to participate directly in the national historic preservation program and to provide funding to local governments to carry out its historic preservation responsibilities (survey, inventory, designation, and protection of their historic resources). To achieve “certified local government” status in Pennsylvania a municipality applies to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission’s Bureau for Historic Preservation.

All states are required to set aside 10% of its Federal historic preservation grant funds to CLGs. These grants are presently offered as a ratio of 60% funding from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and 40% match from the CLG.

### **Pennsylvania State Legislative Response to Historic Preservation: Historical and Museum Commission Act 1945**

Act No. 446, approved June 6, 1945, amending the Administrative Code to consolidate the functions of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, The State Museum and the State Archives, created the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is responsible for the following historic preservation activities in the Commonwealth:

- State Historic Preservation Office for *Determination of Eligibility* and nominations to the National Register, of Historic Places;
- Section 106 Review;
- Administering Historic Preservation Grants; and
- Assisting local governments with the Certified Local Government Program.

The Commission is an independent administrative board, consisting of nine citizens of the Commonwealth appointed by the Governor, the Secretary of Education ex officio, two members of the Senate appointed by the President Pro Tempore and Minority Leader, and two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker and Minority Leader. The Executive Director, appointed by the Commission to serve at its pleasure, is an ex officio member of the Environmental Quality Board, County Records Committee and the Local Government Records Committee.

As the official agency of the Commonwealth for the conservation of Pennsylvania's historic heritage, the powers and duties of the Commission fall into these principal fields: care of historical manuscripts, public records, and objects of historic interest; museums; archaeology; publications; historic sites and properties; historic preservation; geographic names; and the promotion of public interest in Pennsylvania history.

The Commission is funded partially through an annual legislative appropriation, various grants provided by Federal programs, and private donations. Officially recognized local historical organizations may benefit financially through the Commission's eligibility to receive matching funds from various federal programs. The PHMC is active in many phases of historic preservation. The PHMC also conducts a landmark identification program, presenting identification plaques to property owners for attachment on structures included in the PA Inventory of Historical Places. The landmark identification program also includes the placement of roadside historical signs at various sites and locations having statewide and national historic significance. Today nearly 1,900

markers are placed along city roads and highways to represent sites of historical significance in Pennsylvania.

An executive order went into place to require the Office of Historic Preservation of the PHMC to approve all proposals involving the demolition of a state building. The Office of Historic Preservation was also directed to develop and implement a program that will assist the public and private sectors in implementing the Commonwealth's policy to "protect and enhance our irreplaceable resources." The Office has since implemented a five-point program to achieve the executive order as follows:

1. Registering historically or architecturally significant sites and structures on the National Register of Historic Places and on the Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places;
2. Advising and guiding individuals and organizations regarding historic preservation and its funding;
3. Reviewing applications for federal preservation grants;
4. Working for legislation at the state level as an effective tool in historic preservation; and
5. Working with other governmental agencies to review the impact of projects, such as highways, on the Commonwealth's historic resources.

The Contact information for the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is as follows:

Commonwealth Keystone Bldg.  
2nd Floor  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

(717) 787-3362  
fax: (717) 783-9924  
[www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us)

### **Pennsylvania's Bureau for Historic Preservation (Bureau)**

The Bureau is part of the PHMC and serves as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The PHMC is the Commonwealth's official history agency and the Executive Director is designated as the State Historic Preservation Officer.

The Bureau provides technical assistance for the preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings throughout Pennsylvania. The Bureau reviews architectural plans and specifications and provides comments on historic building projects for state and federal compliance. They also assist in code-related issues and accessibility programs in the form of letters of support for variances to historic buildings. In an effort to inform the general public, public agencies, local governments and other stewards of historic properties, the Bureau assists in the development and distribution of material on applying the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*,

preservation planning and the appropriate treatment and repair of historic building materials.

The Bureau also administers the Federal Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC) program in partnership with the National Park Service. The tax credit program is one of the most successful and cost-effective programs that encourage private investment in rehabilitating historic properties such as office buildings, rental housing, hotels and retail stores. According to PHMC's website, since its inception in 1976, Pennsylvania has been a national leader in certified tax credit projects, completing over 1,800 projects and generating over \$2.5 billion in qualified rehabilitation expenditures. The Bureau provides technical assistance throughout the application process.

The Bureau can provide property owners with publications and technical assistance that discuss the appropriate treatment of historic buildings according to the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*.

The Bureau administers the state's historic preservation program as authorized by the Pennsylvania History Code and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is guided by advisory boards and The Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Plan. A board of Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, provides oversight of the Commission.

The Pennsylvania General Assembly is in the process of considering legislation to establish a Historic Homesites Grant Program. Once established, this legislation will provide funds to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to support rehabilitation grants (up to \$6,000) to individuals owning and residing in a historic residential building, as well as to individuals intending to purchase and reside in a historic residential building.

The buildings must serve as the owner's principal residence, be listed in the National Register of Historic Places or be determined to be a contributing building in a listed National Register Historic District, or be located in an Act 167 historic district, or be designated as a historic property under the local ordinance or city code in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. All work on a historic homesite must conform to the U.S. Secretary of Interior's "Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties."

### **The Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Plan**

The PHMC is gearing up to create a PA Historic Preservation Plan. Stated below is the agenda and goals of the plan:

1. Educate Pennsylvanians About Our Heritage and Its Value
  - Bring Pennsylvania heritage alive for our children
  - Get the preservation message out

- Reach out to elected officials and key professionals in the public and private sectors
2. **Build Better Communities Through Preservation**
    - Strengthen and expand preservation planning at the local and regional levels
    - Expand the use of preservation as an economic development strategy
    - Make technical assistance more available and useful to citizens and local governments
  3. **Provide Strong Leadership At The State Level**
    - Seek increased financial support for historic preservation
    - Lead by example
    - Build strong partnerships

### **Historic District Designation in Pennsylvania**

To establish a designation of a Historic District on the local level requires an assessment of the present status of the community's historic resources, knowledge of past historic preservation efforts, and a list of goals and objectives to be obtained in the future.

Taking advantage of historic preservation incentives available at the national, state, and local governmental levels, such as grants, income tax credits for historic rehabilitation, low-interest loans, and local tax abatements will help in the success and acceptance of preserving historic buildings in the community.

It is useful to relate local historic preservation efforts to state and national programs, which will provide a broader perspective by identifying national, state, and local historic preservation organizations and government agencies as resources.

### **Act 167 - Establishing Historical Districts**

Act 167 was adopted in 1961 and amended in 1963. This Act authorizes counties, cities, boroughs, ... and townships to create historic districts within their geographic boundaries; provides for the appointment of Boards of Historical Architectural Review; empowers governing bodies of political subdivisions to protect the distinctive historical character of these districts and to regulate the erection, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, demolition or razing of buildings within the historic districts. It provides the necessary authority for municipalities to adopt and implement historic preservation programs.

## **Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act 247**

The State Legislature enacted Act 247, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code, in 1969. The Act, as enabling legislation, authorizes local governments (counties, cities, township, and boroughs) to establish by ordinances, local planning commissions, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations; and, by resolution, adopt a municipal comprehensive plan. In particular, Article VI, Zoning, Section 605, states:

*“The provisions of all zoning ordinances may be classified so that different provisions may be applied to different classes of situations, uses and structures...Where zoning districts are created, all provisions shall be uniform for each class of uses or structures, within each district, except that additional classifications may be made within any district:*

*...For the regulation, restriction, or prohibition of uses and structures at or near... (vi) places having unique historical or patriotic interest of value...”*

The combination of Act 167 and Act 247 provides the constitutional authority and legislative framework for local governments to develop, adopt, and implement historic preservation programs, in conjunction with a municipal comprehensive plan based on sound planning and legal principles. The legislative authority is provided, and expert legal and planning advice is available; however, local governments must yet be sold on the necessity and benefits of historic preservation.

### **Historic Preservation at the Local Level**

Two state laws provide the legal foundation for municipalities to adopt historic ordinances and regulatory measures.

**1. Act 247 - Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC):** In 2000, two new amendments to the MPC, Acts 67 and 68, strengthened the ability of local government to provide for the protection of historic resources in their comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision ordinances.

*Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans may consider the conservation and enhancement of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic resources in their municipalities [§1103 (a) (6)].*

*Zoning ordinances may promote and preserve prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, and areas of historic significance. [§603 (c) (7)]*

*Zoning ordinances are required to protect natural and historic features and resources [§603 (g) (2)].*

A Historic Overlay Zoning District, unlike the protection offered through the establishment of an Act 167 Historic District, can include individual sites as well as clusters, as long as the resources are well documented and identified on an historic resources map. An historic overlay district could require new buildings to be similar in type and scale to those already existing. Setbacks should be consistent with the common building setback. Requirements to replicate the existing building line, height, and bulk could help to preserve the existing neighborhood character.

**2. Act 167 - The Historic District Act (1961):** Townships and boroughs may create historic districts within their municipalities to protect the historic character through regulation of the erection, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, demolition or razing of buildings within the district. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission must certify districts, including a *determination of eligibility* for the National Register of Historic Places. Therefore, historic districts established through Act 167 are afforded the same protection from federal projects associated with National Register Properties. Act 167 requires appointment of an historic architectural review board, or HARB, to advise the local governing body on the appropriateness of building activity in the district.

