

FARRELL, HERMITAGE, SHARON, WHEATLAND JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

JULY 2007



City of Farrell, City of Hermitage, City of Sharon, Borough of Wheatland

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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 21st 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 vision that residents are proud of their communities and have a renewed sense of optimism for the future; the Region has a diverse economy which provides family-sustaining jobs for a trained workforce; efforts to eliminate conditions which contribute to blight continue, and infill, rehabilitation, and redevelopment projects have improved neighborhoods; growth within greenfields is managed utilizing Smart Growth Concepts; and destinations within the Region have been identified and linked.

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 anchors, linkages, and corridors are essential when planning for the future of this Region, and Chapter 7 discusses those concepts. Anchors include Downtown Sharon and the planned Hermitage Town Center. Corridors include East State Street, Route 60, Route 18, the Shenango River, planned bicycle/pedestrian corridors, and additional road corridors; gateway treatments at entries to corridors are stressed.

Basic plan elements are found in Chapters 8 through 12. Chapter 8 is the Future Land Use and Housing Plan. Chapter 9 is the Community Facilities and Services Plan. Chapter 10 is the Transportation and Circulation Plan. Chapter 11 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 13. 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 13 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 and current 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 the four 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.
- Designating responsibility to a new or existing agency to foster regional cooperation to address the opportunity presented by the extent of vacant properties in the Region.
- Increased intermunicipal cooperation in grantsmanship; staff utilization; recreation and other municipal services; regional promotion; and project planning, such as corridor enhancement plans and bicycle/pedestrian corridor plans.

Cooperative municipal efforts recommended by this plan are discussed at the beginning of Chapter 9 and include, among others,

- Cooperative planning for enhancements to the Route 60 and State Street Corridors and development of consistent overlay zoning.
- Continued cooperative recreation planning between Farrell and Wheatland.
- Region-wide pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan implementation.

- Development of Highland Road and Sharpsville Road/Wheatland Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridors.
- 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 development, maintenance, and improvement of community infrastructure.
- Sharon/Farrell Weed and Seed.
- Sharon/Farrell Elm Street Program.
- Investigate opportunities for Keystone Innovation Zones with Penn State Shenango and other institutions of higher learning.
- Sharon and Penn State Shenango planning together how to enhance downtown experience for student and parents and identify types of uses which would be attractive in the vicinity of the campus. Identify what PSU can do to support downtown revitalization and enhance student presence downtown.

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 four 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 13 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 that 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 718 enhancement plan.
- Idaho Street, Roemer Boulevard and Sharon-New Castle Road enhancement plan.
- State Street enhancement plan.
- Route 60 enhancement plan.
- Shenango River plan.
- Regional Trail System plan.

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

- Downtown enhancement/streetscape projects.
- Penn State Area Enhancement.
- River access/enhancement/revitalization.
- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street enhancements/streetscapes.
- East State Street enhancements/streetscapes.
- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street economic development.
- Route 60 corridor widening.

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.

In summary, the following should be done after adoption of this plan:

- * Execute an Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement
- * Establish Regional Planning Committee
- * Establish responsibility for plan implementation
- * Begin the consistency process for municipal ordinances and plans
- * Contact partners for implementation
- * Choose a small project related to plan priorities to complete to build momentum.

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THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Chapter 1

The Joint Comprehensive Plan

Introduction and Purpose

The Shenango Valley contains a variety of landscapes which make the Region unique in many ways. The rural and agricultural areas of eastern Hermitage, the busy and commercialized Route 18 Corridor, and the dense urbanized cities of Sharon and Farrell, and the industrial corridor within Wheatland, Farrell, and Sharon present unique challenges as well as opportunities in future land use planning. Issues such as economic growth, job creation, agricultural and open space preservation, cultural resource development, and the continuation of the quality of life in the face of a decreasing population makes this plan a challenging one.

The fundamental challenge of this Comprehensive Plan is to help create places and spaces where people want to be and make a future – safe, convenient and pleasant places to live; good job opportunities; a transportation system which allows convenient movement through the area; places to walk, meet and interact; recreational opportunities; restaurant and entertainment venues after work; attractive areas in which to shop; good educational and health care systems; and cultural events and facilities.

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.

Some of the municipalities have prepared individual comprehensive plans in the past, the most recent being the Cities of Hermitage and Farrell. 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 Wheatland, Hermitage, Farrell, and Sharon 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 the cities of Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, the Borough of Wheatland, 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

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 Hermitage, Wheatland, Sharon and Farrell. 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

The Cities of Hermitage, Sharon, Farrell and Wheatland 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 bisects 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 the eastern part of the city of Hermitage; industrial, commercial, and urban development line the PA Route 60 Corridor; dense urban development is typical in the Cities of Sharon and Farrell; and a mixture of suburban, industrial, and commercial are found in the Borough of Wheatland, as well as the western portion of the City of Hermitage.

Commercial Areas and Employment Centers

Most of the local commercial areas are located along the PA Route 18, PA Route 62, and PA Route 60 Corridors, and are clustered mainly in the Hermitage town center, State Street in Sharon, and the Broadway/MLK Jr. Boulevard/Dock Street corridor, with some scattered commercial areas located throughout the cities. With a few exceptions, there are no large scale retail commercial areas within the cities of Farrell or Sharon. Larger scale retail and commercial uses including the large-chain super-centers, shopping malls, and supermarkets can be found to the east in Hermitage along the Route 18 Corridor.

There are a variety of employment centers and industries in the region. Wheatland Tube, and Winner Steel are among the largest heavy industries; the Sharon Regional Health system, (Mercer County's largest employer), Wintronics, Eastern Software, the Hillside industrial parks, and the local school districts represent some of the larger employment centers in the Region.

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 Valley with the following categories:

- Economic Revitalization Areas;
- Neighborhood Revitalization Areas;
- Urban/Suburban Preservation;
- Economic Growth Areas;

- Mixed Use Growth Areas.

The comprehensive plan for Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland 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 Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland planning region is bordered by five municipalities in Mercer County: Shenango Township to the south; Jefferson and Lackawannock Townships to the east; and Sharpsville Borough and South Pymatuning Township to the north. To the west of the region are Brookfield and Hubbard Townships, Trumbull County, Ohio. The following is a brief summary of the land use recommendations of the comprehensive plans, where they exist, of adjacent municipalities.

Sharpsville Region Comprehensive Plan

The Sharpsville Region Plan includes two municipalities adjacent to the planning region: The Borough of Sharpsville, and South Pymatuning Township. The plan is currently in draft form, however, the future land use proposed use for the border of Sharpsville which abuts the cities of Hermitage and Sharon is predominately single family residential, with an industrial area along the river across from Sharon. The land uses in Hermitage are residential and recreation (Buhl Farm Park). The land uses in Sharon include industrial and residential.

South Pymatuning Township shares a border with the City of Hermitage, and this portion of the Township is designated as residential by the plan, as are the majority of the land uses in Hermitage. One possible exception is the Route 18 Corridor in which Hermitage allows commercial and business development, and South Pymatuning Township does not.

Shenango Township

Shenango Township is located directly south of the City of Hermitage. Shenango Township is currently involved in a multi-municipal planning effort with West Middlesex Borough. The draft land use plan designates the Township's border with the City of Hermitage as Rural/Agriculture; Industrial; and Corridor Enhancement.

Mercer Region Comprehensive Plan

The Mercer Region Plan includes Jefferson Township, which shares the eastern border of the City of Hermitage. The Plan designates this portion of Jefferson Township as Rural/Preservation Areas, and Growth Target Areas for the Route 62 Corridor.

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, and the presence of vacant land, will have a powerful influence upon development. The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan designates the Region as a Growth Area. The goals and objectives of this Joint Comprehensive Plan are generally consistent with the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan designations. The land uses of the surrounding municipalities are also generally compatible and consistent.

CITY OF HERMITAGE QUICK FACTS

HISTORY: Established 1976 (as city); Originally incorporated as Hickory Township in 1833.

LAND AREA: 29.5 square miles

POPULATION : 16,571
(2005 estimate) 1990-2005 growth rate of 8.3%
2000 Median household income is \$39,454

GOVERNMENT: Hermitage is a home-rule charter 3rd class city governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners. The day-to-day operations are administered by a City Manager.
In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 50th Senatorial District and 7th Legislative District.
In the U.S. House of Representatives: 3rd Congressional District of Pennsylvania

SEWER AND WATER: Hermitage Municipal Authority
Upper Shenango Valley Water Pollution Control Authority
Aqua, Pennsylvania

EDUCATION: Hermitage School District – Public school for grades K through 12.
Student population - 2,190 (2005-06)
2010-2011 Projection - 2,122

MUNICIPAL OFFICE: City of Hermitage
800 North Hermitage Road
Hermitage, PA 16148
(724)-981-0800
www.hermitage.net

CITY OF SHARON QUICK FACTS

HISTORY:	Established 1841 (as a borough); Incorporated as a city in 1918.
LAND AREA:	3.8 square miles
POPULATION : (2005 estimate)	15,504 1990-2005 growth rate of -11.4% 2000 Median household income is \$26,945
GOVERNMENT:	Sharon is a 3 rd class city governed by a mayor and a five-member City Council. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 50 th Senatorial District and 7 th Legislative District. In the U.S. House of Representatives: 3rd Congressional District of Pennsylvania
SEWER AND WATER:	Upper Shenango Valley Water Pollution Control Authority Aqua, Pennsylvania
EDUCATION:	<u>Sharon City School District</u> – Public school for grades K through 12. Student population - 2,298 (2005-06) 2010-2011 Projection - 2,073
MUNICIPAL OFFICE:	City of Sharon municipal building www.cityofsharon.net

CITY OF FARRELL QUICK FACTS

HISTORY: Established 1916 (as Borough of South Sharon); Incorporated as City of Farrell in 1932.

LAND AREA: 2.3 square miles

POPULATION : 5,999
(2005 estimate) 1990-2005 growth rate of -12.3%
2000 Median household income is \$22,659

GOVERNMENT: Farrell is a 3rd class city governed by a mayor, deputy mayor, and a five-member City Council. The day-to-day operations are administered by a City Manager.
In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 50th Senatorial District and 7th Legislative District.
In the U.S. House of Representatives: 3rd Congressional District of Pennsylvania

SEWER AND WATER: Hermitage Municipal Authority
Upper Shenango Valley Water Pollution Control Authority
Aqua, Pennsylvania

EDUCATION: Farrell Area School District – Public school for grades K through 12.
Student population - 1,015 (2005-06)
2010-2011 Projection - 857

MUNICIPAL OFFICE: City of Farrell
500 Roemer Boulevard
Farrell, PA 16121
www.cityoffarrell.com

BOROUGH OF WHEATLAND QUICK FACTS

HISTORY:	Established
LAND AREA:	0.9 square miles
POPULATION : (2005 estimate)	724 1990-2005 growth rate of -4.5% 2000 Median household income is \$27,596
GOVERNMENT:	Wheatland is a Borough governed by a mayor and a Borough Council. The day-to-day operations are administered by a Borough Secretary. In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: 50 th Senatorial District and 7 th Legislative District. In the U.S. House of Representatives: 3rd Congressional District of Pennsylvania
SEWER AND WATER:	Hermitage Municipal Authority Upper Shenango Valley Water Pollution Control Authority Aqua, Pennsylvania
EDUCATION:	<u>Farrell School District</u> – Public school for grades K through 12. Student population - 1,015 (2005-06) 2010-2011 Projection - 857
MUNICIPAL OFFICE:	Wheatland Municipal Building 71 Broadway Avenue Wheatland, PA 16161 (724) 347-7060

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 Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland 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>Farrell, Sharon Wheatland & Hermitage</i>	
Steering Committee Comments	Ranking
Need infrastructure upgrades - antiquated sewers/water treatment, especially older communities. Start here with improvements	6
Provide incentives to restore older commercial building facades/create architectural standards for new buildings without becoming a barrier to development	4
Revitalize the town - economic development - remove eyesores - create open space	3
Preservation of historic structures should be a high priority – we are losing our local history	3
Need a shared community center - all ages, programs – recreation	3
Promote farming as an economic generator - organic foods/ retail outlets - currently a hub for trucking which should help this activity	3
Existing housing in Wheatland - small area - keep industry/commercial land uses from encroaching on residential area	3
Develop Route 60 corridor - remove unattractive structures – this is the “ribbon connecting the communities”	3
Develop greenways system along Shenango River	3
Concern with disposable buildings - waste of natural resources- quickly become unattractive – see if we can re-use buildings	3
Need more recreation/open preservation interconnecting trails	2
Improve streets/sidewalks	2
Family entertainment needed - restore downtown theater	2

<i>Farrell, Sharon Wheatland & Hermitage</i>	
Steering Committee Comments	Ranking
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
Consolidate school districts - bring together communities and reduce costs	2
Attract government jobs	2
Create a tourism destination - museum	1
Rezone/Reuse unused and underutilized industrialized areas - vary land uses within industrial category	1
Quality of life - meet needs of seniors, the fastest growing segment of our communities	1
Improve ordinances to benefit small businesses – need to encourage more small businesses	1
Generate money from non-tax sources - an example would be gas wells	1
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	1
Alternate transportation should be explored - transit/bike - currently rely only on cars to get around	1
Add/change ordinances to encourage businesses down East State Street, infill existing commercial areas off Route 18 instead of only along Route 18	1
Urban living - affordable - would love to live over store in Sharon- rehabbed housing stock is needed – attraction for younger adults	0
Stormwater management is needed - flood down State Street every time there is a substantial rain	0
Retain “sense of place” - remember past – there are special places that make this valley worth living in and need to be preserved	0

<i>Farrell, Sharon Wheatland & Hermitage</i>	
Steering Committee Comments	Ranking
More landscaping in business areas would change image of area	0
More housing rehab - housing stock is in need of help - focus on single family housing renovation	0
We need to try to keep what we have now - businesses/youth through helping businesses - education	0
There is a perception that family units are breaking down - impact on policies for this plan	0
Attracting immigrants for cultural diversity is important, they would provide a new way of looking at current issues	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 BCCC	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

<i>Shenango Valley Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans</i>	
Public Comments (April 26, 2006)	Ranking
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 better live (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

<i>Shenango Valley Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans</i>	
Public Comments (April 26, 2006)	Ranking
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

<i>Shenango Valley Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plans</i>	
Public Comments (April 26, 2006)	Ranking
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 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 protected from encroachment and more/better public access to this special resource.
- 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 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.

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 communications.

Additional Issues

During the course of this planning study, additional issues have been identified:

- Disparity of municipal real estate tax rates. The rate in Hermitage is 5 mills, Farrell 22 mills, Wheatland 23.25 mills, and Sharon 39.5 mills.
- Movement of people and businesses from the most urbanized areas to greenfields.
- Financial limitations of Farrell, Sharon, and Wheatland. Farrell is an Act 47 community (financially distressed status). Sharon has gone through the Early Intervention Program, but has not applied for Act 47 status (which helps municipalities avoid bankruptcy by allowing them to collect higher wage taxes and receive preferential treatment for state grant funding).
- School enrollment is down in the Region, but there is continued substantial investment in school facilities in the school districts in the Region.
- Sharon's crime rate is increasing, while police manpower has decreased because of budgetary concerns.
- The high cost of repairs and escalating utility costs make it difficult for elderly homeowners who typically have the least amount of income to address such issues. When these homes do go on the market, the high cost of rehab makes it difficult to attract new residents to the city. As a result, many of these homes remain vacant and eventually become blighted and slowly decay while bringing down the value of surrounding properties.
- The Region has a declining and aging population in the older urban areas, and the income of people relative to the national average is declining. These older areas also have large numbers of single female headed households.
- There is a need to find positive things for children to do and to hold their interest.

- There is need for quality affordable housing.
- What is the best approach to realize the tremendous potential of downtown Sharon.
- As the steel industry declined and jobs were lost, businesses which catered to employees were also lost.

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.
- 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).
- Industrial heritage and existing industries.
- Historic sites and districts.
- Cultural diversity.
- History of welcoming immigrants to the community.
- Opportunities presented by vacant land.
- Norfolk Southern rail line.
- Proximity to I-80, I-79, Route 60.
- Community libraries.
- Nearby recreational opportunities, such as Shenango Lake.
- Golfing opportunities.

- 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.
- True downtown in Sharon.
- Buhl Farm Park.
- Existing infrastructure and transit systems.
- Opportunity at Columbia Theater/Vocal Group Hall of Fame.
- Tourist destinations such as Reyers, Winner, Daffins and Philadelphia Candies, Kraynaks, Avenue of 444 Flags, and Quaker Steak and Lube.
- Keystone opportunity zones/enterprise zone/economic development agencies/revolving loan funds.
- Visitors center in Sharon.
- Existing industrial and business parks.
- Recent construction of successful senior and non-senior housing developments.
- Churches and neighborhood and community organizations.

Chapter 4

Regional Vision

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 Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland:

Residents of the Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland Region are proud of their communities and have a renewed sense of optimism for the future. The Region is viewed as a vital destination which retains and attracts young people, families with children, and seniors. People within the communities work together to enhance the elements which link them, such as road corridors, alternative transportation modes, the recreation network, and the Shenango River. The assets of the Region are promoted and economic development is supported in a coordinated manner.

The Region has a diverse economy which provides family-sustaining jobs for a trained workforce. Necessary infrastructure improvements are made. Institutions of post secondary learning are thriving and adult education opportunities have been enhanced. Existing and new businesses have invested within the communities: brownfields have been developed with a mix of uses, new businesses have located in the downtowns, and entrepreneurs have located businesses to serve the needs of residential neighborhoods. The business community has been encouraged by projects which improve the mobility, safety, accessibility, and appearance along the Route 60, Route 62, and Route 18 corridors. Quality, coordinated development, signage, and landscaping are

required by land use regulations. Streetscape and beautification projects are implemented in downtowns and neighborhoods. Enhanced gateways to the communities provide a favorable impression of the Region.

Efforts to eliminate conditions which contribute to blight continue, and infill, rehabilitation, and redevelopment projects have improved neighborhoods.

Housing has been rehabilitated and modernized. Housing alternatives are provided for all age and income groups. Home ownership has increased. Neighborhoods are safer, more vibrant, and livable, supported by quality public safety, library, health, and education services, and protected from encroachments from incompatible land uses.

Within greenfields, growth is managed utilizing Smart Growth Concepts.

Development occurs at designated locations where adequate infrastructure is available. Environmental resources are protected, and greenways and significant areas of open space are preserved, integrated into developments, and connected to open space systems in other developments. Impacts of development are analyzed and mitigated, and buffering and landscaping is generous. Community character is respected, as is land suitability and carrying capacity. Developers provide necessary recreation facilities and road improvements. Development is concentrated and well planned – it is not stripped along the Region's roads. Access to roads is managed and coordinated. Developments are interconnected by road, trail, and sidewalk systems.

Destinations within the Region have been identified and linked, and wayfinding has been facilitated.

The Shenango River is a catalyst for economic development and community activities because of enhanced riverside development and accessibility. Historic resources have been protected and adaptively used. The industrial heritage of the Region has been recognized and celebrated.

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	16
Housing	Future Land Use and Housing Plan	8	25
Revitalization	Future Land Use and Housing Plan	8	29
Regional Cooperation	Community Facilities and Services Plan	9	1
Community Facilities, Services and Utilities	Community Facilities and Services Plan	9	5
Open Space and Recreation	Community Facilities and Services Plan	9	8
Community Development	Community Facilities and Services Plan	9	17
Transportation	Transportation and Circulation Plan	10	1
Economic Development	Economic Development Plan	11	3
Workforce Education and Training Goal and Objectives	Economic Development Plan	11	5
Historic, Architectural, and Cultural Resources	Historic Preservation and Natural Resources Plan	12	3
Natural Resources	Historic Preservation and Natural Resources Plan	12	6
Environmental Education	Historic Preservation and Natural Resources Plan	12	10

Chapter 5

Community Image and Quality of Development

One of the two guiding principles of the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization project was “quality in all things.” It was established that all improvements and changes brought about in the downtown revitalization area must be of high quality and conducive to generating consumer/investor confidence. Similarly, the Hermitage Town Center Plan strives to establish Hermitage as a memorable destination with a recognizable and unique character. The plan states “by showing the way through the creation of a strong and attractive public image for the community and creating opportunities for pedestrian linkages, these investments would pay off when the private land owners follow suit.”

The Sharon/Farrell Elm Street plan indicates that “the removal of blighted properties has been beginning. Now we need to begin to address the long rooted misconception of the negatives of the targeted area and bring about a new concept of promise, change and improvement.” “There is more. . . work that needs to be completed to make our communities’ visible image change.” Farrell is justifiably proud of its efforts to remove dilapidated buildings which blight neighborhoods and to reduce the density of residential neighborhoods. Opportunities now exist for a number of infill projects in the community to build upon the momentum created by the Centennial Place housing development which has been constructed in the southern end of Farrell.

Wheatland recognizes the opportunities along Route 718 to have more than just an industrial corridor. Opportunities presented by underutilized land and buildings can provide for a mixed use environment along a road which could be improved to match the character of the upgraded Broadway Avenue. The entire Region recognizes the importance of the enhancement of the entire Route 60 corridor to enhance economic development activities and to enhance the image of the community. The Mercer County long range transportation plan notes that “the area business community has identified traffic problems along Broadway Avenue as the most significant obstacle to business success in development in the Hermitage Industrial Park. As redevelopment and parcelization occurs elsewhere (such as on former Sharon Steel properties), an improved Broadway corridor will need to be a way to serve new industrial development.”

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

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

Quality development often begins with a vision for an area, such as those set forth in the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project and the Hermitage Town Center Plan. 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, 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.

DOWNTOWN SHARON

Prototypical improvements in street corridors, parking areas, and commercial building exterior renovations from the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project are listed below:

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
- 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



Traditional/Typical Parking Lot



Parking Lot with Planted Islands

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



State Street – Sharon: Location of suggested renovation, present view and rendering of shopping center using design standards.

HERMITAGE TOWN CENTER

The Hermitage Town Center Plan identifies additional elements which 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
- introduction of mixed uses, where appropriate
- developing narrower pedestrian intersections
- creating visual and physical buffers between traffic and pedestrians
- develop design and development standards that make big box retail development less unsightly and designate appropriate locations for that kind of development
- coordinated signage
- build to lines (requiring new development to build a set distance from the street edge)
- incremental redevelopment



From Hermitage Town Center, prepared by Strada for the City of Hermitage and MCRPC

Hermitage Boulevard rendering looking south towards the intersection of State Street

ROUTE 18 CORRIDOR

The Route 18 - South Corridor Study suggests:

- 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

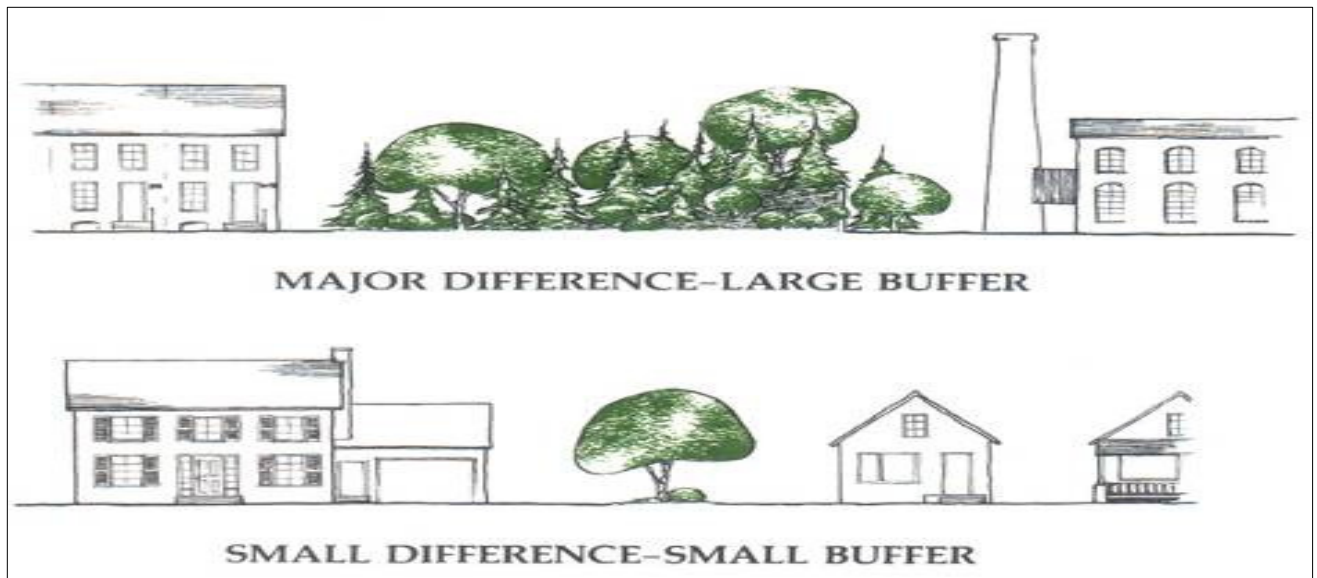
Buffering of residential areas when commercial development occurs is of particular concern in the Region, especially in the Hermitage Town Center area and along Route 18 and State Street. When commercial development occurs, buffer yards which contain sufficiently tall landscape buffers should be provided along residential properties.

Big Box Retail without Buffering:



Big Box Retail with Buffering:





Examples of Buffer Types



Hermitage has already enacted a Route 18 South Overlay District in its zoning ordinance. It is likely that further overlay zoning would occur in the Route 18 corridor as the vision for the Hermitage Town Center and Route 18 North are further crystallized. Wheatland should consider enactment of appropriate zoning along the Route 718 corridor. Farrell should also consider appropriate provisions within the Idaho Street, Roemer Boulevard and Sharon-New Castle Road corridors.

Where a road corridor passes through more than one municipality, such as in the case of the Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Dock Street corridor and the State Street corridor, the municipalities should adopt common overlay zoning provisions for those corridors to assure consistency of regulation within the corridors.

REGULATION OF ARCHITECTURE

Each municipality will have to determine the extent to which architecture and building design should be regulated and whether architecture be 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.

Architectural considerations would be more appropriate in a downtown setting such as Sharon. Elements to discuss include:

- a. Allow only appropriate uses in scale, and 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, but 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.

Holes in Streetscapes

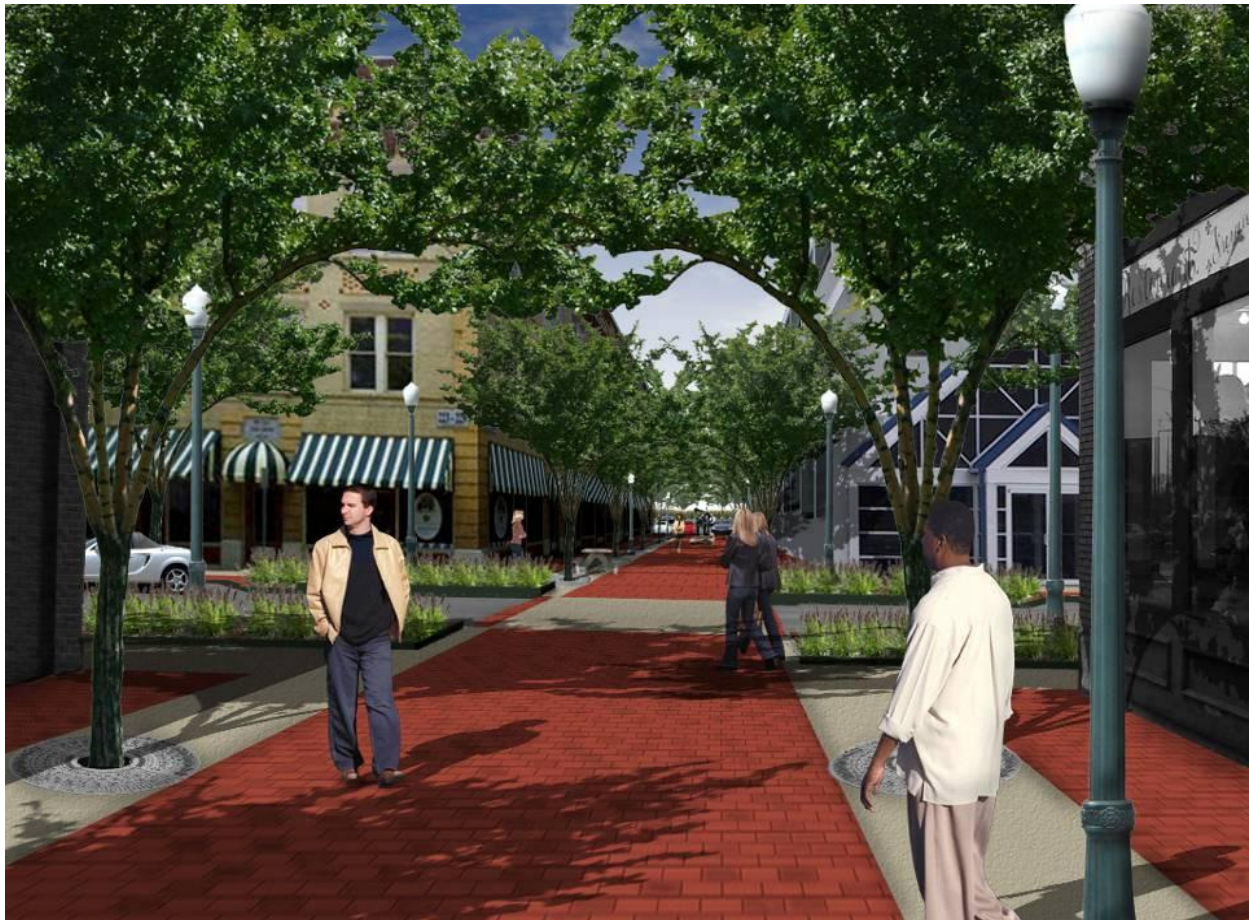
Underutilized areas in streetscapes, such as large expansive parking areas, can be detrimental to the vitality of an area. They are not aesthetically pleasing, they are barriers to pedestrian circulation, and represent opportunities lost, whether for economic development, taxable income, opportunities for dwelling units, or uses which provide opportunities to residents or visitors to the area. Two areas of particular concern are the large parking area for Sharon Plaza along State Street in downtown Sharon and the expanding parking area in the State Street area of Sharon around the Sharon Regional Health System complex. More intensive use of the Sharon Plaza parking area should be considered, and was addressed to an extent in the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project. Ideally, development along State Street would be restored, closing off the view of a large parking lot, with mixed use buildings.

Existing Conditions in Downtown Sharon



Examples of what could be done to bring buildings closer to State Street and enhance side streets





The Sharon Regional Medical System facility is a crucial asset to the City, and the Medical System and the City should work together to address ways of meeting the parking needs of the facility.

Parking expansion near hospital



Another critical use in downtown Sharon is the Penn State Shenango campus, which also has substantial parking requirements. Though not along State Street, continued expansion of parking areas for the campus would provide large underutilized areas within downtown Sharon. As is the case with the Medical System, the City should work with

Penn State Shenango to address parking needs of the University. The Master Plan from Penn State Shenango Campus can be found on the following page.

A related issue is utilization of the downtown Sharon parking garage. Members for the Downtown Revitalization Project committee made several comments regarding the garage, including “redevelop the parking garage site”, “improve lighting in the parking garage”, “consider other uses for the parking garage site”, “convert portions (top 2 floors) of the parking garage to offices”, “cluster new apartments near parking garage to increase usage”. Sharon should consider the alternative futures for the parking garage. If the parking garage is to remain, the City should also determine whether it would be appropriate to use the parking garage as a facility dedicated to Penn State Shenango and the Sharon Regional Medical System, to reduce needs for lot parking. In the case of the hospital, a shuttle would be necessary from the garage to the hospital facility.

Underutilized Parking Garage



Positive steps are being taken by the City to link the Penn State Campus to downtown, including planning for a pedestrian bridge over the River between the campus and downtown. Shenango Street is being renovated. Consideration should be given to opening first floor buildings along pedestrian ways.

Penn State Shenango and Vicinity





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. Sharon has not been impacted by Penn State Shenango as many college towns have, because of the commuting nature of the University. Conversion concerns would increase if the University did become a facility for resident students.

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

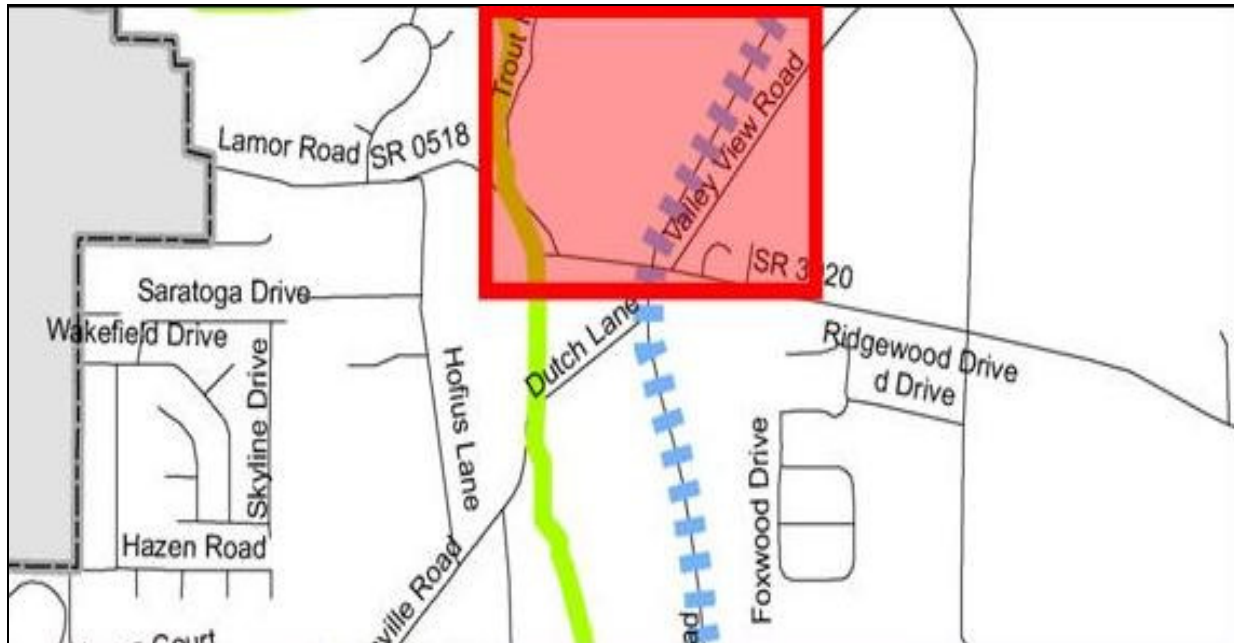
- Locations where permitted
- How use is treated procedurally
- What type of building can be converted
- Density of converted units
- Lot size for converted building
- Impervious surface/open space requirements
- Units per structure allowed
- Structure size requirements
- Dwelling unit size minimum
- 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 some areas of the region the Future Land Use Plan indicates that Mixed Use is appropriate. The Hermitage Town Center plan encourages mixed use environment that places living, working, shopping, and recreating in the same environment, eliminating the requirement that all travel be by automobile and establishing a walkable community. Having residents in the Town Center would increase activity in the center and add pedestrians to the streets. The Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization project is supportive of a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and loft apartment use. Neighborhood Revitalization areas and the Idaho Street and Roemer Avenue Corridor Enhancement areas in Farrell should have infill of businesses, community facilities, housing and senior housing.

Mixed use is contemplated for the 718 corridor in Wheatland, and the Route 60 corridor through Wheatland and Farrell and Sharon. Mixed use already occurs in some instances, and mixed use is more likely to involve a mix of commercial and industrial uses in these road corridors. A diverse mix of uses already exists in the State Street corridor, and will be encouraged to continue. Mixed uses are envisioned in portions of the Route 18 corridor.

Hermitage Route 18 North



Hermitage Route 18 North – Conventional Business Park Development



Hermitage Route 18 North - Conventional Use vs. Mixed Use



Hermitage Route 18 North – Mixed Use



As noted previously, 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. Such zoning should be in place to support the plan for enhancement of the Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Dock Street corridor, to address the importance of East State Street as a link between downtown Sharon and the proposed Hermitage Town Center, to address continued development in the Route 18 corridor, and enhance the potential for the mixed use character of the Route 718 corridor. 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 will vary throughout the Region. Infill development is absolutely crucial in Farrell where a number of dilapidated structures have been removed, resulting in vacant lots. Most of these vacant parcels are located in the neighborhood revitalization area shown on the Future Land Use Plan. Additional buildings will be removed over time. Infill development in Wheatland is most likely in the industrial area along Route 718 and Ohio Street. In Sharon, infill will be less prevalent than in Farrell, but there will be opportunities scattered throughout the city. In

Hermitage, infill will occur in undeveloped parcels among developed areas. A major concern in Hermitage will be that the infill uses are appropriate to the character of the neighborhood, will not adversely impact surrounding properties, and will provide adequate buffering.

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. For instance, near the intersection of Routes 418 and 518 in Farrell, infill development could have strengthened the intersection with buildings closer to the roads and creating a park to serve as a buffer between commercial and residential uses. The images on the following pages show an overall rendering of what could have been done at the intersection, photo enhancements of an example of infill of a site, and the type of close-to-the-street development which can enhance a streetscape.

Farrell - State Routes 418 and 518 – Alternative Design Approaches





In some cases, infill development will occur as a public project, such as Centennial Place. In other cases, infill will occur as private development. What follow are potential infill promotion strategies which can be used to facilitate public projects or encourage private projects. Efforts should be made to encourage major regional institutions such as health care systems to invest in infill projects in brownfields and grayfields, not just greenfields, to serve as anchors for redevelopment activities.

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 Hermitage into the other municipalities in a regional scheme.

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, City, 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.

OPPORTUNITIES OF VACANT PROPERTIES

The Shenango Valley is not alone in having to deal with vacant properties – most older industrial communities face the issue and more are addressing the issue head-on, as has been done in this Region. The National Vacant Properties Campaign (NVPC) has worked with some of those other communities and provides information resources, tools, and assistance to support vacant property revitalization efforts. The NVPC identifies a continuum of vacant properties from abandoned, boarded-up buildings; lots with trash and debris; vacant or under-performing commercial properties known as grayfields; neglected industrial properties with environmental contamination, known as brownfields; deteriorating vacant single-family homes, buildings with significant housing code violations, and long-term vacant housing.

A recent study the NVPC was involved in is the Buffalo Blueprint, which is a regional strategy for addressing vacant properties in the Buffalo, New York region. Such a regional approach should be considered in the Shenango Valley region, given the widespread extent of vacant properties in all municipalities and the limited financial capability of addressing vacant properties each year. Creation or designation of a regional agency might increase the influence of the Region in securing concerted assistance of municipal, County, State, and Federal agencies, and neighborhood groups, institutions of higher education and other non-profits, and the private sector in identifying, rehabilitating, abating, and reusing vacant properties and reclaiming them for mixed residential and economic development and common community areas.

The Region has regional champions for economic development such as Penn-Northwest, which facilitates projects such as State Line Industrial Park. While economic development is one aspect of addressing vacant parcels, such as along the Route 718 corridor in Wheatland and the Superfund Site along Ohio Street in Hermitage, there is also a strong housing and mixed use component involved in Sharon and Farrell. There

should be a mechanism for on-going communication, information sharing, developing institutional capacity, problem solving, grantsmanship, and partnership formation.

One of the outcomes of this plan should be the formation of new partnerships. In analyzing vacant land in the Region, and formulating plans for the reuse of that land with neighborhood participation, urban studies and design students from Mercer County colleges and universities, as well as those from the Pittsburgh area and urban areas in Ohio, should be invited to participate as part of class projects.

Chapter 6

Livable Communities

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.

Many of the everyday experiences and special events available in the Region contribute to the quality of life, such as buying donuts and muffins from the local bakery on a Sunday morning; buying homemade pyrohy from the church on Friday afternoon; buying candy, shoes, or clothes at the "World's Largest"; eating wings along the River; pausing to look at the River as one walks over a bridge; playing golf at an outstanding golf course; watching a high school team play in a venue where numerous state champions have played before; floating in the Shenango River on a raft; enjoying the facilities and special events at Buhl Farm Park; standing on a hillside overlooking the extensive industrial base of the region and imagining what the area looked like in the heyday of the steel industry; eating lunch in a café in a real downtown; or attending Farrell Homecoming.

New Housing within Farrell



Quality of life is also achieved by meeting the basic 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; and facilitating movement of residents throughout the Region through alternative modes of travel, including vehicular, bicycle, transit, and pedestrian. Crucial to enhancing the quality of life in the Region are revitalizing downtown Sharon; fostering more of a town center in Hermitage; taking advantage of economic development opportunities in all four municipalities; maintaining and revitalizing

neighborhoods in all the municipalities; and enhancing the major linkages between the communities in the Region, including State Street, Route 18, the Route 60 Corridor (Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard and Dock Street), 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								
Ingredients for Livable Communities	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
	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.

WEED AND SEED PROGRAM

Maintaining livable communities also requires addressing areas of concern. The efforts of the Sharon/Farrell Weed and Seed program through program implementation, police overtime and leadership training for residents is supported by this Plan. Sharon/Farrell Weed and Seed has partnered government officials, public and private businesses, school districts, hospitals, law enforcement, and community residents to channel assets and resources to address local needs and reduce crime and revitalize neighborhoods. A number of blighted and unsafe properties have been removed and crime has been reduced. Rehabilitation funding has been available to home owners.

ELM STREET PLAN

A new initiative in Sharon and Farrell is the Elm Street Plan. The purpose of the Elm Street Plan is to revitalize neighborhoods which are major routes of both pedestrians and motor vehicles going to and from local commercial areas and/or to downtown Sharon. The local neighborhood association is attempting to assist residents in making them more invested in the safety and maintenance of the neighborhood in which they live. The Elm Street Plan is concerned with infrastructure, housing rehabilitation, streetscape and road work to improve the visible image of the community. Targeted areas are Hamilton and Fruit Avenues in the City of Farrell and New Castle and South Oakland in the City of Sharon. This Comprehensive Plan supports implementation of the Elm Street Plan.

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

Anchors, Linkages and Corridors Within the Region

Corridors in the Region, such as Route 18, East State Street, Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard, and Dock Street, 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 link the Anchors of Sharon and Hermitage, 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. The mission of the Elm Street Program is to improve the quality of life in the Sharon/Farrell targeted area and changing the visual and perceptual image of mixed use areas which are predominantly residential. The Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project states that “a major deterrent to new investment and to reinvestment in downtown Sharon is the worn out image projected by its general physical condition. Large areas of street corridor, parking areas, riverfront and building blocks communicate a negative image to potential investors that this real estate location is substandard. The following revitalization plan is prepared as part of an overall strategy to reestablish positive image, attract economic development, and enhance quality of life by improving downtown Sharon’s physical development framework.”

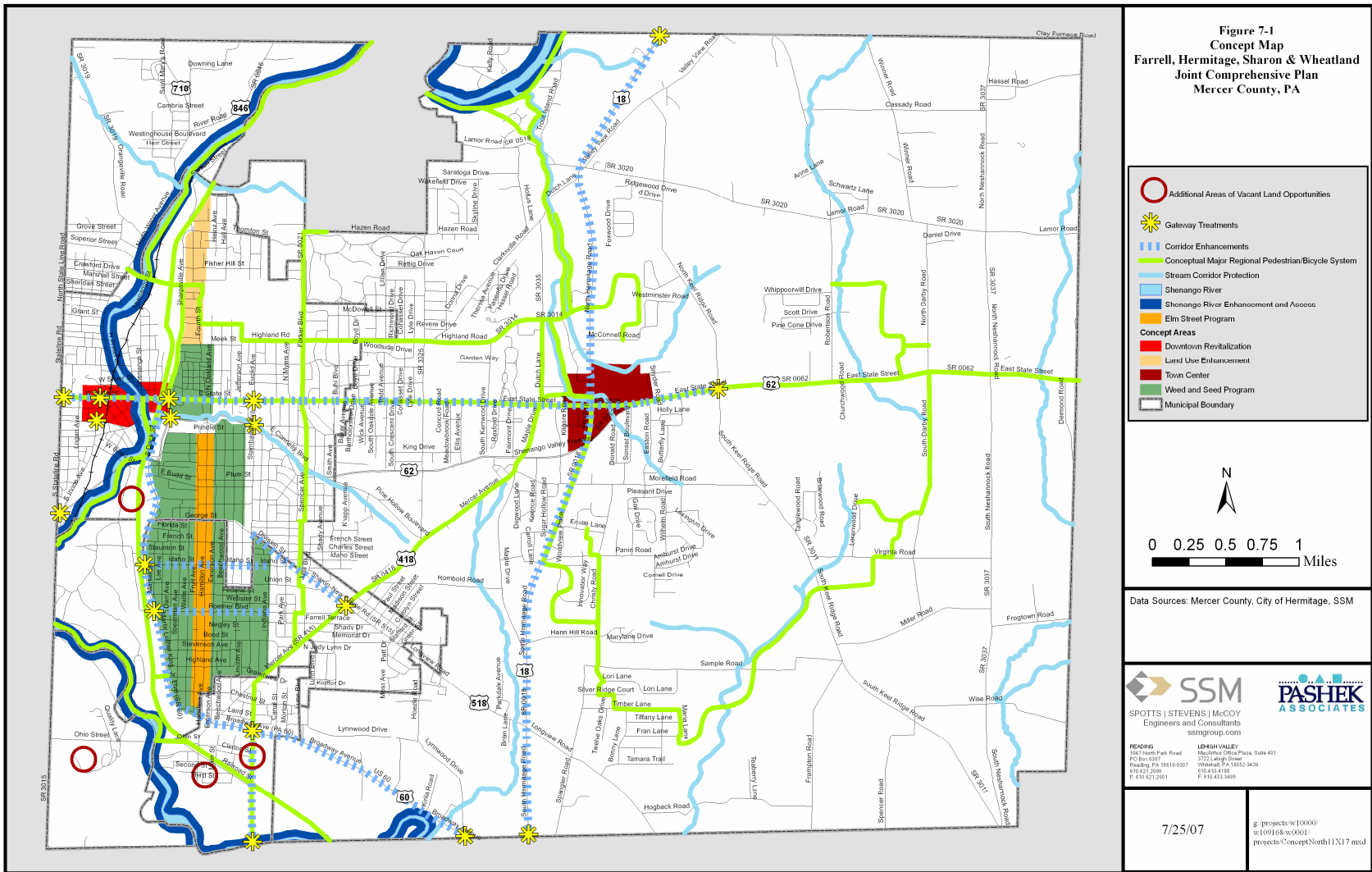
One of the missions of the Route 18 South Corridor study for the City of Hermitage was to market Route 18 South as a gateway into the Shenango Valley. A gateway is an entrance corridor that defines the arrival point as a destination. Gateway planning concerns arranging the landscape and visual experience to help create a sense of arrival at the destination, 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 in Figure 7-1, the Concept Map.

ANCHORS

Downtown Sharon is one of the anchors of the Region. A strong downtown is important to the future of the Region and this comprehensive plan supports implementation of the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization project Revitalization Plan. The Vision for downtown Sharon contained in the Plan is a downtown that has the following image:

- A district of attractive buildings, street corridors and riverfront.



- A district filled with street-life activity including residents, artists, shoppers and tourists.
- A district with a strong economy based on offices, retail businesses, and quality apartments.
- A district that is fun and hospitable for adults and children.
- A district where the feeling of “good-times” keeps people coming back for more.
- A district known regionally as “the place to be”.

A summary illustration of recommended physical improvements and development opportunities is shown on the next page. The plan stresses physical improvements to 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.

In conjunction with physical improvements, it is important to continue efforts to make Sharon downtown a business center in the Region – focusing more on office and workplace development. Basic needs in retail, such as a grocery store and gas station, will be encouraged to locate as well as a hotel. It is realized, however, that much of the retail development will continue to occur in Hermitage. As additional businesses locate in Sharon, support retail is expected to follow.

Sharon also has unique resources to attract people to downtown, including the Shenango River, tourist-oriented shopping destination, historic architecture, Penn State Shenango, and the Columbia Theater/Vocal Group Wall of Fame. These resources and their settings should be enhanced, including creation of additional public spaces and events, to attract people and allow people to gather and interact.

Another potential anchor in the Region is the envisioned Hermitage Town Center at the intersection of Route 18 and State Street. The objectives are to:

- Establish Hermitage as a memorable destination with a recognizable and unique character
- Create a common public space at the heart of the community
- Define gateways and entries that clearly delineate a downtown district with a sense of arrival and place

- Focus new development efforts to create walkability within the downtown through streetscape improvements that create connectivity between the various pieces of the downtown area
- Use landscaping and other amenities to create visual buffers along the major streets and roads

This comprehensive plan supports establishment of a Hermitage Town Center.

The design principles for the Town Center include:

- Creating a sense of place
- Developing public spaces for the community and to attract others
- Recognizing the intersection of Hermitage Boulevard and State Street as the heart of Hermitage
- Connecting the pieces together
- Promoting walkability
- Establishing mixed use
- Calming vehicular traffic
- Using all elements of the town to reflect the unique character
- Leveraging creative solutions for perceived problems

Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project

Summary Illustration of Recommended Physical Improvements and Development Opportunities



★ Alternate hotel development locations

Prepared for the **City of Sharon, Pennsylvania**

Prepared by **E. G. & G., Inc.**

CORRIDORS

East State Street

East State Street will take on increased importance as the connecting corridor between downtown Sharon and the Hermitage Town Center. Portions of State Street are addressed in the Downtown Revitalization Plan for Sharon and portions in the Town Center Plan for Hermitage, but the remaining area in between remains without an overall concept plan. It is recommended that a concept plan be prepared for State Street from the Sharon Downtown Revitalization Project to the Hermitage Town Center. The plan should be coordinated between the cities of Sharon and Hermitage and address:

- compatibility with the Sharon and Hermitage plans
- 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

East State Street – Stambaugh Avenue Intersection



Route 60

The Route 60 Corridor, Broadway Avenue in Hermitage and Wheatland, Martin Luther King Boulevard in Farrell, and Dock Street in Sharon, is another important corridor within the Region. Given the interchanges of Route 60 with Route 18 and I-80 in Shenango Township to the South, the corridor is a major gateway to the Region. It is a major route for vehicles traveling to the industrial areas of the Region, and is a main street through Wheatland, Farrell and Sharon. Route 60 is crucial to the image that people have of the region.

Concept plans have been prepared for the widening and enhancement of the Route 60 Corridor, and it is important that the plans be finalized and implemented. In addition to road widening, lighting, pedestrian facilities and landscaping, it is important to remove, screen, or buffer buildings and uses which detract from a positive image of the community.

Corridor Enhancement



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



Infill with similar architecture and setback.



Landscaping, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities.

Route 18

Two major plans have been prepared for the Route 18 Corridor. Route 18 is a major gateway to the Region from the north and south, leads to the envisioned Hermitage Town Center, and provides access to recreational, business, and institutional uses within the corridor.

The Vision which was created for Route 18 - South is as follows:

“Route 18 – South is a distinctive gateway leading into the City of Hermitage and the Shenango Valley. The corridor has the character of a boulevard and functions with safe and efficient movement. It has retained a diversity of small-scale commercial and residential uses that are visually unified through scale, landscaping, and minimal traffic impact. A beautiful greenway extends the length of Route 18 – South and incorporates street trees, aesthetically pleasing landscaping and pedestrian pathways to link the multiple uses along the corridor and preserve the natural environment.

The City, in conjunction with property owners and developers, has incrementally reduced the number of individual curb-cuts along the corridor through the construction of shared points of access and the development of interconnecting access drives. Select types of non-residential uses permitted along the corridor have provided alternative uses for residential dwellings that once fronted onto Route 18. These low intensity mixed uses compliment the strong retail base found in the City’s Central Business District. In addition, the City’s two premiere Technical Parks are known around the region for their high quality landscaping, and well-designed professional offices/mixed use development.

Residents of the City of Hermitage are proud of their quality development; healthy and diverse economy; high quality of living; sensitive design standards; and the visual appearance of Route 18 - South.

The study recommends that PA 18 South becomes a distinctive gateway boulevard with a diversity of residential and small-scale commercial uses, control of traffic impacts, and a ribbon of attractive greenery and landscaping. Specific recommendations include:

- The focus of major commercial development should continue to be the city center area on PA 18 North of Morefield Road and on State Street, not on PA 18 South. The goal is to guard against transfer of such development from the city center or from other Shenango Valley commercial centers.
- Encourage preservation of residential areas in the northern part of the corridor, but afford some flexibility for commercial conversion with minimal residential impacts.
- Encourage a mix of use in the middle part of the corridor, allowing residences to remain but also allowing small-scale commercial and office uses.
- Promote an expansion of the planned technical park zoning. It affords high-tech and office uses in a well-planned development buffered against adjacent uses.
- Create a gateway in the southern part of the corridor that allows larger, travel-oriented uses with a green/landscaped front to leave a positive impression on visitors.
- Create a design overlay district that would establish (applicable to new development) a 15' greenway on each side of the highway, a continuous pedestrian sidewalk, parking lot orientation to the side or rear, and special sign design standards.

This plan supports the Route 18 – South corridor study and implementation of the Plan's recommendations.

The PA 18 North Corridor Transportation and Planning Study contains discussion on access management, connectivity/new roads, greenways development, bicycle/pedestrian circulation, future development considerations and land use issues, policy-related concerns, and economic development issues. Recommendations of the plan include the following:

- An additional new connector road is being recommended for the area between PA 18 and Valley View Road. A new, two-lane facility here would accomplish two

things: 1) alleviate Valley View Road's problematic intersection with Lamor Road, and 2) provide new access to the current "Planned Technical Park" property.

- Development of an official map would accomplish several things for the City:
 - Provide a tool for planning public capital investments
 - Identify areas where open spaces are desired or where public improvements are envisioned
 - Strengthen its position with developers
 - Identify areas where public improvements are envisioned, i.e., road improvements or widenings, parks, playgrounds and sites for other public purposes.
- The City should institutionalize a bicycle/pedestrian/greenways subcommittee to serve as an advisory group to its planning commission and the Shenango Valley MPO. This Committee would oversee the implementation of the bicycle/pedestrian and greenways elements of this plan, establish short and long term priorities, and administer future public involvement and outreach.
- The City should consider establishing an identifiable town center for the area centered on the intersection of PA 18 and U.S. 62. A town center concept will serve to promote a greater sense of identity and community pride for the residents of the City of Hermitage, as well as promote increased business opportunities and strengthen the local economy.
- The zoning ordinance is the best mechanism to address the land use related issues that were raised during the study, such as:
 - Setbacks
 - Landscaping and buffering
 - Street trees
 - Underground utilities
 - Access management
 - Mixed-use development areas

This Comprehensive Plan supports the implementation of the PA 18 North corridor transportation and planning study.

Shenango River

The Shenango River traverses all four municipalities in the Region. Recreational development along the river has been limited: the Mahaney recreation area in northcentral Hermitage, the park and canoe launch in Sharon between West Connelly Boulevard and West Budd Street, and the river walk under construction south of West Silver Street in Sharon. 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. The River is an attractive community asset, but there are two major limitations to riverside enhancement in the Region. The first is lack of accessibility, as for much of its length, the River flows through developed industrial areas. Access to the River should be increased. The second limitation is contamination of the River itself and land and air in the vicinity of the River, because of past industrial practices. Cleanup of the River and surrounding areas could be a decades long process, but should be pursued as diligently as is possible.



There are some areas where the River is accessible, such as along Route 718 at the entrance to the Region in Hermitage and Wheatland, and Clark Street in Sharon. A gateway treatment should be established there. Sharon has already created a park and canoe launch near West Budd Street and is constructing an enhanced river walk. Other 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.

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 removal of some buildings such as the vacant diner to open up the River to the public.
- Connect neighborhoods to the River.
- Link communities together.

Implementation of concepts already in discussion will help to accomplish this, including the River Walk under construction in Sharon, the planned Pine Hollow Run trail in Hermitage to the Mahoney Recreation area, and the Rail Trail. Additional access should be supported at a trailhead in Wheatland along Route 718, which is connected via Route 718 to the residential areas of Wheatland. Another trailhead could be considered at Clark Street in Sharon, with pedestrian connections to nearby neighborhoods and Highland Avenue. Additional access within downtown Sharon would also be desirable. This might involve building removal. Facilitating access to the potential Rail Trail from the Farrell neighborhoods through industrial land will be an issue, and this concept should be assessed to determine the best route to follow.

- Build upon other assets in the Region.

This would involve facilitating access from such assets as Penn State Shenango, downtown Sharon commercial destinations, the Hermitage Town Center, and a restored Columbia theater. Consider enhancing the Mercer County Visitor Center site and visitor experiences at the site; orient it more to the Shenango River; enhance the land along the River; and tie the site to a walkway along the River.

- Be a major aspect of downtown Sharon
- 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, commercial, multiple-family and townhouse, lofts and apartments, 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 downtown Sharon, such as near the Silver Street bridge and the area of Three on the River.
- Promote accelerated clean-up of the River and surrounding areas, and the dredging of contaminated materials.

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.

River Enhancements in Sharon



Along and near the Shenango River in the vicinity of Clark Street



Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridors

The Mercer County MPO Bicycle/Pedestrian Action Plan identified three corridors which would link municipalities within the Region, the Highland Road/East-West Corridor, the Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Corridor and the West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Rail Trail. This plan supports development of these concepts as detailed below:

The Highland Road/East-West Corridor

Purpose

The east-west bicycle/pedestrian corridor will serve three main purposes:

- To provide alternative modes of transportation from the residential areas of Sharon to the commercial and institutional areas of Hermitage, specifically to the City's schools, government offices, and medical offices.
- To provide a recreational route through residential areas of Sharon.
- To provide connections to other proposed bicycle/pedestrian corridors along the Shenango River, to Buhl Park, to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Dam Overlook, to Sharpsville, to Farrell, and to Wheatland.

Description

The east-west corridor is roadway-based and extends from the Shenango River near the West Hills of Sharon east to Hickory High School. The heart of the proposed route runs along Highland Road traversing residential areas through Sharon to commercial and institutional areas in the City of Hermitage. The route will provide connections to:

- City of Hermitage government offices
- Hickory High School
- Bicycle/pedestrian facility along PA 18
- Hermitage middle and elementary schools
- Pine Hollow Run
- Numerous medical and doctor facilities
- Residential neighborhoods in Sharon
- PA 518
- Penn State Shenango Campus
- Industrial facilities near the Shenango River
- Shenango River

Example of Bicycle/Pedestrian Enhancement



The Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Corridor

Purpose

The north-south bicycle/pedestrian corridor will serve three main purposes:

- To provide an alternative mode of transportation for traveling north-south through the Shenango Valley.
- To provide a connection to various residential communities, recreational areas (Buhl Park), and educational institutions (i.e., Farrell, Sharon, and Sharpsville Area High Schools).
- To provide connections to other proposed bicycle/pedestrian corridors along the Shenango River to the south and running east-west from Hermitage High School to downtown Sharon.

Description

The North-South corridor is a roadway-based corridor extending through the Shenango River Valley from Wheatland near the Shenango River north to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Dam Overlook. The proposed route follows several roads that travel through the residential areas of Farrell, Sharon, and Sharpsville. The route will provide connection to:

- PA 718

- Industrial facilities near the Shenango River in Wheatland
- Residential neighborhoods in Farrell, Sharon, and Sharpsville
- Farrell, Sharon, and Sharpsville High Schools
- Our Lady of Fatima School
- U.S. 62
- Buhl Park

Bicycle/Pedestrian Enhancements in Hermitage

Highland Road



Route 18



LindenPointe



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.

Additional Corridors

There are additional corridors within the Region that are of importance, but have not been the focus of major planning studies or revitalization plans, except for Highland Road.

Idaho Street at one time was a major commercial area within Farrell. Currently, much of the land along the street is vacant, with some commercial and residential properties. The corridor is in need of enhancement to foster neighborhood revitalization and provide facilities and services for residents. Idaho Street features opportunities for mixed use infill development and parks and other community facilities.

Roemer Boulevard in Farrell extends from Martin Luther King Boulevard to S.R. 518 near S.R. 418 in the eastern portion of Farrell. The Farrell municipal building, the Stey Nevant Library, Farrell Area Elementary School and Farrell Area High School are located along Roemer Boulevard, and some businesses are located along the western portion of the Boulevard. The core of municipal oriented uses, including the municipal building, Veterans Square, playground, and Farmers Market are located along or north of the corridor. Given the intersection of Roemer Boulevard with Martin Luther King Boulevard (which is to be enhanced), the community facilities along or near the Boulevard, and the connection that Roemer Boulevard provides to state routes through the heart of the city, an enhancement plan should be prepared for Roemer Boulevard.

Roemer Boulevard and Martin Luther King Boulevard - Farrell



Potential Roemer Boulevard Streetscape Enhancement - Farrell



Rendering of Potential Enhancement of Roemer Boulevard and Martin Luther King Boulevard Intersection:



The most viable commercial area within Farrell is currently located along Sharon-New Castle Road (SR 518) in the vicinity of and west of Route 418. This is an area which has older strip commercial development. Given the presence of the school complex as well as residential neighborhoods near this area, it is important that those commercial areas are

maintained and are not allowed to deteriorate. In the future, redevelopment plans should be prepared for those commercial areas to maintain their viability and to assure that they do not have adverse impacts upon residential neighborhoods. Attention should be given to building facades, landscaping, buffering, and access management.

The Highland Road corridor is an important connection to Route 18 and provides access to institutional and recreational uses within Hermitage and Sharon. Hermitage has completed Phase 1 of Highland Road improvements, with Phase 2 to follow.

Route 518 from Sharpsville to State Street is another entranceway into the Region and provides access to major industrial facilities on the west side of the road. The road has recently been repaved, so issues along the road are primarily land use issues. Of particular interest is the Transitional Neighborhood Area identified on the east side of the road on the Future Land Use Plan. This area contains a mix of industrial parking lots, marginal commercial uses, and residential areas influenced by the proximity to the industrial areas on the west side of the road. Appropriate enhanced use should be made of the commercial land and parking lots along Sharpsville Road to serve as a buffer between industrial and residential areas. The parking lots provide potential for use as recreational areas.

Gateways

We previously touched on the concept of gateways. In the Region there are major gateways to the Region itself, such as Route 60, Route 18, Route 62, State Street, and Route 718, but there are also internal gateways to each municipality, gateways to the downtown of Sharon, and conceptual gateways to the Heritage Town Center.

In the Route 18 South Corridor Study, the area of Hermitage from Longview Road to the Shenango Township border was recommended as a gateway district. In the Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project, major gateways to downtown Sharon were identified at the intersection of Sharpsville Avenue and East State Street and the intersection of State Route 62 and Connelly Boulevard. Minor gateways were indicated at the intersection of West State Street and Irvine Avenue and Connelly Boulevard with Irvine Avenue.

Gateway treatments will vary with goals that have been established for an area as well as existing conditions. For instance, a gateway along the Shenango River on Route 718 at the entrance to Wheatland would be open in nature, such as a park, as the area is subject to flooding. The entrance to Sharon's downtown along Route 62 is predominantly through an older industrial and heavy commercial area, and until land uses change over time, opportunities would be more cosmetic. Sharon has already made improvements to the West State Street streetscape, including construction of new sidewalk.

Recommendations for the Route 18 South Corridor in Hermitage included the following:

1. Maintain the landscape by regulating the amount of land within the lot that can be paved or built upon.
2. Allow for larger sized uses in this district than in the rest of the corridor. Larger, traveler oriented uses, will attract people from the nearby interchange while also complimenting the green landscape to leave a positive impression upon the visitor. It is recommended that these large uses be positioned with a greater setback from Route 18 and require a vegetative front yard that is void of parking.
3. Parking lots shall be oriented to the side and/or rear.
4. Encourage lot consolidation so that more opportunities exist for developing larger uses in this district.
5. Develop nodes of retail uses in the Gateway District which share common access drives.

The Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization project lists the following prototypical gateway area improvements for the gateways into downtown Sharon:

- 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
- gateway signage and site furnishings
- trees and landscaping

The gateway for Hermitage to the Region and City along Route 18 North, which is a relatively undeveloped area, would be accomplished through master planned mixed-use development adhering to appropriate design and performance standards and utilizing Traditional Neighborhood Development.

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 the four 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.
- Designating responsibility to a new or existing agency to foster regional cooperation to address the opportunity presented by the extent of vacant properties in the Region.
- Increased intermunicipal cooperation in grantsmanship; staff utilization; recreation and other municipal services; regional promotion; and project planning, such as corridor enhancement plans and bicycle/pedestrian corridor plans.

Chapter 8

Future Land Use and Housing Plan

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.

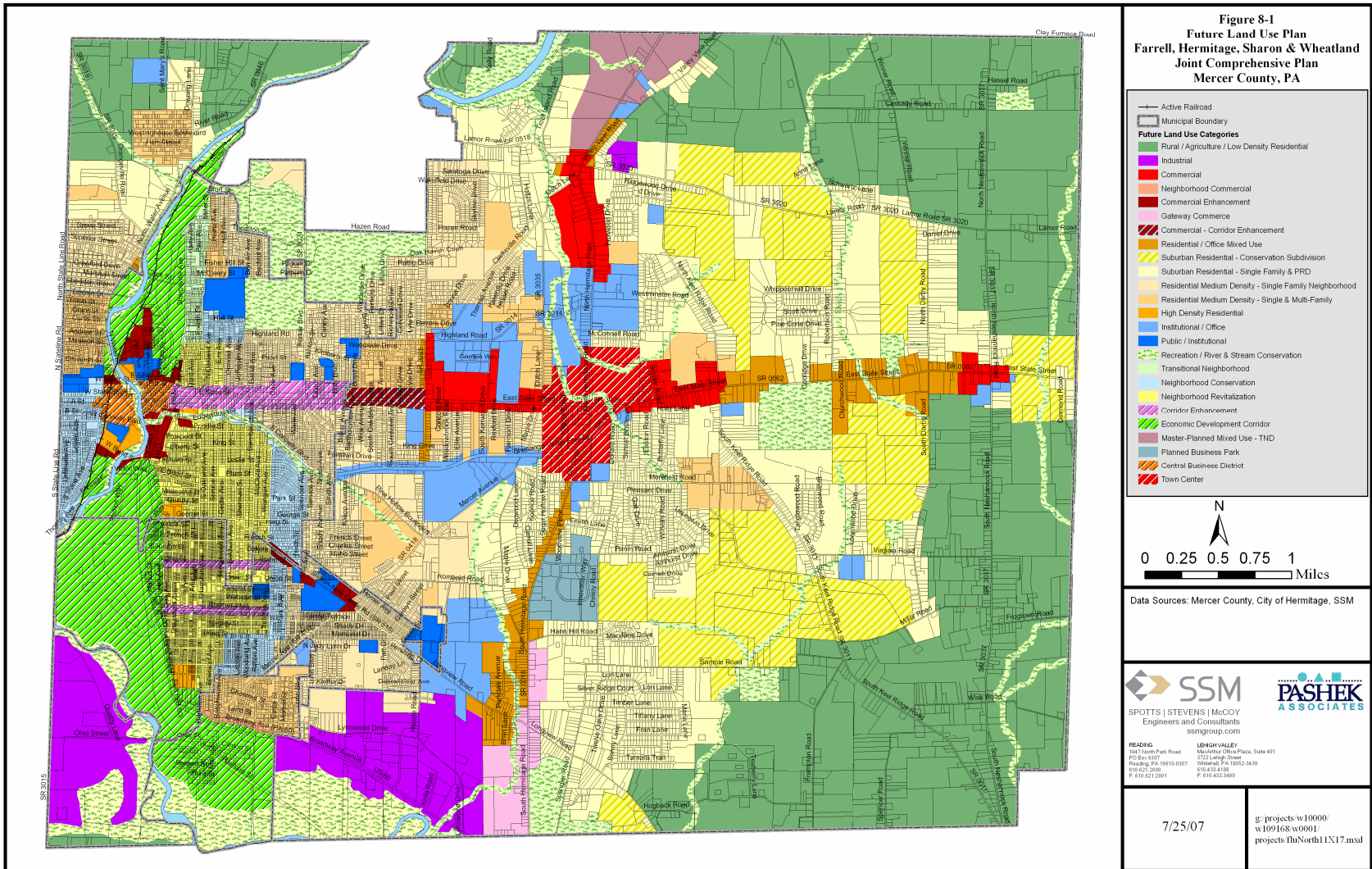
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

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 Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland Joint Comprehensive Plan, Figure 8.1, includes the following Land Use Categories:

- Rural/Agriculture/Low Density Residential
- Suburban Residential – Conservation Subdivision
- Suburban Residential – Single Family and PRD
- Residential Medium Density – Single Family Neighborhood
- Residential Medium Density – Single and Multi-Family
- High Density Residential
- Town Center
- Central Business District
- Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Commercial Enhancement
- Commercial Corridor Enhancement
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Transitional Neighborhood
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Corridor Enhancement
- Economic Development Corridor
- Planned Business Park
- Industrial
- Recreation/River & Stream Conservation
- Public/Institutional
- Institutional Office
- Residential/Office Mixed Use
- Master-Planned Mixed Use- TND
- Gateway Commerce



RURAL/AGRICULTURE/LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Description - These areas contain a mixture of agricultural, woodland, open space, nurseries, 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 limited low density development; agricultural uses; rural resources; open space and recreation.

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

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Larger lots of at least one acre or more per dwelling unit. Conservation Development techniques are encouraged in this district.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL - CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION

Description – Larger undeveloped parcels in the City of Hermitage.

Planning Objective – To allow continuation of existing land uses. If and when development occurs, Conservation Subdivision Design Techniques should be used.

Recommended Land Uses – Agriculture, woodland, single family detached dwellings in Conservation Subdivisions, public recreation.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – If and when developed single family detached dwellings in Conservation Subdivisions at a density of 20,000 square feet to once acre per dwelling unit.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL – SINGLE FAMILY AND PRD

Description - Given the current pattern of development in the community, this will be a higher density than what most communities in the County have as their lowest density district, since the future land use map includes some existing lots less than one acre. The defining characteristic of this district is that only single-family detached homes (and accessory uses) are permitted unless a PRD is proposed.

Planning Objective – To accommodate continued suburban-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; PRD containing single and multiple family dwellings.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density of 20,000 square feet to one acre per dwelling unit. Open Space and conservation development/sensitive design techniques and PRD's permitted..

RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY – SINGLE & MULTI-FAMILY

Description – This area contains higher densities than the Suburban Residential areas and single-family neighborhood area, and allows narrower lots. Single-family semi-detached homes and townhouses, apartments, condominiums, and senior housing are permitted as well as fully detached houses.

Planning Objective – Recommended areas where more urban residential development has occurred and 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; condominiums; senior housing developments; park/open space uses. Mobile homes will be accommodated in some areas.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density range of 3-12 units per acre, dependent upon neighborhood conditions and zoning district.

RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY – SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD

Description - This area contains higher densities and narrower lots than Suburban Residential areas. Single-family detached dwellings are permitted.

Planning Objective – Allow for development consistent with the character of existing neighborhoods.

Recommended Land Uses – Single family detached dwellings; park/open space uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - Density range of 2-4 units per acre.

HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL:

Description - This district permits all dwelling types, detached, semi-detached attached rowhouses, and apartment buildings.

Planning Objective – These areas are where the greatest density of residential development has occurred and will continue to occur.

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

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Generally, 12 units or more per acre, consistent with surrounding urban development.

TOWN CENTER (HERMITAGE):

Description - This area will be chiefly a commercial area, but professional offices, and limited mixed use residential 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 city’s Town Center Plan. The critical element here is the creation of a flexible, pedestrian-friendly environment where the commercial uses are compatible with existing 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. Highway oriented uses are not recommended in this area.

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

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 development may be appropriate within these areas to create a sense of ‘place’, while discouraging automobile-dependent uses and large parking lots. Access management strategies are extremely important in this area.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (SHARON):

Description – This category is similar to the “Town Center” area in that a variety of uses will be accommodated, but the area will have a more urban feel – density will be higher, buildings may be taller and off-street parking areas should be to the side or rear of the structures. The Central Business District includes many of the City’s historic resources.

Planning Objective – Area intended to allow continued growth of the existing downtown core, providing services including the niche specialty shops in contrast to commercial chain stores, and professional offices. Accessory uses to Penn State Shenango Valley Campus are appropriate as well. New construction should be consistent with the historic character of the area. River access and preservation should be incorporated into development regulations.

Recommended Land Uses - Professional and government offices; conversion and loft apartments; parks and recreation; small-scale and specialty retail; day-to day commercial uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Maximum density of one unit per 2000 square feet, with some flexibility depending on use. Target area for economic activity and re-development of vacant buildings with the goal of re-establishing the central business district as a destination. Emphasis should be on protection of the historic character of the area.

COMMERCIAL

Description – Existing commercial areas in the State Street and Route 18 Corridors.

Planning Objective – To allow a variety of appropriate commercial uses while providing an attractive setting for these uses.

Recommended Land Uses – Retail, personal service, entertainment, offices

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - Development or redevelopment which occurs must comply with established design standards for site design, landscaping, access/management, signage, and building design.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL:

Description - This is the most restrictive commercial district. It includes small-scale commercial uses which will be compatible with adjoining residential neighborhoods.

Planning Objective – Provide for limited residence-serving uses along the east side of Broadway Avenue in the Borough of Wheatland.

Recommended Land Uses – Resident serving retail, office uses, and government services.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Lot sizes from 2000 square feet to 10,000 square feet, with density appropriate as needed by use.

Neighborhood Commercial Area in Wheatland



COMMERCIAL ENHANCEMENT:

Description - This includes retail sales and businesses which are made compatible and do not detract from nearby Central Business, Institutional, and residential uses.

Planning Objective – Allow for the enhancement of older, generally built-up commercial areas near the Central Business District in order to support downtown revitalization.

Recommended Land Uses – Commercial uses such as retail, supermarkets; multi-tenant shopping plazas; automobile related uses; and offices.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Lot sizes from 2000 square feet to 2 acres or higher, with density appropriate as needed by use.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT:

Description – East State Street Corridor which is developed, but in need of beautification and streetscape enhancements.

Planning Objective – Convert unaesthetic developed strip area into attractive, functional commercial business corridor. Emphasis on access management and sign regulations is critical.

Recommended Land Uses – General commercial (excluding strip malls); office; municipal uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - In general, higher density uses are most appropriate in these areas, however, rear-parking lots and landscaping may require larger lot sizes where applicable.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION:

Description - This area includes most of Sharon's and Farrell's older neighborhoods, in which much of the existing housing stock has deteriorated and is in need of repair.

Planning Objective - Provide a mechanism to make these neighborhoods marketable again. Provide incentives to homeowners who maintain their property, and assist those who cannot, while encouraging an aesthetic mix of small-scale commercial and office uses.

Recommended Land Uses – All types of medium to higher density residential uses; neighborhood commercial and service uses; offices; parks and recreation.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Lessen the extreme densities of these areas by removing vacant and blighted structures. Infill development should be at a density consistent with recent housing development. Strategies should be consistent with the goals of the Weed and Seed Program.

Revitalization in Farrell



TRANSITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD:

Description - The transitional neighborhood is a medium density, primarily residential area that may be experiencing some decline and/or commercial development pressures. These areas are located adjacent to non-residential land uses, which may infringe on the residential character, and may lead to poorly maintained and vacant housing.

Planning Objective – Recommended areas where urban residential re-development and mixed-use development should occur. These areas should be monitored for signs of blight, and enhancements and buffering should be recommended where appropriate. Flexibility in densities should be provided to accommodate a wide range of housing opportunities and commercial and office uses that are consistent with the character of existing neighborhoods.

Recommended Land Uses – Single family detached dwellings; single family semi-detached dwellings; townhouses; apartments; low-impact office and neighborhood commercial; senior housing developments; park/open space uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Density range of 5-12 units per acre, dependent upon neighborhood conditions and zoning district.

Underutilized and Vacant Parking Areas in Transitional Neighborhood Area



NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION:

Description – Neighborhoods which are currently well maintained and thriving, but are located adjacent to un-aesthetic land uses and/or neighborhoods in decline.

Planning Objective – Protect these older existing residential areas from land uses that may infringe on the character and quality of life of the neighborhood. These areas should be monitored for signs of blight, and enhancements and buffering should be recommended where appropriate. Flexibility in densities should be provided to accommodate a wide range of housing opportunities that are consistent with the neighborhood's character

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

Recommended Development Densities / Strategies – Density range of 5-12 units per acre, dependent upon neighborhood conditions and zoning district.

CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT:

Description - Corridors and/or gateways which are predominately developed but in need of beautification and upgrades.

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 and sign regulations are critical.

Recommended Land Uses - General commercial (excluding strip malls); office; residential; mixed uses; second floor residences; municipal use.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – In general, higher density uses are most appropriate in these areas, however, rear-parking lots and landscaping may require larger lot sizes where applicable.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR:

Description - Corridors where a broad range of economic development activities and investment are encouraged.

Planning Objective – These areas should be the focus of job creation, capital improvements, and large scale commercial/industrial/commerce centers. The zoning in

these corridors should be flexible enough to allow for a wide variety of uses, with the common goal being job creation and increase of the tax base.

Recommended Land Uses - Large-scale business, industry, and commercial ventures; industrial parks; river-based recreation and tourism uses; municipal use. Residence-serving businesses in Wheatland and Farrell.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - Flexible, depending on uses proposed.

Vacant Land in Route 718 Corridor in Wheatland



PLANNED BUSINESS PARK:

Description – This area corresponds to the planned technical park in Hermitage as an appropriate location for high quality employment opportunities.

Planning Objective – Provide a flexible area to market professional offices, technology businesses, corporate offices, education, and similar uses. Residential development and warehousing are not recommended in this district.

Recommended Land Uses - Technology firms, professional, and corporate offices and educational uses. Warehousing, distribution facilities, and trucking terminals are not recommended.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – High quality development in a master-planned campus setting.

INDUSTRIAL:

Description – These areas are intended to accommodate employment-generating uses.

Planning Objective – An economic development area to accommodate primarily industrial uses, with only limited, if any, commercial businesses.

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

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – One acre minimum lot size, or appropriate for use. Though design standards are less than in the other districts, landscaping and other esthetic treatments are still important.

RECREATION/RIVER & STREAM CONSERVATION:

Description - These are open space, recreational and sensitive natural resource areas, including the Shenango River and other watercourses and associated floodplains, that should remain in such use for the foreseeable future.

Planning Objective – Provide for existing public and semi-public owned parks, natural areas, conservation areas, and open space, and protection of the Shenango River and other water courses, including river and stream protection as described in the Eight Headwaters Plan.

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

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

Shenango River at Route 718



PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL:

Description - This area includes school district and other educational facilities, and municipal facilities, health care, churches, cemeteries, and other cultural features.

Planning Objective – To provide areas for public or semi-public uses, as well as limited professional offices.

Recommended Land Uses – School district facilities; professional offices, churches; cemeteries; municipal use; assisted living and health care facilities; recreational uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Flexible, based on use. Design standards should be incorporated into ordinances to ensure appropriate design and development occurs.

INSTITUTIONAL/OFFICE

Description – This area includes school district, municipal, public recreational, and health care facilities, senior housing, churches, cemeteries, professional offices, and nursing homes.

Planning Objective – To continue to provide for types of uses listed above.

Recommended Land Uses – School district, municipal, public recreational, and health care facilities, senior housing, churches, cemeteries, professional offices, and nursing homes.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - This area may include several different zoning districts each allowing differing combinations of the uses listed above.

Senior Housing in Hermitage



RESIDENTIAL/OFFICE MIXED USE

Description – Areas along and near the Route 18 and Route 62 corridors, containing generally smaller lots along heavily traveled major highways where more intensive commercial development is not desirable.

Planning Objective – Allow for single and multiple family residential and smaller offices and similar small, compatible low traffic non-residential uses (such as specialty retail).

Recommended Land Uses – Single family and multiple family residential; public and semi-public uses; offices; limited retail and service uses.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies - Scale considerations such as building size are important to limit intensity of development in these areas. Design standards and access management are also critical.

MASTER-PLANNED MIXED USE -TND

Description – Area north of Lamor Road along Route 18 to be developed for mixed office/residential/limited commercial development.

Planning Objective – Allow mixed development based on Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Concepts.

Recommended Land Uses – Office uses; a variety of residential types including single-family detached and semi-detached, multiple family and townhouses; and limited types of residence and office serving commercial.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Street system layout and traffic considerations are of primary importance. Official map and specific plan tools may be utilized, strip plaza, big-box retail concepts will not be used. Size of commercial uses will be limited.

GATEWAY COMMERCE

Description – Portion of Route 18 south where businesses serving interchange/highway travelers would be located.

Planning Objective – Create a positive entry to the Shenango Valley on Route 18.

Recommended Land Uses – Uses such as hotels, restaurants, travelers services, limited types of commercial and entertainment.

Recommended Development Densities/Strategies – Gateway design standards are important to creating a positive entry. Uses permitted would be limited to those that are appropriate to a gateway setting.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Plan for development of the Hermitage Town Center.
- Encourage a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses in the cities and borough. Limit the encroachment of industrial uses into residential and commercial areas within Wheatland. Expand shopping opportunities in the downtowns of Sharon and Farrell.

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 building 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 US Route 62 and PA Routes 18 and 60 to enhance the appearance of these corridors, enhance safety and traffic movement, and maintain economic viability. Such overlay zoning would:
- 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)
 - 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, including 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.
3. In some or all Commercial districts, typical “big box” architecture should be discouraged through architectural treatments of building facades.

I. Additional zoning actions include:

1. Requiring buffers and/or performance and design standards where there will be potentially conflicting uses.
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 include or are 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 over the next 20 years.

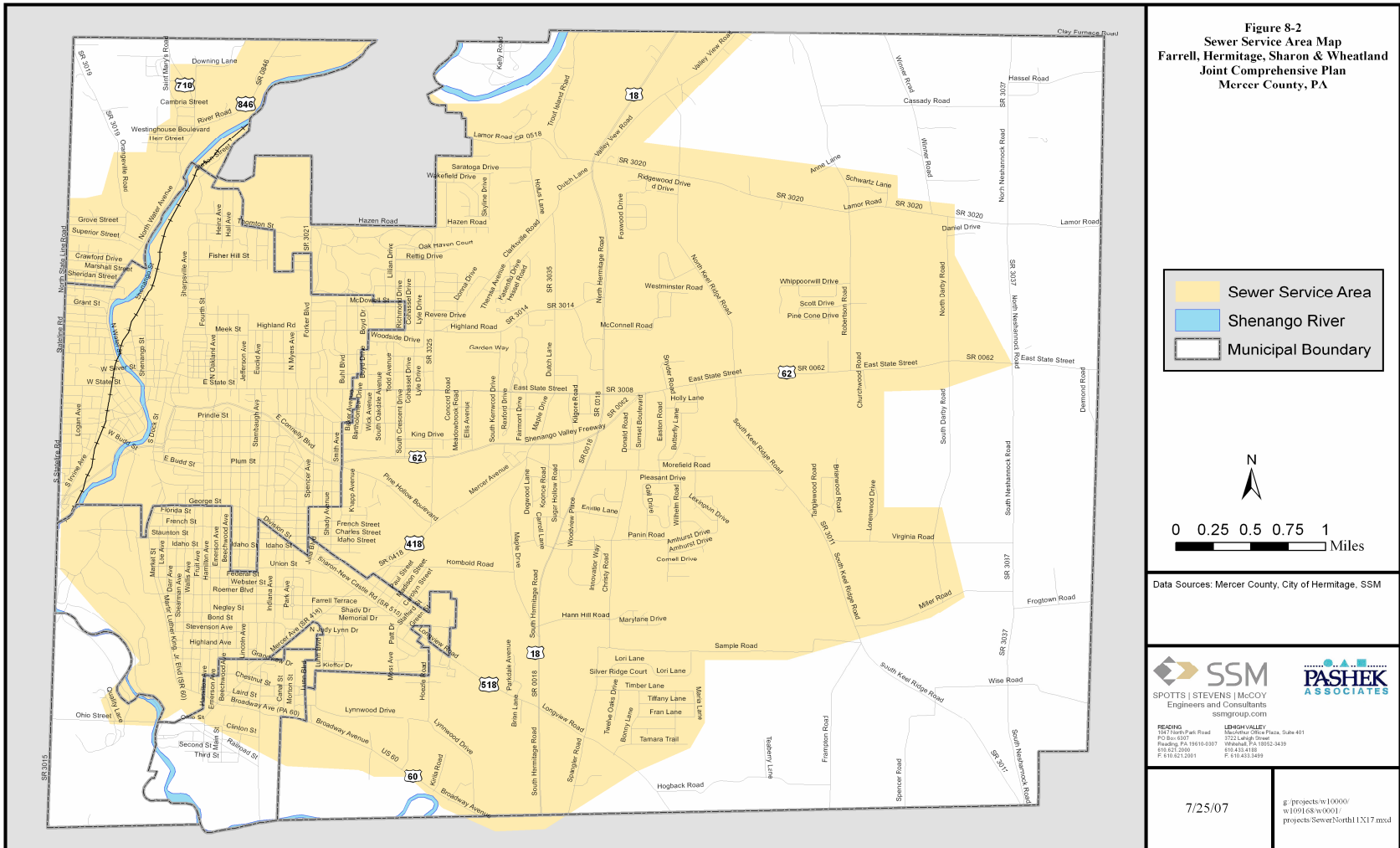
In this Region, the Designated Growth Areas include all areas outside of the Rural/Agriculture/Low Density Residential areas and Recreation/River and Stream Conservation areas, as shown on Figure 8.1, the Future Land Use Map.

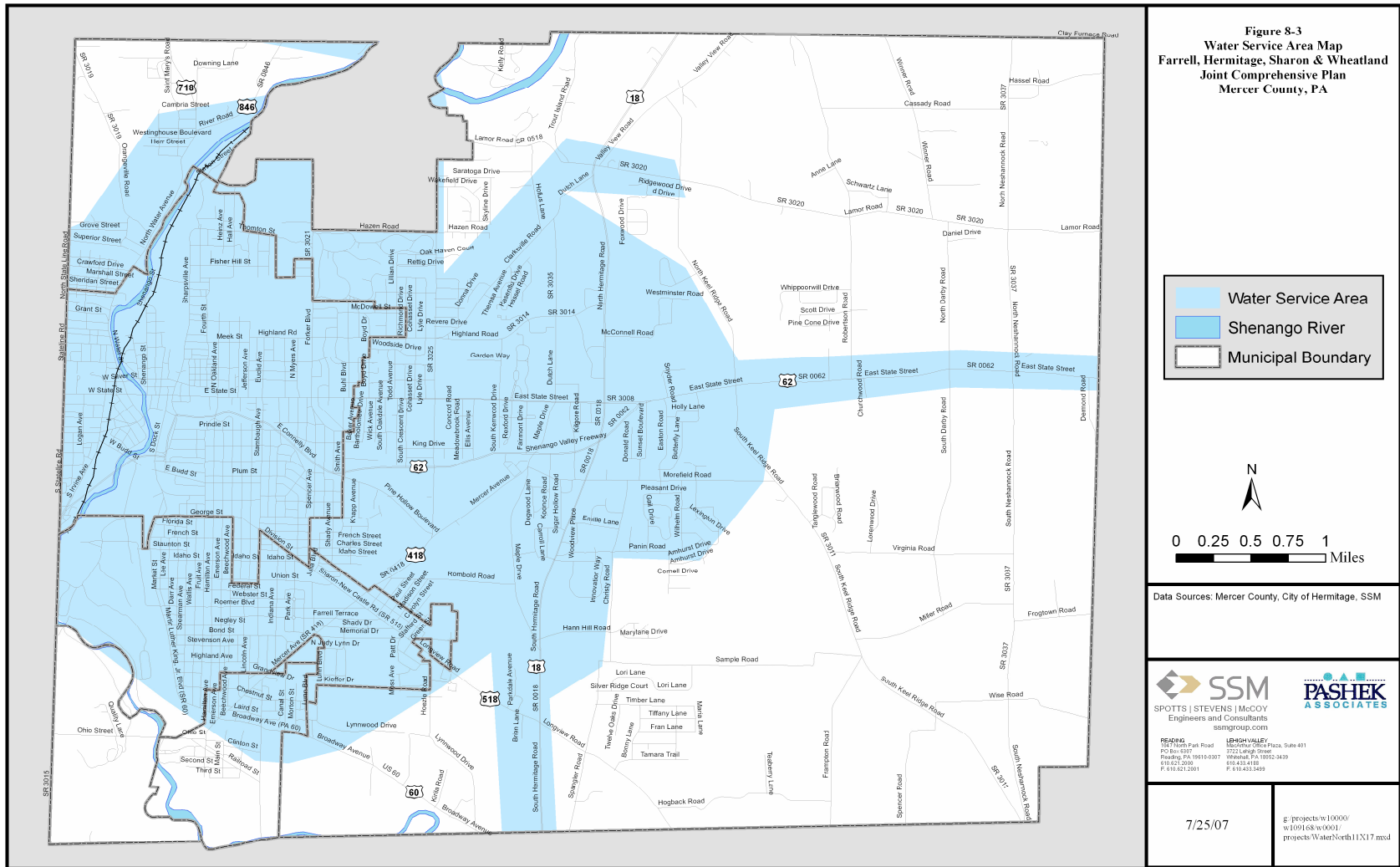
Sewer and water service areas, which affect delineation of growth areas, are shown on Figures 8-2 and 8-3.

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.
- 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.





- Encourage preservation of remaining agricultural areas.
- Implement Smart Growth Techniques and concentrate development in existing core areas of the Region.
- Practice sustainable development, including preservation of open space and environmental protection.

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 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, particularly the older residential areas of Sharon and Farrell.

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

- Continue to support development of new owner-occupied housing.
- Promote construction or renovation of all types of rental units.
- 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, which have reasonable access to required services.
- Encourage home ownership and retention of the single-family housing stock in older communities, and discourage absentee property ownership.
- Improve property conditions and maintain/increase housing stock in residential areas near downtowns.
- Encourage first-time home ownership.
- Identify gaps in the current housing market and develop a strategy to fill them.
- Develop alternative housing types in the downtown areas of Sharon and Farrell to attract people back to the city centers and help to restore economic energy and health to the downtowns.

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 that 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 which are 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.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Construct rental and for-sale housing units to replace obsolete housing.
- Reduce the density of developed neighborhoods in Farrell.
- Demolish vacant blighted and decaying structures and clean up blighted properties. Remove blighting influences surrounding target areas for new and rehabilitated housing.
- Maintain grant and revolving low-interest loan programs for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation.
- Implement code enforcement programs to identify code violations that can be corrected by rehabilitation or demolition.
- Facilitate expansion and selection of housing opportunities by maintaining housing counseling services for landlord relations, maintaining place of residence, and homeowner training.
- Facilitate neighborhood maintenance through programs for home improvements, including weatherization, painting, lighting, neighborhood cleanup, and access to lawn care maintenance equipment.
- Develop home façade improvement program.
- Utilize homeowner assistance program to facilitate vacant property acquisitions.
- Maintain low-interest loan and grant programs for rehabilitation and housing purchase through local banks.
- Facilitate construction of a wide range of housing choices for the elderly.
- Maintain down-payment assistance programs for housing purchases. Utilize the Mercer County Affordable Housing Fund to assist first time homeowners.
- Maintain rental unit licensing and annual inspections to discourage substandard rentals.
- In the Elm Street Grant program area, appoint block captains, develop neighborhood social groups, and continue to develop the Block Watch Program.

- Review examples of non-profit agencies which buy homes, rehabilitate them, and sell them to moderate income families, in partnership with HUD and banks offering attractive mortgages.
- Create parks for neighborhood use in open land areas which will be developed in the future.
- Improve financial literacy and credit repair tools for residents.
- Construct a Senior Citizen Mid-rise Housing Development on the southwest corner of Spearman Avenue and Roemer Boulevard.
- Develop block by block approaches to neighborhood revitalization, with analysis of needs for clearance and rebuilding and for rehabilitation.
- Because residential areas in Farrell which will be redeveloped often overlook industrial areas, to make these residential areas more attractive, enhancements should continue in the industrial areas.
- Determine whether split-rate property tax would be appropriate to encourage development on vacant or blighted land by shifting balance of the tax burden onto land away from improvements.
- Determine the merits of providing tax abatement for rehabilitated or repaired structures.
- Neighborhood revitalization in the Patagonia area of Hermitage and in Hermitage west of Buhl Farm Drive.

The Importance of Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are an important social and economic mechanism within our society, both in existing areas, and in future growth areas. Neighborhoods can provide quality of life amenities, and can also provide a means of organization and representation within municipal government. The cities of Sharon, Farrell, and Hermitage, as well as the Borough of Wheatland all contain a rich, diverse variety of neighborhoods containing all levels of housing. Unfortunately, many of these older neighborhoods are facing challenges from deteriorating housing, population loss, blight, crime, and the threat of incompatible uses eradicating their character. Issues such as maintenance, code enforcement, and livability need to be addressed. Strategies need to focus on prevention and information; stabilization and abatement; acquisition and management; and re-use and long term planning. Awareness and concern for the Region's neighborhoods are illustrated by this comprehensive plan, in which the future land use map contains four

distinct neighborhood-related designations. These are designed to provide guidance to protect, revitalize, and in some cases re-establish the traditional neighborhoods that make the cities of the Shenango Valley unique.

Neighborhood Preservation Opportunities

1. Identify neighborhoods in need of organization.

Organize a neighborhood group to improve communication and outreach, and so serve as a liaison between residents and local government. Some initiatives could include:

- Designing a neighborhood newsletter;
 - Motivate residents to become involved;
 - Provide a forum for discussion and identification of issues;
 - Encourage residents to meet each other;
 - Establish communication and assistance to local law enforcement agencies.
2. Encourage homeownership, and discourage conversion of owner-occupied dwellings to rental units.
 3. Use banners, signage, and advertisements to physically identify neighborhoods and build a sense of unity for its residents.

Revitalization

Goal: Support the revitalization of the Region's neighborhoods.

Objectives:

- Stress the redevelopment of brownfields.
- Expand revitalization efforts beyond the downtowns to include residential neighborhoods. Utilize the Main Street/Elm Street programs in Sharon and Farrell to promote economic and neighborhood revitalization.
- Improve the image and perceptions of neighborhoods, improve pride in neighborhoods, and make them more marketable.
- Protect and expand investments in sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure. Improve deteriorating street conditions.

- Prioritize and focus funds for economic development, housing rehabilitation, and/or the removal of dilapidated buildings. Increase job opportunities.
- Provide regulatory amendments that will augment the revitalization of existing neighborhoods.
- Encourage redevelopment that is compatible with neighborhood character.
- Encourage beautification projects in the cities of Farrell and Sharon.
- Encourage streetscape projects.
- Improve neighborhood livability by allowing for integrated and/or nearby human services, learning centers, employment, small-scale commercial uses, professional offices, and locally based start-up enterprises.
- Expand opportunities for social and cultural activities.
- Identify community resources, creating clusters where feasible, and revitalize areas and encourage housing opportunities around those clusters.
- Encourage residents to become invested in their community and resources and developing skills and responsibility to support, create, and maintain their neighborhoods.
- Increase employment and financial skills of residents to facilitate their success.

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 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 5.4% 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

	2000 Census	2005 Estimate	2010 Projection	2020 Projection	2000-2020 % Change
Farrell City	6,050	5,999	5,299	4,570	-24.5%
Hermitage City	16,157	16,571	17,050	17,885	10.7%
Sharon City	16,328	15,504	15,159	13,994	-14.3%
Wheatland Borough	748	724	730	711	-4.9%
Total Region	39,283	38,798	38,238	37,160	-5.4%

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

TABLE 8.2

BUILD OUT CAPACITY FOR POPULATION GROWTH

Future Land Use Plan Category	Approx. Available Undeveloped Acres	Available Acres Minus 20%	Likely Average Development Density	Likely Maximum Potential for Dwelling Units at Build Out	Likely Maximum Potential for People*
High Density Residential	2	1.6	10 D.U./Acre	16	38
Residential Medium Density – Single Family Neighborhood	365	292	3 D.U./Acre	876	2,076
Residential Medium Density – Single and Multi-Family	294	235.2	6 D.U./Acre	1,411	3,344
Suburban Residential Conservation Subdivision	1,885	1,508	2 D.U./Acre	3,016	7,148
Subdivision Residential – Single Family and PRD	1,100	880	2 D.U./Acre	1,760	4,171
TOTALS	3,646	2,916.8	--	7,079	16,777

*Used 2.37 persons per dwelling unit, the highest average in the Region.

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 Residential Areas to the year 2020 as 16,777 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 2,123 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, and keep the Region a desirable place to live for current and future residents.

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 and Villages, 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, including regional parks, neighborhood playgrounds, and green buffers. These bring nature into the human environment.

Open Space Development (Growing Greener)

Growing Greener¹ 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 Hermitage'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 existing centers, in conformity with the general character of the existing centers. There are a number of strategies which can be used to promote infill, as noted in Chapter 6. The following policies can be reviewed by the municipalities as a starting point in determining the most appropriate methods for use in the Region. 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.

¹ 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

Community Facilities & Services Plan

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 9-1.

Cooperative Efforts

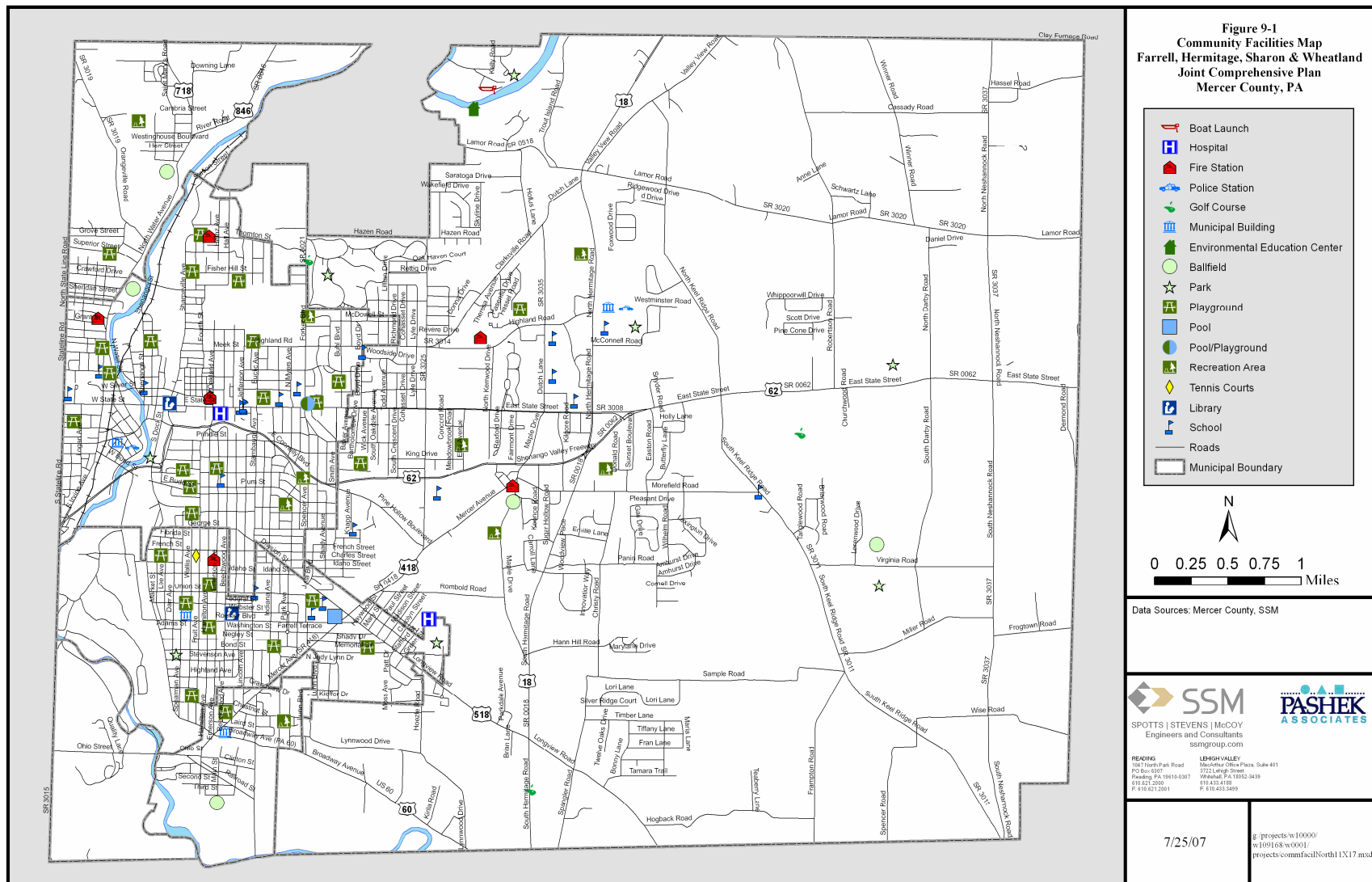
All four municipalities should continue to review opportunities for regional cooperation in the provision of services and facilities as both the demand and the cost of such services increase. The municipalities can also work with the school district in providing facilities and programs to area residents. 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 Shenango Valley 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.



- Position all participating municipalities 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.
- Encourage cooperation of school districts to enhance education opportunities for students in the Region and meet the educational needs of the community.
- Address economic development on a regional basis.
- Pursue joint opportunities for funding of projects through grant programs.
- Explore tax-base sharing, revenue sharing, and cost sharing strategies to reduce local competition for new businesses.
- 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.
- Cooperate on a Strategic Marketing Plan, economic development, tourism, and community development opportunities that promote the Region as a destination.
- 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 the 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.

If new school facilities are proposed by one of the local school districts in the Region, the municipalities should work with the Districts 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 all 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.

Municipal Buildings



COOPERATIVE MUNICIPAL EFFORTS RECOMMENDED BY THIS PLAN

- Cooperative planning for enhancements to the Route 60 and State Street Corridors and development of consistent overlay zoning.
- Continued cooperative recreation planning between Farrell and Wheatland.
- Supporting the viability of public libraries.
- Region-wide pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan implementation.
- Shenango River access, enhancement, and development plan and Shenango River Trail.
- Development of Highland Road and Sharpsville Road/Wheatland Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridors.
- 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.
- Sharon/Farrell Weed and Seed.
- Sharon/Farrell Elm Street Program.
- Investigate opportunities for Keystone Innovation Zones with Penn State Shenango and other institutions of higher learning.
- Sharon and Penn State Shenango planning together how to enhance downtown experience for student and parents and identify types of uses which would be attractive in the vicinity of the campus. Identify what PSU can do to support downtown revitalization and enhance student presence downtown.
- Create/designate a regional agency to spearhead efforts to enhance the role of the Shenango River in the Region.
- Determining whether revenue sharing as authorized in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code is a viable concept in the Region.

Community Facilities and Services

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.
- Explore cooperative efforts to provide cost effective public safety services.
- Encourage sanitary sewer and water systems that are cost-efficient, meet residents' needs, maintain community health, and provide an equitable level of service.
- Maintain and enhance the Region's public library services.
- Provide public safety services that meet the needs of the Region's residents.

- Encourage cooperation and shared facility use by two or more government entities or agencies.
- Update Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans as necessary.
- Encourage innovative approaches to managing on-lot sewage disposal systems where used.
- 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 hazardous materials and solid waste.
- Encourage disaster preparedness planning in the region.
- Provide better public access to government.
- Strengthen higher education, including adult education, within the Region.

- 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.

Recreational Facilities



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 properties that are suited for athletic fields or playgrounds (flat and well-drained); have adequate public access; and are closer to population centers.

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, greenway networks 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.

Recommendations of the Eight Head Waters Study (Hermitage) should be implemented.

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. Establish and 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 local school districts 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 work to establish recycling centers, if deemed appropriate, 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.
- 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 school boards 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.
- T. Encourage school districts to cooperate in resolving the need to balance declining enrollment with the need to maintain and improve education facilities. Encourage the school districts to work together to provide enhanced educational opportunities to more students in the Region.
- U. Encourage non-profit organizations to make payments to municipal governments in lieu of taxes.
- V. Encourage major institutional uses to locate within brownfields and grayfields, rather than greenfields.

RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the Region per the Concept Plan.
- Sanitary sewer improvements, such as replacement of old sewer lines and pump stations.
- Street, alley, curb, and sidewalk improvements and reconstruction.
- Municipal building improvements in Wheatland and building maintenance in Farrell.
- Stey-Nevant Public Library maintenance.
- Provide accessibility for the handicapped at all public facilities.
- Upgrade the Farrell sewage system and sewage treatment plant to eliminate inflow and infiltration.
- Eliminate infiltration within the Hermitage sanitary sewer system.

- Streetscape improvements and traffic calming along Hamilton, Fruit, New Castle, and South Oakland Avenues (curbing, landscaping, sidewalks, remove nuisance trees, street lighting, gateway signage).
- Replace Farrell City Park.
- Develop a neighborhood park to serve the northwest section of Farrell.
- Develop additional recreation facilities at Wheatland Fields.
- Continue to improve existing recreation facilities and create new mini-parks in Farrell and Wheatland per the City of Farrell Recreation and Park Plan.
- Develop teen recreational programs, before/after school programs, preschool programs, and senior programs within the Region.
- Implement the City of Sharon Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan and upgrade existing Sharon parks and playgrounds.
- Develop new neighborhood parks in Sharon – consider purchase of former Westinghouse parking lots.
- Determine if a softball/baseball field should be developed along Clark Street at North Water Street in Sharon.
- Plan for and develop a city-wide trail system in Sharon based on the Trail System Concept Map in the Recreation Plan.
- Prepare master plan for Bicentennial Park in Sharon.
- Develop neighborhood mini-park on a lot at Logan and North Irvine Streets in Sharon.
- Implement the Whispering Pines Park Master Plan in Hermitage.
- Purchase and utilize the National Guard Armory for indoor recreation.
- Develop satellite community parks in the southern and northwestern portions of Hermitage.
- Make additional sports fields available for local sports organizations.

- Require land dedication or recreation fees in lieu of dedication for all new land developments.
- Implement the concept Hermitage Trail System Plan.
- Implement the recommendations of the Eight Head Waters Study for greenway and open space conservation.
- Support continuation of operation of the Community Library of the Shenango Valley.
- Support upgrading and maintenance of Buhl Farm Park.
- Conduct community clean-ups as needed.
- Secure up-to-date mapping of sewer lines in Farrell, Sharon, and Wheatland.
- Increase volunteer participation and training for playgrounds and recreation programs.
- Determine appropriate use of 40 acre Stull property on Sample Road in Hermitage.
- Extend sanitary sewer in East State Street to Jefferson Township.
- Completing river walk on east side of Shenango River in downtown Sharon from Silver Street to East State Street (new lighting, sidewalks, and signs along Shenango Street also included).
- Build Little League baseball field in Farrell at corner of Wallis Avenue and Federal Street.
- Monitor decision on renovation of Case Elementary School and whether the site will continue to be used for school purposes. If not to be continued for school use, determine an appropriate future use.
- Acquire 55 acre Hanson property on Virginia Road in Hermitage for development of sports play fields for local leagues.
- Construct sidewalk along north side of Highland Road as part of pedestrian/bicycle system connecting high schools with Buhl Farm Park.
- Upgrade Sharon sewage treatment plant.

- Build a footbridge across the Shenango River connecting Penn State Shenango to downtown Sharon.
- Complete Hometown Streets street improvement project in Sharon.
- Turn Hermitage Middle School, which will be closed, into a community center.
- Raze the Hermitage Elementary School to construct play fields.
- Expand capacity at the Hermitage sewage treatment facilities.
- Resolve “Taylor Dump” usability issues in a manner acceptable to Wheatland, to allow appropriate use of the site.
- Determine whether use of brick for street materials, as found in Farrell, should be used in central business areas.
- Enhance Stambaugh Avenue/State Street Intersection.
- Enhance Stambaugh Avenue from State Street to the Freeway.

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's communities, 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.
- 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, dining and cultural amenities that will encourage young adults, retirees, and other demographic groups to remain in or relocate to the region.
- Support the agencies which address the needs of the disabled community.
- 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 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.

- Identify cooperative venture opportunities with Penn State Shenango and how Penn State Shenango can contribute to the development of community in the Region.
- Establish and/or implement, as applicable, design guidelines for the cities and borough consistent with the existing character of their streetscapes.
- Promote high quality, coordinated development, landscaping, and signage at gateways to and along the major roadway corridors to established town centers 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.

Most of the Region is 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 9.2) 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.

Remediation

It is critical that EPA remediation efforts for the Shenango River and land along the Shenango River continue in order to improve the quality of water in the River and mitigate continued contamination of the River and air from contaminated industrial lands.

Table 9.2 - Recommendations for Protecting Water Supplies

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

Chapter 10

Transportation and Circulation Plan

Introduction

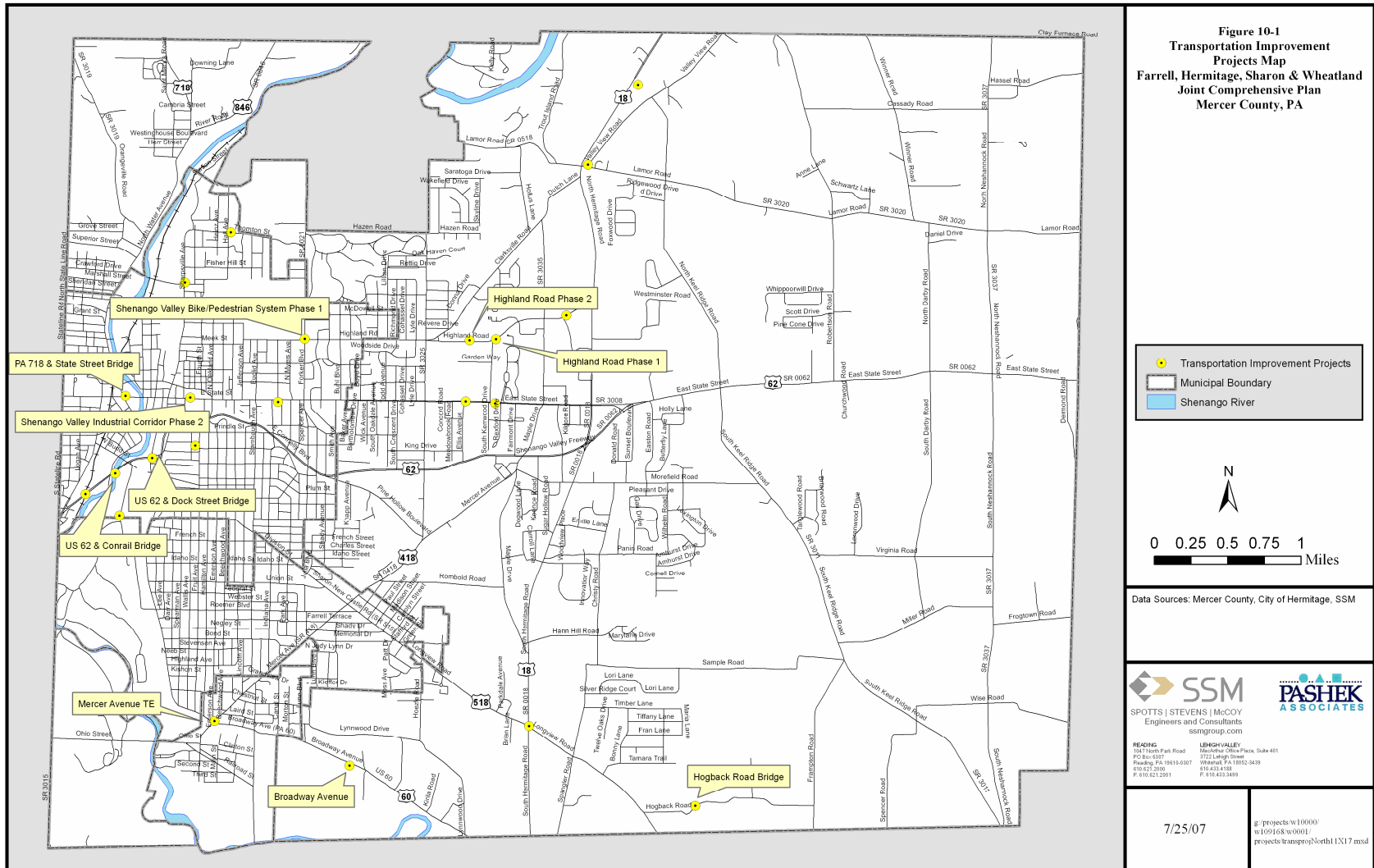
There is a direct connection between land use planning and transportation, one cannot plan for one and ignore the other. The transportation system needs to provide each community with adequate access to the system; support economic development and revitalization efforts; serve but not adversely affect 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 10-1, 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:

- Advance transportation projects that take advantage of brownfield reuse and other similar opportunities such as KOZ sites.
- Upgrade bridges as needed.
- Identify appropriate truck routes through the urban areas in the Region.
- Upgrade urban corridors as part of downtown revitalization efforts.
- 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, rail, air, and highway networks. Support the development of adequate facilities (terminals/stations/park and ride lots, etc.) for linking different modes of transportation. Eliminate confusion at transfer or interchange points within and between modes.



- Improve accessibility of the circulation system for all users, including persons with disabilities.
- Coordinate land use and zoning with roadway network capacities.
- Develop policies that will encourage carpooling.
- Enhance public transportation services, promote the use of public transportation, and inform people of transit opportunities.
- 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 an improved and enhanced Route 60 Corridor to serve new industrial and commercial development and create a favorable impression of the Region.
- Identify the best ways of mitigating congestion within the Region and work to get corridors placed on PennDOT's Congested Corridor Program.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Provide enhanced access through a variety of modes of transportation to major activity generators, such as employment, health, shopping, education, and recreation facilities from all municipalities in the Region.
- 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.
- Continue to upgrade intersections within the Route 62 corridor, address congestion, and revitalize and enhance the corridor with improvements such as sidewalks, screening, landscaping, and design standards.
- Continue to improve and increase the connectivity of the Region's bicycle and pedestrian network.
- Investigate provision of alternate routes of travel to the major road corridors within the Region.

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, PA Route 60, and US Route 62 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 the 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. Work with the railroads to maintain the rail corridors.
1. Keep the corridors free of brush and debris for fire safety.
 2. Maintain railroad road crossing surfaces.
 3. Install and maintain proper warning lights, gates, and signs at railroad crossings.
- E. Implement the projects recommended by this plan.
- F. 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.
- G. Work with PennDOT to ensure adequate maintenance of roads with substantial volumes of truck and school bus traffic as well as automobile traffic.
- H. Consider the merits of adoption of Transportation Impact Fee ordinances to be used by the municipalities individually or jointly and require land developers to address needed transportation improvements in the Region.
- I. Work with PennDOT and the MCRPC to establish appropriate speed limits, reducing them as necessary, in developed areas.
- J. Prepare multi-year programs for street maintenance and improvement.

- K. 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.
- L. Encourage landowners to cooperate with PennDOT and the municipalities in the redesign of existing strip development areas to manage access and improve streetscapes.
- M. Coordinate utility and road improvements so that utilities are constructed before road improvements are made.
- N. Require property owners to keep street rights-of-way available for required improvements and pedestrian systems.
- O. Work together as a Region with the County, Legislators, and PennDOT to list needed transportation improvements on the Twelve-Year Transportation Program.
- P. 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.
- Q. Use transit system to facilitate access to recreation facilities and increase awareness of transit opportunities.
- R. Promote interconnections of developments.
- S. Support funding for the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service. Work to increase transportation alternatives for seniors.
- T. Request that the MPO investigate the feasibility of light rail service to the Region.

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 10.2, includes the functional classification for the Region's roads.

Traffic Volumes

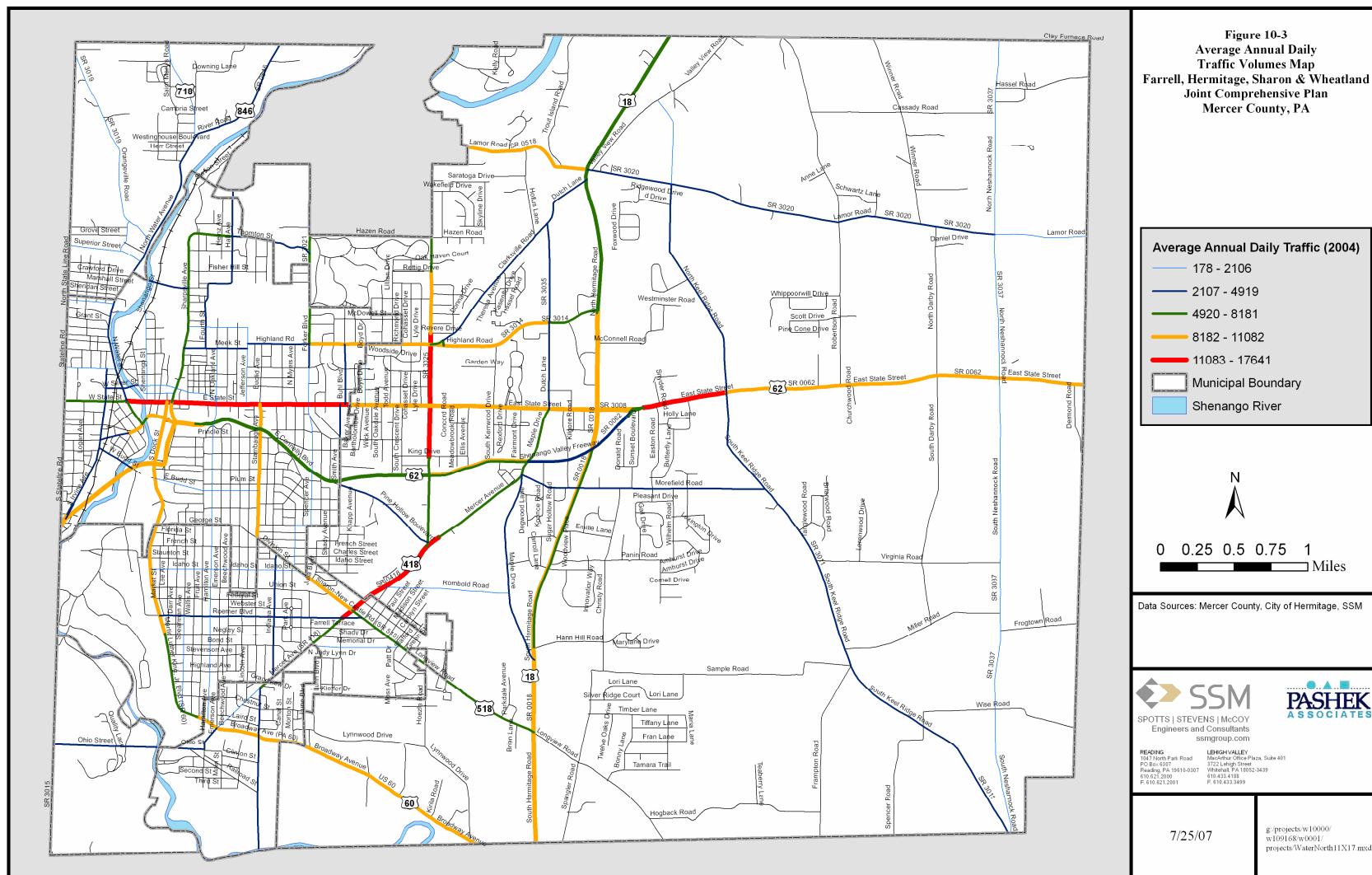
Figure 10.3 indicates Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes in the Region.

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:

- New connector road between PA 18 and Valley View Road.
- Highland Road/East-West Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridor.
- Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridor.
- Shenango River Rail Trail Feasibility Study and West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Trail.
- Highland Road Phase 2 road widening and sidewalk improvements.
- Evaluate the feasibility of developing a vegetative median along parts of PA Route 18.
- Widen South Buhl Farm Road to three lanes from East State Street to the Freeway.
- Widen North Buhl Farm Road to three lanes from East State Street to Highland Road.
- Construct an access road to the Shenango Valley Mall from Snyder Road, and add a connection road from PA Route 18 to Keel Ridge Road, as discussed in the Hermitage Town Center Plan.
- Study if signalization of left turn movement is warranted at the intersection of Longview Road and PA Route 18.
- Develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways along Route 18 and evaluate the feasibility of creating more means for pedestrians and bicycles to safely cross PA Route 18 and US Route 62.



- Define and implement Transportation Improvement Districts along PA Route 18 to implement the plans for that road.
- Eliminate the railroad crossing at Budd Street in Sharon, leading to new industrial access road south into Farrell, opening several areas of industrial property to development.
- Pave Green Street in Farrell to provide access to medical facilities.
- Broadway Avenue (Route 60) reconstruction.
- Shenango Valley Industrial Corridor Phase 2.
- Replace US 62 and Conrail Bridge.
- Replace US 62 and Dock Street Bridge.
- Replace Shenango Valley Freeway Bridges.
- Mercer Avenue Traffic Enhancement.
- Replace Hogback Road Bridge 2323.
- Replace Kelley Road Bridges 2304 and 2305.
- PA 518/Valley View Road relocation.
- PA 18/Longview Road intersection improvement.
- Intersection improvement at Hazen Road and North Buhl Farm Road.
- PA 518/Clark Street intersection improvement.
- East State Street/Ellis Street intersection improvements.
- East State Street/Maple Street/Dutch Street intersection improvements.
- East State Street intersection improvements in Sharon.
- PA 518/Thornton Street intersection widening.
- US 62 Gateway Enhancement.

- East State Street/Kerrwood Drive intersection improvement.
- Shoulder widening on Keel Ridge Road.
- Pine Hollow Run Project.
- Trout Island Trail Project.
- Pursue designation of US 62 for inclusion in the PennDOT Congested Corridor Improvement Program.
- Upgrade the US 62 Corridor through Transportation Enhancement and Betterment project.
- Construct barriers as needed on the Shenango Valley Expressway where head-on collisions occur.
- Establish and improve designated truck routes through Sharon.
- Wheatland street improvements as necessary to support development of land in Wheatland industrial/economic development area.
- Realign intersections of PA Route 18, Dutch Lane, Valley View Road, and Lamor Road.
- Access management program along PA Route 60 Corridor.
- Work with Shenango Valley Transit Authority to enhance access to park and trail facilities and recreation events.
- Identify and enhance pedestrian connections through Wheatland, Farrell, and Sharon between the Shenango River Rail Trail and Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Corridor.
- Reconstruct streets, alleys, and associated infrastructure in the vicinity of Centennial Place in Farrell, including Highland Street, Stevenson Street, Fruit Avenue, Wallace Avenue, Kedron Street, Kishon Street, and Spearman Avenue.
- Address Morrocco property access/frontage road to Yourga Place in Hermitage.

- Extend Garden Way to connect Kerrwood Drive and Buhl Farm to provide access to the rear of existing shopping centers and eliminate left turns at the exit on to State Street.
- Patagonia area street improvement project.
- Investigate the potential for a traffic signal at Linden Pointe Technical Park entrance off PA Route 18.
- SR 60 – Ohio 82 connection project.
- In Wheatland, continue to reconstruct streets, as was done on a portion of Morton Street, in a systematic manner. Prepare a plan for street maintenance and reconstruction. Examples of streets in need of improvement include Hamilton, Avenue, Emerson Avenue, Chestnut Street, Laird Street, Riddle Street, Morton Street, Pine Street, Metz Street, Clinton Street, and Mill Street.

Program sidewalk improvements and construction as necessary, such as along Canal Street and Balm Street.

- Reduce the speed limit on Broadway Avenue in Wheatland to 35 mph.



Streets in Farrell

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.

MCRPC Corridors of Countywide significance - PA Routes 18; 60; US Route 62

The PA Route 18 in the City of Hermitage corridor bisects the Region's largest designated growth area, where future residential, commercial, and town-center development is expected. This impending development will increase traffic in the corridor, and eventually surpass the highway's carrying capacity. The City must coordinate efforts with PennDOT as well as the MCRPC to implement the plan for this corridor.

US Route 62, with some of the highest traffic volumes in the Region, is the principal east/west route and the main transportation corridor in the Region. Higher intensity development will occur throughout the length of the corridor.

PA Route 60, the Broadway Avenue Corridor is the key economic development corridor, and will need improvement to provide access to the Region's economic development areas and enhance the perception of the Region.

The corridors identified are State and Federally-owned and maintained highways. It is critical that the municipalities continue communications with PennDOT and MCRPC, to discuss future planning and upgrades. Reactionary spot improvements will not suffice, and will ultimately lead to a poorly functioning transportation system. The municipalities, PennDOT, and MCRPC need to agree on a vision for these corridors and plan accordingly to accommodate future development. Some of the improvements and concepts recommended for consideration by this Plan include the following:

- Road Widening in the Route 60 corridor.
- Signal light coordination: The cycle lengths of each light should be coordinated to allow for smooth traffic flow along the corridor. Signals with self-adjusting timing mechanisms can optimize flow at intersections. Higher density development should occur near signalized intersections, to lessen the need for additional signals.
- Access management: An effective transportation system cannot allow unlimited land access. Every additional driveway and street intersection introduces traffic and reduces the road's ability to move traffic safely and efficiently. Especially within the designated growth areas, it is imperative to limit the access points, particularly along PA Route 18 and US Route 62. PennDOT has developed guidelines for municipalities to use when formulating their own access

management regulations. The municipalities should coordinate with PennDOT to develop access management regulations to include in their respective ordinances.

- Act 209 Traffic Impact Fee: Steps required to establish and implement a traffic impact ordinance are shown in **Table 10.1**.

Potential elements of a corridor improvement program are found in Appendix I.

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 the Coordinating Committee and the Technical Committee. 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 (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

Shenango Valley Transit

The Shenango Valley Shuttle Service is a fixed route bus service that serves the City of Sharon, Borough of Sharpsville, City of Farrell, City of Hermitage and the Borough of Wheatland with three routes, the northern, southern, and central, that travel between downtown Sharon and the Shenango Valley Mall.

Freight Rail Service

The railroad system for the Region includes lines from the City of Pittsburgh through the western portion of the Region along the Shenango River Corridor. The lines are owned and operated by Norfolk Southern.

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 need for such districts along US Route 62 and PA Routes 18 and 60 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. High traffic volume areas, such as portions of the US Route 62 corridor, Buhl Farm Drive, and PA Route 418 are most in need of congestion management techniques.

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 Municipalities Planning Code indicates that when municipalities have prepared a multi-municipal plan, to allow for the provision of transportation capital improvements in a cooperative manner, the municipalities may cooperate to enact joint transportation impact fee ordinances.

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 10.1** identifies the steps involved in setting up and implementing an impact fee ordinance.

TABLE 10.1
SUMMARY OF THE STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING
TRAFFIC IMPACT FEE ORDINANCE

<u>Task</u>	Responsible Entity
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>	Governing Body
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>	Governing Body
3. Committee oversees preparation of Land Use Assumptions plan, holds public hearing, forwards to Governing Body for adoption.	Impact Fee Advisory Committee
4. Committee oversees preparation of Roadway Sufficiency Analysis and forwards to Governing Body for approval.	Impact Fee Advisory Committee
5. Committee oversees preparation of Capital Improvements Plan, holds public hearing, forwards to Governing Body for approval.	Impact Fee Advisory Committee
6. Impact Fee Ordinance text developed and Ordinance adopted.	Governing Body

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 - *Anchors, Linkages, and Corridors Within the Region*, as well as the *Future Land Use Plan*, Chapter 8.

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 (where feasible) should be eliminated. 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 PA North Planning and Transportation Study recommended the following approaches for consideration when considering 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

The study also identified education as a major need:

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

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 routes 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.

The PA North Planning and Transportation Study for Hermitage noted:

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

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

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

A traffic calming plan was recommended for McConnell Road and its connecting neighborhood streets.

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 11

Economic Development Plan

The Farrell/Hermitage/Sharon/Wheatland Planning Region must support and create conditions for innovative economic and community development. A proactive approach to economic development is to increase the tax base as well as employment opportunities by expanding and diversifying the economic base.

A coordinated economic development strategy involving smaller scale uses could be directed to the urbanized areas of Farrell and Sharon, and larger-scale enterprises could be directed toward the Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Dock Street Corridor, Ohio Street, Sharpsville Avenue Corridor, Route 718 Corridor in Wheatland, and several locations in the Region where large scale commercial and industrial uses exist, such as the PA Route 18 Corridor and US Route 62 Corridor which are also appropriate for mixed commercial and office uses. Industrial development should be directed toward existing industrially zoned areas of the Region and existing industrial and commerce parks.

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.

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 (PNDC) 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.
- Have the PNDC and business retention and expansion partners 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.

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. In addition, there are substantial opportunities available for re-use of currently underutilized properties.

Future Land Use Plan Category	Available Acres
Central Business District	1
Commercial	86
Commercial Corridor Enhancement	1
Commercial Enhancement	3
Corridor Enhancement	8
Economic Development Corridor	199
Gateway Commercial	76
Industrial	420
Institutional Office	211
Master-Planned Mixed Use-TND	213
Neighborhood Commercial	1
Planned Business Park	81
Residential/Office Mixed Use	152
Town Center	47
Total	1,499

Economic Development

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

Objectives:

- Encourage expansion of existing businesses.

- 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.
- Market the low cost of living, affordable housing, educational opportunities, and the Region's neighborhoods to attract and retain young persons and new residents.
- Participate in countywide tourism promotion programs.
- Promote reuse of brownfields and development of infill properties and give high priority to brownfield, infill, and redevelopment projects in transportation programming and infrastructure improvements.
- Maintain and expand a business/industry corridor along Route 60. Promote the Corridor as a link between all communities in the Region.
- Streamline the process for review and approval for revitalization projects (brownfield, infill, and redevelopment projects) and other economic development. Eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers to development.
- Focus incentives and programs (such as KIZ, KOEZ, and KOZ) in underutilized areas where infrastructure investment has already been made.
- Encourage coordination among public, private, and non-profit sectors to carry out economic development initiatives.
- 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 downtown physical and aesthetic improvements and marketing promotion improvements, 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 and institutions.
- 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.
- Work to accomplish necessary infrastructure to support economic growth.

Workforce Education and Training Goal and Objectives

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. The Region's most intense future commercial development should occur: along US Route 62, PA Route 18, PA Route 60 Corridor, Ohio Street, Sharpsville Avenue Corridor, Route 718 Corridor in Wheatland, and the Shenango River.

US Route 62 Corridor – Sharon and Hermitage

The commercial areas in the cities of Sharon and Hermitage are found along State Street from downtown Sharon to North Keel Ridge Road in Hermitage. The development potential for these areas includes larger scale retail (primarily in Hermitage), offices, ancillary commercial uses, residence serving uses, and cultural and tourist attractions. In downtown Sharon and the town center of Hermitage, the uses should adhere to design standards that encourage visual consistency along the corridor by regulating access management, signage, landscaping, setbacks, and streetscape improvements. The westernmost portion of the corridor will over time experience revitalization of an older industrial area.

PA Route 18 Corridor – Hermitage

The commercial areas along PA Route 18, as delineated on the Future Land Use Map, should be reserved for quality commercial, office, or institutional development. This area, because of its location within and/or in proximity to a growth area and town center district, in which higher density housing is expected to occur, and because of its access to public sewer and water, is an ideal location for economic development activities in the Region. It also presents an opportunity for the City of Hermitage to develop a Specific Plan, as per Section 1106 of the

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Development within the town center should be consistent with the recommendations of the Hermitage Town Center study. Technical business parks are under development or anticipated in the southern portion of the corridor. Mixed use is anticipated in the northern portion of the corridor.

***PA Route 60 (Broadway Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard, Dock Street)
Corridor - Hermitage, Wheatland, Farrell, Sharon***

The Route 60 corridor links all four municipalities and is a key component of the transportation and economic development infrastructure of the Region. Future development along this corridor should include a mixture of economic development activities with an emphasis on job creation and retention, including heavy industry, commercial, office and commerce parks, institutional uses and recreation. Access management should be a key consideration, and any development in the corridor should complement the larger scale development envisioned in this Plan. The Wheatland section of the corridor should contain commercial uses at a smaller, neighborhood scale, while the portions through Farrell, Hermitage, and Sharon are more appropriate for larger scale uses.

Route 60 Corridor



Shenango River Corridor

The Route 60 corridor is a key transportation link through the Region. 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, particularly the City of Pittsburgh and its revitalized South Side neighborhoods, the River can be used as an impetus for economic development activities. Uses such as industrial heritage education, recreation, cultural activities, and restaurants and taverns, and loft-style housing should be explored.

Ohio Street

Penn-Northwest is developing the State Line Industrial Park along the north side of Ohio Street. Most of the remaining land west of the River (approximately 400 acres) is contained within the Sharon Steel Farrell Works Superfund Site.

Superfund Site



State Line Industrial Park



The high piles of slag and sludge will be removed from the banks of the Shenango River and will be used to regrade the interior portions of the site. When regraded, these materials will form open space. The area adjacent to the Shenango River will be graded to recreate a broad level floodplain. Bio-engineered bank stabilization techniques and erosion control measures will be designed to stabilize the river bank and prevent further erosion of contaminated material into the Shenango River and the wetlands area. A passive vegetated groundwater barrier consisting of poplar trees will be planted between the northern slag area and the Shenango River. This vegetated barrier will absorb groundwater from the source areas before it flows into the Shenango River.

Once the site has been regraded, a biosolid material will be worked into the surface material to create an ideal environment for a high-fertility protective cover

over the slag and dried sludge. The protective biosolid cover will also minimize the ability of water to pass through the slag and sludge. By reducing the quantity of water passing through the slag and sludge, the migration of contaminants into the groundwater will also be reduced, and ultimately the discharge of contaminated groundwater into the Shenango River will be minimized. Remaining groundwater flow through the site will be intercepted by the passive vegetated groundwater barrier, which will use poplar trees to absorb groundwater before it is discharged into the Shenango River. The biosolid cover will also provide a protective barrier between the contaminated slag and sludge and the people and wildlife that access the site. This cover will be seeded with native plant species to create a grass and shrub or tree habitat. Perimeter fencing will be installed around the biosolid cap so that the cap can be well established. Long-term monitoring of the groundwater, sediment, and surface water in the Shenango River will be used to demonstrate a decrease in site-related contaminants discharges and an increase in water quality in the Shenango River after consolidating contaminated slag and sludge under the biosolids cover. Certain land use and activity restrictions, known as institutional controls, will be implemented to prevent unacceptable human health risks and ecological exposure risks to slag, dried sludge, contaminated dust and contaminated groundwater located at the site. The land use restrictions will prohibit damaging the cap and the groundwater use restrictions will prohibit the use of contaminated groundwater from being used as a drinking water source. The institutional controls will be implemented through orders or agreements with EPA or through municipal ordinances.

Hermitage, Farrell, and Wheatland will have to pursue with EPA whether the ultimate use of the site would be recreational opportunities such as hunting, nature watching, and hiking, or whether economic development of the site should be encouraged. Costs of development would be higher than on a typical industrial site because of the biosolid cap, but there are examples of development occurring where such caps are in place.

Sharpsville Avenue Corridor

Further development/redevelopment of Winner/Westinghouse properties is supported for industrial and heavier commercial uses.

Route 718 Corridor in Wheatland

Primarily an industrial area, with a mix of viable uses, vacant buildings and lots, and underutilized parking areas, mixed commercial, office, health care and industrial use is supported.

Specific economic Development Projects supported include:

- Development of Sharon Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Legacy Commons properties.
- Development of Hillside I and II Industrial Park properties.
- Enhancement and redevelopment of the Route 60 Corridor.
- Redevelopment of the Idaho Street corridor.
- Development of Hermitage Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Wheatland Industrial Park properties.
- Development of State Line Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Linden Pointe Technical Park.
- Enhancement of the Roemer Boulevard and Sharon-New Castle Road Corridors.
- Enhancement of the East State Street Corridor.
- Eventual development of office/institutional development in Hermitage west of Route 18 and north of Longview Road.
- Development of the Hermitage Town Center.
- Revitalization of downtown Sharon pursuant to the Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- Development of appropriate mixed use at the northern entrance to Hermitage along Route 18.
- Development of appropriate mixed use along the Route 718 corridor in Wheatland.
- Maintaining low interest Revolving Loan Funds for economic development and job creation.

- Promoting 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 whether Sharon and Farrell should participate in the Main Street program.
- Determining the viability of a revolving loan fund for starting micro-enterprises and addressing barriers to development of start-up businesses. Continue Business Education Self-Sufficiency Training.
- Developing Broadway North properties.
- Developing/redeveloping Winner Development/Westinghouse properties.
- Developing Technology Innovation and Development Center at LindenPointe.
- Developing VIP Industrial Park.
- Enhancing commercial and industrial areas abutting the Sharon Central Business District so they will not adversely affect revitalization of downtown. Examples of areas include the area between West Silver Street, North Irvine Street, and the River, and the area between the Freeway, Walnut Street, the River, and Connelly Boulevard.
- Supporting the Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation efforts to restore the Columbia Theater and reopen the Phoenix Restaurant as a museum, restaurant, and piano bar.
- Attracting a grocery store, hotel and gas station in Sharon, as well as other uses to fill vacant storefronts.
- Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission promotion of the City as a whole, highlighting the LindenPointe Technical Park and Stateline Industrial Park.
- Developing Broadway South properties.
- Development of former Farrell City Park site.
- Linking Budd Street to the Route 62/Route 82 interchange near State Line Road in Masury to give the area behind Duferco Steel rapid access to the highway network.

- Encouraging entrepreneurs in Neighborhood Revitalization areas of Farrell and Sharon.
- Enhancing unattractive commercial properties along the Route 60 Corridor for reuse.
- Encouraging utilization of vacant industrial buildings and underutilized parking lots along Council Avenue in Wheatland. Encourage (and zone for) mixed use development.
- Enhancing areas surrounding Penn State Shenango and the Sharon downtown to support further development of the campus and revitalization of downtown.
- Identifying regional assets to travelers on I-80.
- Continuing Hermitage landscape and façade loan program, expand use of the concept in the Region.
- Planning for appropriate use of parking areas in Transitional Neighborhood areas east of Sharpsville Avenue.
- Gateway enhancements pursuant to the Concept Plan.
- Developing Henry Evans Industrial Park properties.
- Determining whether the concept of themed downtowns should be used to market commercial districts within the Region.
- Identifying sources of gap financing to make investment projects feasible.

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 downtown Sharon to increase the number of people downtown.
- N. Provide appropriate zoning at appropriate locations to attract Mercer County target industries of education and health services; professional and business services; information; transportation and warehousing, and utilities; and manufacturing.
- O. Take advantage of 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.
- Q. As land use became more intense in downtown Sharon, investigate shared parking opportunities on Railroad and Chestnut Streets and opportunities for shared parking at churches along West State Street.
- R. Where appropriate, allow small residence-serving stores in residential neighborhoods to encourage entrepreneurship, serve residents, and reduce vehicle trips.

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.
- 2nd 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 (MPC) 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 adoption of 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 city centers, such as Main Street Programs, are outlined below. Applicable in downtown Sharon, these elements could also be used in established and redeveloping corridors 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 to define 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 12

Historic Preservation and Natural Resource Plan

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.

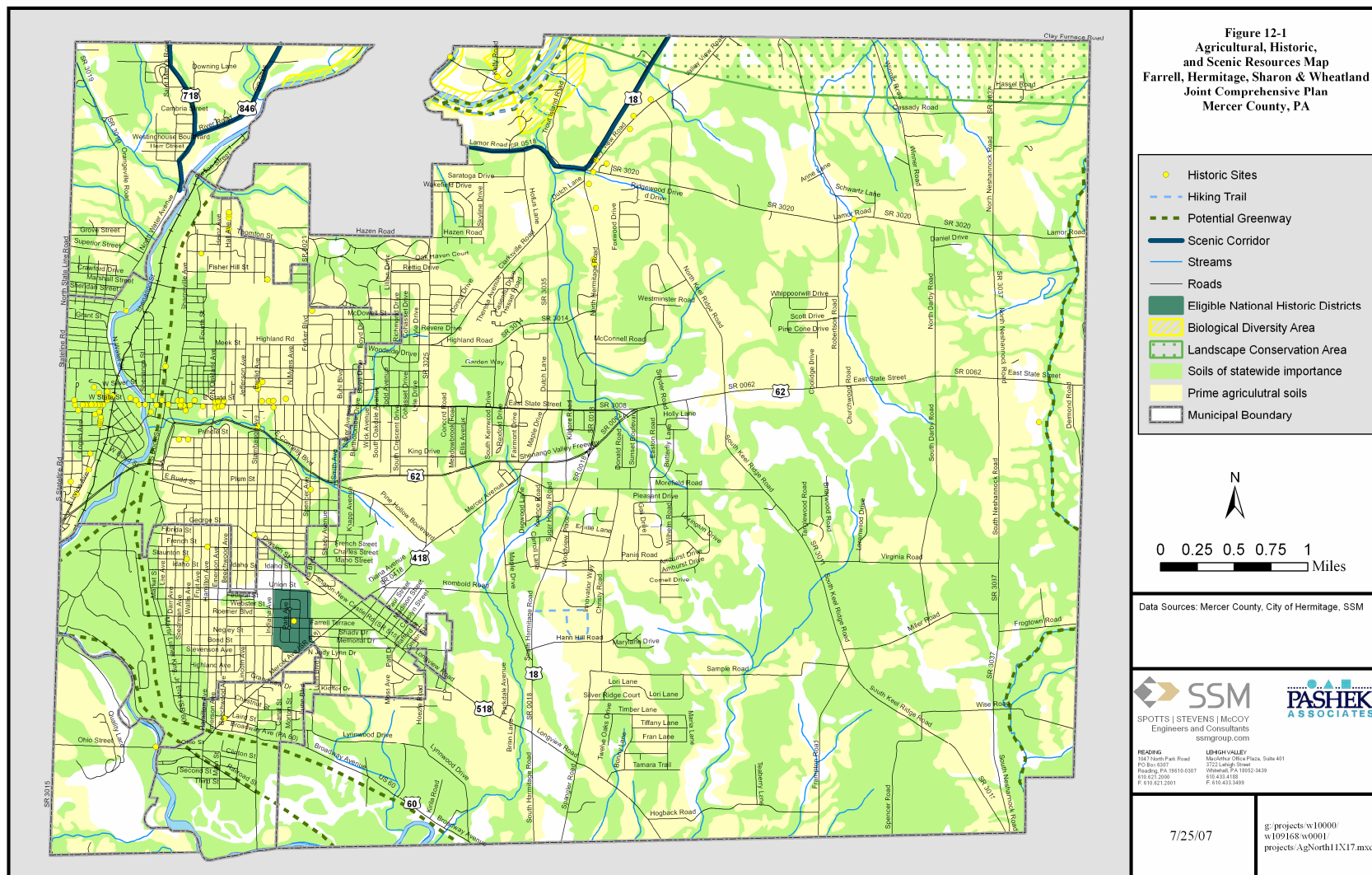
Figure 12-1 shows the location of agricultural, historic, and scenic resources.

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:

- Downtown Sharon Historic District
- West Hill Historic District, Sharon
- Shenango Land Plan Historic District, Farrell



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.

Currently the only site in the Region listed on the National Register is the Frank H. Buhl Mansion in the City of Sharon, which was listed in 1977.

Sites currently listed as eligible for the National Register includes the following:

- Saint Johns Episcopal Church, Sharon
- West Hill Historic District, Sharon
- Downtown Sharon Historic District
- Sharon Junior and Senior High School
- J.A Elementary School, Farrell
- Shenango Land Plan Historic District, Farrell
- Kelly Road Bridge, Hermitage
- Bryan Joseph Property, Hermitage
- Gibson Property, Hermitage
- Western Pennsylvania Adolescent Center, Hermitage

Historic, Architectural, and Cultural Resources

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.
- Promote the Industrial history of the Region.

Historic and Cultural Resource Actions:

- A. 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 or municipal historical commissions or committee where none exist, 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 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 Hermitage and Wheatland Historical Societies.

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.

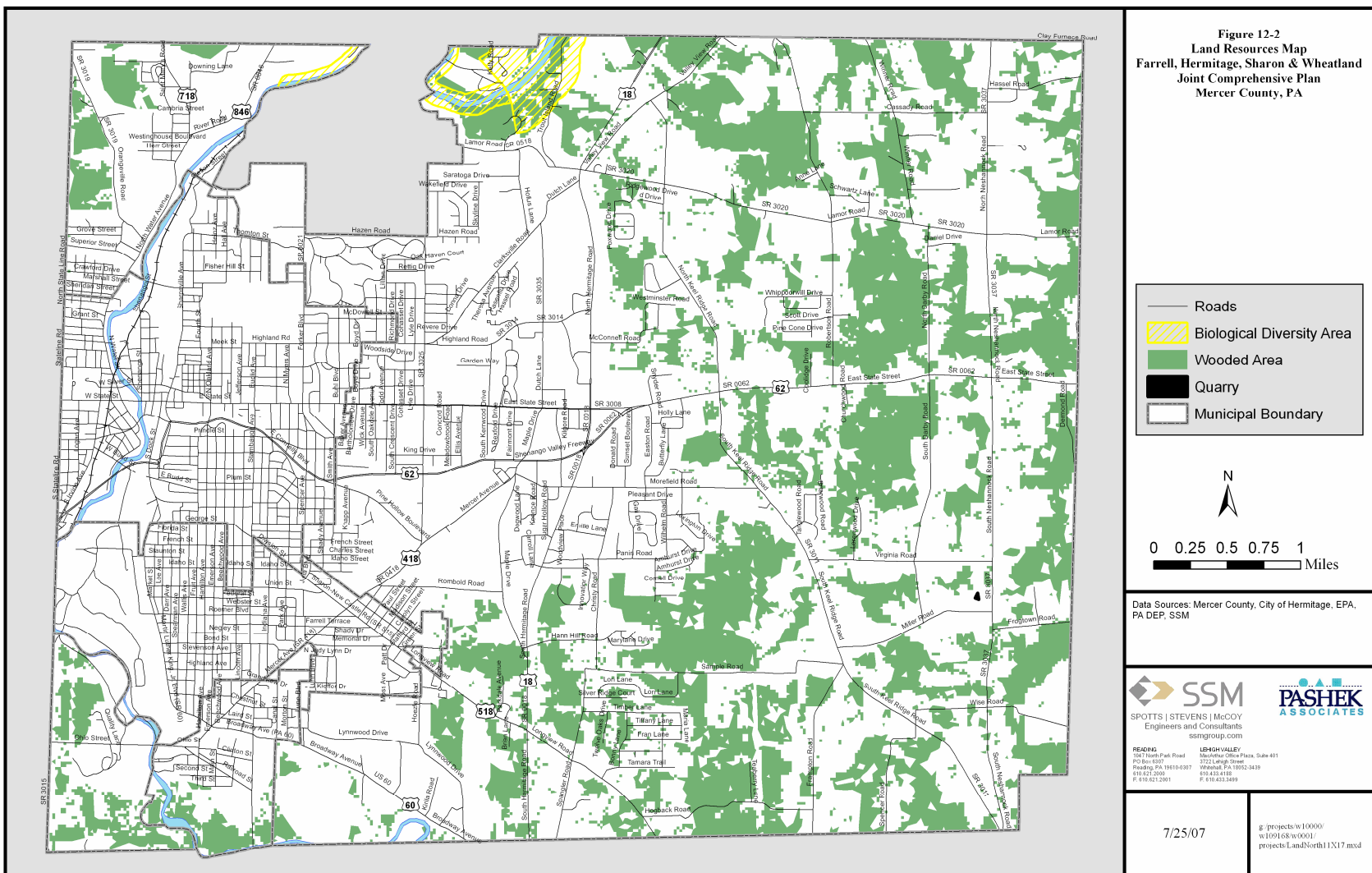
Mercer County has identified a biological diversity area along the Shenango River in the City of Hermitage, as shown on Figure 12-2, the Land Resources Map. Figures 12-3 and 12-4 show water resources and composite natural features.

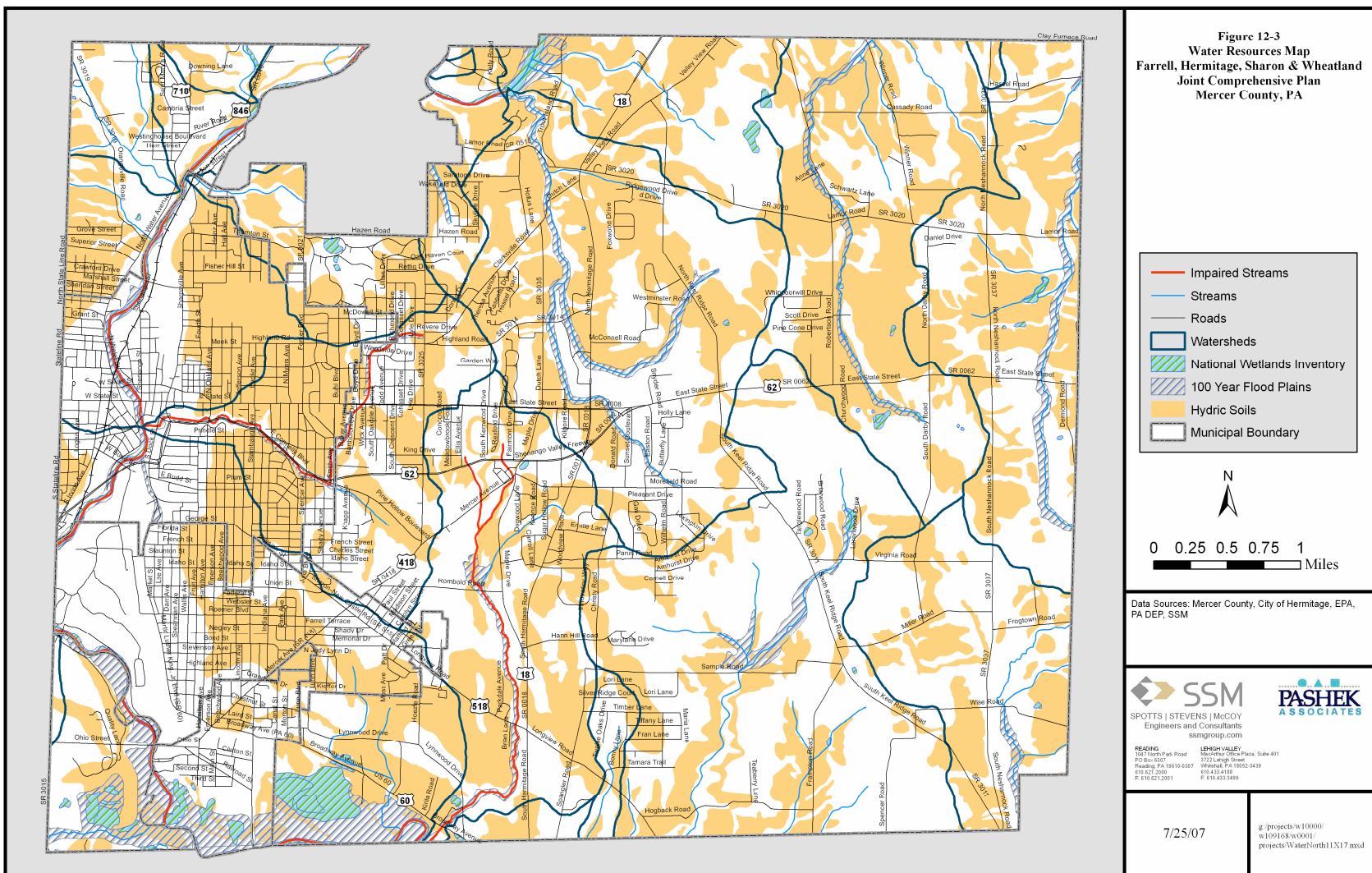
Natural Resources

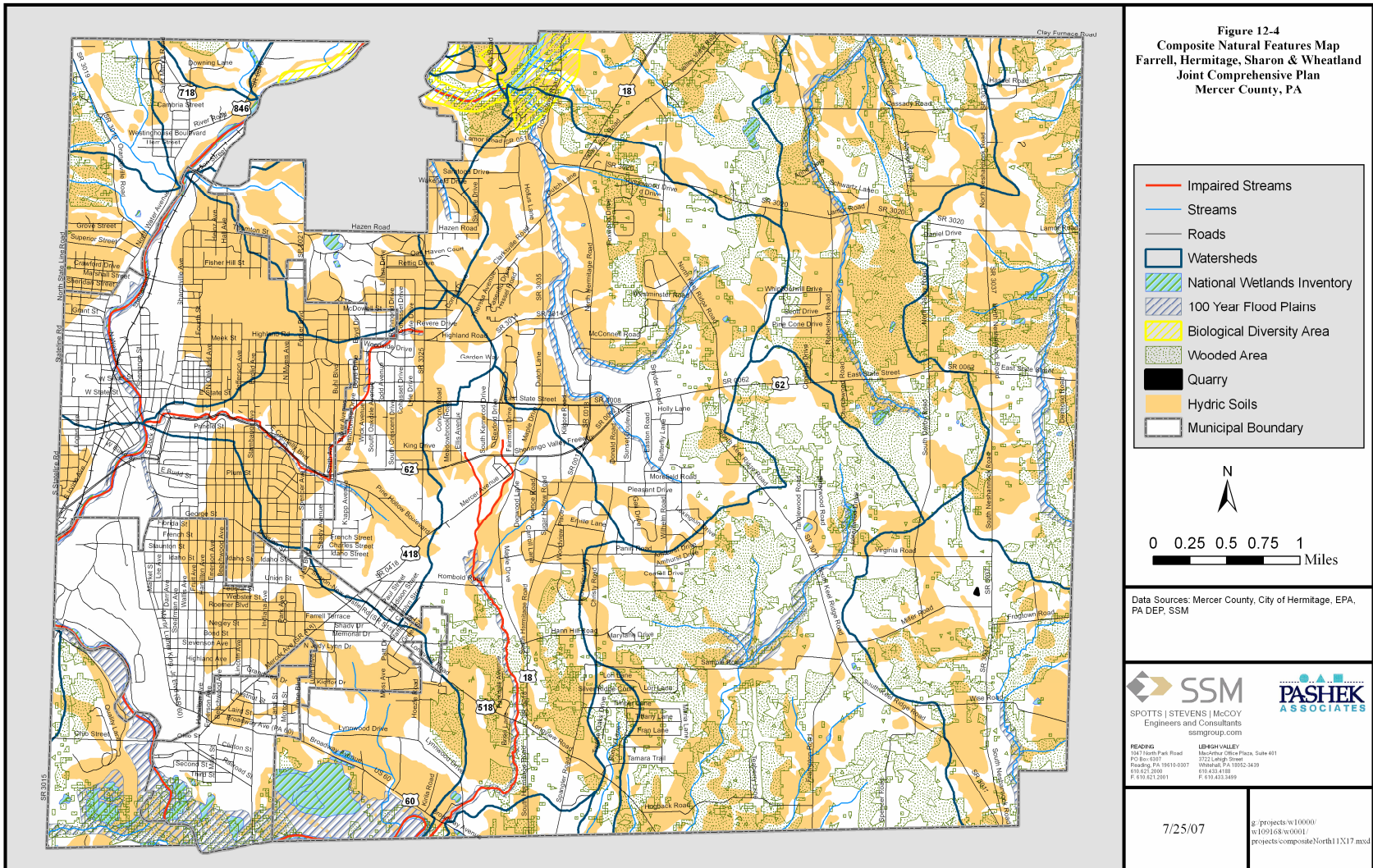
Goal: Retain natural landscape systems and sustain or improve the quality of natural environmental features.

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 woodland stewardship by landowners and residents for recreation, wildlife habitat, and water quality protection.
- 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.
- 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.

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 municipal Environmental Advisory Councils or 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 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 windbreak, 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.

The recommendations of the Eight Head Waters Study are supported by this Plan.

Chapter 13

Implementation/Priority Actions

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 Anchors, 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 Anchors – Sharon and Hermitage Town Centers
- Allow Mixed Use in Appropriate Locations
- Provide Corridor Overlay Zoning
- Encourage Infill Development
- Enhance Corridors – in particular, East State Street, Route 60, Route 18, Idaho Street, Roemer Boulevard, Sharon-New Castle Road, Highland Road, Council Avenue
- Enhance Shenango River
- Create Attractive Gateways
- Address Opportunities Provided by Vacant Properties
- Enhance Regional Pedestrian/Bicycle Opportunities
- Increase Organizational Linkages and Intermunicipal Cooperation in the Region
- Incorporate Elements of *Livable Communities*

- Utilize Smart Growth Principles
- Promote Economic Development
- Enhance Infrastructure
- Enhance Financial Capabilities and Resources
- Promote Neighborhood Revitalization
- Protect Residential Uses from Detrimental Encroachments

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.
 - 1. Sanitary sewers
 - 2. Storm sewers
 - 3. Sidewalks
 - 4. Municipal buildings
 - 5. Transportation infrastructure
 - 6. Pump stations
 - 7. Sewage treatment plants
- 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. Route 60 improvements
4. Route 62 improvements
5. 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
6. 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. Identify and prioritize blighted properties to be removed

- i. Neighborhood maintenance to include weatherization of homes, painting homes, increasing homeownership, conducting neighborhood cleanups, and rehabilitating housing
 - j. Buffering/screening of incompatible uses or unsightly uses
 - 7. Gateway treatments at entrances to the Region, to municipalities, downtown Sharon, and the Hermitage Town Center, including Route 60, Route 18, Route 62, State Street, Route 718, Sharpsville Avenue and East State Street, intersection of Route 62 and Connelly Boulevard, intersection of West State Street and Irvine Avenue, and intersection of Connelly Boulevard and Irvine Avenue.
- IV. Identify and Promote Assets of the Region and Help Reverse Decline in Population
 - 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
 - A. Encourage reuse of existing multi-level buildings for apartments
 - B. Support Ownership/First Time ownership programs, such as down payment assistance and rehabilitation grants
 - C. Encourage senior housing options from single homes to nursing care
 - D. Discourage absentee property ownership

- E. Encourage retention of single family detached housing
 - F. Remove blighted housing
 - G. Build affordable housing units in Sharon and Farrell
 - H. Create areas of lower density housing in areas of excessive density in Farrell
 - I. Rehabilitate units with federal HOME/CDBG funding
 - J. Identify and target housing unit infill opportunities
 - K. Discourage substandard rentals
 - L. Allow for a variety of housing types through zoning
- VI. Targeted Land Use Policies and Improvements for Corridors, Infill, Greenfields, Grayfields, and Brownfields
- A. Implement Route 18 North and South Corridor Plans
 - B. Continue East State Street improvements
 - C. Encourage continuation of agriculture
 - D. Implement Route 60 plan
 - E. Continue to create visions for road corridors
 - F. Identify projects for Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs)
 - G. Promote office development in Sharon
 - H. Identify housing infill opportunities
 - I. Identify commercial and office land opportunities on underutilized industrial land
 - J. Identify commercial, office and industrial opportunities in Route 60 corridor, including opportunities for mixed use

- K. Encourage necessary commercial and professional services within neighborhoods
- L. Implement Hermitage Town Center Plan
- M. Clean up areas along Shenango River to increase access and usable land
- N. Utilize Specific Plans and create shovel-ready sites for economic development in brownfields and grayfields sites
 - 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
- O. Utilize Official Maps in each municipality for road, park, trail, and other improvements
- P. Plan for commercial development along Route 518 corridor in Farrell and mixed use development in the Idaho Street and Roemer Boulevard Corridors
- Q. Recruit targeted businesses/services, i.e., grocery store, gas station, hotel in Sharon

- R. Coordination with School District planning to support neighborhood schools concept
- S. Identify reallocation opportunities for land uses in Sharon
 - 1. Parking and expansion opportunities for existing businesses
 - 2. Housing opportunities
 - 3. Parks as buffers between uses
- T. Accurate floodplain identification
- U. Protect residential uses from unwanted encroachments and visual intrusions
- V. 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 in appropriate settings (e.g., Downtown Sharon, Hermitage Town Center, Route 60 Corridor, Route 718 corridor in Wheatland, State Street Corridor, Neighborhood Revitalization and Corridor Enhancement areas in Farrell and portions of Route 18 Corridor.
 - 8. Discourage strip development
 - 9. Zoning and Act 537 (Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act) planning coordination
 - 10. Implement land use plan through zoning map
 - 11. Access management provisions

12. Regulation of residential conversions and restriction of conversions in solid residential neighborhoods

13. Architectural considerations of uses, such as big boxes, and within downtown, town center, and streetscape settings

W. Promote health care industry

X. Plan for appropriate mixed use along Council Avenue and neighborhood commercial uses along the east side of Broadway Avenue in Wheatland

Y. Promote appropriate utilization of Superfund sites which have been remediated by EPA

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. Prepare Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans and require stormwater management

E. Encourage continued cleanup of former Sharon Steel and Westinghouse properties

VIII. Increase Linkages and Facilitate Mobility in the Region

A. Identify 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
- IX. Enhance Municipal Services and Regional Cooperation
- A. Obtain increased training for staff and public safety professionals
 - B. Support and 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
 - I. Utilize impact and foot patrols in Weed and Seed and Elm Street target areas
 - J. Assist residents with vacant property acquisition through homeowners assistance programs
- X. Increase Citizen Participation
- A. Implement Block Watch programs, hold activities and events per Weed and Seed and Elm Street programs in Sharon and Farrell
 - B. Create local lawn care maintenance equipment bank for use by residents in urban neighborhoods

- C. Market and publicize in media and via marketing materials Elm Street program activities, and create banners and street signs denoting Elm Street corridor
- D. Encourage marketing by local realtors of properties available in Elm Street targeted areas
- E. Establish an Elm Street Board to oversee and direct the Elm Street Designation process
- F. Conduct community leadership training
- G. Facilitate intra-neighborhood communications through the Neighborhood Association of Farrell and Sharon
- H. Hold heritage events and other cultural activities
- I. Conduct public forums
- J. Encourage volunteerism
- K. Educate regarding this Plan
- L. Educate regarding the benefits of historical preservation, environmental protection, open space, greenways and recreation, growth management, and agricultural preservation
- M. Encourage enhancement of the street, social, and cultural life of the Region
- N. Create community foundation to fund projects
- O. 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

- Sharon/Farrell 5-Year Elm Street Plan.

- Sharon Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Project.
- Hermitage Town Center – A Community Vision.
- Route 18 South Corridor Study.
- PA 18 North Corridor Transportation and Planning Study.
- Mercer County Comprehensive Plan.
- Mercer County MPO Bicycle/Pedestrian Action Plan.
- Municipal Community Development Plans.
- City of Farrell Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan (also covers Wheatland).
- Mercer County Greenways, Open Space, and Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Mercer County Long Range Transportation Plan.
- City of Sharon Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan.
- City of Hermitage, Pennsylvania Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan.
- Eight Head Waters Study.
- Penn Northwest Development Corporation Action Plan.
- Sharon Truck Route Study

Planning Efforts Recommended by this Plan

The following additional planning efforts are recommended by this Plan:

PLANS RECOMMENDED BY THIS PLAN

- Route 718 enhancement plan and zoning in Wheatland.
- Idaho Street, Roemer Boulevard and Sharon-New Castle Road enhancement plans and zoning in Farrell, including redevelopment plans for commercial areas,

- State Street enhancement plan and zoning in Sharon and Hermitage.
- Route 60 enhancement plan and zoning in Hermitage, Wheatland, Farrell, and Sharon.
- Shenango River access, enhancement, recreational use, and economic development plan.
- Sharpsville Road land use enhancements in Transitional Neighborhood area.
- Feasibility Study for Sharon trail system.
- 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.
- Updates of municipal Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans if not consistent with this Plan.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

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

Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Wheatland Priority Projects

Initial Committee Listing

- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street economic development
- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street enhancements/streetscape
- East State Street enhancements/streetscape
- Mixed use development in Route 18 corridor using smart growth principles
- River access/enhancement/revitalization
- Sharpsville Avenue industrial corridor enhancements

Farrell Listing

- Route 60 corridor widening

- Caparo/Duferco site clearance projects
- Hillside II Light Industrial Development
- Hope VI Residential Development Street Reconstruction
- Elm Street Project
- Senior Citizen Midrise Housing Development (Spearman and Roemer)
- Recreation Projects
- Blight Removal

City of Hermitage Listing

City of Hermitage Priorities

- East State Street Revitalization/Streetscape - Sharon, Hermitage
- Town Center Development/Mixed Use Concepts
- Neighborhood Revitalization (Patagonia, western Hermitage – west of Buhl Farm Drive)
- Economic Development – LindenPointe, Stateline
- Transportation Infrastructure Improvements & Maintenance
- Mixed Use Development on Route 18 Corridor
- Broadway Avenue (SR60) Economic Development
- Recreational Facilities Improvements and Expansion
- Regional Marketing
- Sustainable Development / Preservation of Open Space & Environmental Protection
- Concentrate Development in Existing Core Areas of the Community / Smart Growth
- Gateway Enhancements
- Agricultural Preservation

Regional Priorities

- Penn State area enhancement/development
- Downtown Sharon/Farrell enhancements, streetscape projects
- Targeted Economic Development
- Increase Financial Capabilities
- Neighborhood Revitalization

Sharon Listing

- Downtown enhancement/streetscape projects
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Historic resource enhancements
- Penn State area enhancement

- Enhancement of the Stambaugh Avenue/State Street intersection
- Enhancement of Stambaugh Avenue from State Street to the Freeway
- Gateway enhancements

At a public meeting held on March 20, 2007, at Penn State Shenango in Sharon and attended by about 45 residents of the Region, the residents were asked to “vote” to identify which of the priority projects identified up to that date were of the highest priority to them. Each resident identified five projects of highest priority. The voting was as follows:

Farrell, Hermitage, Sharon, Wheatland Priority Projects

- Downtown enhancement/streetscape projects - 22
- Penn State area enhancement - 18
- River access/enhancement/revitalization - 18
- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street enhancements/streetscape - 13
- East State Street enhancements/streetscape - 13
- Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street economic development - 12
- Recreation Projects – 11
- Enhance infrastructure – 11
- Route 60 corridor widening - 9
- Neighborhood revitalization - 8
- Gateway enhancements - 8
- Blight Removal – 7
- Increase financial capabilities – 7
- Increase grant opportunities - 7
- Senior Citizen Midrise Housing Development (Spearman and Roemer) - 6
- Enhancement of Stambaugh Avenue from State Street to the Freeway - 6

- Mixed use development in Route 18 corridor using smart growth principles - 5
- Caparo/Duferco site clearance projects - 4
- Hillside II Light Industrial Development - 2
- Identify and promote assets of region – 2
- Sharpsville Avenue industrial corridor enhancements - 1
- Elm Street Project - 1
- Historic resource enhancements - 1
- Enhancement of the Stambaugh Avenue/State Street intersection - 1
- Hope VI Residential Development Street Reconstruction - 0

The residents at the public meeting voted most often for downtown enhancements/streetscape projects; river access/enhancement/revitalization; Penn State area enhancement; Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street enhancements/streetscape; East State Street enhancements/streetscape; and Broadway Avenue, MLK Boulevard, Dock Street economic development.

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 key programs now being utilized in the Region and some of the current and/or potential partners for plan implementation:

PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES IN SUPPORT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN

Programs

- Sharon/Farrell Weed and Seed Program
- Sharon/Farrell Elm Street Program
- Section 108 Loan Consortium

- Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP)
- HOME grants for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation
- ERASE paint program
- Transportation Enhancements (PennDOT)
- Hometown Streets/Safe Routes to School
- Capital Budget and Rail Assistance Program

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
- Local/neighborhood based social service programs geared toward low to moderate income individuals and public service agencies that provide food, shelter, and medical assistance to the underprivileged (Community Food Warehouse, Shenango Valley Urban League, Ark House, Prince of Peace Center)
- Mercer County Community Transit (on-demand services)
- Mercer County Regional Planning Commission
- Neighborhood Association of Sharon and Farrell
- Southwest Gardens Economic Development Corporation
- Shenango Valley Shuttle Service (fixed-route)
- Mercer County Conservation District
- Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau

- Shenango Conservancy
- Wheatland 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
- Hermitage Historical Society
- 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
- National Vacant Properties Campaign
- Greater Sharon Association
- Community Action Team
- Mercer County Career Center
- Sharon Beautification Commission

An expanded list of governmental grant programs 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 HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Construct rental and for-sale housing units to replace obsolete housing.
- Reduce the density of developed neighborhoods in Farrell.
- Demolish vacant blighted and decaying structures and clean up blighted properties. Remove blighting influences surrounding target areas for new and rehabilitated housing.
- Maintain grant and revolving low-interest loan programs for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation.
- Implement code enforcement programs to identify code violations that can be corrected by rehabilitation or demolition.
- Facilitate expansion and selection of housing opportunities by maintaining housing counseling services for landlord relations, maintaining place of residence, and homeowner training.
- Facilitate neighborhood maintenance through programs for home improvements, including weatherization, painting, lighting, neighborhood cleanup, and access to lawn care maintenance equipment.
- Develop home façade improvement program.
- Utilize homeowner assistance program to facilitate vacant property acquisitions.
- Maintain low-interest loan and grant programs for rehabilitation and housing purchase through local banks.
- Facilitate construction of a wide range of housing choices for the elderly.
- Maintain down-payment assistance programs for housing purchases. Utilize the Mercer County Affordable Housing Fund to assist first time homeowners.
- Maintain rental unit licensing and annual inspections to discourage substandard rentals.
- In the Elm Street area, appoint block captains, develop neighborhood social groups, and continue to develop the Block Watch Program.

- Review examples of non-profit agencies which buy homes, rehabilitate them, and sell them to moderate income families, in partnership with HUD and banks offering attractive mortgages.
- Create parks for neighborhood use in open land areas which will be developed in the future.
- Improve financial literacy and credit repair tools for residents.
- Construct a Senior Citizen Mid-rise Housing Development on the southwest corner of Spearman Avenue and Roemer Boulevard.
- Develop block by block approaches to neighborhood revitalization, with analysis of needs for clearance and rebuilding and for rehabilitation.
- Because residential areas in Farrell which will be redeveloped often overlook industrial areas, to make these residential areas more attractive, enhancements should continue in the industrial areas.
- Determine whether split-rate property tax would be appropriate to encourage development on vacant or blighted land by shifting balance of the tax burden onto land away from improvements.
- Determine the merits of providing tax abatement for rehabilitated or repaired structures.
- Neighborhood revitalization in the Patagonia area of Hermitage and in Hermitage west of Buhl Farm Drive.

RECOMMENDED COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Create safe pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout the Region per the Concept Plan.
- Sanitary sewer improvements, such as replacement of old sewer lines and pump stations.
- Street, alley, curb, and sidewalk improvements and reconstruction.
- Municipal building improvements in Wheatland and building maintenance in Farrell.

- Stey-Nevant Public Library maintenance.
- Provide accessibility for the handicapped at all public facilities.
- Upgrade the Farrell sewage system and sewage treatment plant to eliminate inflow and infiltration.
- Eliminate infiltration within the Hermitage sanitary sewer system.
- Streetscape improvements and traffic calming along Hamilton, Fruit, New Castle, and South Oakland Avenues (curbing, landscaping, sidewalks, remove nuisance trees, street lighting, gateway signage).
- Replace Farrell City Park.
- Develop a neighborhood park to serve the northwest section of Farrell.
- Develop additional recreation facilities at Wheatland Fields.
- Continue to improve existing recreation facilities and create new mini-parks in Farrell and Wheatland per the City of Farrell Recreation and Park Plan.
- Develop teen recreational programs, before/after school programs, preschool programs, and senior programs within the Region.
- Implement the City of Sharon Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan and upgrade existing Sharon parks and playgrounds.
- Develop new neighborhood parks in Sharon – consider purchase of former Westinghouse parking lots.
- Determine if a softball/baseball field should be developed along Clark Street at North Water Street in Sharon.
- Plan for and develop a city-wide trail system in Sharon based on the Trail System Concept Map in the Recreation Plan.
- Prepare master plan for Bicentennial Park in Sharon.
- Develop neighborhood mini-park on a lot at Logan and North Irvine Streets in Sharon.
- Implement the Whispering Pines Park Master Plan in Hermitage.

- Purchase and utilize the National Guard Armory for indoor recreation.
- Develop satellite community parks in the southern and northwestern portions of Hermitage.
- Make additional sports fields available for local sports organizations.
- Require land dedication or recreation fees in lieu of dedication for all new land developments.
- Implement the concept Hermitage Trail System Plan.
- Implement the recommendations of the Eight Head Waters Study for greenway and open space conservation.
- Support operation of The Community Library of the Shenango Valley.
- Support upgrading and maintenance of Buhl Farm Park.
- Conduct community clean-ups as needed.
- Secure up-to-date mapping of sewer lines in Farrell, Sharon, and Wheatland.
- Increase volunteer participation and training for playgrounds and recreation programs.
- Determine appropriate use of 40 acre Stull property on Sample Road in Hermitage.
- Extend sanitary sewer in East State Street to Jefferson Township.
- Completing river walk on east side of Shenango River in downtown Sharon from Silver Street to East State Street (new lighting, sidewalks, and signs along Shenango Street also included).
- Build Little League baseball field in Farrell at corner of Wallis Avenue and Federal Street.
- Monitor decision on renovation of Case Elementary School and whether the site will continue to be used for school purposes. If not to be continued for school use, determine an appropriate future use.

- Acquire 55 acre Hanson property on Virginia Road in Hermitage for development of sports play fields for local leagues.
- Construct sidewalk along north side of Highland Road as part of pedestrian/bicycle system connecting high schools with Buhl Farm Park.
- Upgrade Sharon sewage treatment plant.
- Build a footbridge across the Shenango River connecting Penn State Shenango to downtown Sharon.
- Complete Hometown Streets street improvement project in Sharon.
- Turn Hermitage Middle School, which will be closed, into a community center.
- Raze the Hermitage Elementary School to construct play fields.
- Expand capacity at the Hermitage sewage treatment facilities.
- Resolve “Taylor Dump” usability issues in a manner acceptable to Wheatland, to allow appropriate use of the site.
- Determine whether use of brick for street materials, as found in Farrell, should be used in central business areas.
- Enhance Stambaugh Avenue/State Street Intersection.
- Enhance Stambaugh Avenue from State Street to the Freeway.

RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

- New connector road between PA 18 and Valley View Road.
- Highland Road/East-West Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridor.
- Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridor.
- Shenango River Rail Trail Feasibility Study and West Middlesex/Sharon Shenango River Trail.
- Highland Road Phase 2 road widening and sidewalk improvements.

- Evaluate the feasibility of developing a vegetative median along parts of PA Route 18.
- Widen South Buhl Farm Road to three lanes from East State Street to the Freeway.
- Widen North Buhl Farm Road to three lanes from East State Street to Highland Road.
- Construct an access road to the Shenango Valley Mall from Snyder Road, and add a connection road from PA Route 18 to Keel Ridge Road, as discussed in the Hermitage Town Center Plan.
- Study if signalization of left turn movement is warranted at the intersection of Longview Road and PA Route 18.
- Develop pedestrian and bicycle pathways along Route 18 and evaluate the feasibility of creating more means for pedestrians and bicycles to safely cross PA Route 18 and US Route 62.
- Define and implement Transportation Improvement Districts along PA Route 18 to implement the plans for that road.
- Eliminate railroad crossing at Budd Street in Sharon, leading to new industrial access road south into Farrell, opening several areas of industrial property to development.
- Pave Green Street in Farrell to provide access to medical facilities.
- Broadway Avenue (Route 60) reconstruction.
- Shenango Valley Industrial Corridor Phase 2.
- Replace US 62 and Conrail Bridge.
- Replace US 62 and Dock Street Bridge.
- Mercer Avenue Traffic Enhancement.
- Replace Hogbock Road Bridge 2323.
- Replace Kelley Road Bridges 2304 and 2305.
- PA 518/Valley View Road relocation.

- PA 18/Longview Road intersection improvement.
- Intersection improvement at Hazen Road and North Buhl Farm Road.
- PA 518/Clark Street intersection improvement.
- East State Street/Ellis Street intersection improvements.
- East State Street/Maple Street/Dutch Street intersection improvements.
- East State Street intersection improvements in Sharon.
- PA 518/Thornton Street intersection widening.
- US 62 Gateway Enhancement.
- East State Street/Kerrwood Road intersection improvement.
- Shoulder widening on Keel Ridge Road.
- Pine Hollow Run Project.
- Trout Island Trail Project.
- Pursue designation of US 62 for inclusion in the PennDOT Congested Corridor Improvement Program.
- Upgrade the US 62 Corridor through Transportation Enhancement and Betterment project.
- Construct barriers as needed on the Shenango Valley Expressway where head-on collisions occur.
- Establish and improve designated truck routes through Sharon.
- Wheatland street improvements as necessary to support development of land in Wheatland industrial/economic development area.
- Realign intersections of PA Route 18, Dutch Lane, Valley View Road, and Lamor Road.
- Access management program along PA Route 60 Corridor.

- Work with Shenango Valley Transit Authority to enhance access to park and trail facilities and recreation events.
- Identify and enhance pedestrian connections through Wheatland, Farrell, and Sharon between the Shenango River Rail Trail and Sharpsville/Wheatland North-South Corridor.
- Reconstruct streets, alleys and associated infrastructure in the vicinity of Centennial Place in Farrell, including Highland Street, Stevenson Street, Fruit Avenue, Wallace Avenue, Kedron Street, and Kishon Street, and Spearman Avenue.
- Address Morrocco property access/frontage road to Yourga Place in Hermitage.
- Extend Garden Way to connect Kerrwood Drive and Buhl Farm to provide access to the rear of existing shopping centers and eliminate left turns at exit on to State Street.
- Patagonia area street improvement project.
- Investigate the potential for a traffic signal at Linden Pointe Technical Park entrance off PA Route 18.
- SR 60 – Ohio 82 connection project.
- In Wheatland, continue to reconstruct streets, as was done on a portion of Morton Street, in a systematic manner. Prepare a plan for street maintenance and reconstruction. Examples of streets in need of improvement include Hamilton, Emerson, Chestnut Street, Laird Street, Riddle Street, Morton Street, Pine Street, Metz Street, Clinton Street, and Mill Street.

Program sidewalk improvements and construction as necessary, such as along Canal Street and Balm Street.

- Reduce the speed limit on Broadway Avenue in Wheatland to 35 mph.
- Replace Shenango Valley Freeway Bridges.

RECOMMENDED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Development of Sharon Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Legacy Commons properties.
- Development of Hillside I and II Industrial Park properties.
- Enhancement and redevelopment of the Route 60 Corridor.
- Redevelopment of the Idaho Street corridor.
- Development of Hermitage Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Wheatland Industrial Park properties.
- Development of State Line Industrial Park properties.
- Development of Linden Pointe Technical Park.
- Enhancement of the Roemer Street and Sharon-New Castle Road Corridors.
- Enhancement of the East State Street Corridor.
- Eventual development of office/institutional development in Hermitage west of Route 18 and north of Longview Road.
- Development of the Hermitage Town Center.
- Revitalization of downtown Sharon pursuant to the Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- Development of appropriate mixed use at the northern entrance to Hermitage along Route 18.
- Development of appropriate mixed use along the Route 718 corridor in Wheatland.
- Maintaining low interest Revolving Loan Funds for economic development and job creation.

- Promoting 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 whether Sharon and Farrell should participate in the Main Street program.
- Determining the viability of a revolving loan fund for starting micro-enterprises and addressing barriers to development of start-up businesses. Continue Business Education Self-Sufficiency Training.
- Developing Broadway North properties.
- Developing/redeveloping Winner Development/Westinghouse properties.
- Developing Technology Innovation and Development Center at LindenPointe.
- Developing VIP Industrial Park.
- Enhancing commercial and industrial areas abutting the Sharon Central Business District so they will not adversely affect revitalization of downtown. Examples of areas include the area between West Silver Street, North Irvine Street, and the River, and the area between the Freeway, Walnut Street, the River, and Connelly Boulevard.
- Supporting the Vocal Group Hall of Fame Foundation efforts to restore the Columbia Theater and reopen the Phoenix Restaurant as a museum, restaurant, and piano bar.
- Attracting a grocery store, hotel and gas station in Sharon, as well as other uses to fill vacant storefronts.
- Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission promotion of the City as a whole, highlighting the LindenPointe Technical Park and Stateline Industrial Park.
- Developing Broadway South properties.
- Development of former Farrell City Park site.
- Linking Budd Street to the Route 62/Route 82 interchange near State Line Road in Masury to give the area behind Duferco Steel rapid access to the highway network.

- Encouraging entrepreneurs in Neighborhood Revitalization areas of Farrell and Sharon.
- Enhancing unattractive commercial properties along the Route 60 Corridor for reuse.
- Encouraging utilization of vacant industrial buildings and underutilized parking lots along Council Avenue in Wheatland. Encourage (and zone for) mixed use development.
- Enhancing areas surrounding Penn State Shenango and the Sharon downtown to support further development of the campus and revitalization of downtown.
- Identifying regional assets to travelers on I-80.
- Continuing Hermitage landscape and façade loan program, expand use of the concept in the Region.
- Planning for appropriate use of parking areas in Transitional Neighborhood areas east of Sharpsville Avenue.
- Developing Henry Evans Industrial Park properties.
- Determining whether the concept of themed downtowns should be used to market commercial districts within the Region.
- Identifying sources of gap financing to make investment projects feasible.
- Gateway enhancements pursuant to the Concept Plan.

Chapter 14

Interrelationships of Plan Components

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 urban 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
Land Use and Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing neighborhoods. Provide a variety of housing opportunities for all Target Growth Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies coordinated with land use goals to direct development to growth areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make available to serve area residents where necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must consider impacts of growth on the system Accommodate volumes at acceptable levels of service Access management on priority corridors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide open space system through their protection Protect the Shenango River corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on residential areas should be mitigated Provide jobs and services for residents Focus on Economic Development corridors
Sewer and Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth should occur where have adequate facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider existing facilities and plans, appropriate discharge standards and methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate with consideration of ability to serve, consistent with land use goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be coordinated in support of growth areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Supply sources should be protected and pollution prevented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should not overburden systems or deplete water supplies
Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include facilities to service residents and growth areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major facilities should be adequately served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider existing 537 plans, potential cooperative efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should adequately service facilities in the Region Consider linkages of community facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide recreational opportunities Green Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can provide a tax base to support provision of facilities
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth should occur where have adequate capacity Maintain functional operation and safety when growth occurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be coordinated in support of designated growth areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate major facilities where can be adequately serviced Concerns for school transportation system Consider impacts on system from growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider existing facilities and plans, coordinate with MCRPC and PennDOT Plan improvements to the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a greenway system Provide non-motorized and public transportation alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access management on US Route 62 and PA Routes 18 and 60 Streetscape improvements and corridor enhancement
Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development should occur where land is suitable and resources will not be harmed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should not extend to areas where irreparably harm important resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can incorporate natural features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can facilitate access to resources Design system with consideration of existing environment and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing natural resources should be protected, enhanced and interpreted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the natural environment Tourism / promote industrial heritage of the Region
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate land uses for sensitive areas Provide for commercial, industrial, business uses Neighborhoods provide workforce and market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can support development at appropriate locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to quality of life and the attractiveness of the area Implement a greenway system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address system deficiencies to improve business climate Improve intersections and access to industrial parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to quality of life and attractiveness of area to businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing business centers Concentrate on developing industrial parks and economic development corridors

Chapter 15

Existing Land Use

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 Region. The approximate acreage of each category is provided for an 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 15-1, 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

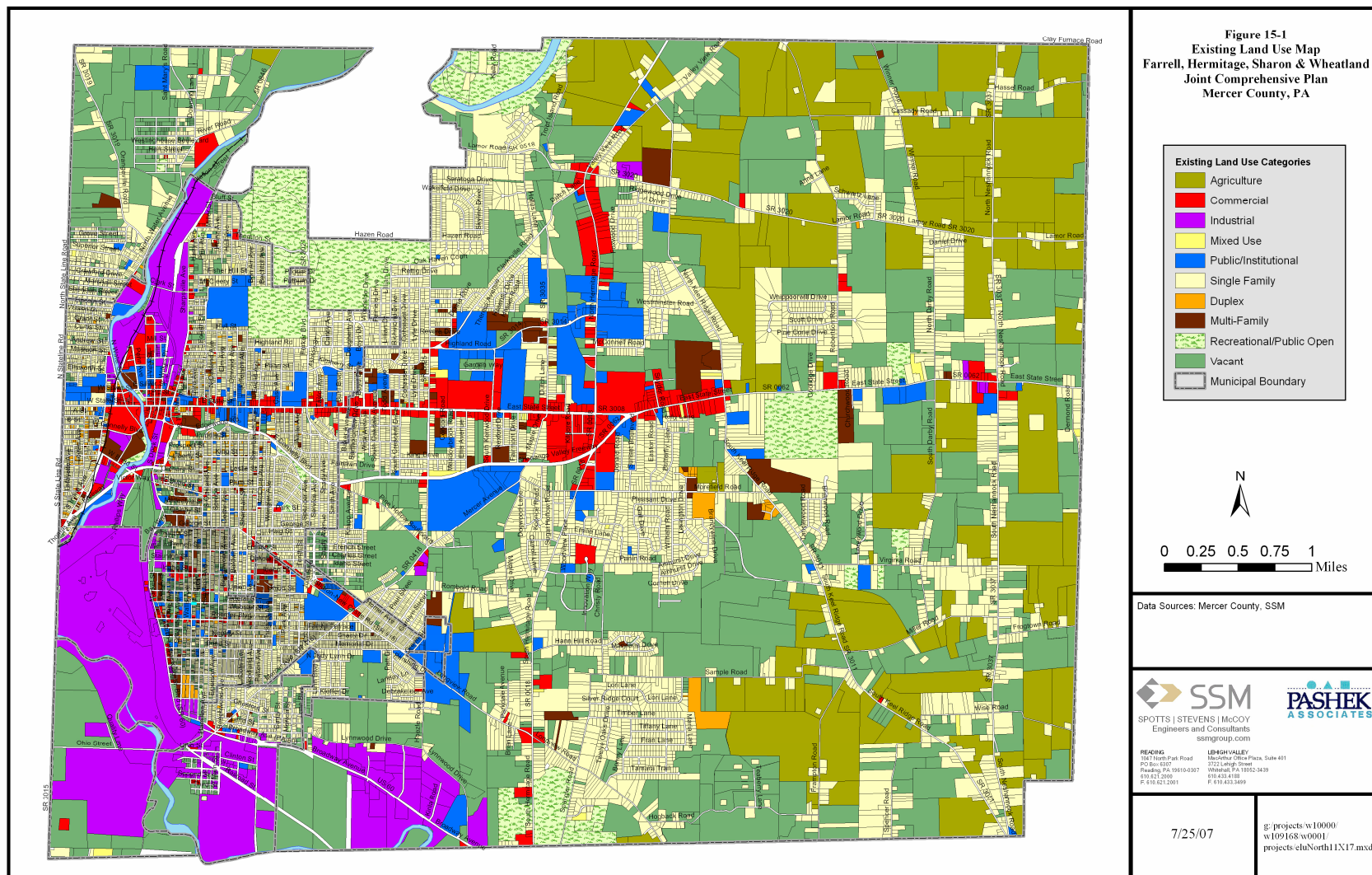
LAND USE PATTERNS

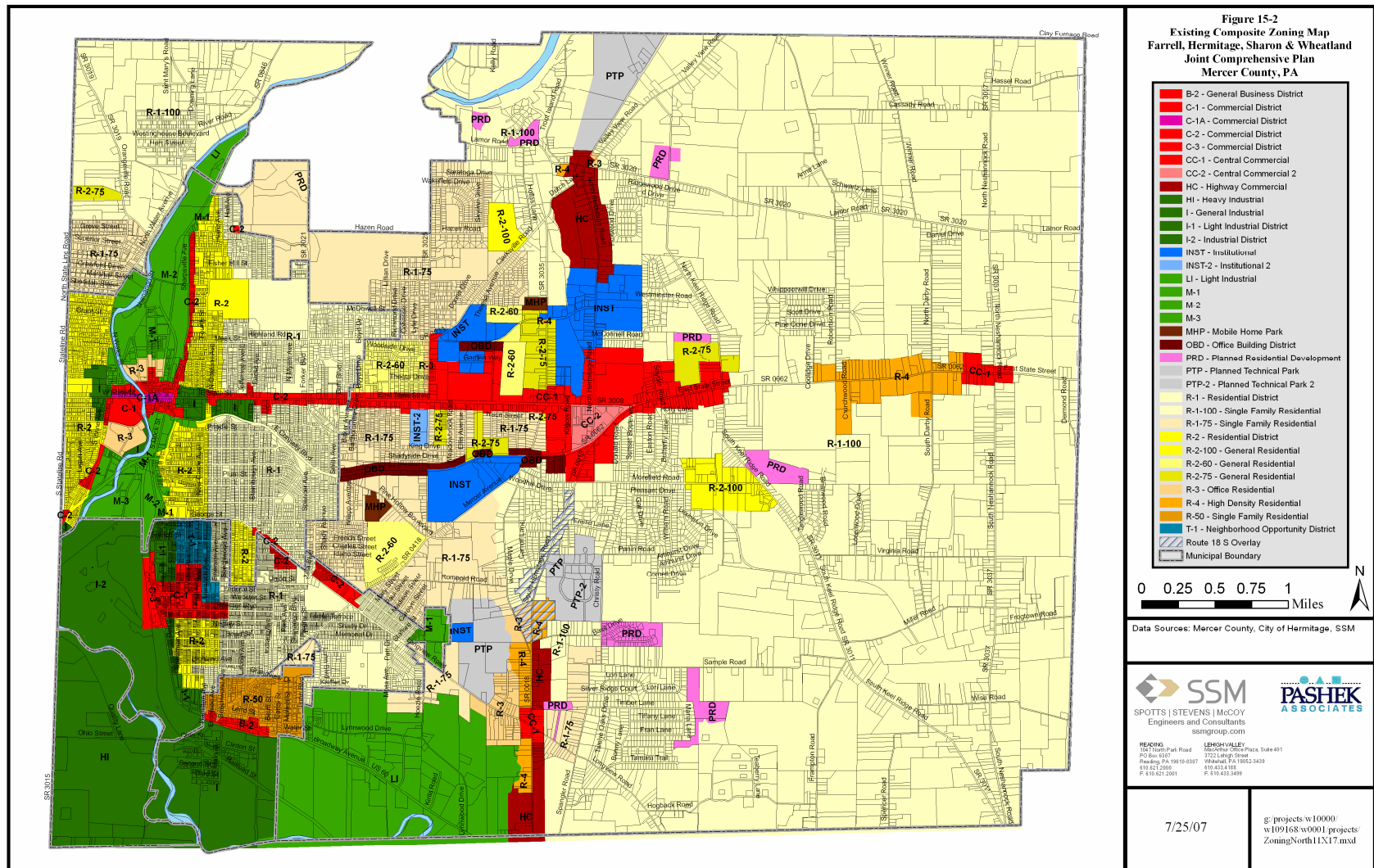
The Region as a whole has experienced a population decline over the last 20 years. The city of Hermitage is the only municipality to see a population increase over this time. Hermitage contains the largest population and economic activity in the Region, including commercial and industrial development along the PA Route 18 and Route 60 Corridors. Though the pressures of residential development have extended into outlying areas of Hermitage – mostly migration from within the planning region – much of the eastern part of the city remains rural. The cities of Sharon and Farrell, as well as the Borough of Wheatland contain land uses more reflective of their industrial heritage, older industrial and commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.

Single family detached, and semi-detached residential development, commercial, and heavy industrial uses are most prevalent in the Region, however, there are other land use characteristics as well. The city of Hermitage contains a large amount of rural and agricultural lands, and all four municipalities contain various scattered vacant parcels and buildings that offer future development and infill potential. The land use categories and approximate acreage of each are described in detail in the following table.

Figure 15-1, the Existing Land Use Map, shows the Region and its current land use patterns.

Figure 15-2 shows existing composite zoning in the Region.





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.”

	Hermitage	Sharon	Farrell	Wheatland	REGION TOTAL
Residential	5,190.3	1,019	468.7	82.2	6,760.2
<i>Single-Family</i>	<i>4,857.7</i>	<i>937.5</i>	<i>440.5</i>	<i>80.4</i>	<i>6,316.1</i>
<i>Duplex</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>11.7</i>	<i>.49</i>	<i>94.1</i>
<i>Multi-Family</i>	<i>272.6</i>	<i>59.6</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>350</i>
Agriculture	3,724.4	0	0	0	3,724.4
Commercial	561.6	172.1	35.8	4.8	774.3
Industrial	625.8	266.6	473.2	249.4	1,615
Mixed Use	39	4.3	0.36	0.41	44.1
Public/Institutional	714.8	192.7	108.5	3.2	1,019.2
Recreation/Public Open Space	889.4	110.5	4.1	2	1,006
Vacant	6,120.8	123	131.3	122.9	6,498
TOTAL	17,866.1	1,888.2	1,221.96	464.91	21,441.2

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 the City of Hermitage.

Single-Family Residential

Single family residential development contains more acreage than any other residential category in the Region. Significant concentrations of single-family residential development are located throughout the Region, with the highest concentrations located in the cities of Hermitage and Sharon.

Duplex

This category includes the semi-detached and two-family houses. Once again, duplexes are most prevalent in the cities, particularly in the City of Hermitage which contains 60 acres of duplex development.

Multi-Family Residential

Multi-family residential uses are scattered throughout the Region and cover substantially less total acreage than single-family residential housing. This category consists of the following specific development types: three-family residences, condominiums, apartments (including those over garages), and residential conversions. There is one notable concentration of multi-family residential use in the City of Hermitage along North and South Keel Ridge Roads. Multi-family developments can also be found scattered throughout established neighborhoods throughout the Region.

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. The City of Hermitage accounts for nearly 70% of the Region's Public/Institutional uses.

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 State Street Corridor, although scattered small commercial operations may be found intermixed with residential development throughout the Region.

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 vast supply of industrial development includes industries located along the Broadway Avenue / Martin Luther King Boulevard / Dock Street Corridor (PA Route 60), including the Hermitage Industrial Park, as well as other concentrations of industrial uses within Wheatland, north Sharon, and Farrell.

Mixed Use

Mixed Use contains by far the smallest amount of acreage throughout the Region, with only 44 acres. 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 Region, most prevalent in the City of Hermitage. Most of this vacant land consists of undeveloped woodlots, meadows, or former agricultural lands. The cities of Sharon and Farrell, as well as the Borough of Wheatland contain vacant lands as well, mostly consisting of abandoned or demolished former industrial or residential lands. These lands are valuable for the infill development and/or re-use potential that they present.

UNDERSTANDING THE TRENDS

Analysis of the Existing Land Use Map reveals several land use trends in the Region. One of the most important factors to the economy of a region is a healthy commercial and industrial base. There are several significant concentrations of industrial use in the Region, including the industrial parks, the PA Route 60 Corridor, and North Sharon. The municipalities also have the potential to increase the level of commercial and industrial development through their zoning regulations, which can allow these uses in areas consistent with this Plan.

The eastern side of the City of Hermitage is dominated by open or vacant rural land, including farmland - some productive, some simply meadow and open space. This abundance of open land and farms adds to the rural character and quality of life in the City. Residential development pressure has increased within these areas over the past few years, and if left unchecked will slowly dissect the city's open areas.

The cities of Farrell and Sharon contain the majority of the higher density residential areas of the Region, while single-family residential developments and commercial and institutional uses are common in Hermitage. While the Region is not experiencing great development pressure, the current development pattern, if it continues, could dissect the Region's remaining rural areas with sprawling development. It is critical that new growth be encouraged to locate in the Growth Areas delineated in this Plan.

Chapter 16

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.

TABLE 1 POPULATION – 1970 to 2000, With 2005 Estimates					
	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
Shenango Valley Region	54,929	50,662	45,715	44,249	43,668
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)

TABLE 2 POPULATION CHANGE – 1970 to 2000				
	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%
Shenango Valley Region	-7.8%	-9.8%	-3.2%	-19.4%
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.

TABLE 3 MEDIAN AGE FOR STUDY AREA	
MUNICIPALITY	MEDIAN AGE (years)
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
<i>Source: U.S. Census Data</i>	

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

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
Total population	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)
Under 5 years	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%)
5-9 Years	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%)
10-14 years	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%)
15-19 years	6.2% (6.4%)	5.8% (5.8%)	6.3% (6.6%)	4.5% (4.7%)	5.5% (6.5%)	6.9% (6.6%)	7.5% (7.5%)	6.9% (6.9%)
20-24 years	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%)
25-34 years	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%)
35-44 years	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%)
45-54 years	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%)
55-59 years	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%)
60-64 years	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%)
65-74 years	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%)
75-84 years	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%)
85+	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%)
Under 18 years	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%)
18-64 years	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%)
65+	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%
Shenango Valley Region	85.8%	11.9%	0.1%	0.42%	.01%	0.23%	1.48%	0.72%
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
Families in poverty:	24.0%	6.3%	14.4%	8.3%	7.9%	2.3%	8.8%	7.8%
1. With children under 18	40.4%	11.3%	21.5%	15.1%	10.6%	0.9%	14.9%	12.1%
2. With children under 5	54.2%	20.5%	23.7%	6.3%	22.8%	3.2%	19.3%	15.3%
Families with female householder:	51.3%	27.4%	33.8%	41.2%	29.8%	8.6%	32.0%	24.9%
1. With children under 18	66.9%	38.2%	47.3%	50.0%	35.8%	7.1%	14.9%	12.1%
2. With children under 5:	83.9%	68.0%	62.9%	27.3%	50.9%	100.0% **	63.8%	47.4%
Individuals in poverty:	26.4%	8.2%	17.6%	14.4%	9.7%	4.7%	11.5%	11.0%
18 years and older:	19.1%	7.0%	14.9%	12.9%	7.6%	5.4%	9.5%	9.8%
65 years and older:	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	18,462	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	27.3% 5,044	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	26.6% 4,915	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 typical Congested Corridor Improvement Program outlines actions to address congestion in that corridor. The general elements presented could be applied as appropriate in corridors in the Region, such as Route 62, Route 18, and Route 60.

- 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 providing 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

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.

