



Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

A COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT POLICY
GUIDE

2010



PREPARED BY THE HARBORCREEK TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION

March 2010

Acknowledgements

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RESOLUTION #10-74
Adopted March 17, 2010



ADOPT 2010 HARBORCREEK NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Supervisors of the Township of Harborcreek, Erie County, Pennsylvania at a regular meeting assembled at the Harborcreek Township Municipal Building, 5601 Buffalo Road, Harborcreek, PA 16421 on March 17, 2010 with Dean S. Pepicello, Joseph D. Peck and Timothy J. May, having the authority and being empowered to do so by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, P.L. 805 No. 247 as amended do hereby pass a resolution to adopt the 2010 Harborcreek Township New Comprehensive Plan.

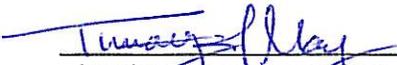
HARBORCREEK TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS



Dean S. Pepicello, Chairperson



Joseph D. Peck, Supervisor



Timothy J. May, Supervisor

ATTEST:



Cynthia S. Williams, Assistant Secretary

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Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter I
Introduction

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is the official policy document of a Pennsylvania municipality. While a comprehensive plan has an official recognized status under the Pennsylvania law that regulated municipal planning and zoning (The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code) There is no requirement to prepare a plan. About half of Pennsylvania's 2500+ townships, boroughs and cities have an adopted plan. Once adopted, the plan serves as an official guidance for public investments (Such as streets, parks, or sewer lines) and provides support for local zoning ordinances. State agencies, such as the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection, and PennDot, are mandated to coordinate with local comprehensive plans for grants or state permits.

A Township Comprehensive Plan must contain several elements to be complete and valid in Pennsylvania. It must have a careful survey of trends to document changes in growth and development. Required chapters include:

- Community Development Goals and Objectives
- Plan for Land Use
- Plan for the Conserva-



- tion of Natural and Historic Resources
- Plan for Housing
- Plan for Community Facilities
- Plan for Transportation.

The plan must also contain statements that ensure that the community has examined the interrelationships between all of these required chapters.

Because Harborcreek township has a planning commission, the commission is the agency responsible for the preparation of the comprehensive plan. The planning commission must make a careful analysis of trends. This analysis should focus upon such issues as growth and changes

in housing population, land use or traffic patterns. The planning commission must also seek input from the school district, and at some point in the plan preparation, solicit public input.

In this respect, the comprehensive plan is both a document, and a process. The process includes both the gathering of information and creating opportunities for participation by the community. The process also allows the planning commission to learn more about the community and the issues that it faces. This knowledge can then be applied to choose policies that will keep the Township successful.

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About Harborcreek Township

Harborcreek Township (Erie County) is a rural and suburban community lying just to the east of the City of Erie Pennsylvania. The Township has about 34 square miles or 21,760 acres. The Township is notable in that the entire northern boundary of the Township is formed by the southern shore of Lake Erie.

The Township was settled in the late 1790's and grew throughout the 19th Century. By 1884, the Township was described as one

of the wealthiest and most populous Townships within the County.

Growth continued to be a theme of the Township in the 20th Century. In 1940, before the availability of public water or sewer, the Township had 3,600 residents. By 1960 the population rose to over 10,000. Growth slowed in the 1980's, due to regional economics, but returned in the 1990's. From 1990 to 2000, Harborcreek Township was the second fastest growing township in the

Erie metro area (second only to Millcreek).

Between the last two census counts, the Township gained 1,159 residents. At the same time, the City of Erie saw a population loss of 5,001. Since 1950, the Township population has more than doubled, with a growth rate of 117.6 percent. By comparison, The state saw a population increase of only 17 percent and Erie County saw an increase of 28 percent.

Interesting Township Facts

Harborcreek Township is the third most northern municipality in all of Pennsylvania (south of only Northeast Township and Borough.

As of 2009, the Township has not raised taxes since 1990; making 19 consecutive years without a tax increase.

As of 2007, Harborcreek Township had the shortest average time for a home to be on the market in Erie County (38 days from listing to sale).

History of Planning in Harborcreek Township

Local Comprehensive Planning is not new to the community of Harborcreek Township. This document is the fourth of the comprehensive plans prepared by the township over the past 40 years. The Township has been unusually conscientious in updating its plans on roughly ten year cycles. The first adopted comprehensive plan was prepared in the 1960's. The second was completed in 1980. A new Plan was adopted in 1996, and significantly amended in 1998. While not a statutory requirement of the PA Municipalities Planning Code, it is clear the intent of the code is for municipal review and update of plans at least once per decade.

One of the reasons for the frequent updates of the Township Comprehensive Plan has been the previously



This Comprehensive Plan update, and previous ones, were funded in part, through grant assistance provided by the Coastal Zone Management Program, in order to protect the unique Lake Erie shoreline.

mentioned growth and development in the Township. However, another reason has been the financial support provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection,

through the Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM). CZM funds were also used for the preparation of this new plan.



How This Plan is Different

The 1996 Plan included about 200 pages of detailed analysis of demographic, housing, and economic trends. This is typical of Comprehensive Plans prepared before the common use of the Internet. Planners frequently has to spend hundreds of hours to gather information and conduct research to gain information that is now a mouse click away from the average American home. Typical for the time, the plan was published in two separate volumes. There was one large volume that contained all of the background analysis and data. A second shorter volume was published that contained only policies and recommendations. A large part of the work of professional planners was thus knowing where to find data, and acquiring it. The information had to be included in the document to make it accessible to planning commissions and interested citizens.



To facilitate contact with the public, both the Township website, and a special project weblog were created.

The Internet now makes common planning information equally available to professional planners, local leaders and community residents. This equal access of data makes the publication of long planning documents unnecessary. A few basic data sources of data are listed in the sidebar.

The Internet was also used as a means to share infor-

mation with Township residents. The Township website contained periodic updates, and a special project weblog was also created (www.harborcreekplanning.blogspot.com).

The Internet now makes common planning information equally available to professional planners, local leaders and community residents. This equal access of data makes the publication of long planning documents unnecessary.

Some Useful Websites for Comprehensive Planning Data

Other relevant data sources are listed in succeeding chapters, but here are a few important sources of planning information.

US Census Bureau
www.census.gov.

Harborcreek Township page at Citydata site
<http://www.city-data.com/township/Harborcreek-Erie-PA.html>

PennDot roadway video log
http://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ividlog/video_locate.asp

Penn State University online mapping services
<http://www.pasda.psu.edu/>

Harborcreek Township website
<http://www.harborcreektownship.org/>



Key Issues

At the beginning of the Comprehensive Plan update, the Planning Commission identified some key issues and changes that the updated plan should consider. These important factors are listed below:

- Changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities planning Code
- Growth of Penn State University, Behrend Campus
- Changes in planning practice, better and evolving practices of site design and growth management.
- Opportunities for Lakefront area development and conservation.
- Opportunities to develop multi-modal transportation systems, ranging from sidewalks to new collector roads.
- Opportunities for redevelopment in older areas of the Township, such as underutilized commercial development

How This Plan is Officially Used

Pursuant to requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, The Harborcreek Township Planning Commission will use this comprehensive plan as a document to advise the Township Supervisors on decisions relative to:

Any rezoning of a property, or any amendment to the zoning ordinance, amendment to the subdivision and land development ordinance or the creation and amendment of any official map.

The location, opening, vacation, widening, narrowing, or enlargement of any street, public land, or water-course in the Township

The location, erection, demolition, removal or sale of any public structure in the Township

The construction, extension, or abandonment of a water or sewer line or sewage treatment plant.

The Planning Commission will also use this plan as required by Section 305 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to review any school district actions relative to the location, demolition, sale, or lease of any school district structure or land.

The recommendations of the Planning Commission will be supplied to the applicable public body within 45 days as required.

Finally, state agencies utilize this plan in making decisions about issuing state permits (Such as various permits issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, or the Department of Transportation) and use the plan to decide if applications for state grants are consistent with the plan.



Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 2
Community Development
Goals and Objectives

A Vision for Harborcreek Township's Future

This chapter of the Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan sets an overall vision, general goals, and specific objectives about the future development of the Township.

Article III of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) states that a comprehensive plan must include a statement of the future development objectives of the municipality, with mandatory inclusion of a statement as to the "location, character, and timing" of future development. This is generally understood as a series of community development goals and objectives. It is an expectation of the MPC that this section of the comprehensive plan would serve as, or support the community development objectives as a part of the zoning ordinance as well.

This chapter includes the terms "vision", "goals", and "objectives". These are all community statements of a



preferred future that progress from the most general to the more specific. The vision statement below is generalized. This statement was used to build goals and more specific objectives for all portions of the plan that are found in this chapter. Following chapters of the plan then contain very specific actions, policies, and for each of the areas covered by the goals and objectives.

A vision statement alone will not make a desired future come true. It must be rooted in both realistic assessment of the community and supported by the citizens of the community. For that reason, this chapter also discusses both the overall future prospects of the Township, and how the planning process gave residents an opportunity to participate in plan formulation.

The Overall Vision for Township Planning: It is the overall vision of the Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan to develop and preserve a pleasant attractive healthy, safe, efficient, and convenient community environment for living, working, shopping and relaxing. This plan is intended to promote to protect, and to facilitate the public health, safety, morale, and general welfare of the community. The plan aims at coordinated and practical community development through proper density of population, a public policy to add value to private property through physical improvements, fitting human development into the natural setting, and avoidance of land overcrowding.

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Establishing the Vision Through Growth Patterns Analysis

Comprehensive Planning in Harborcreek township has always focused upon growth and its implications for the community. One of the first planning tasks for this update was to examine whether this growth would continue. This analysis relied heavily upon the Erie County Demographic study, a part of the County Comprehensive Plan and available from:

www.eriecountyplanning.org.

It was quickly determined that growth would continue, largely based upon the continuation of historic patterns. However, it was also determined that there would be important structural changes to the population.

The previous chapter noted that Harborcreek Township was the second fastest growing municipality in Erie County from 1990-2000. Between the last two census county, the Township gained 1,159 residents. At the same time, the City of Erie saw a population loss of 5,001. Based upon this the County projected that the Township population would rise to 16,425 by 2005 and 16,608 by 2010. By 2020, Harborcreek Township was projected to have 16,803 persons.

The County projections were then compared to population estimates. The Census Bureau attempts to track population changes on an annual basis by preparing estimates. The Table below summarizes estimates from the last count until 2006. It is believed that these estimates correspond to in-house building permit data and a reasonable basis for planning.

If these estimates are correct, Harborcreek Township has already exceeded its projected growth for the year 2020. A combination of factors cause this growth. People are continuing to move into Harborcreek Township from other communities, especially the City of Erie. Some planners believed that this trend would subside, but migration appears to have continued at historic levels. This population also consists of younger persons who have more children that add to growth. Another factor in the Township's recent rapid growth has been the increase in Behrend Campus Penn State enrollments.

The Township believes that growth will continue at historic levels. If this is the case, the Township will gain

about 1500-1700 residents between the 2006 estimates and 2020. This would make the total population somewhere between 18,500 to 18,700.

Almost as important as the change in total population is the changes occurring to the population. This can be accomplished by examining the age of the population in both 1990 and 2000, to see where changes in excess of natural aging occurred. The results are presented in the sidebar. This trend is very important in the regional context. The entire Erie County population has aged. There are more older people and fewer younger people. However, the Township is gaining a higher proportionate share of these young families. The Township also gained young people of college age, as Behrend college enrollments increased.

The summary of this analysis is that the Township needs to continue to plan for growth. The demographics established a real world basis about how much growth that can be used to determine how much land will be needed for development.

Structural Changes to the Population

Population changes for three reasons: migration, death and birth. The consultant analyzed each of these factors to determine how the Township population changed over time.

The Township gained in the following age groups:

Pre-school and school age children: +936 over natural increase

College age young adults: +911 over natural decrease

Working Age Adults 35-54: +605 over natural decrease

Retirement age adults 65-85: +812 over natural decrease

The Township saw a decrease in the following cohorts:

Young adults Age 25-34: -1548 below natural decrease

Empty Nesters Age 55-59: -635 below natural decrease

US CENSUS BUREAU POPULATION ESTIMATES

Year	census	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Population	15,178*	16,269*	16,373	16,457	16,541	16,780	16,871	17,027
Change		+1091	+104	+84	+84	+239	+91	+156

****Note: The Township challenged the original 2000 Census count, and the US Census Bureau revised it.**



Establishing the Vision Through Citizen Participation

The 1996 Comprehensive Plan included specific considerations for citizen participation as a part of the goals and objectives. The general goal was “*To encourage continuous discussion among residents and business owners concerning the development of the community and to encourage their participation in public affairs*”. The Township also established three specific objectives for citizen participation that are printed on the sidebar.

This plan update reaffirms this goal and its objectives as essential to the continued success of the Township. In order to ensure that this goal was meaningful and not simply words on paper, the Planning Commission decided to make participation as easy as possible for any citizen. Rather than a meeting, it was decided to hold an open house wherein the planning consultant, Planning Commission, and Supervisors would be available for and afternoon and early evening to talk to individual residents.

About 50 Township residents and interested persons attended the open house (not including Planning Commission members and Supervisors). The participants saw a brief slide show, and many of the maps and charts contained within this plan. A brief survey was available, and 35 persons returned a survey in the box pro-



Citizens helped refine and reaffirm The Township's Goals and objective through participation at the planning open house.

vided (full survey results are in the appendix). Overall attendance was typical for a community of this size, though return of surveys was a little smaller than normal.

Attendance at these events has some implications for overall citizen satisfaction with local government. If many Township residents were unhappy, they would have used the open house as an opportunity to come and express their discontent (the planning consultant has conducted open house meetings elsewhere where attendance of 100+ persons was largely an expression of some current issue (such as an unpopular development) or overall unhappiness with local leadership. In Harborcreek, citizens who attended be-

lieved that local leadership is doing a good job, and there was indication of trust between the citizens, Planning Commission and Supervisors.

Representation from the Harborcreek School District was one of the highlights of the open house. All too often in other communities, the school district ignores development issues. The district officials were keenly interested in how information from the Township planning process could be used in their long-range planning.

The short survey used during the open house reveals much about citizen attitudes. First, it revealed that most residents like their community. One respondent called it a “Beautiful,

Objectives For Citizen Participation

Have all business meetings of the Planning Commission the Board of Supervisors and other public bodies in the community open to the public.

Stimulate the interest of residents and business owners in local public affairs and encourage their attendance at meeting of local public bodies.

Encourage increased participation by residents and business owners at public meetings.



Friendly Happy Township”. Many noted they liked the country atmosphere within proximity to urban jobs and amenities.

When asked about the use of buildings and land within the Township, most citizens believe that housing supply is sufficient. They also believe that medical services, parks, farmland and woodland is currently adequate. They would like to see more retail, restaurants, jobs and industry.

Citizens who filled out the

survey gave the Township high marks for scenic rural character, a good place to raise children, affordability, public schools, fire protection, freedom from crime and community spirit. The only aspect a majority found as only “somewhat desirable” was job and business opportunities.

The most pressing concerns of Harborcreek citizens included the economy, tax base, school property taxes, and stormwater runoff. Other notable concerns were the interrelated items

of the impact of large scale development upon rural areas, and the loss of farm and forest land to such development.

Citizen priorities for the future included the protection of existing residential neighborhoods., the encouragement of business and industry, and integrating more land conservation into development practices. Citizens also wanted the Township to only extend water and sewer systems after careful consideration of its other impacts.

Key Findings of the Open House

Because the survey is not a wide random representative sample, its purpose was not to provide a referendum on issues that would be closely decided. The purpose was to look for areas of consensus and to also ensure that the consensus is consistent with the vision of local leaders. Some overall conclusions include the following:

Citizens recognize the great diversity of Harborcreek Township, in being a mix of suburban and agricultural and natural areas. They like that mix.

Citizens are generally pleased with the community’s rate of growth.

In declining communities, citizens often want any kind of development. In rapid growth communities, citizens say there is too much of all kinds of development. Harborcreek citizens seem to largely believe that some growth is beneficial, and that the Township can control it with quality standards.

Citizens intuitively support greater tax base diversification towards nonresidential development. However, this was not because of property tax concerns. In fact, the norm for these surveys in other communities is that tax base and school property taxes are an issue of near crisis proportion.

Harborcreek Township citizens are not looking for radical policy changes from their leaders. There is support and interest in more conservation oriented development, providing more areas for business development, and retirement oriented housing, but they are not looking for sweeping changes to planning and zoning.

Local leaders in the Township have a vision that is consistent with their citizens’ expectations. Citizens want systematic (but not huge) transportation improvements, smart growth options, housing to meet changing demographics, and more variety of business development, which are some key concerns expressed by the planners. In conclusion, Harborcreek Township is doing a lot of things right. The level of citizen satisfaction is unusually high. This also means that our efforts to update the comprehensive plan should be careful to effect gentle changes, but not a reversal of the overall direction.



Narrative Objectives For Character of Development

These objectives were originally composed in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, and have been updated as necessary to reflect changing conditions.

Environmental Considerations

The general environmental goal is to preserve and enhance the natural and cultural environments of the community.

The specific objectives are to:

Protect unique geologic, vegetative, and other ecological areas to ensure variety in the environment, to serve as outdoor education resources, to guard against damage to life and education resources, and to preserve the natural amenities

Protect the groundwater resources in those area that are dependent upon on-lot wells for potable water by such methods as restricting the type and density of development in recharge areas

Discourage encroachment upon lake bluff and shorelines, streams and their floodplains and wetlands, ponds, and high water table areas that threaten to degrade the natural condition of their waters and/or banks.

Energy Conservation Considerations

The Energy Conservation general goal is to promote energy conservation as a matter of serious public concern.

The specific objectives are to:

Exercise public responsibility in providing direction to energy conservation efforts in the community.

Promulgate efficient land use patterns that lead to efficient energy utilization

Adopt land use and development controls, building codes and similar regulations that promote energy efficiencies

Utilize alternate energy sources in all new environmental and institutional buildings, when feasible.

Encourage resident, community service, and business use of renewable energy services, and promote an attitude of energy conservation.



Narrative Objectives For Character of Development

Aesthetic Considerations

The aesthetic goal is to enrich the lives of all residents in the community by seeking to improve the aesthetic quality and visual impact of the man made environment and by preserving and enhancing the natural environment

The specific objectives are to:

Prevent the desecration of the scenic elements such as dense woodlands, water bodies, and steep slope and hilltops by relating all development to natural features.

Encourage the elimination, isolation, or screening, of all visual distractions created by people.

Encourage the use of landscaping and conservation practices to enhance the visual quality of the man-made environment.

Encourage placing utilities underground when practical and encourage attractive designs and blending with the natural environment when underground placement is not practical.

Encourage the protection of scenic views and vistas

Control the use of signs in terms of number, type, size, and location, and encourage attractive design.

Economic Considerations

The economic general goal is to establish a diversified and enduring business structure in the community which provides residents with a variety of employment opportunities while at the same time preserving a healthful, secure, and pleasant residential environment.

The specific objectives are to:

Provide for future commercial and industrial development by reserving adequate land areas through various methods such as zoning planned unit development, office and industrial park development.

Provide for the concentration of commercial and industrial developments within selected areas by designating these areas in the land use plan and supported by land use regulations

When financially feasible, provide the necessary infrastructure that encourages business and industrial development in areas designated for such land uses. Appropriate levels of infrastructure provided at such sites by the Township may include water and sewer system and transportation improvements.

Reserve the economic potential of Interstate 90 interchanges within the Township by reserving these areas for business and industrial development.

Discourage the intrusion of residential uses into existing and proposed commercial/industrial development areas

Establish and perpetuate a public and private sector relationship conducive to local economic development



Narrative Objectives For Character of Development

Housing Considerations

The Housing Goal is to provide adequate housing for the present and future residents of the community.

Specific Objectives are to:

Increase the supply of decent, safe and sanitary housing in price ranges affordable to a wide spectrum of residents

Preserve and protect existing and viable single family residential neighborhoods from land use conflict.

Remain flexible to how changing demographics may effect housing needs, such as the changing needs of older residents. .

Preserve the existing sound housing stock through public and private actions and incentives to encourage the upkeep of housing.

Meet housing needs of the transient student population, but limit the effect of students housing development upon year round residential neighborhoods.

Establish a policy to determine the context of housing deterioration and dilapidation. Examine whether areas of deterioration are due to market changes, a need for land use changes, or other factors.

Transportation Considerations

The general transportation goal is to provide for safe and convenient circulation and movement of goods within the community.

Specific Objectives are to:

Provide for the separation of local and through traffic in order to facilitate movement both within the community and between the Township and neighboring municipalities.

Coordinate and integrate the transportation systems of the community with that of the state.

Provide for pedestrian walkways and non-motorized bikeways wherever warranted.

Ensure adequate off-street parking is provided by future developments

Encourage integration of the Township into regional mass transit systems.

Set an appropriate standard for new public streets in all new development.

Work to ensure that transportation infrastructure necessitated by new development is paid for by that development

Community Facilities and Utilities Considerations

The goal for facilities, services, and utilities in the Township is to provide the level of facilities and services adequate to meet the needs of current residents and anticipated future growth in a fiscally responsible manner.

Specific objectives are to:

Focus on the complete development of identified growth areas before the further extension of public water and sewer.



Narrative Objectives For Character of Development

Unless necessary to abate a public hazard, or to serve developments of regional impact and significance, public water and sewer should only be extended outside growth areas when such extension are paid by private developers.

Provide an appropriate level of support to community facilities and services, such as local fire departments,

Maintain and improve municipal recreation facilities in order to enhance the Township's quality of life

Establish and maintain a consistent recreation level of service.

Land Use Considerations

The Land use general goal is to provide and perpetuate a land use pattern in the community which includes a wide variety of interrelated land uses in proper proportion that will ensure tax base sustainability, meet the various needs of residents, and maintain harmony between natural systems and human needs, while minimizing conflict between various land uses.

Specific objectives are to:

Prevent undesirable land use relationships by avoiding the mixing of incompatible uses, while still maintaining neighborhood conveniences

Encourage the concentration of land uses in discernable clusters and limit both strip development and irregularly dispersed development patterns.

Preserve and protect declining land uses, such as agriculture, while still maintaining alternative land use choices for farmland owners.

Discourage the indiscriminate spread of commercial, industrial, and large scale institutional uses, particularly the encroachment of those uses upon existing and future residential areas.

Discourage the adverse spread of higher and medium density residential developments

Identify areas of spot blight within the Township, and accelerate redevelopment or re-use of such areas.

Promote innovative development concepts such as planned residential development, limited rural./agricultural subdivisions, conservation subdivisions, and traditional neighborhood developments that encourage variety in neighborhood and architectural design with respect for unique site features.



Objectives For Location and Timing of Development

In addition to the character of development, the other standards set by the MPC for objectives for future development of a municipality are for the location and timing of development. Harborcreek Township has fulfilled this requirement by creating a map of its community development goals and objectives. This map is found on the next page, and divides Harborcreek Township into four areas of optimum current and future development.

A Suburban Development Core: This is the area where much development has already happened, and where most of the growth over the past 50 years has been accommodated. There is not significant vacant land available here. However, there remain some key tracts of land that remain developable. From a timing standpoint, this is the area where Harborcreek Township that can accommodate Development immediately. There are also a few properties in this area that have already been developed, but are deteriorated. In a growing Township this deterioration may be for various reasons, including changes in surrounding land use, changes in market forces, of other reasons. Whatever the reason for deterioration, the sound use of land mandates the encouragement of the revitalization or redevelopment of such properties. Encouraging such redevelopment is the policy of Harborcreek Township.

A Rural Resource Area: Harborcreek Township has a rural area where there has historically been less development. There is also less chance for future development, due to a lack of public water, public sewer and transportation infrastructure. This area is also the home to large concentration of natural and agricultural resources, including prime farmlands, forest land, wetlands and some areas of steep slope. For this reason there should not be intensive development in the Township's rural resource areas. Limited development could occur in these areas if it did not threaten rural resources, the integrity of existing land uses (especially farms). Such limited development would also need to be small scale so that transportation and infrastructure improvements would not be needed. From a standpoint of timing, limited development could occur in this rural area immediately. Intensive development should not occur in this area during the life of this plan.

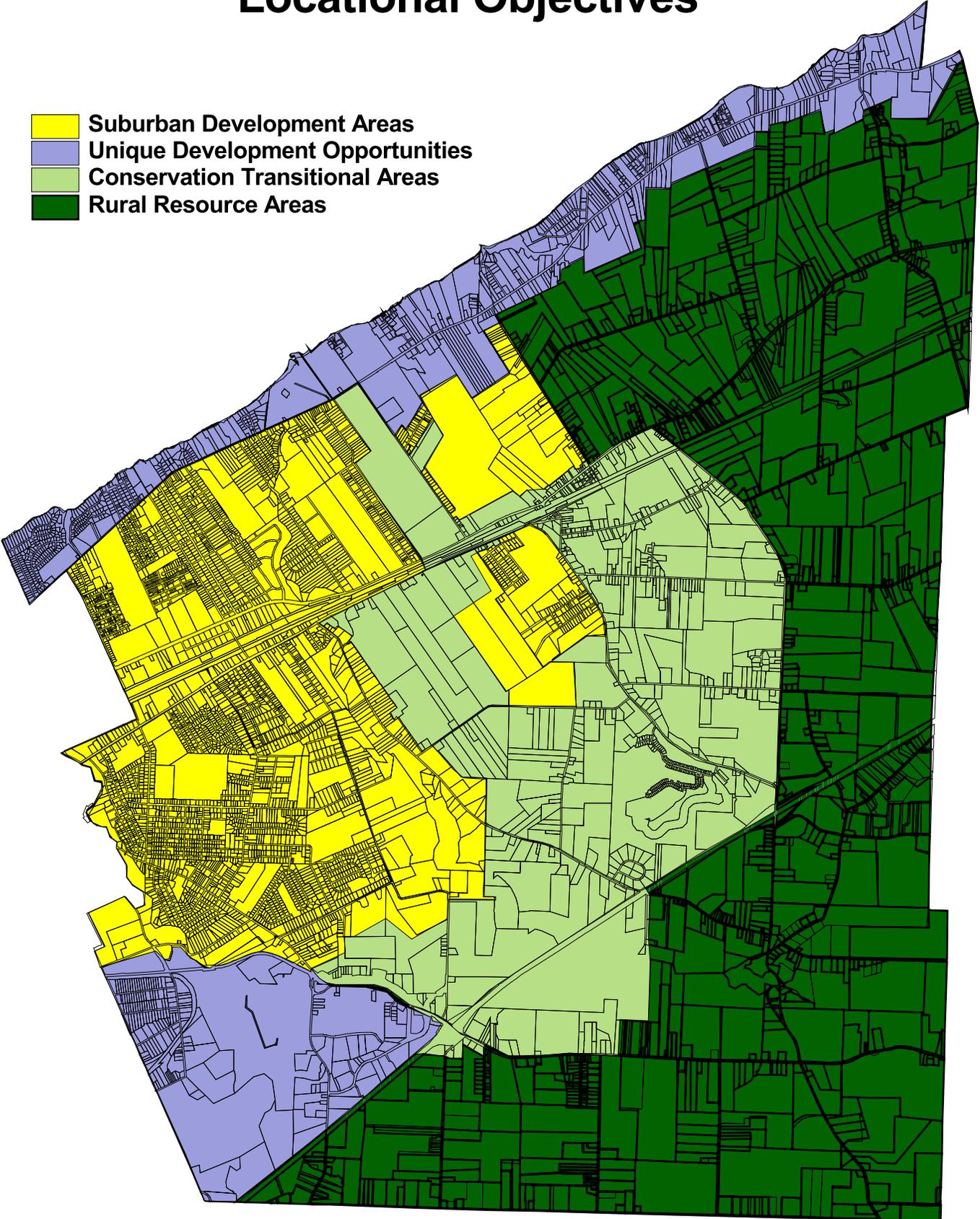
A Conservation Transitional Area: The conservation and transitional area, lies geographically between the suburban and rural areas of the Township, where the rural area and the suburban development area meet. Some of this area has been developed., but there has not been the more complete development that the suburban area has seen. In this area, intense commercial development some-

times abuts a farm. There is a scattered mix of all types of land uses. This area will continue to develop. If properly developed, the new buildings will enhance the Township. However, development of this area should not come at the cost of rural and natural resources in this transitional area. From a timing standpoint, the Township would prefer that this area develop only after similar tracts in the suburban area, but the greater concern is for the quality of development.

Special Areas: There are two areas of the Township where special conditions will affect future development. In both cases, there are unique special circumstances that make these areas different from most of the Township. Along the northern border of the Township the Lake Erie shoreline represents a truly unique resource of state-wide importance. Development here was influenced by the desirability of a Lake Erie location. The second area of unique circumstance is the greater area of PSU Behrend, where development is influenced heavily by the Penn State Campus and associated private development. Both of these areas can accommodate some development, but this development must be cognizant of a unique treasure in one case, and a unique market situation on the other.

Harborcreek Township Community Development Locational Objectives

-  Suburban Development Areas
-  Unique Development Opportunities
-  Conservation Transitional Areas
-  Rural Resource Areas





Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
(Erie County)

Chapter 3
Plan For The Conservation of
Natural and Historic
Resources

Communities In Pennsylvania Must Plan for Conservation

As previously noted, municipal comprehensive plans in Pennsylvania must meet the minimum contents required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PaMPC). The PaMPC was amended in 2001 to require that all comprehensive plans contain, "A plan for the protection of natural and historic resources to the extent not preempted by federal or state law." The Code specifies that the natural and historic resources meriting protection shall include:

- Wetlands and aquifer recharge zones
 - Woodlands
 - Steep slopes
 - Prime agricultural land
 - Floodplains
 - Unique natural areas and historic sites
- Finally, the MPC specifies

that local planning may not exceed the requirements of nine Commonwealth environmental laws (Such as the Clean Streams Law, Oil and Gas Act, Agricultural Security Area Law, Nutrient Management Act and the mining and reclamation acts).



However, the need to protect natural resources in Harborcreek Township extends beyond mere compliance with the law. The rich legacy of natural resources found in the Township has made it an

attractive place to live. As discussed in the previous chapter, citizens treasure this natural setting and its rural resources.

Three Steps in Conservation Planning

Since a formal conservation plan is a new element in Harborcreek Township's comprehensive plan, it is important to define the term "conservation". For the purposes of this plan, conservation means the stewardship and prudent use of natural resources, based upon their relative rarity or value. In some

cases, conservation may entail continued use of resources, such as sound farming. In other cases, conservation may mean the preservation of a vanishing resource (through an action such as buying land).

This chapter follows a three step process to plan for conservation. The first step

is to identify what resources may exist in the Township. The second step is to identify what factors may be a possible threat to those resources. When both the specific resources are known and the threats are identified, it is finally possible to formulate a strategy and policies for their protection.

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The First Step in Planning: Identify Resources

While the previous comprehensive plan for the Township did not contain a formal conservation plan, there was a detailed discussion of natural resources, which was utilized in part for the assessment. Since that time, many state and federal agencies have developed databases and electronic mapping of such re-

sources. Data was also available from the Erie County Planning Department. These were compared using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. GIS is computer technology that allows multiple kinds of database information to be compared by mapping. The series of maps attached to

this plan, presents not only what kinds of resources the Township has, but where they occur. In addition to the County, data was gathered from the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection, US Department of the Interior, Pa Historical and Museum Commission, and US Department of Agriculture.

Historic Resources

Harborcreek Township has a rich history that was well chronicled in the previous Comprehensive Plan. This document also noted four historic dwellings in the Township, mostly early homes from the 1830's. Inventories of historic resources are also conducted by state, federal, and sometimes local governments to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The historic resource list created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is the National Register of Historic Places. The register conveys limited protection to properties that are listed or eligible for listing. Eligibility includes homes and other buildings, structures (such as bridges), sites (such as battlefields or archeological sites), and even objects (such as ships). Eligible properties may be of state, local, or national significance. If a property is determined eligible, or listed on the register, it is protected from actions using

federal funds that would adversely impact the property without mitigation. For example, if a highway project were to take a historic house, mitigation might mean re-routing the highway or complete documentation of the building prior to demolition. The mitigation actions would be resolved between the agency undertaking the project and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (the federally designated State Historic Preservation Office).

Because of National Register requirements, most state and federal agencies conduct archeological and historic resource surveys. Most surveys in rural Pennsylvania have been undertaken due to PennDOT projects. Frequently, these surveys, note eligible properties, but formal listing is usually the prerogative of the property owner.

State Agency surveys show there are three known eligible properties. The

Evans House Farm on Hannon Road includes farm outbuildings of historic significance. The Thomas Bunnell House on Station Road is a circa 1850 brick farmhouse in close to original state. There are three buildings associated with the Elisha Mack property; a carriage house, store building and dwelling, located on Station Road.

There are an additional 15 Properties of indeterminate eligibility. Indeterminate eligibility means they may be eligible, based upon further review, but that information or time was lacking.

Most of these are homes located along Buffalo Road. However, the list also includes the Clark Road Bridge, and some scattered homes. Finally, it is important to note that 108 buildings were surveyed in the area of Shannon Road, Station Road, and the Section of Station from Nagle to Saltsman. There were not sufficient related resources to justify a historic district.



Archeological Heritage

The protection afforded by the National Register and the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 is not limited to buildings. The oldest historic sites in Harborcreek Township are prehistoric native archeological sites. Nelson's Biographical Dictionary and Historical Reference Book of Erie County (1896) mentions a number of circles and Indian mounds in Harborcreek Township along the banks of Four Mile Creek. However, like many prehistoric sites, these have since been lost to development. There may be many undiscovered sites with Harborcreek Township. The Sommerheim Park Site in Millcreek Township (listed on the National Register) has occupation patterns dating back to 3700 B.C.. The State Historic Preservation Office does not disclose the exact location of archeological resources to protect them from unauthorized relic hunters. However, no National Register eligible archeological sites have been documented in the Town-



ship. Archeological survey work was conducted pursuant to several highway projects.

It is known that the Township was occupied by native peoples for thousands of years, so it is important for site and project planning considerations to have a general understanding where archeological sites are likely to occur in the Township. In general, sites are likely in any natural shelter (such as rock overhangs), flat lands near stream confluences and transitional environmental between topography or land and water. In 1981,

archeologist, William C. Johnson of the University of Pittsburgh, also noted archeological sensitivity characteristics of the Erie Lake Plain and Erie County. These include: Elevated locals with well-drained, sandy or gravelly soils, the upper 10 meters of bluff edges (potential cemeteries) relict late Pleistocene beach strands and sandbars. It is extremely important that any Lake Plain sites that have never been developed or plowed be noted for potential sensitivity. This is because so little of the entire Lake Erie shoreline in the United States remains undisturbed.

Land and Water Resources

The Land of Harborcreek Township has been shaped by a variety of factors. Prehistoric glaciers shaped the basic landforms and watersheds. Lake Erie affects climate, which in turn determines what kind of plants will grow. Streams constantly erode and re-shape landforms. Human activities have also had impacts on land and water.

In terms of planning for development, some land and water factors enhance human use of the land. Other factors present limitations to human use of the land. For example, many surface water features add value to development. This can be seen in Harborcreek by the desirability of lakefront home sites. Other factors, such as slope and emergent

wetlands limit development. Some Resources, such as minerals, good farm soils, or woodlands have an innate economic value. However, these values are not always compatible with other kinds of development. Some land uses, such as agriculture and mining, can impact quantity and quality of water resources.



Watersheds, Floodplains and Wetlands

Watersheds: All of Harborcreek Township drains into Lake Erie and the Saint Lawrence watershed. The minor watersheds are depicted on the attached map. It should be noted, that the Township is actually the terminus of several streams, particularly Sixmile, Sevenmile, and Eightmile Creeks. The exceptions are streams like Mill Creek and Fourmile Creek which drain a small part of the Township, but terminate in other municipalities. As most watersheds in the Township run south to north, and development patterns run east to west, no single watershed has been impacted by development. The greatest urbanization has occurred in the Lake Erie Watershed along the western border of the Township. It is likely that Sixmile Creek will be the focus of much future development. This could potentially create concentrations of runoff in the northern part of the basin.

Floodplains: Most of the major drainage basins have associated floodplains. However, due to the stream type, the channel of the floodplains is exceptionally narrow. Observation of the stream basins reveals that these streams have cut deep narrow channels, so the wide floodplains found in other parts of Pennsylvania are less common in the Township. It appears that much development has avoided significant impact upon floodplains thus far. Where there are not deep

channels associated with networked streams, large wetland systems are found in the floodplain area. These wetlands absorb much runoff, but changes caused by development can change drainage and cause also localized flooding due to stormwater.

Wetlands: One of the most widespread environmental limitations in the Township are wetland areas. However, the extent of practical versus regulatory limits, and even the actual classification of any one area as wetland is somewhat unclear. Some wetlands are protected from development by the Clean Water Act as “waters of the United States”. Pennsylvania’s regulatory basis includes isolated wetlands. The US Fish and Wildlife Service Provides limited mapping of likely wetlands over the 1:24000 topographic map series. The US Department of Agriculture has also mapped hydric soils, which are anaerobic soils often associated with wetlands. The attached maps include both hydric soils and USFWS identified wetlands.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has a multi-tiered system for wetland classification. The first tier is the relationship to a larger system, such as a lake, pond or river. The second tier is how the wetland links to that system. The final tiers look at the plant communities and such issues as the

material that make up the bottom of the wetland. There are small wetland areas near the Erie Lake Shore. These are lake related littorals, which means they are characteristic of wet areas on the shoreline. The Township has some Riverine Wetlands, which are fed by flooding of perennial streams. Most wetlands in the Township are Palustrine, which may be fed by streams, but also independent. The most common Palustrine wetland types are forested. It should be noted that there are large areas of hydric soils or soils with hydric components that extend beyond USFWS known wetlands. This difference reinforces the reality that each site proposed for development within must be delineated for presence of wetlands.

One of the great concerns about water in the Township is the aforementioned problem of stormwater runoff. Human development (Such as rooftops and pavement) changes the amount of water that is absorbed into soil. As this water can not enter the ground, it concentrates in greater areas and creates localized flooding. In some cases, the runoff from parking lots can pick up pollutants, such as oil and antifreeze from leaking cars.



Wetland area adjacent to stream in the Township: These wetlands prevent flooding by absorbing stormwater runoff.



Topography, Slope, and Minerals

Slope limits development by increasing grading and road building costs. Without careful planning, development of slope areas can cause erosion, soil shifts and increases in the velocity of stormwater runoff that can cause flooding.

In general, slopes in Harborcreek Township are found in the southern two-thirds of the Township. A wide ridge of slope areas lies between I-90 and Route

20. Perhaps the steepest slopes are found in the bluffs along Lake Erie, and stream valleys. These are the only major slope areas north of Route 20.

Minerals in Harborcreek are primarily limited to sand and gravel. Because the entire Township was glaciated, there are many pockets of glacial sand and gravel. Mining remains a possibility in rural resource areas.

In accordance with the requirements of the Pa Municipalities Planning Code requirements, this plan notes 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.

Woodlands and Unique Natural Areas

Woodland are the natural ground cover over most of Harborcreek Township. Many woodlands are found in otherwise undevelopable areas, such as slopes, or wetlands. Based upon air photos, perhaps 40 percent of the Township has tree cover. This is consistent with Erie County, where slightly less than half of the total County land area is forested.

Almost every area of the Township has been logged in the past, and tree species have changed enormously over the past 200 years. Some excellent preliminary research on the extent of trees and changing forest types in the Township was developed by Harborcreek native, historian, and geologist Beth Simmons (*Trees of Harborcreek Township*, 1999, available from www.rootsweb.com). The original forest was Beech/Maple/Hemlock. Simmons noted the fact that Hemlocks are now only found in stream gorge areas, and

represent a relict population. She also catalogued a number of locations of older individual trees (from road or boundary marker records), and a few areas which may contain patches of virgin timber (mostly in upland areas, away from streams). There are many areas of secondary growth (poplar and maple dominant), and a few areas of early twentieth century conservation plantings. The largest secondary growth trees appear to be on slopes in the streams gorges. These are not a dominant Township landscape feature.

Some areas of Harborcreek Township have physical features, or harbor distinctive plant or animal communities. In 1993, the Erie County Department of Planning cooperated with the Western Pennsylvania



Conservancy to conduct an inventory of such natural areas. This study identifies several areas of the Township as possessing some significance. These include:

- The entire lake plain and bluff areas north of Route 5.
- The Eightmile Creek Gorge.
- A forested wetland in the Eastern part of the Township.
- A small forest west of the village of Harborcreek.
- The Sixmile Creek Gorge.



Farmland and Agricultural Resources

Agriculture is different from other kinds of environmental issues. Unlike wetlands, slopes or floodplains, the best agricultural land often has few or no environmental limitations that would prevent development. Agriculture is also an active human use of land, where other natural resources are a natural condition.

However, farmland is not an unlimited resource. Productive agriculture is necessary for food production, but agriculture cannot occur without good soils. Across Pennsylvania the loss of farmlands to development has become an issue of statewide importance. Farmland developed for other uses is lost to food production. The Commonwealth has responded to this by creating laws to protect farmland and also creating legal tools for counties and municipalities to protect high value farmland within their jurisdiction.

The County Comprehensive Plan notes that Erie County has two distinct farming regions; the coastal plain and the uplands. Along the coastal plain, the lake moderates climate. There are also a number of well drained soils. These environmental factors combine to create a unique area where grape production and other fruit and vegetable farming can thrive. Further from the shore of Lake Erie, the topography becomes more varied, clay



The northern part of Harborcreek Township is a part of the unique lake plain agriculture system, where climate and soil create conditions favorable to such crops as grapes.

heavy soils become more common, and the microclimate benefits of the lake are diminished. Thus, the upland agriculture is more limited to grazing livestock, dairying, and grain production. The more specialized fruit and vegetable production is often much more lucrative on a per acre basis.

Like Erie County, Harborcreek also has both farming systems within its borders. The lake plain fruit growing system is very limited in Pennsylvania, and Harborcreek Township is near the heart of this valuable farming system.

The Township has recognized the quality of its agricultural heritage by adopting an Agricultural Security Area (ASA). ASA's are enabled by the Commonwealth to be adopted by any township. An ASA is a covenant between farmland

owners and the Township to protect farms from nuisance suits and restrictive ordinances.

Erie County has also provided preferential assessment and purchase of development rights. Preferential assessments (commonly known as "clean and green") sets a taxable value for properties based upon an expectation of its use as farmland, rather than for development. This saves significant money for farmland owners who do not wish to sell for development. The County receives money from the state to purchase conservation easements to protect farmland. The attached map details ASA's preferential assessments, and County purchased conservation easements in the Township. Most are concentrated in the lake plain farming area.



Threats to Natural and Historic Resources

The analysis of natural and historic resources show that Harborcreek Township has an unusually rich array of resources. Growth analysis contained in the previous chapters of the Comprehensive Plan notes that the Township has seen fairly constant growth and development over the past decades. While, the rate of development may vary in the future, there is no denying the fact that Harborcreek Township is in the path of growth. Land formerly used for working farm or forest land will increasingly be developed for homes or businesses.

On the surface, it would seem that development of land would represent the most significant threat to Natural and Historic Resources within the Township. However, development is no more a direct threat to the township natural setting than is agriculture; the real threat is poorly planned development. Poor farming practices can erode land and pollute watersheds. Good farming practices can protect resources. Likewise, good development practices can both add value to private property and protect natural areas.

Harborcreek Township is in a unique position to learn from other Pennsylvania Communities about where development practices may have gone awry in those communities. Throughout growing areas of Pennsyl-



Suburban Sprawl: In many growing communities across the nation, poorly planned growth is the greatest threat to natural resources.

vania, there is widespread dissatisfaction from homeowners, local governments, and developers. Homeowners frequently become upset about the loss of community character. They state that they have either moved to the community or stayed there for its rural and small town qualities. Environmentalists and conservationists criticize development patterns that force auto dependency and use more land than necessary. Social critics blame suburbanization for a loss of community. Builders and real estate professionals blame local ordinances for artificially raising housing costs through excessively large lots, over-designed streets, and the inability to

mix uses. Public policy analysts believe that local regulations prevent the replication of the best examples of historic town planning principles, and poorly planned growth actually results in higher taxes.

One important lesson of this discontent is that developers are not wholly at fault. Often, they scrupulously adhere to local zoning and land development regulations. However, the regulations often mandate wall to wall house lots, removal of trees, and paving of large areas. Unless natural and historic resources are accounted for in the development planning process, they will not be protected.



What Resources are most at Risk?

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, some resources are protected by state and federal law. With this understood, it can be helpful to rank the level of risk.

Historical and Archeological Resources: Low Risk

These resources have limited protection from federal law. In the case of historic buildings, landowners often protect them as a matter of community pride. There are not concentration of resources to warrant creation of historic districts.

Wetlands, Floodplains, and Hydrology: Low Risk

Wetlands are protected by state and federal law. The Township has also adopted a floodplain ordinance to protect these areas in agreement with state and federal law. There is some risk from localized flooding due to continued growth and development. However, the Township has adopted a stormwater management ordinance to ensure that new development does not create additional runoff beyond the property line.

Slope and Topography: Low to Medium Risk

Historically, most development in the Township has not occurred in steep slope areas. As the Township grows, development will either need to move further into the Lake Erie plain or into the slope areas in the central portion of the Township. In some cases, expense will preclude the development of slope areas, but in other areas surrounding land values may make the development of slopes viable.

Woodland and Unique Natural Areas : Medium to High Risk

There is no state or federal law offering innate protection to a scenic resource. Poorly planned development could have an undesirable visual impact upon areas such as gorges.

Farmland: High Risk

Three factors combine to make Harborcreek Township's farms and farmlands the community's most endangered resource.

Land Use Planning For Conservation

Since the most threatened resource in Harborcreek Township is also the least protected, The key to a sound conservation strategy in the Township will be land use planning. The community development objectives identify where Conservation should take priority in the Township's future. The community development goals and objectives map has identified where growth is to be encouraged, and where the

continued use of land for rural resources is preferred. However, the mapping prepared for this chapter shows that every portion of the Township has some natural resources of value. The public input in the previous chapter noted that growth in the Township has been in a large part due to factors that draw people to Harborcreek Township: which includes natural resources. Citizens state this when they mention such

factors as "country setting" as positives features of Harborcreek.

The implications of this is that some level of natural resource conservation must become a part of planning for every part of the Township. The overall theme of planning for conservation are thus an inherent part of this chapter, as well as the Plan for Land Use in the next chapter.



GIS Land Analysis

Twenty years ago, integrating environmental data with local property line mapping or zoning maps was an expensive, laborious process. It was thus difficult for either a community or a developer to always know, what features were on any particular property, and how they might fit into a network of natural re-

sources. The maps attached to this plan chapter are the start of GIS system for the Township that integrates property line mapping with natural features. This data needs to be widely disseminated, especially to the development community (Developers, real estate specialists, engineers). This is based upon the simple

premise that the first step in protecting natural resources is to identify them. GIS makes it easier to do this within site planning, as well as community wide planning. The Township could also begin building its own GIS system, using this data. This would facilitate greater accuracy of data over time.

Integrate Natural Resource Data into Site Plans

Nearly every municipality requires some form of preliminary subdivision or land development plan. The Pa. Municipalities Planning Code explicitly permits two stage review of development plans. However, in practice, preliminary plans often require as much engineering as final plans. A developer may spend \$4000-5000 dollars per lot on this engineering, so changes are expensive.

For example, if a developer is required to show all bearings and distances for every lot on a preliminary plan, he is not going to be willing to move a lot line or road to better plan around natural resources.

It is thus essential that communities begin working with developers and their site planners as early in the process as possible. If the developers and designers understand what the Township is trying to accomplish,

and there is strong communication before much is spent on engineering, developer and communities can work together to protect resources.

While preliminary plans can be flexible as to the extent of engineering, the existing site conditions should be presented in as much detail as possible. Preliminary site plans should show such features as:

Statuary environmental limitations such as wetland, or floodplains.

Perennial or intermittent streams.

Vegetative ground cover, such as areas of mature forest, working farmlands, fencerows, or abandoned fields and brushy areas.

Unusual environmental features, such as waterfalls.

Any sites of historic or

other visual interest, such as old mill abutments, old stone fences, or historic barns.

Because Pennsylvania law allows multiple levels of plan approval, this types of existing conditions information should be reviewed before or during design of house lots, roads and other improvements. In the case of a subdivision, the community is allowed up to ninety days to review preliminary plans. An expedited review could be provided for developers who sketch a careful plan around significant features.

The land of Harborcreek Township is not a checkerboard. Every tract has different resources, and every tract should be developed differently to protect those resources.

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Expand land conservation approaches

Development of the Township's farmland, (and other values areas of woodland and unique natural areas) cannot be stopped by a regulatory approach. For the highest values resources, the only workable and fair approach is to purchase that land or purchase an interest in that land sufficient to ensure its protection.

Purchase of land is the best tool to protect both unique natural areas and public access. For example, The Township purchased the Shades Beach property and has been developing it as public park. In doing so, the Township also was able to protect an area of Lake Erie bluff. However, since buying land is expensive, this would be a somewhat limited tool in the Township's conservation toolbox.

Because most farms are in private ownership, and their protection is ensured if they continue to be farmed, complete public purchase in fee simple is not normally the best approach. A proven tool for farmland preservation is the purchase of an agricultural preservation easement. An agricultural conservation easement actually entails paying a landowner for a formal conservation agreement. The landowner agrees through the agreement to not develop his property. He retains all other normal rights, the property can be sold. It can be posted to prevent public trespass. The

owner has simply agreed not to subdivide it or sell it for a commercial, residential, or industrial land development. The rights are purchased in perpetuity.

Erie County presently manages the purchase of agricultural conservation easements and has purchased several tracts in Harborcreek Township. Because the program is voluntary, it is also fair. The only shortcoming of this program is that there are more interested farmland owners than funds to purchase easements. Harborcreek must compete with these limited funds with North East, Girard, Fairview and other Lake Erie Plain farming communities.

Municipalities who wish to prioritize farmland preservation have some other options. Some have formed local land trusts. These trusts apply for competitive funding for purchase of agricultural conservation easements. In some cases, they offer match to the County program and gain priority by doing so. A few municipalities in eastern Pennsylvania have actually enacted bond issues voted upon by citizens in order to buy open space or farmland easements. The municipalities that have done this have actually learned that the purchase of the land saves money by ensuring that it does not develop into land uses that costs more in public services than they generate in revenue (See the next chapter for a

full discussion of this phenomena).

Finally, Townships are increasingly using the Transfer of development rights to protect land. This approach has been enabled in Pennsylvania since 1989, but has only been widely used recently. Through a transfer of development rights, a developer can gain the right to develop at a higher density in a growth area by paying the Township or a farmland owner to purchase a conservation easement. In essence, the developer transfers the development capacity of a rural tract to an urban tract. The owner of the rural tract is paid for this right.

Transfer of development rights has several advantages. It is a voluntary transaction for both buyer and seller at an agreed price. If properly used, it can increase the form and type of development in areas the community wishes to direct it. The municipality can participate at several levels. Some communities merely enable transfer of development rights through zoning. Others have formed land trusts and facilitate the transfers by compiling lists of willing landowners, or even buying and re-selling the rights. As a matter of public policy, Harborcreek Township will explore the wider array of land conservation tools. Where feasible, it will select and apply approaches to steward its limited land resources.



A Township grape field in Winter.



Summary of Conservation Policies and Actions

Harborcreek Township has an unusually rich array of natural and historic resources, ranging from the lake bluffs, to wetlands and unique high value farmland.

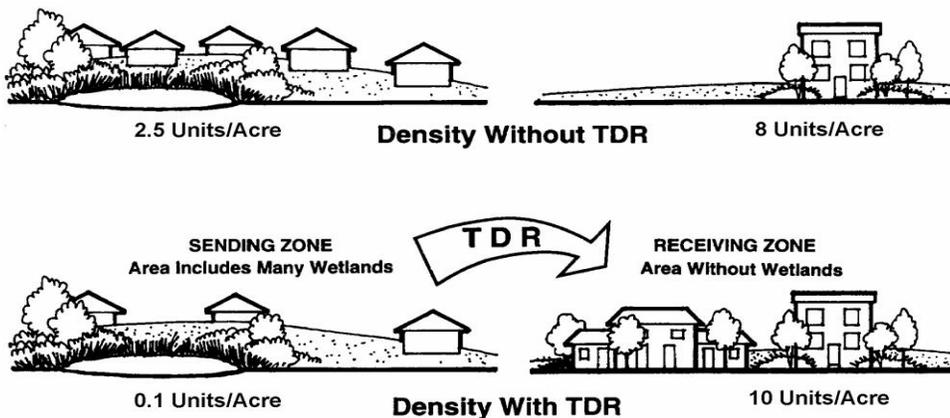
The Township protects natural resources and private property from impacts such as localized flooding, through its floodplain and stormwater management ordinances.

The Township will use an appropriate level of land use planning (including the zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances) to protect natural resources based upon the level of threat to those resources. Some conservation should be a part of both growth areas and rural resource areas.

Because of the diversity of natural resources, a higher level of site planning should be cognizant of the unique features of each site.

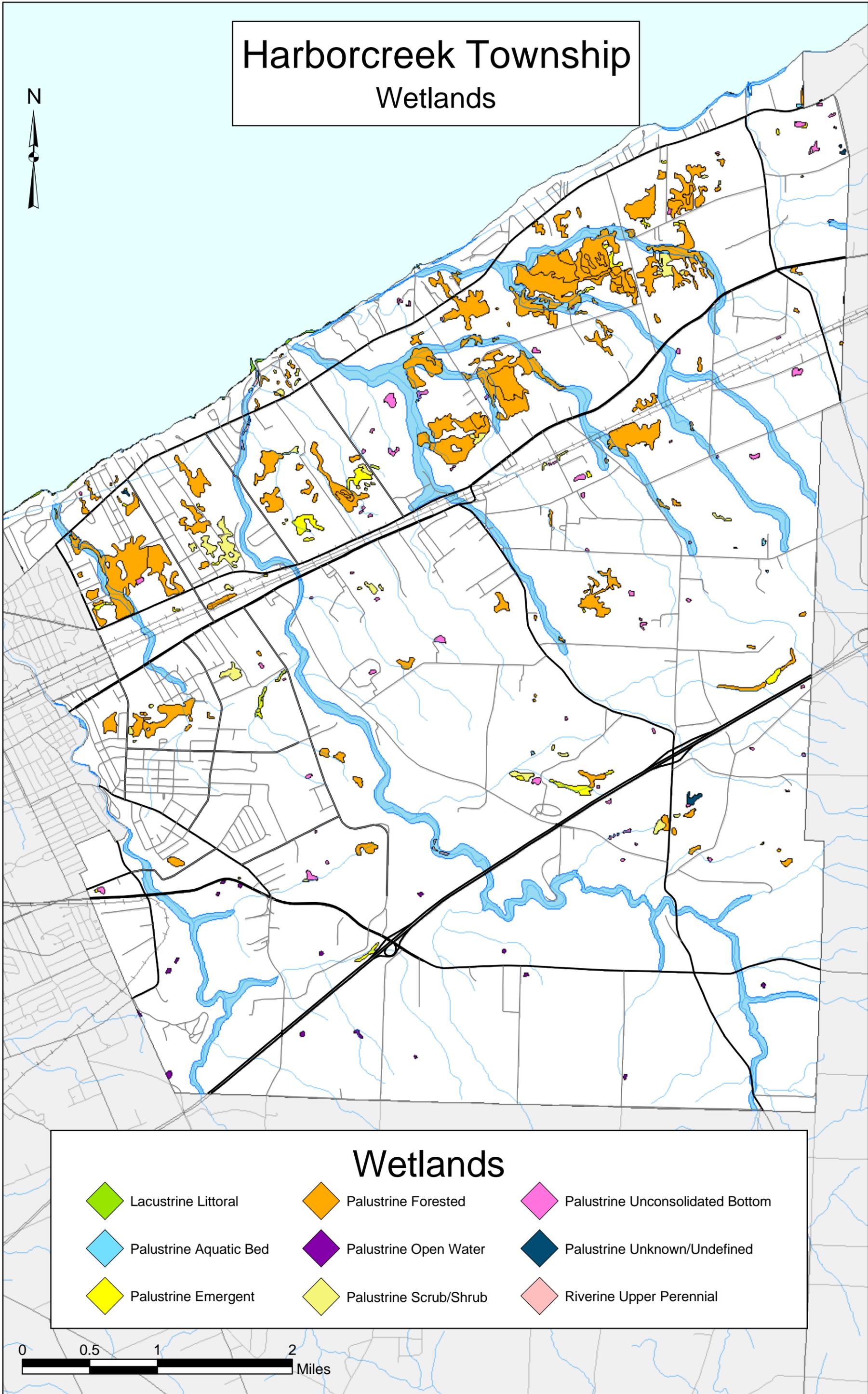
The Township will use the GIS mapping from this plan as a basis in making land use decisions about development priorities. Through this Township wide analysis, the Township will also begin to move towards an expectation of greater natural resources preservation within site development planning.

Because farmland is the natural resource most at risk in the Township, Harborcreek Township will further explore methods to protect farmland. This may include transfer of development rights, a local land trust, municipal funding, or a combination of these approaches.



This graphic from New York state illustrates how transfer of development rights (TDR) can be integrated into local land use policy, resulting in greater density in a targeted growth area.

Harborcreek Township Wetlands



Wetlands

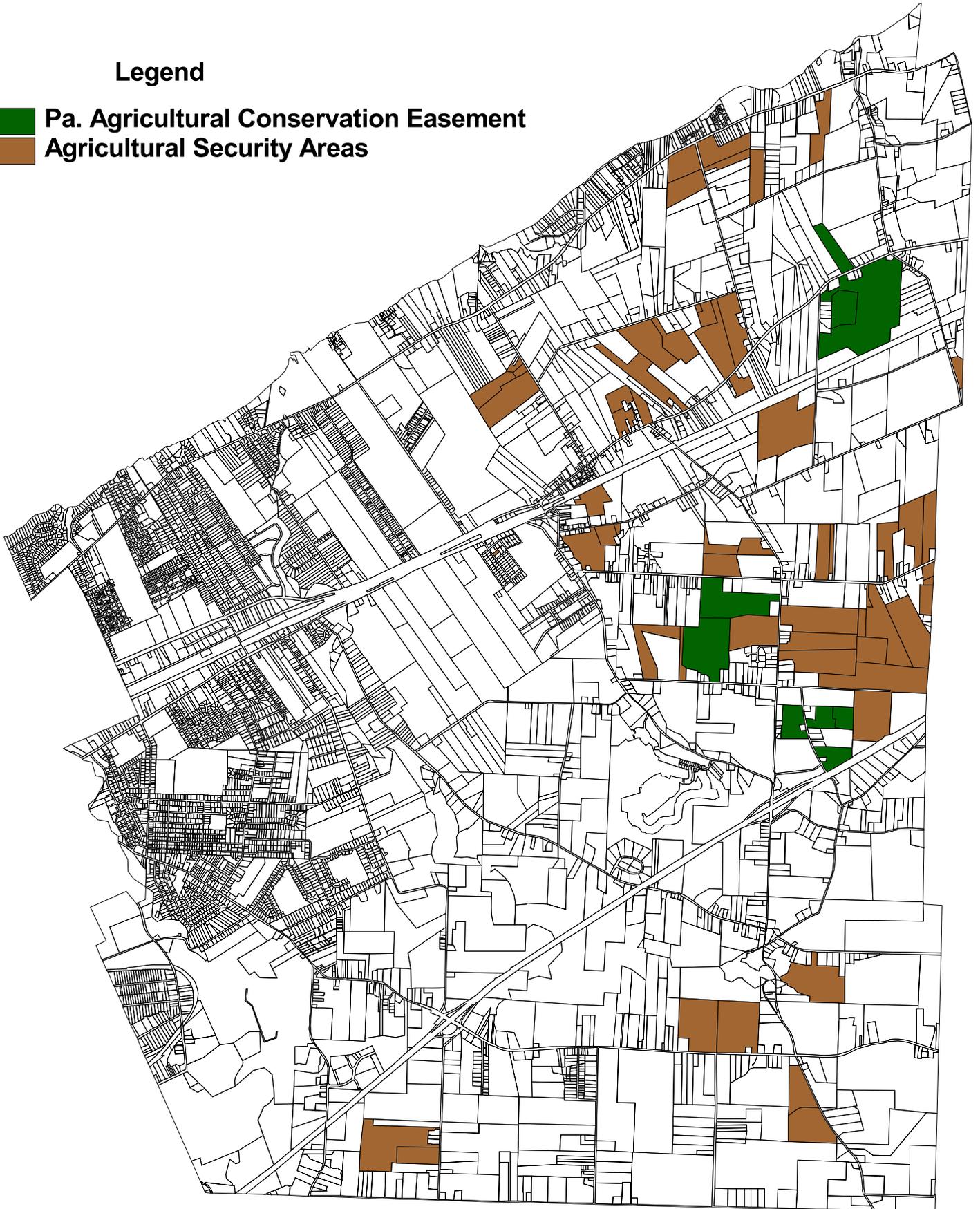
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
|  Lacustrine Littoral |  Palustrine Forested |  Palustrine Unconsolidated Bottom |
|  Palustrine Aquatic Bed |  Palustrine Open Water |  Palustrine Unknown/Undefined |
|  Palustrine Emergent |  Palustrine Scrub/Shrub |  Riverine Upper Perennial |



Harborcreek Township Agricultural Programs

Legend

-  Pa. Agricultural Conservation Easement
-  Agricultural Security Areas

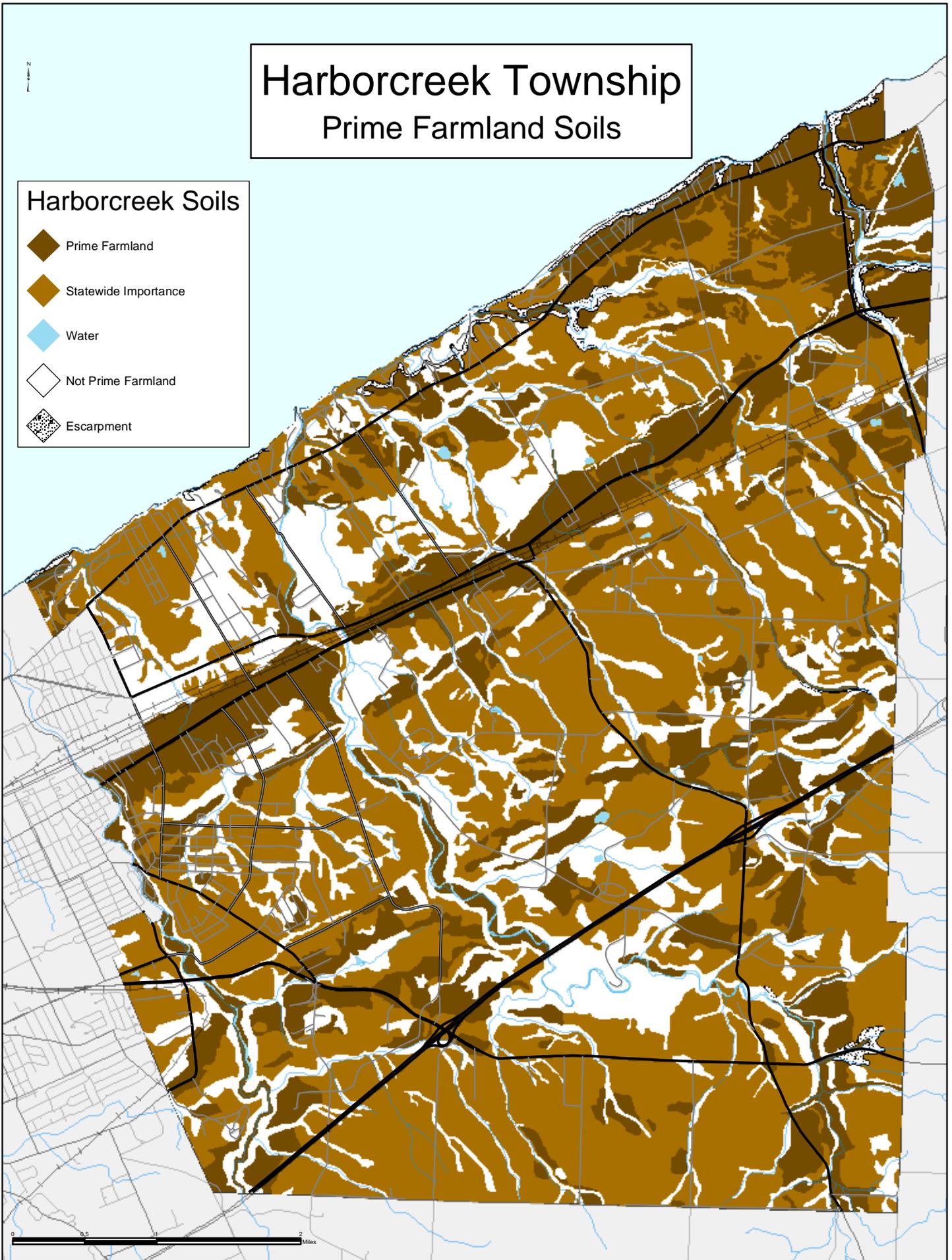


Harborcreek Township

Prime Farmland Soils

Harborcreek Soils

- Prime Farmland
- Statewide Importance
- Water
- Not Prime Farmland
- Escarpment

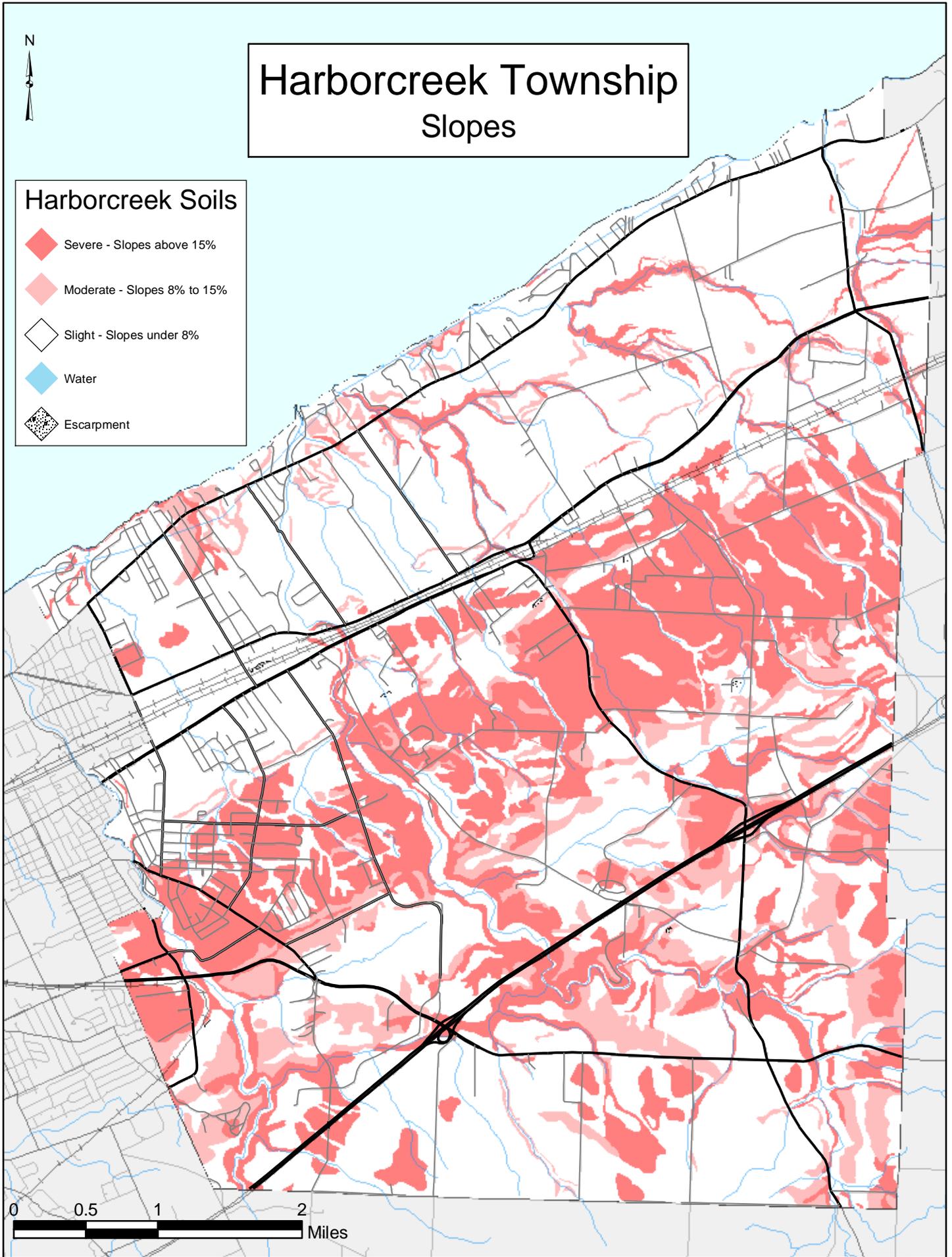




Harborcreek Township Slopes

Harborcreek Soils

-  Severe - Slopes above 15%
-  Moderate - Slopes 8% to 15%
-  Slight - Slopes under 8%
-  Water
-  Escarpment

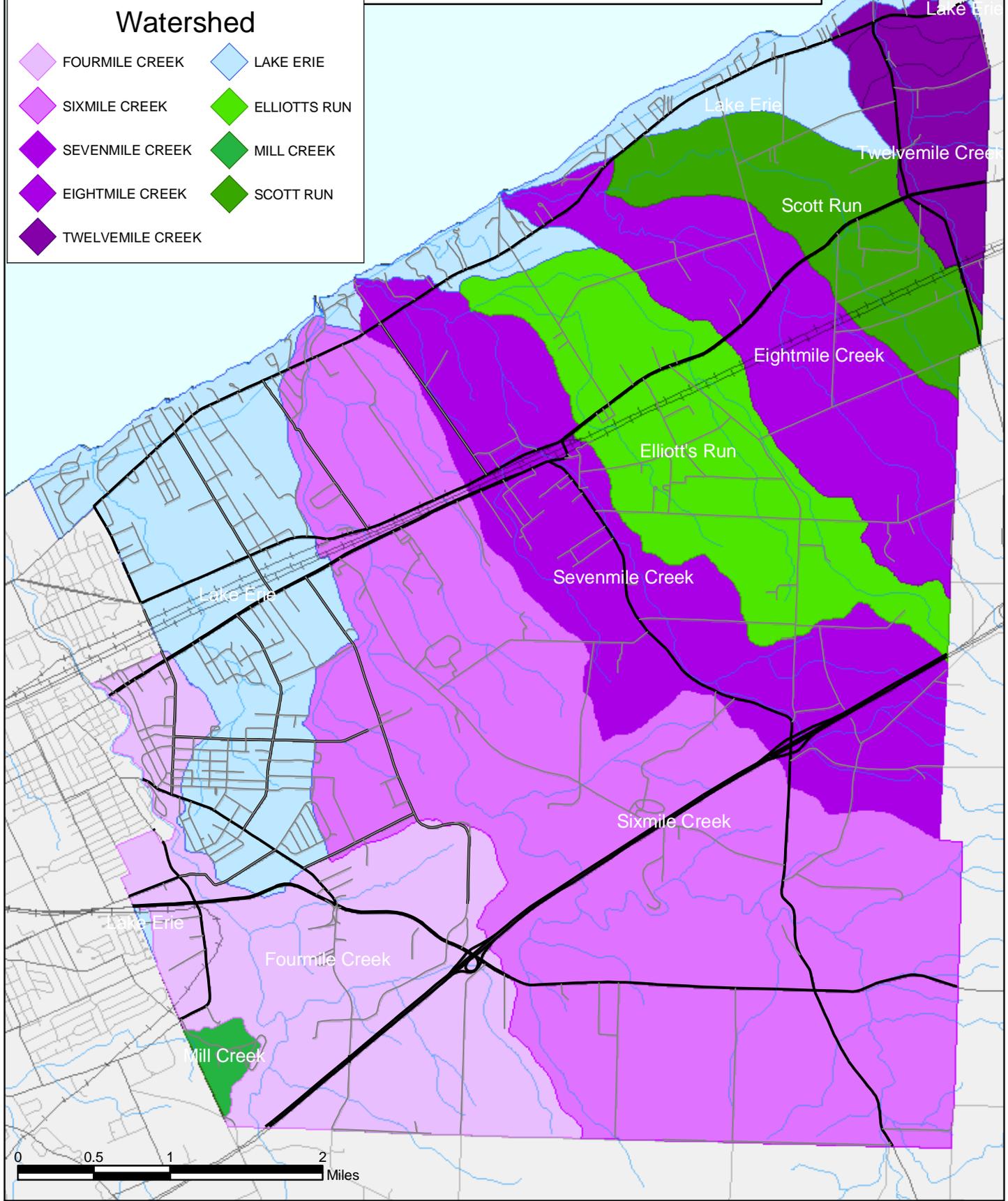


Harborcreek Township Watersheds



Watershed

- | | |
|--|---|
|  FOURMILE CREEK |  LAKE ERIE |
|  SIXMILE CREEK |  ELLIOTT'S RUN |
|  SEVENMILE CREEK |  MILL CREEK |
|  EIGHTMILE CREEK |  SCOTT RUN |
|  TWELVEMILE CREEK | |





Chapter Four

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 4
Plan for Land Use

Land Use Planning to Accommodate Growth

Planning for land use has always been at the heart of Harborcreek Township’s comprehensive planning. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) has always required that a comprehensive plan include a land use plan element. However, the MPC also gives the municipality considerable freedom to plan for land use as it sees fit. The MPC states that the land use plan “*may include provisions for the amount, intensity, character and timing of land use proposed for residence, industry, business, agriculture, major traffic and transit facilities, utilities, community facilities, public grounds, parks and recreation, preservation of prime agricultural lands, flood plains and other areas of special hazards and other similar uses.*” This “may” language indicates permissiveness, rather than a mandate, as found in language for the plan for conservation.



Township land resources are key to its future as a community that can attract investment

While the MPC gives the community great discretion in formulating its own land use plan, land use planning has a great relevance for a zoned community. In Pennsylvania, a zoned community in the path of growth has an obligation to provide properly designated land for all types and kinds of devel-

opment. The community must plan for areas for various types of residential, commercial and industrial use through its zoning ordinance. For example, a municipality cannot exclude industrial development because it sees itself as a bedroom community.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan examines how the demographic patterns previously discussed have impacted the use of land. From this analysis, an estimate is made about how much land will be needed to accommodate anticipated future growth. An important part of this projection

is to understand that different types of land development (housing, commercial, industrial, and private farm or forest land) will have divergent effects upon public service costs.

Because the extent and amount of future growth is estimated, the Township can plan to accommodate that growth in a way that will add value to the community and enhance existing development. Such sound development will also represent wise use of the natural resources discussed previously. It will also help maintain the Township in a way that citizens want.

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Analyzing Growth Pattern Changes

Land use analysis is helpful to determine the relationship between demographic growth and the need to accommodate future growth. In order to choose which lands are a better focus of growth and which ones might be better candidates for lower intensity uses, it is necessary to see both current land utilization patterns, and if possible, historic patterns.

In the case of Harborcreek Township, a wealth of historic and existing land use data is available. Township land use patterns were generally analyzed in the 1994 Township Comprehensive Plan. In 2002, The County of Erie conducted a land use survey based upon aerial photography, augmented by field surveys. The results of this analysis were incorporated into the 2003 Erie County Comprehensive Plan. The County Plan noted that in the 1970's, most development

in the Township was concentrated in the lake plain area, north of Route 5, and the older residential area off Saltsman Road. While neighboring communities such as Wesleyville and Lawrence Park had almost identical development patterns in both 1978 and 2003, Harborcreek Township saw dynamic change. A summary of these changes is presented in the sidebar below.

Consistent with the expectations of the Pa. Municipalities Planning Code, the County Comprehensive Plan established designated growth areas, future growth areas, and rural resource areas. These are shown as they applied to Harborcreek on the map entitled Land Use Plan Work Map. This map bears a strong relationship to the 1996/2003 Harborcreek Township Future Land Use Plan Maps. While it is obvious that the County of Erie

gave consideration to Harborcreek Township in development of the County plan, there is an obligation of both counties and townships to maintain reasonable consistency written within the Pa Municipalities Planning Code. The code states.

When a municipality having a comprehensive plan is located in a county which has adopted a comprehensive plan, both the county and the municipality shall each give the plan of the other consideration in order that the objectives of each plan can be protected to the greatest extent possible.

The phrases of "designated growth areas", "rural resource areas", and "future growth areas" within the Erie County Plan are taken directly from the Pa. Municipalities Planning Code as well.

"Designated growth area," a region within a county or counties described in a municipi-

Important Changes to Land use in the past decade

There has been a great increase in the extent of commercial development on Buffalo Road/Route 20, though some older commercial areas are being underutilized.

There has been new commercial development on the Township's I-90 Interchanges, particularly on Station Road.

Some infill residential development has occurred in the western portion of the Township

Lower density roadside residential development is occurring in all rural areas of the Township

There has been a great expansion in institutional land uses



Analyzing Growth Pattern Changes , continued

pal or multimunicipal plan that preferably includes and surrounds a city, borough or village, and within which residential and mixed use development is permitted or planned for at densities of one unit to the acre or more, commercial, industrial and institutional uses are permitted or planned for and public infrastructure services are provided or planned.

“Future growth area,” an area of a municipal or multimunicipal plan outside of and adjacent to a designated growth area where residential, commercial industrial and institutional uses and development are permitted or planned at varying densities and public infrastructure services may or may not be provided, but future development at greater densities is planned to accompany the orderly extension of provision of public infrastructure services

“Rural resource area,” an

area described in a municipal or multimunicipal plan within which rural resource uses including, but not limited to, agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism are encouraged and enhanced, development that is compatible with or supportive of such uses is permitted, and public infrastructure services are not provided except in villages.

Note that these phrases contain both land use type and density components. Harborcreek Township has given the County plan great consideration in developing its own future land use plan, in an effort to maintain general consistency.

Because the County Plan is now a few years old, the Township conducted further research into existing land use. The results are attached as the Existing

Land Use Map. This map examined how each parcel is used (Whether for residential, commercial, industrial, public or agricultural uses. Standards used in coding various land uses were the same used in the Erie County Plan.). This map reveals the key pattern that roadside residential has spread to nearly every public road in the Township.

The final part of the analysis was an examination of parcel sizes, to determine where various levels of growth and development could conceivable occur. This is attached as a map entitled Parcel Size. The result of this analysis was that fairly large parcels remain in many areas of the Township, including within historically designated growth areas. This indicated that the existing growth area and even older planned growth areas have not been completely built out.

At projected growth levels, Harborcreek Township could meet all of its current and long term future growth needs on about 1,000 acres.

Growth Area Analysis

If the Demographic projections are realized, the Township would need to provide somewhere between 129 and 600 acres in the near term, and an additional 26 to 220 acres in the long term to accommodate expected growth. Commercial and industrial growth is more difficult to project. In Erie County over the past two decades Each 22 acres of residential development is accompanied by 5 acres of commercial/industrial

development. A high land consumption scenario for Harborcreek Township would indicate the need for about 180 acres of commercial industrial land. Thus, in total, Harborcreek Township could meet all of its current and long term future growth needs on about 1,000 acres. The square depicted on the Land Use Plan Work Map illustrates the relative size of this area.

It would seem that the historic growth areas are more than adequate to accommodate reasonable future growth. In fact, There is nearly enough R-2 land to accommodate future growth needs at medium to high density. The choice before the community is to steward its land resources to balance residential growth with its other needs, especially conservation and job-creating non-residential development.



The Link between Land Use and Tax Base

Part of the Township's land use planning needs to account for maintaining a diverse tax base. Since the last Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted, there has been significant research in the relationship between land development and public service cost/benefits ratios to the municipality. Much of this work in Pennsylvania was pioneered by Tim Kelsey, an economist from Penn State University.

Kelsey has made numerous studies on how much different kinds of development generate in tax revenue and how much they cost the Township and school district to provide services. The purpose of this research is not to exclude any kind of development as balance is necessary for any healthy community. However, an understanding of the effect of different kinds of development upon local government finance can

help the community in allocating its vacant land resource with an eye towards maintaining balance. The general results of Kelsey's research as well as observation from other growth communities, is summarized below. Revenue used in this analysis included both real estate and earned income taxes. Municipal service costs are very different, dependent upon whether the community provides police or only more basic services, such as road maintenance.

A General Understanding of The Costs and Benefits of Various Kinds of Land Development

Single Family Residential: In many Pennsylvania communities, the average priced home will cost the municipality and school district as much in public services as it generates in taxes. This is primarily due to the provision of public school services. In some communities, very expensive homes (which have fewer children per the assessed value) can generate more tax revenue than they require in services.

Multiple Family Residential: Apartments for families typically cost the school district much more than they generate in taxes. Their effect upon a Township or Borough seems to be linked to their location and whether municipal police services are provided. However, it is important to note that multi-family housing for persons over the age of 55 are a tremendous benefit to the school district, as they pay taxes but require no services.

Retail, Offices and Restaurants: Some communities with local police services believe that retail trade generates excessive police calls per taxes paid. However, this type of tax base is of tremendous positive impact to school districts.

Industry and Warehouses: This type of development is the most uniformly beneficial to all taxing bodies. The assessed values are often high, and public service needs are low.

Privately Owned Farm and Forest Land: Private vacant land does not have high assessed values, but public service needs are extremely low. This kind of development is uniformly beneficial.



Future Land Use Plan

The final map in this chapter is a Future Land Use Plan for the Township. The map is a more specific implementation of the overall vision established in the Community Development Goals and Objectives chapter. This plan is based upon the realities that:

1. The Township will continue to grow.
2. The Township must maintain a diversity of tax base.
3. Growth must not come at the expense of the rich heritage of natural resources that make the Township attractive to current and future residents.

Planning for these realities all revolve around the key concept of “Smart Growth”. It is a central recommendation of this plan that smart growth principles be applied to future planning in all areas of the Township. However, smart growth planning concepts will look different in different areas of the Township. This is in keeping with the recommended policy priority that Harborcreek Township Plan for a continuation of its historic planning policies. Harborcreek Township is a successful community in part because of its past comprehensive planning and its adherence to those plans. It is not the purpose of this update to reverse historic policies, but to gently alter policies to conform to changing information. The future land use plan map divides the Township into seven areas for future planning. As mentioned in Chapter One, this land use plan will be used to analyze such local decisions as water and sewer extensions, rezoning requests, and as guidance for other policy decisions. The township may also initiate rezoning actions to implement certain concepts of this future land use plan. For each area, an overall vision is established, followed by target amounts of open space, and some key actions to fulfill the vision.

Agricultural Preservation Priority:

The vision: It is the desire of this township that this area remains in productive agricultural use in the future. Some development of single family dwellings at very low residential densities may also occur here, but this development should not occur to the extent that it would effect agricultural resources.

Target amount of open space in this area should be 80 percent or greater through the whole area, and 50-70 percent of each individual tract that may develop. Open space uses should be concentrated in private farm and forest land.

The Township support continued efforts to preserve agricultural and in these areas through such approaches as expansion of agricultural security areas. This is the Township’s priority area for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements, and a sending zone for any potential Transfer of Development Rights program. The Township will also look at ways to regulate density and preserve open space, without completely restricting development choices for property owners. The Township will also endeavor to protect farms from the negative effects of development.

Rural Residential and Agriculture

The Vision: This area has historically been agricultural but has seen significant residential development. It is the vision of the Township that this area become home to innovative residential and other development concepts that embody key smart growth principles. In this manner, this area can be a pleasing mix of housing, compatible small business, public conservation areas, and private farm and forest lands without any specific development type adversely impacting the other.

Target amounts of open space should be fifty percent of this area or greater. Open space uses may include lands owned by government, homeowner’s associations and private owners. The target amount of open space can be met by a variety of concepts, such as clustering of housing to avoid environmentally sensitive lands.



Future Land Use Plan, continued

The Township will seek to achieve a desired mix of development and open space in this area through exploration of innovative zoning and land development concepts.

PSU Campus Core Area

The Vision: Harborcreek Township strongly supports the continuation and planned expansion of the PSU campus as an integral asset in Harborcreek Township. The Township Supports PSU in fulfilling their own campus development plan.

Penn State University Behrend Campus has brought innumerable benefits to Harborcreek Township. Benefits include:

- Access for Township residents to numerous recreational educational and cultural opportunities
- Student spending for a variety of goods and services within the Township; from housing to pizza
- The development of a high quality business park that creates long term tax base diversity
- Employment opportunities for township residents both on campus and in the associated business park.

The presence of large institutional developments also can bring challenges to the host community. In the case of colleges and universities these include:

- Large areas of non-taxable property, sometimes in highly desirable locations
- Lifestyle conflicts between transient student populations and families in surrounding neighborhoods
- A tendency for off campus student oriented development to detract from both the university setting and other surrounding private development (“student slums”)
- A tendency for both the Township and the institution to plan without regard to the others land use concerns

The key objective for this area is to maximize aforementioned benefits, while minimizing negative impacts. Coordination between the Township and PSU is an essential first step. Other recommendations include:

Creation of a public/semi public zoning district. This will protect both adjacent homeowners (or potential homeowners) and the campus. Such an approach is used by many other campus host communities, including Slippery Rock, Meadville, Edinboro, Clarion, and Indiana. The Township should work with PSU to delineate this newly zoned area properly.

Campus Related Residential and Commercial:

The vision: walkable communities for students that include safe decent housing and a mix of commercial business and services. Architecture and site design of new buildings should complement the high standards of development seen on campus. There is a secondary goal to protect single family dwellings elsewhere by encouraging student housing here.



Future Land Use Plan, continued

Target amount of Open space 15-20 percent. Open space may be limited to environmentally constrained land, public parks, and passive recreation or formal open space.

In terms of land use, the most likely new developments will be multiple family (or more properly multiple tenant) residential dwellings, New institutional uses, and commercial businesses intended to serve the institutional and associated residential community. Due to the campus location, there are only limited areas where private associated off campus development can occur without endangering neighborhoods. The beneficial private development of these tracts with high quality student oriented development is in the interest of both campus and township. Key tracts should not be zoned to the new public district, but R-3. In addition, consideration should be given to a design overlay by invoking the standards of the Traditional Neighborhood Development chapter of the Pa Municipalities Planning Code. Through a design overlay, off-campus development will be an asset to the nearby campus.

Nonresidential Development Reserve

The Vision: Reserve areas for the kinds of development that will create a diverse tax base and provide jobs, retail goods and business services to Township residents. Any underutilized land or buildings in this area should be reutilized where possible as a land conservation strategy and to enhance value to neighboring properties.

Target amount of open space in these areas can be comparatively small, as these areas lie within designated growth areas. Minimal amounts of open space can be used to preserve light and air, naturally manage stormwater runoff, and be used to buffer the effect of nonresidential development upon neighboring residential areas.

Township policies will explore such tools as continued use of LERTA tax abatements in specifically identified locations that meet the criteria of deterioration, underutilization, or land use conflict. The Township especially desires to fill “holes” (underutilized land areas). In certain extreme cases of vacancy and deterioration, the Township may actually participate in active redevelopment

The Township will also explore its zoning policies to examine where a smart growth mix of uses may be appropriate in nonresidential growth areas. For example, it may be possible to integrate light industrial uses into retail commercial areas, with approximate safeguards for protection of all uses.

Lakefront Area

The Vision: The essence of the lake front areas should be preserved as a unique resource of statewide importance. Though careful planning, further development can be supported here if it is of such a scale that the overall character of existing development is protected.

In one respect, the target amount of open space in this area can be somewhat minimal, as the Lake itself provides a natural setting. However, The Township will protect key natural resources in these areas such as the Lake Bluffs, and Stream corridors. The provision of public open space through parkland and Lake access is an important goal to maintain community values.

The Township support compatible tourism development and public access to Lake Erie. It will explore concepts such as limited development of small scale compatible tourist and neighborhood oriented business. However, this development will not be supported at the expense of natural resources, and the integrity of current neighborhoods. The Township will continue development of its own parkland, and support additional small scale public access to lake Erie through the efforts of such agencies as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat commission.



Future Land Use Plan, continued

Suburban Development

The Vision: It is the vision of the Township that these areas remain pleasant neighborhoods comprised of single family dwellings and compatible related uses. Growth goals should not surpass the basic goal of protecting existing single family neighborhoods from land use conflict.

Target amount of Open Space in this area should be about 30 percent on each site developed with about 10-15 percent of total land area retained as public open space. Open space uses might include identified conservation lands, which could be owned by a homeowners association nonprofit or government, and public parks and playgrounds. While this area is an identified growth area, Open space uses remain crucial to the quality of life of most residents. While suburban development may continue and hopefully flourish, The Township is committed to the concept of building better suburbs. It will explore alternate means to facilitate development that utilized open space to preserve natural amenities and provide buffer between various housing development to preserve a semi rural setting.

The greatest planning issue in this areas, is simply to maintain them as sound pleasant neighborhoods. This will entail protecting these areas from incursion by such uses as student oriented residential development or large scale commercial development.

The Township also recognizes that housing type may change over time. It will explore careful means to facilitate condominium ownership and townhouse development in residential areas which are density neutral or of minimal impact on surrounding single family areas. It will also identify key developable tracts for development of a wide range of housing types.

This suburban development north of Pittsburgh mixes housing types and preserved some rural character.





Harborcreek Township Endorses Smart Growth as a means to both enjoy prosperity and protect natural resources.

Since Harborcreek Township is committed to “smart growth”, some explanation of the term is in order. Smart growth is a very broad movement in the United States that encompasses many interests with various discontents about current patterns of growth

and development. Together, this broad, mostly unorganized, coalition has advocated a number of reforms in planning and development practice. Smart growth is broadly defined as growth, which balances social, economic, and environmental needs. Many smart

growth advocates have broadly accepted ten principles to achieve smart growth (See below). The remainder of this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is an action plan to achieve smart growth within the context of continuity with the land use plan.

Smart Growth Principles

- Mix Land Uses
- Take Advantage of Compact Building Design
- Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices
- Create Walkable Neighborhoods
- Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place
- Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty, and Critical Environmental Areas
- Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities
- Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices
- Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective

Smart growth is broadly defined as growth which balances social, economic, and environmental needs

Successful Smart Growth: One size does not fit all

The manner in which an urban, small town, suburban, or rural community might implement these broad principles would be very different. For example, many cities have great walkability but may not have any farmland and open space to preserve. A suburban community may make fair, predictable and cost effective development decisions, but lack sense of place. Thus,

one of the real lessons of the smart growth movement is that there is no one answer or approach that fits every community. An example of this is the contentious area of density and minimum lot sizes. Some have confused smart growth as being solely concerned with smaller lot sizes or higher density. However, smart growth techniques have been successfully adapted to com-

munities maintaining lot sizes ranging from 5,000 square feet to 40 acres per dwelling unit. The uniform principle applied in either case is planning goals achieved by the density standards.

As Harborcreek Township has villages, open rural areas, and suburban areas, more than one tool will be necessary.



Smart Growth will give developers more than one choice

Harborcreek Township already offers a variety of lot standards within various parts of the Township through its zoning ordinance. The Township also offers the option of conventional development or Planned Residential Development, as authorized by the Pa. Municipalities Planning Code. Through a system of incentives and options, more flexibility can be offered if developers make more effort to preserve the features that make a site in the Township unique. The goal should be to target an

appropriate level of natural resource protection and density that suits the context of the neighborhood. In areas of the Township where there has been more development, the focus might be on simply projecting water resources, or using natural lands as buffers between different kinds of development. In more rural areas, the focus might be on saving farmland, or ensuring development does not overwhelm groundwater resources and land capacity. In addition to conventional zoning, tools such as

enhanced planned residential development will make this possible. Another tool for more developed areas of the Township would be Traditional Neighborhood Development, authorized for Pennsylvania communities in 2001. For rural areas, choices may involve making partial development easily for working farmers, but using other models for complete development of a site that protect rural values of neighboring properties, and prevent the necessity of extending infrastructure.

Smart Growth places more emphasis on site densities and quality; less attention to minimum lot

Minimum lot standards are a simple way to ensure each new lot has access to light, air and privacy. However, minimum lot standards alone will not protect water quality, natural lands or working farms from the effect of large scale development.

If a major subdivision is creating new roads many lots, the real issue is not the size of each lot, but how many dwellings will be on the tract. Engineers and civil designers too often treat a parcel of land like a chessboard. Computer-aided drafting software is used to divide a parcel into the optimum number of lots (based upon minimum lot size) then connect each lot with roads. This is the reason a Mercer County planning report recently noted, "Subdivisions from Califor-

nia to Connecticut all look alike." by examining the total housing capacity of the site, the Township could allow engineers and civil designers to account for the existing natural and cultural features that make a site unique.

A 50 acre tract covered with two acre house lots, has a significant impact on wildlife, and water resources. The same site could probably carry the same number of homes on one acre lots, provided that there was careful planning to keep natural systems (Like wetlands and swales to manage stormwater) intact.

As previously mentioned, overall density should match the neighborhood context. Greater site and lot density can be allowed

in areas with more infrastructure. However, some natural lands can be a part of every neighborhood in the Township.

The natural lands that remain on the site can serve many purposes. In a suburban or village context, they might provide community recreation, add beauty or serve as a place for community outdoor events. Natural lands can also be a buffer between different developments

Part of planning is for the perpetual ownership of such natural lands. They could be owned by a homeowner's association, a conservation group, or even a working farm owner (With protection through a land preservation agreement)



Integrating Smart Growth into existing zoning

Just as smart growth is not a one size fits all proposition, smart growth principles must fit different parts of the Township in different ways. This portion of the plan offers options for the Township to create development models that offer developers a range of conservation design options in various zoning districts.

A Agricultural Areas: The objective in these districts should be to either lower site density or require more creative site planning to conserve both upland and lake plain farming areas. At present, the preservation of farmland through voluntary sale of easements is limited to Lake Plain areas. It is unlikely that upland farmers will have such opportunities in the near future. Recognizing this, the key to planning for these areas is to ensure that farm and forest land owners have a range of choices to develop their property, but that other farm and forest owners are protected from the effect of denser development that would require more infrastructure. Rural development should be different from suburban development; otherwise, the result will be changing the countryside into suburbs. The attached illustrations show how a new model of development might work. Option One, Example one, illustrates how an entire farm could be reconfigured into a number of mini-farms. Option One example two shows how the same regulations would facilitate an ac-

tive farmer selling a few frontage lots to capitalize his operation. Option one allows the entire farm to be subdivided with a minimum of development expense (Lack of roads and infrastructure) . The Township should make such limited development options as easy as possible, with an assured, streamlined approval process. Option two illustrates a more complete development model that still retains rural character. In this model, developers can mix larger "Homestead" lots which would allow the owners to keep horses or limited livestock, with a smaller lot that still retains a country setting. Lots of the Homestead sizes are of low enough development impact to encourage good private stewardship of natural resources. The Final Optional model is a cluster plan that ensures lots of at least sufficient size for a well and septic system, while preserving open space through clustering. This would allow a professional developer to maximize salable lots, while still minimizing road development costs.

Residential Areas: Harbor-creek Township has several residential zoning districts. They also have adopted a Planned Residential Development (PRD) ordinance) which can facilitate flexible, smart growth design. The objective for the Township in these areas is to create a reason for developers of large sites to choose Planned Residential Development to increase the quality of site

planning. This can be done by creating additional incentives for the use of a PRD instead of a conventional subdivision. Incentives might include simplifying the existing PRD standards, creating more lot flexibility, and allowing limited "condo", "quad" or townhouse dwellings to be carefully integrated into the PRD. This could be accomplished through PRD because the use of this tool is limited to larger tracts of land. In these areas, the developer would have the option of clustering homes on the least environmentally sensitive areas of a tract. The undeveloped parts of the tract could be owned by a homeowner's association or other responsible organization, and be protected by a conservation agreement.

College Related Development: One area of particular residential concern is the area around the Penn State Behrend Campus. This branch of Penn state, as both a Land Grant and Sea Grant institution, is committed to environmental stewardship. The campus reflects this stewardship, with well-designed buildings carefully set into the natural landscape. The Township has created a special zoning classification for the area surrounding campus, and this district could become of focus of opportunities for integrating good design into development regulations.



Integrating Smart Growth into Existing Zoning, continued

Harborcreek's R-4 district has already incorporated many smart growth principles. Within the R-4 it is possible to mix land uses and mix housing types and densities. It is recommended that the Township build upon this foundation by utilizing the opportunity for a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) overlay zone or designation.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a new regulatory tool in Pennsylvania to allow development to emulate the American small town neighborhoods as built in the past. A TND emphasizes design,

rather than a rigid list of uses and lot sizes. It stresses physical developments that fit into a community in terms of architecture, the relation of the street to abutting buildings, height, and open lands while being flexible in terms of use. Homes, schools, shops and offices are all integral to one another, and the streets are connected, providing multiple ways to reach a destination. Interconnected streets minimize traffic effects on any one area. Street trees protect pedestrians from cars, provide environmental benefits, beautify the street, and help shade nearby houses. Houses are close to

the street, maximizing backyard space, promoting front-porch connections. Shopping, educational and recreational opportunities are all located within walking distance of residences. Perhaps one third of a site is set aside to link natural lands to this attractive townscape.

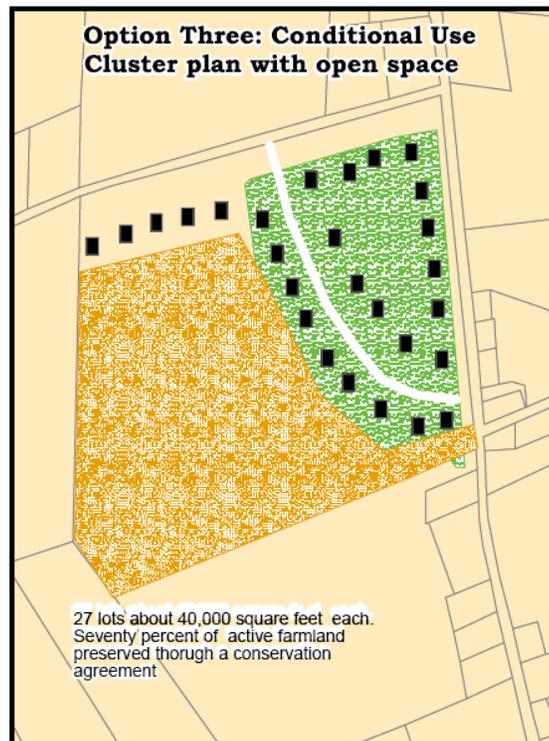
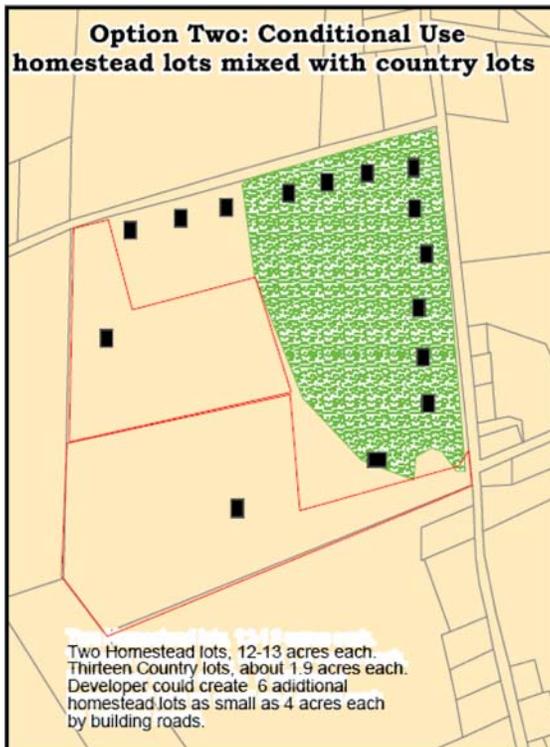
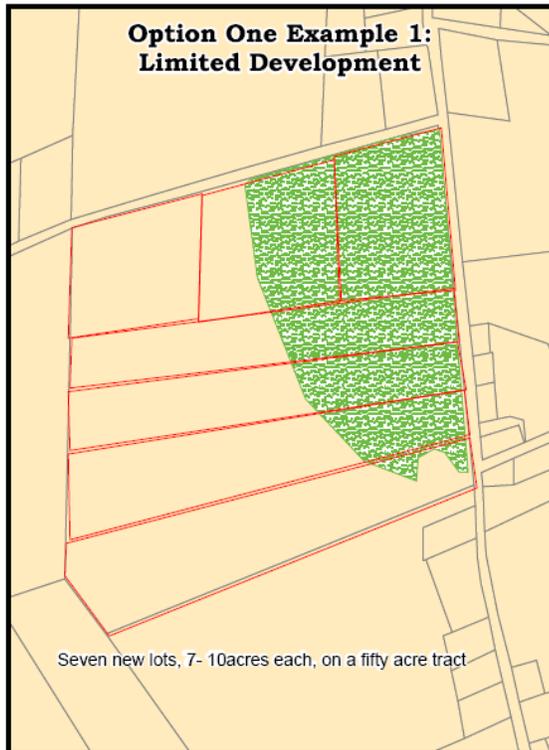
Putting Smart growth into practice:

The illustrations on the next page show how a fifty acre parcel could be subdivided under several options conserve land resources. The first option would be a limited subdivision, wherein the number of times the property may be subdivided is regulated, rather than regulated merely lot size. It is most fitting in agricultural preservation areas. Option two allows more complete development and could fit agricultural preservation or rural residential areas. The final option is closer to a classic "cluster plan" It might be fit in different forms in any area of the Township, with forest land being preserved instead of farmland in the more suburban areas. These options allow for various kinds of development, that match the level of development to both the need of the property owner, and avoidance of the necessity to extend infrastructure.

The Township can implement such concepts by making amendments to its zoning ordinance, as well as updating its Planned Residential Development Ordinance. This can be done without changing current lot and density sizes, because the models work by regulating design of large-scale development.



Smart Growth in practice sketches





Summary of Land Use Policies and Actions

The Township has analyzed its designated growth areas as compared to land use changes and dimorphic growth. The Planning Commission has determined that the Township has allocated sufficient land areas to provide for anticipated growth.

The Township will strive to carefully maintain a balance of land uses to ensure tax base sustainability. The future land use plan identifies areas for PSU campus development, off campus, university related development, lake front development, residential development at various densities, nonresidential development, and agricultural preservation, with appropriate buffer and transition areas. Of particular importance is a transition between rural and suburban areas.

The Township is committed to smart growth principles as a means to properly steward its remaining land resources. Smart growth principles of particular importance to Harborcreek Township are:

Preservation of farmland, natural beauty and critical Environmental areas.

Fostering a sense of place

Mixing land uses where possible

Creating a range of housing opportunities and choices.



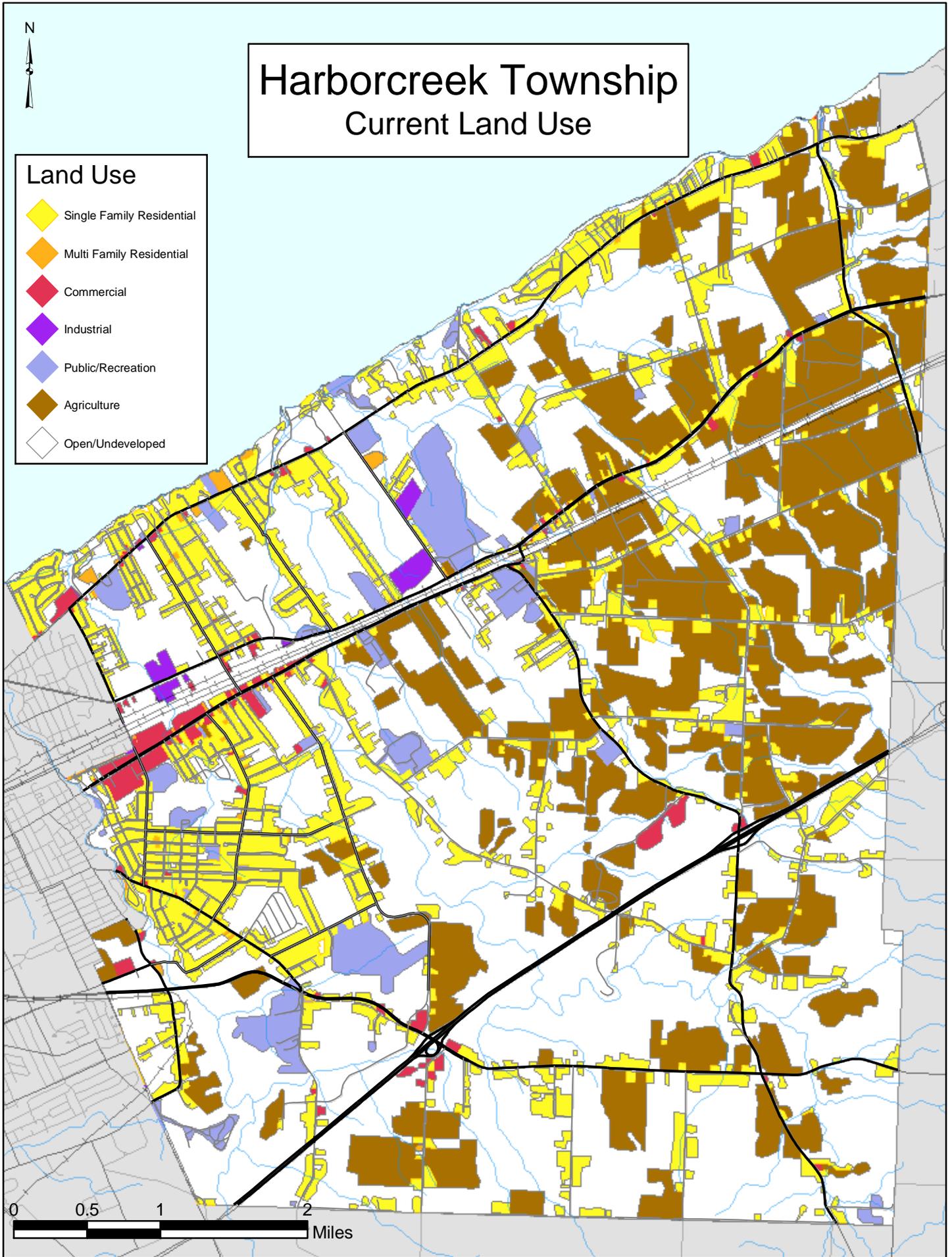
Community Day represents the Township's commitment to fostering a sense of place.



Harborcreek Township Current Land Use

Land Use

- Single Family Residential
- Multi Family Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public/Recreation
- Agriculture
- Open/Undeveloped

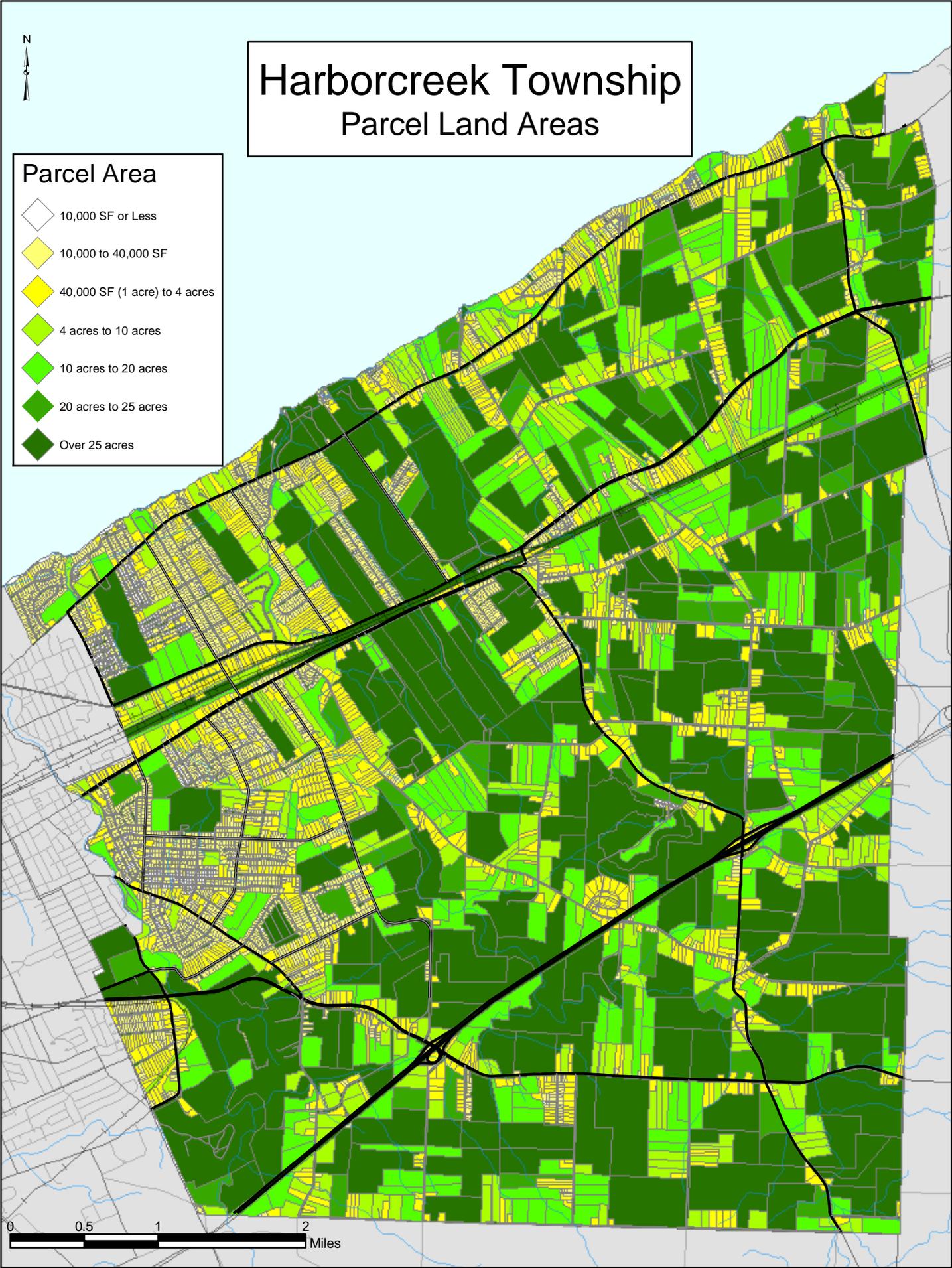




Harborcreek Township Parcel Land Areas

Parcel Area

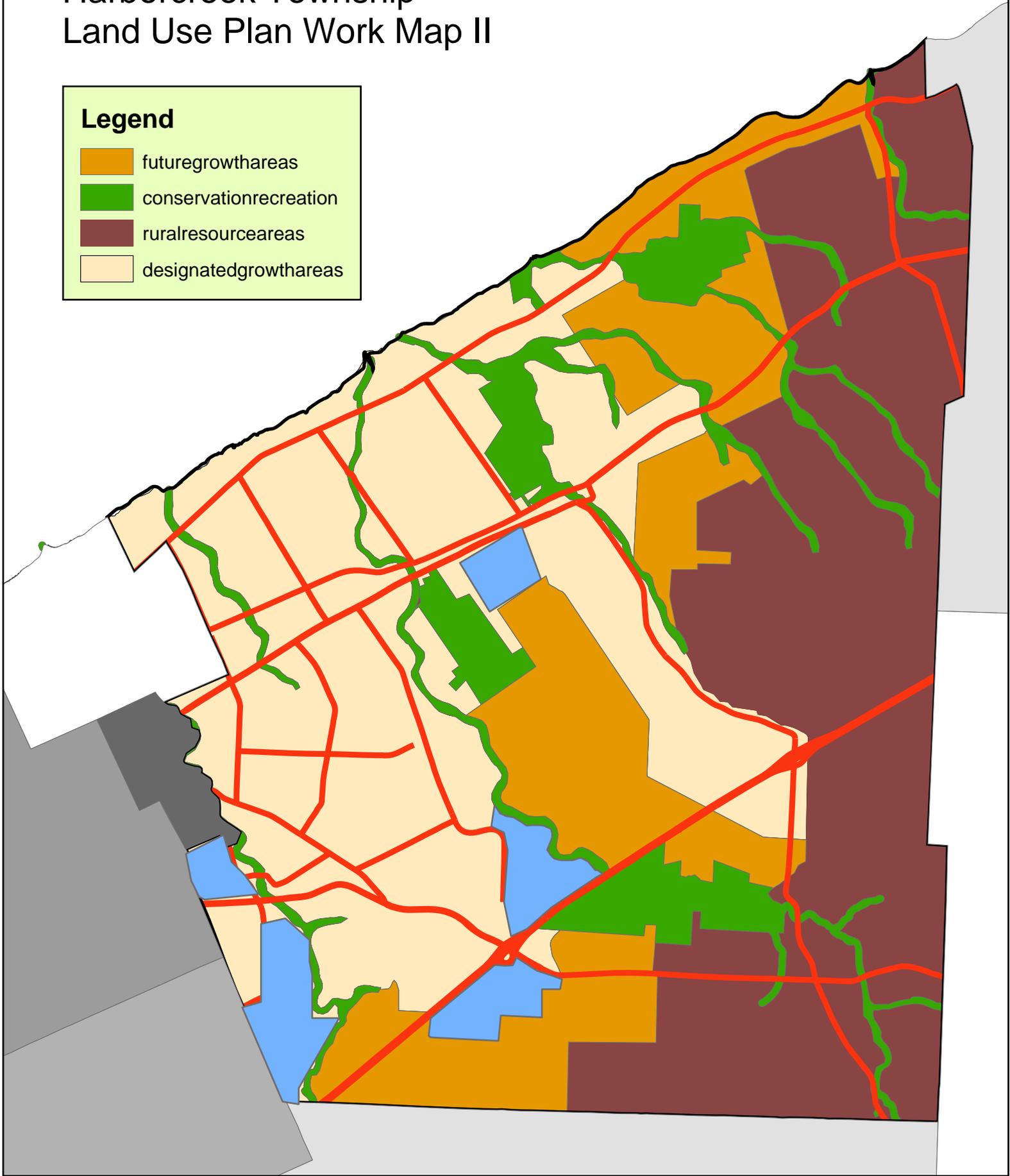
-  10,000 SF or Less
-  10,000 to 40,000 SF
-  40,000 SF (1 acre) to 4 acres
-  4 acres to 10 acres
-  10 acres to 20 acres
-  20 acres to 25 acres
-  Over 25 acres



Harborcreek Township Land Use Plan Work Map II

Legend

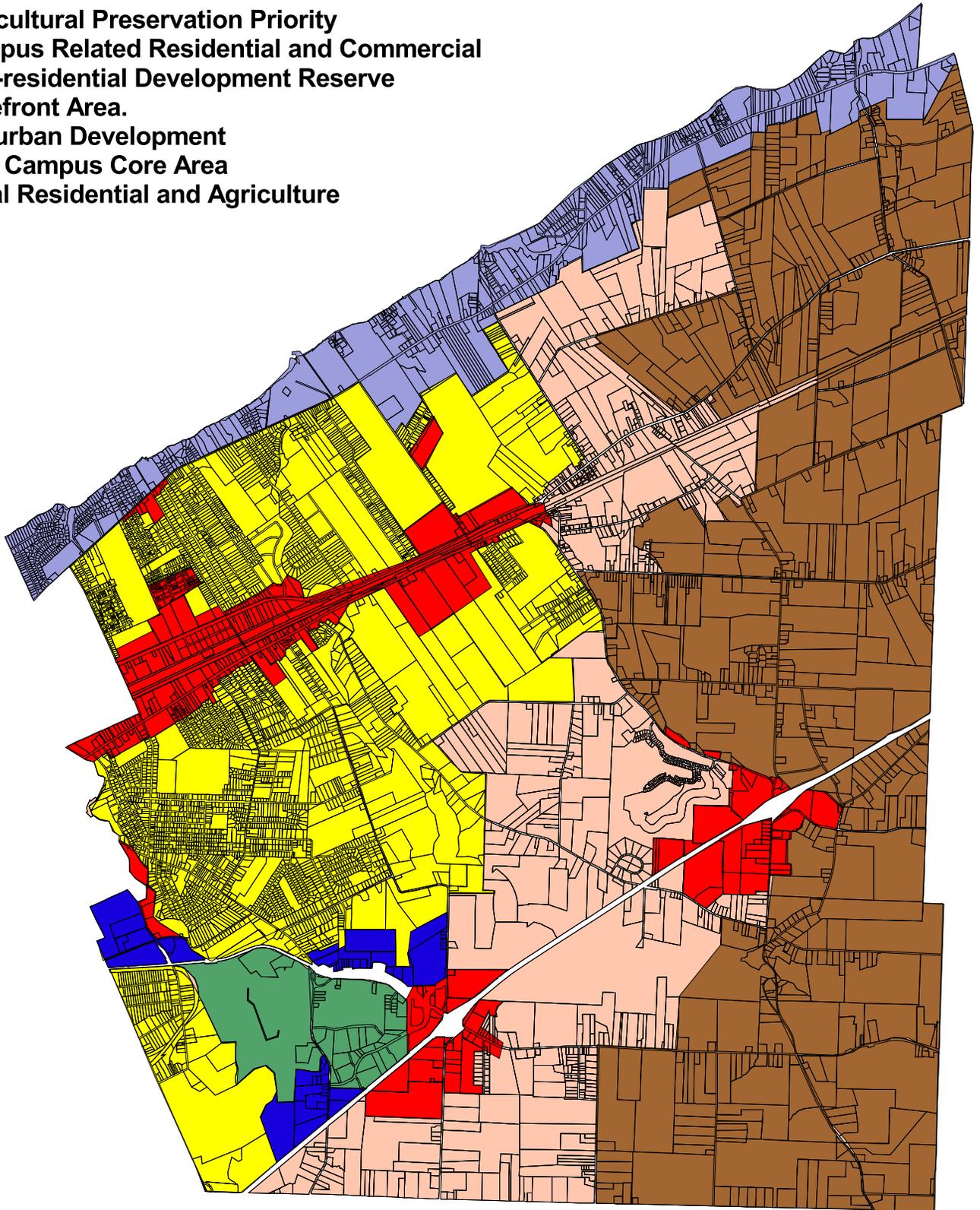
-  futuregrowthareas
-  conservationrecreation
-  ruralresourceareas
-  designatedgrowthareas



Maximum land needed to accomodate projected residential growth

Harborcreek Township Future Land Use Plan

-  Agricultural Preservation Priority
-  Campus Related Residential and Commercial
-  Non-residential Development Reserve
-  Lakefront Area.
-  Suburban Development
-  PSU Campus Core Area
-  Rural Residential and Agriculture





Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 5
Plan For Housing

Housing to meet Future Growth Needs



A newer neighborhood in the Township. A large part of the Township’s past success lies in policies that meet the housing needs of those who desire to live in the Township.

A Housing Plan is required for Pennsylvania Comprehensive Plans. The purpose of this is to ensure that each community plans “to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality.” For Harborcreek Township, much historic growth has been families moving to the Township, and the housing plan is a necessity to ensure that planning for land use includes sufficient land for necessary housing.

Beyond the MPC requirement, there are numerous

reasons why a municipal government should be concerned whether the local supply of affordable housing is adequate for those who live and work in the municipality now and adequate for new residents and workers in the future. The availability of safe sound and attractive housing is a significant community resource. If a community has an adequate supply of sound housing and the potential to expand its housing stock, it is usually considered as a desirable place to live and raise a family. Homeowners are purchasing or renting more than four walls ; they are

investing their future in a place. This links housing to such concerns as health, security, status, privacy, the availability of public and private goods and services, and neighborhood and social relations.

This housing plan includes a brief overview of recent housing trends to enable an understanding of the current situation. It also offers the Township some means to ensure that local housing policies can help keep the Township a desirable community.

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<i>Housing Needs and Demographics</i>	42
<i>Housing and Smart Growth</i>	43
<i>Summary of Policies and Actions</i>	44



Harborcreek Township Housing Trends

Most of the data in this chapter is taken from the Erie County Housing Plan, a component of the County Comprehensive Plan adopted in October 2008. This gave the Township access to recent data and analysis about housing conditions. Pertinent data from the County Plan included changes in housing units, housing price and market information, and the relationship between demographics and housing. The County Housing Plan document is available at www.eriecountyplanning.org

As of the Census of 2000, Harborcreek Township had 5,158 housing units. (The census defined "housing units" includes a single family home as well as each individual apartments within multiple family buildings, and mobilehomes). From

1970 to 2000, the Township saw an increase in total housing units of 66 percent. From 1990 to 2000, the Township's housing stock grew by about 1 percent each year. This did not make the Township the fastest growing in the County (Washington Township holds that record with a growth of 145%). However, housing growth reflected the steady population growth that the Township saw. Township housing growth was consistently about twice that of Erie County as a whole. A reason for this is that some Erie County communities, such as the City of Erie and Wesleyville, actually lost housing units. This loss of housing units is typically reflective of those communities with population loss. The housing units are lost through conversion to other uses, such as busi-

ness, or loss through fire or demolition.

The Township's housing stock has been historically dominated by single family detached homes. As of the last Census, 84 percent of Township homes were single family dwellings. A similar number of Township residents (82 percent) own their own home. Sixty Four percent of Township homeowners have a mortgage. However, unlike some other suburban communities, Harborcreek Township has provided opportunities for a variety of housing types. The Township has a significantly larger percentage of apartments than such neighboring communities as Lawrence Park Township or Northeast Township. Most Township apartments are in very large complexes of 50+ units or small developments of 2-4 units.

Facts About Township Housing

During the 1990's, Harborcreek Township gained about 50 housing units each year. During the past 8 years, the rate of growth was about 70 new homes each year.

Analysis by the Greater Erie Board of Realtors (GEBOR), show that the median price for a home in Harborcreek township is more affordable than many other townships in the County .

Median sale prices in the Township fell between 2005 and 2006.

As of 2007, Harborcreek Township had the shortest average time for a home to be on the market in Erie County (38 days from listing to sale).

Erie County Planning projections would indicate a future demand in the Township for about 750 new homes by 2020.

The population is expected to age in the future (There will be more older persons in the population as a whole). This may shift future housing preferences to condominiums, apartments and residential care facilities.

Not all Township residents live in a dwelling unit. Many live in group quarters, including college dormitories ((346 people) in nursing homes (332 people) and smaller number of people in people in training schools for juvenile delinquents, homes for abused, dependent, and neglected children, homes for the mentally retarded, and religious group quarters.



Harborcreek Township Housing Trends, continued

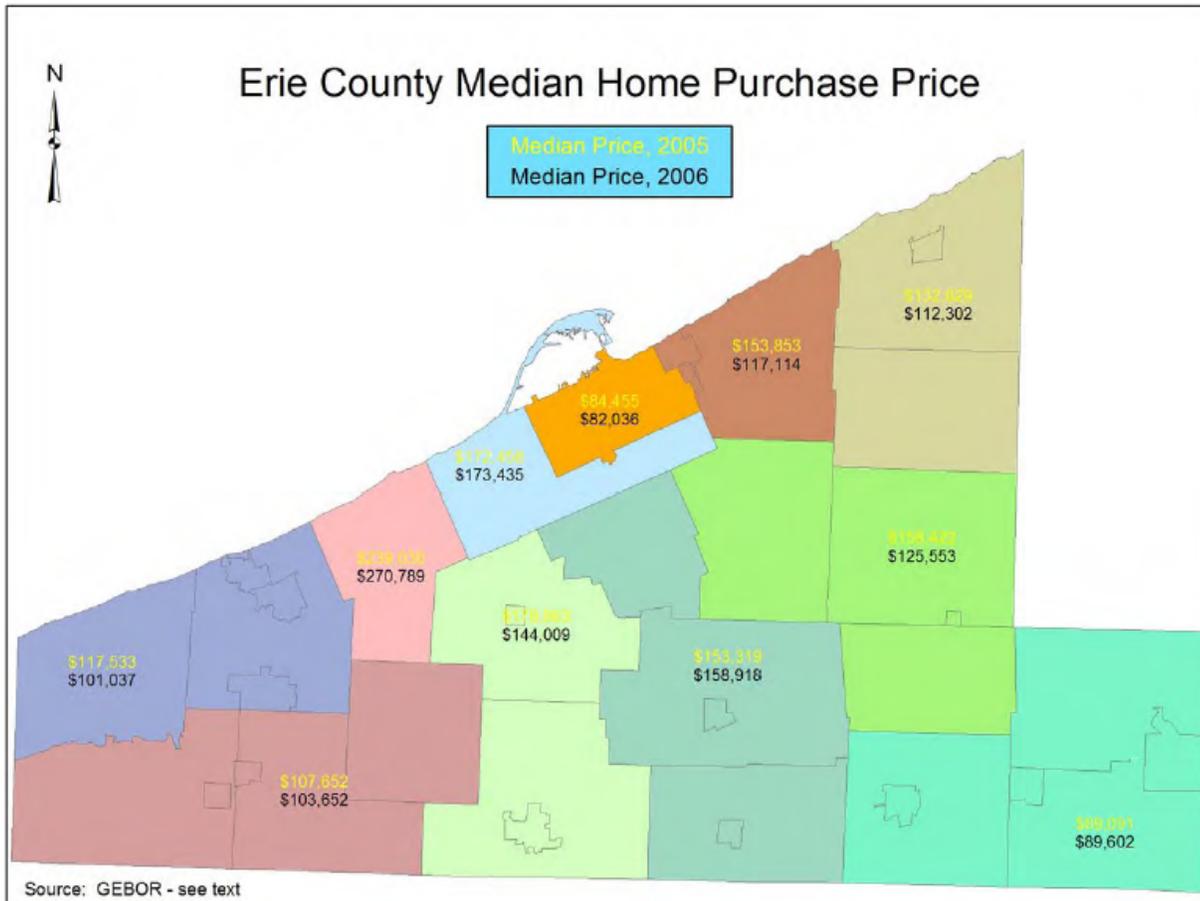
In the last Census home-owners were asked to estimate the value of their home. The median value for a Township home was \$104,400. This is higher than the County median value of \$85,300. The Township ranks 11th in value among the County's 38 municipalities. Median Contract Rent in the Township was \$378 per month. This is only slightly higher than the County median of \$360 per month, which is somewhat remarkable for a community with off-campus college students. A more typical median for a college community is that of

Edinboro, with a median of \$430 per month.

Within the context of local incomes, housing remains affordable. The County Plan analyzed the costs of local housing against local incomes, known as a Purchase Price Index (PPI). A lower Purchase Price Index means that housing is more affordable. The PPI for Pennsylvania is 2.36. It is 2.25 for Erie County. It is 2.23 for Harborcreek Township. This is unusually positive for a growing community. It indicates the level of growth is sustainable without unduly inflating

housing costs.

To update the Census information, the County Plan used additional data, such as information from the Greater Erie Board of Realtors. This data indicates that recently housing costs in the Township have dropped slightly (see map below), and that the market has responded favorably, as homes in Harborcreek were selling quicker than any other Erie County community. Since the last Census, the Township is also seeing a sustained rate averaging about 60 new homes each year.





Housing Needs and Changing Demographics

The housing needs of people vary tremendously with the age, occupation, and economics of the household. The Erie County Housing Plan included a section called “anticipating the future” which examined how changing demographics would change future housing needs. Some of these trends are particularly important to Harborcreek Township.

The Baby Boom Generation has had a major impact upon Harborcreek Townships’ growth. The County Housing Plan notes that, “As Boomers age, they are likely to downsize and seek out condominiums where little or no outside maintenance is required. Still, for their first downsized home they are likely to want homes that look and feel like a traditional home, with individual garages (attached or detached), a distinct front entrance, and even a small yard or private patio area. Some seniors will seek out complexes where they can move progressively into units that provide more and more care—living first in a single-family-type home or apartment, then into an assisted-living facility, and finally into an extended care facility.... If Erie County wants to retain seniors, housing providers will need to address both the types of housing units offered and the amenities that are provided.

This countywide concern is also a Harborcreek Township concern. In addition to documenting general

growth, the comprehensive plan process analyzed structural changes to the population (See also the sidebar on Page 6). This analysis was done by examining the population by age group in 1990 as it compared to 2000. These census counts were also compared to typical birth and death rates to account for natural increase or decrease in the population. When a comparison of age groups are made between the last two census counts, the township gained in every age group except two. This means that more people were choosing to move to the township from the outside than were leaving. Because of widespread growth across all age groups, it is important to look at the areas where there was loss. By the 2000 census the township had about 1500 fewer young adults (age 25-34) than it should have, and about 600 fewer persons of early retirement age (55-59) than it should have.

There are a number of possible explanations for this trend. Weather in North-western Pennsylvania has caused many retirees to move to the Sunbelt. Many young adults in the region have also moved to other areas of the nation for perceived greater economic opportunities. Another possible reason may be a lack of desired housing choices in the Township for people in these age groups. In some communities, housing policies can create un-

necessary regulatory barriers to this form of housing.

Another key demographic to the Township's future is the student population at Behrend College. The College, part of the Penn State University system, has been gaining about 300 students per year since 2000. If Behrend follows the trend with other colleges and universities, it will not expand on-campus housing to meet increased student demand. This means that more students will seek off-campus housing in the community. While these young residents add vitality to the community, their lifestyle can create enormous conflict with permanent family residents.

To maintain the quality of life for year round residents, student housing should be limited to areas near campus, and away from predominately single family neighborhoods. Because of their lifestyle, students homes can fit well into commercial areas. The construction of new off-campus dwelling units is also to be encouraged, over conversion apartments. This will assist the college in growing, by being able to market high quality off campus housing. It will also assist the Township and school district by encouraging new construction. Finally, it will help maintain the affordability of single family homes.

“If Erie County wants to retain seniors, housing providers will need to address both the types of housing units offered and the amenities that are provided.”

Erie County Housing Plan 2008



Housing and Smart Growth

Smart growth as discussed in the Land Use Plan is about accommodating necessary growth without jeopardizing the community's existing character, or inadvertently creating greater public costs through growth. In many respects smart growth should be economically sound as well as being cognizant of natural character.



Historic example of smart growth: The village of Harborcreek.

Smart growth can also help keep housing affordable and available in a growing community. Some rural techniques, such as clustering, can save in infrastructure development costs. Another approach for larger sites in suburban growth

areas is to encourage a mixing of housing types within a single site. Some developers in Erie County have been hesitant to do this, but the Township permits it,

and one planned residential development in the Township has various densities and house types in one plan.

Housing in the Village of Harborcreek

The village of Harborcreek was developed during the 19th Century, yet retains many of the ideals of smart growth design, advocated on page 33 of this plan (mix land uses, take advantage of compact building design, walkability) One recognized housing strategy for providing affordable housing is the conservation of older housing, and neighborhood revitalization. Harborcreek Township has such a concentration of older homes in the Village of Harborcreek. While the area is zoned for business purposes, land use analysis shows that it is predominately residential in character. As the map on the following page illustrates, about 75 percent of the lots in the village are used for residential dwellings.

It is interesting also that the village retains its traditional context, being a small developed place surrounded by agricultural lands. This is common in Pennsylvania, and is reflected in two key definitions from the Pa Municipalities Planning code

Village, an unincorporated settlement that is part of a township where residential and mixed use densities of one unit to the acre or more exist or are permitted and commercial, industrial or institutional uses exist or are permitted.

“Rural resource area,” an area described in a municipal or multimunicipal plan within which rural resource uses including, but not limited to, agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism are encouraged and enhanced, development that is compatible with or supportive of such uses is permitted, and public infrastructure services are not provided except in villages.

These standards from the MPC above reflect the character of the village as a small urban place in a rural context. The land use plan reflects this as well. Planning for the village should reflect its setting in the Township, as well as its embodiment of so many smart growth principles. This should also be a priority for potential revitalization, and any transportation improvements made in the village should adhere to context sensitive design principles. The Township may explore zoning alternatives that would allow for a continuation of the village's mixed use character while preserving its unique setting.

Summary of Housing Policies and Actions

Trend analysis shows that housing policies in Harborcreek Township have been successful. This indicates that past policies have been successful, especially in terms of zoning for various forms of housing.

The Township should continue policies that do not add unnecessary regulatory barriers to housing costs.

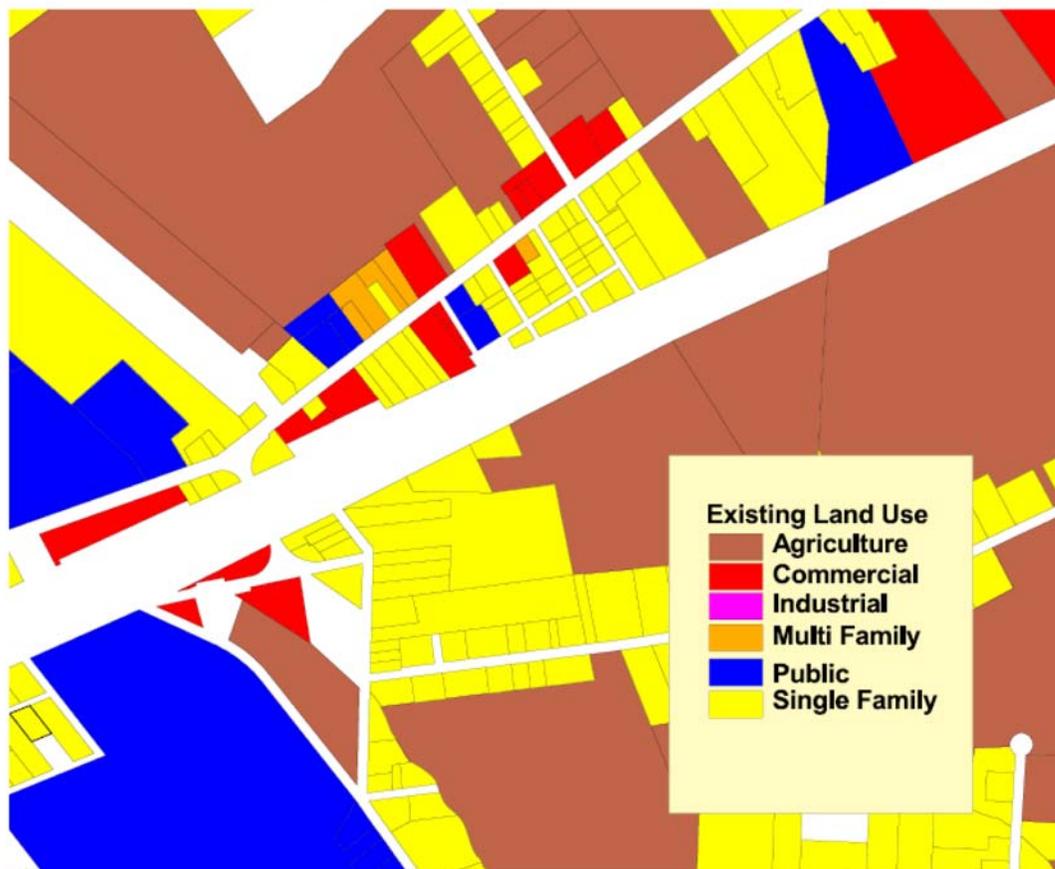
The Township should identify potential locations and overall policies to attract alternative forms of housing for the key 55+ demographic. For example, zoning regulations could differentiate condominium and 55+ housing from other multiple family dwellings.

The Township should encourage the new construction of multifamily dwellings for students in appropriate areas near the Penn State Behrend Campus. Conversion apartments for students in residential neighborhoods should be discouraged.

Use smart growth techniques to facilitate a mix of housing types in a single development.

Encourage revitalization of Harborcreek Village as a mixed residential commercial area.

Land Use in the Village of Harborcreek





Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 6
Plan For Transportation

Transportation Infrastructure is a Crucial Element of Community Growth and Development



The Pa department of Transportation is concerned about traffic congestion and its relation to community development, including gathering traffic counts and maintenance of an on-line video log of traffic conditions. Route 20 is shown here from the log, which can be accessed at http://www.dot7.state.pa.us/ividlog/video_locate.asp.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requirements for a Comprehensive Plan state that there must be a “plan for the movement of people and goods”. A major theme of this Comprehensive Plan process and document have dealt with the issue of growth and its many impacts upon Harborcreek Township. The road system is the Township’s main means of moving people and goods, and it has contributed to the Township’s recent growth by

making property in the Township accessible for business and residential purposes. However, this growth brings more cars to the roads and adds to traffic congestion. Congestion can have negative effects on the local economy and quality of life, so planning for transportation becomes a key part of the preparing for future growth and development.

While it is technically easy to solve transportation congestion, it is not financially

easy to do so. The Township is focusing its transportation planning efforts on setting priorities, and finding equitable, realistic means to pay for needed improvements. The second theme of this chapter is to ensure that transportation policies fit into the townships overall smart growth objectives. Most of the data and analysis for this chapter is taken from two sources, the Erie County Transportation Plan and the Pa Department of Transportation.

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Harborcreek Township Transportation Trends

Harborcreek Township contains 83 miles of Township roads and 38 miles of state maintained roads. However, from the standpoint of community planning, drivers freely move between the locally owned and state owned network. Traffic analysis is most generally broken down into the function of a road, and the amount of its use. The basic functional classes of roads are arterial, collector and local. Arterial roads are the main roads that connect a community to other communities and the rest of the nation. Local roads are those that serve to connect an individual property, and most users are only on that

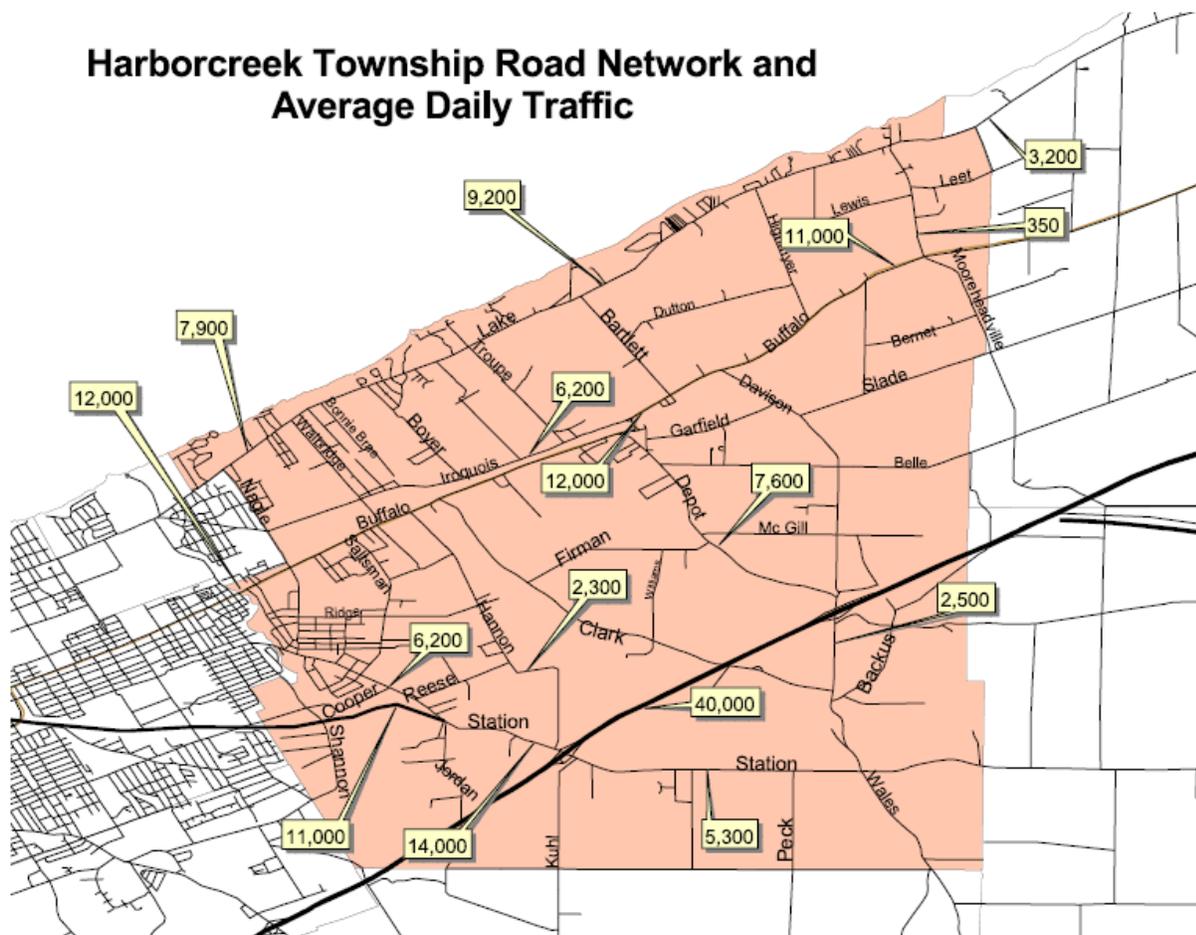
road to go to a specific place on that road. Collector roads are the intermediary roads that connect the local roads to arterials. Arterials and collectors are also divided into classes, based upon how localized or regional their function is. An interstate highway is normally considered as a principal arterial, while a road that connects nearby towns would be regarded as a minor arterial.

Under normal circumstances, arterial roads carry the most traffic, and collector and local roads carry proportionately less traffic. The map below shows average daily traffic for those

roads in the Township wherein information was available from PennDot as of 2007. For comparative purposes, this same information is presented on the map attached to the end of this chapter which also includes roadway functional classes.

In general, the higher traffic counts in the Township are found in the northern and western areas, with lower traffic in the more rural south and east. This also reflects the reality that the system functions better from east to west than north to south.

Harborcreek Township Road Network and Average Daily Traffic





Traffic Projections

The Erie County 2030 Transportation Plan utilized County Comprehensive Plan projections (taken from the official County demographic report, which is also an element of the County Comprehensive Plan) as a basis for traffic projections to the year 2030. With knowledge about local road systems, population projections can be used to estimate future road use, and such a model was prepared for the County.

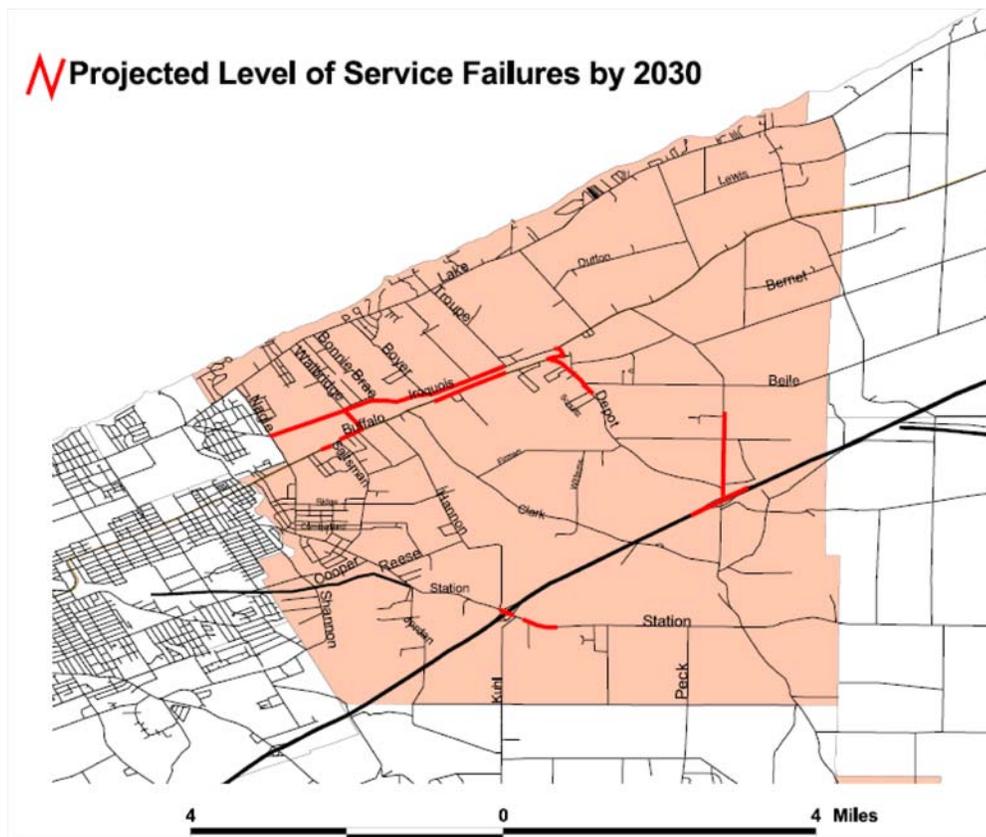
Projections for Interstate 90 show that the portion of the road from Route 97 to Route 8 would see average daily traffic of up to 57,000 vehicles per day. From Route 8 to the Bayfront connector would rise to

about 41,000 vehicles in an average day. Eastern portions of the Bayfront Parkway itself would rise to traffic levels of about 28,900 average daily traffic. Projections also show that a number of lesser roads in Harborcreek will be strained by this growth. The result of this is that rising levels of traffic will decrease the levels of service and increase congestion

PennDot uses a simple grading system to rate levels of service for roads and highways., assigning roads in intersection with a grade form "A" through "E" Roads where traffic flows smoothly with few stoppages from turning movements, and little or no delay at intersections, receive

higher grades. As delays increase, grades drop to unacceptable levels of "D" "E" or "F". The map below shows all areas of the state road system in Harborcreek Township that are expected to fall to levels of "D" or below by 2030.

When this County level planning data is compared to local growth patterns, stress will also be placed upon other Township roads not identified by the County Plan. While level of services projections are not available, stresses will be placed on Hannon and Saltsman. While not necessarily plagued by congestion, other north/south roads will carry more cars than their rural geometry can accommodate safely.





Transportation Improvement Finance and Projects

There are significant areas of traffic congestion projected in the Township's future. There are only three choices to mitigate traffic congestion:

1. Live with it.
2. Make physical improvements to the roadway system to increase the capacity of roads at intersections
3. Use planning techniques to carefully plan incremental improvements.



Area of the Harborcreek Route 20 Rail underpass.

Measuring and projecting roadway use is a relatively easy task. The Institute of Transportation Engineers, a nationwide professional organization, tracks vehicle trips generated by different kinds of development based upon both predevelopment and post development studies (See the sidebar on this page). However, once traffic impacts (and possible areas of failure or congestion) are identified, the difficult task is determining how to pay for necessary improvements.

Roadway improvements are expensive. One standard traffic light can cost \$140,000. Grading, paving and drainage costs for new roads can easily run up to \$300 per lineal foot.

The Erie County Transportation Plan concludes with recommended projects to begin to implement identified safety concerns and projection traffic congestion areas. There are two prior-

ity projects that would have a significant impact upon Harborcreek Township. The first project is the recommended widening of Interstate 90 to 6 lane service. This project is recommended for phased in both 2010-2020 and 2020-2030. This is an expensive project, with total costs of all phases exceeding 167 million dollars.

The second local project recommended in the long range transportation plan is the inadequate railroad underpass for Route 20, located just west of the Village of Harborcreek. This project has been a priority since its inclusion in the 1996 Township Comprehensive Plan. The Erie County 2030 Transportation Plan prioritizes this project for the final years of the 2021-2030 cycle and estimates costs at 46 million dollars. This makes it the most expensive projects in

the County Plan. It is expensive because it involves both rail and road alignment. In 1996, Erie County Planning helped the Township identify an approach that involves a series of new road connectors (sketches from the 1996 plan are on the next page for informational purposes). Elements of this incremental approach could offer a starting point for alternative solutions to this issue. If more affordable options could be developed, the Township could approach the County and PennDot with them. The Township should also begin to look at stressed local roads identified in this plan update and begin to explore solutions by completing some preliminary engineering. This would place Harborcreek Township in a good position to participate in the County funding process for state and Federal Transportation funds.

Measuring Traffic Impacts by the Type of Development

Traffic is measured by both Average Daily Traffic and Peak Hour Traffic. In general, daily use is more important for total design (Such as road width), and peak hour is more important for intersection capacity. The traffic impacts below are based upon peak hour, and are presented here for general reference only. They do not preclude the necessity of actual field traffic studies and more detailed analysis available from Institute of Transportation Engineers publications. (www.ite.org).

Every Single Family Dwellings generates one peak hour trip.

Convenience stores with gasoline sales generate about 16 peak hour trips for every gas pump.

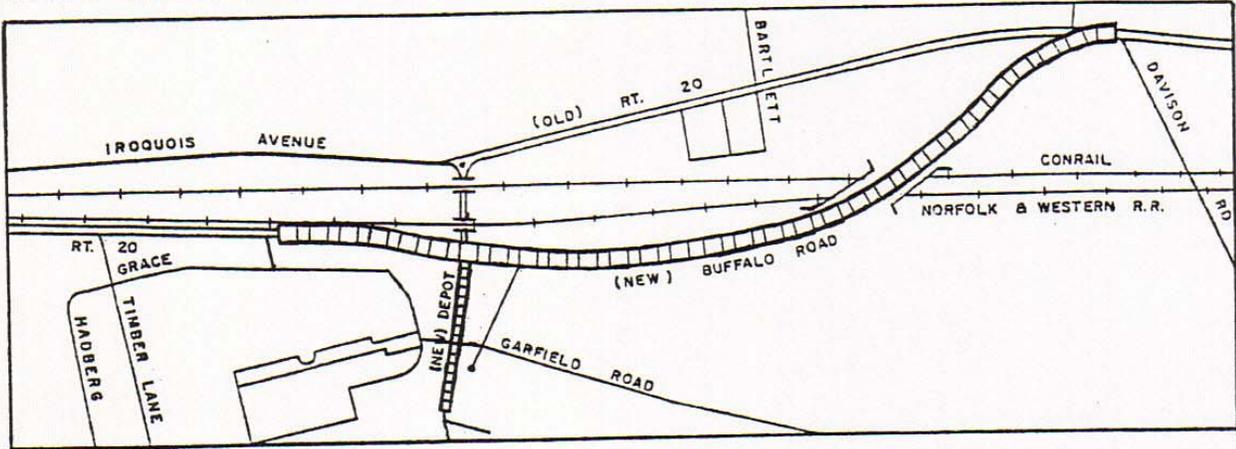
Shopping Centers generate about 50 peak hour trips for every 3000 square feet of building.

Industries like tool and die or plastic molding shops generate about 50 peak hour trips for every acre of building.

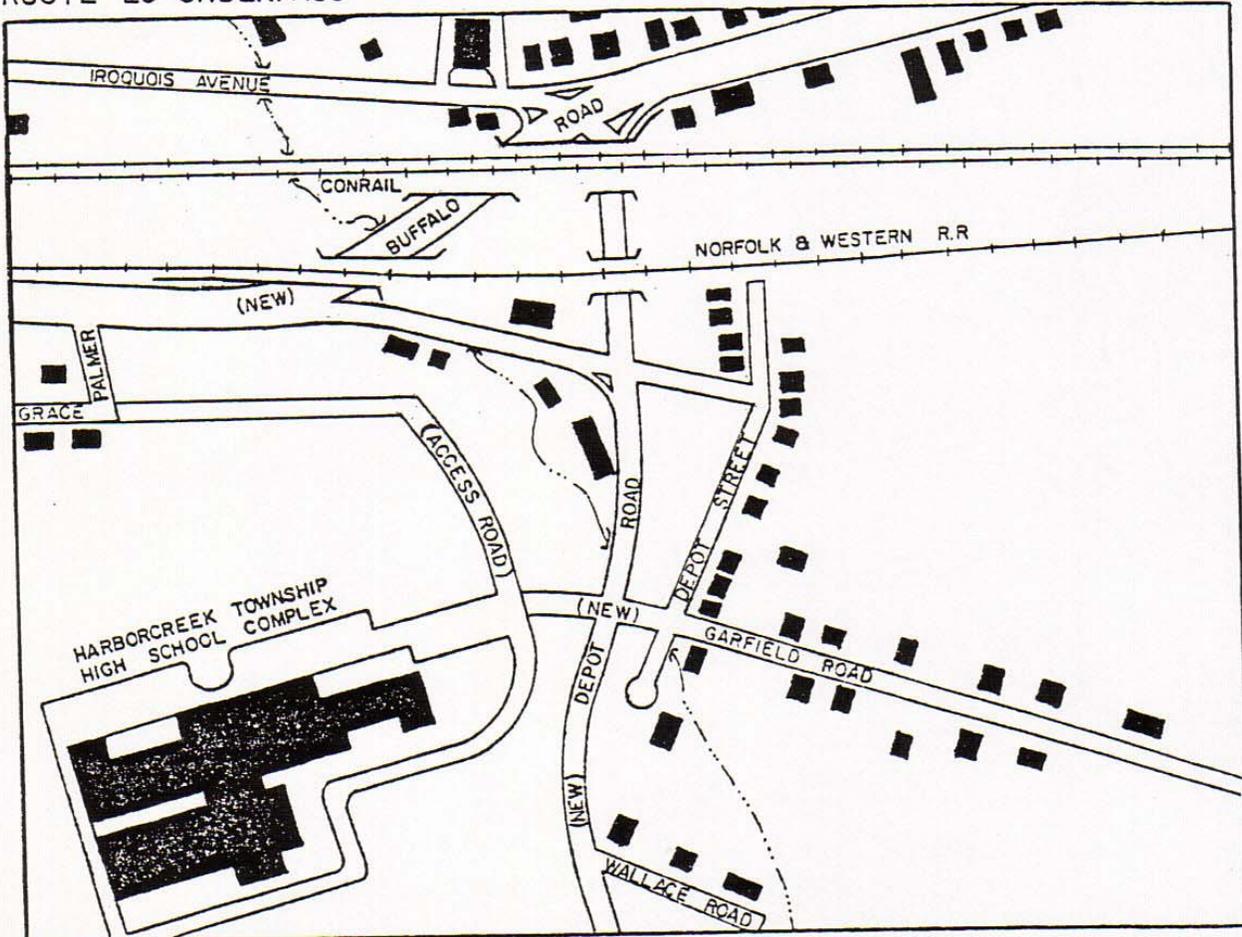


Transportation Improvement Finance and Projects

ROUTE 20 BY-PASS



ROUTE 20 UNDERPASS





Transportation and Smart Growth

This narrative has shown that Harborcreek Township's growth is becoming a cause of traffic congestion, which can have a negative effect on both quality of life and the ability of the Township to attract beneficial future development. The standard approach to this is to spend public funds in expanding the roadway network. This can at times attract more road use and actually increase congestion. There is also a concern that if public general funds (Whether federal, state, or local) are the sole source of transportation funding, citizens of the Township are subsidizing kinds of growth they may not want.

One of the most important smart growth concepts is making development decision fair and cost predictable (See page 33 of this plan). The Township can do this in two ways. One is to use planning techniques that will mitigate congestion through design.

The second is to create equitable funding streams to ensure that new development bears a proportionate share of costs that it creates for the community.

There are two low cost planning techniques that can be used by Harborcreek Township to minimize traffic congestion. The most direct benefit could be through the addition of access management regulations to the zoning ordinance or subdivision and land development ordi-

nance. Access management allows a municipality to require coordination and placement of new streets or driveways to occur in a manner that minimizes their effect upon traffic flow. While PennDot does grant highway occupancy permits for state roads, they have no authority or ability to coordinate new access points over a whole section of road. They actually recommend that municipalities adopt their own ordinance that will allow greater coordination between state and local approvals. A full copy of PennDot's access management model ordinances can be downloaded from <ftp://ftp.dot.state.pa.us/public/bureaus/CPDM/WEB/Access%20Management%20Model%20Ordinances%20for%20PA%20Municipalities.pdf> As these are model ordinances, they should only be used as a starting point for development of local ordinances.

Another planning tool is the use of official maps to reserve land needed for future transportation improvements. The term "official map" is subject to some confusion. In the context of Pennsylvania planning law, an Official Map is a map adopted by ordinance that may depict both current and **future** rights of way, public grounds, and other public facilities. In the case of rights of way for streets, the official map may depict an intersection or road segment where widen-

ing is necessary, or an area where an entirely new road or street is needed. Once adopted, the official map serves to protect those rights of way future encroachment. A subdivision or land development on such property must either conform to the official map or the Township may impose up to 180 days while determining if they wish to acquire the proposed right of way.

These smart growth planning tools can assist in negating some of the need for expensive transportation improvements, but at some point physical construction is still necessary. At that point, each community must ask the question about who should pay; the developer, or the community. In some cases, it is appropriate for the municipality to make improvements, particularly if necessary to guide development to a desired place (such as a redevelopment area). In other cases, development should bear its own costs. There are several possible approaches, and choosing the best methods for various parts of the Township will be an important part of the implementation of this plan. Basic choices include; area wide impact fees, proportionate share of onsite improvements through subdivision approval, partnership districts, and tax incremental financing. Each should be examined to see how it might be applied in Harborcreek.

Non Motorized Transportation

A final key objective of smart growth is to provide a wide variety of transportation choices to the citizens of a community (again, see page 33). Harborcreek Township has done this through a sidewalk ordinance and the support of non-motorized use of roads through bikeways.

The plan recommends a continuation of these policies and also beginning to link a network of major public recreation areas, through trails, bikeways and sidewalks. This is discussed more fully in the next chapter.



Transportation Funding Choices

Impact Fees authorized by Article V-A of the Pa Municipalities Planning Code :

Pros:

- Would easily raise \$1,000,000 or more for the Township at transitional fee of \$1000 per trip
- Apply to both taxable and nontaxable development (unless a particular kind of development is exempted by ordinance as in the Public interest.
- Can be spent where needed, as local community decides, except for 50% improvement costs for state roads
- Money need not be spent in vicinity of development
- Developers like equity of costs

Cons:

- Must pre-design many improvements
- Cost \$120,000-\$200,000 to establish. Only a portion of this may be recovered from the fees
- Some planning theorists believe that the resultant traffic improvements actually increase rates of growth and development
- May discourage some smaller residential and commercial development if there are comparable locations outside the impact fee zone.

Onsite Improvements as Authorized by Section

Pros:

- Very easy to establish with no up-front costs to municipality
- Design done as-needed.
- Also can apply to both taxable and nontaxable development
- Developers immediately benefit from improvements

Cons:

- Does not deal with systemic congestion
- Sometimes cannot fund the improvement where needed
- If fees are collected, can be an accounting hassle

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

Pros

- Can be sold to developers like LERTA
- Can allow installation of improvements before development comes to add value to land.

Cons

- Public as a whole pays
- Can only apply to taxable development
- Cannot deal with systemic congestion
- Requires some pre-design

Transportation Partnership District Act 47 of 1985

Pros

Very minimal municipal costs

Cons

Requires forward looking and larger developers



Summary of Transportation Policies and Actions

The Most significant Transportation Planning issue that will face the Township over the next decade will be growing areas of traffic congestion. This Plan recommends an approach to mitigate this congestion by both identifying an equitable means to pay for necessary transportation improvements, and using smart growth techniques to minimize the need for expensive roadway improvements.

Paying For Improvements:

Township can require developers to pay the costs of “onsite” improvements under their subdivision and land development regulations. This authority is carefully limited.

Township can implement a Transportation Capital Improvement Program and collect impact fees that can be spent in a large impact area.

Township can fund improvements through diverted taxation (TIF).

Township can encourage Transportation Partnership District agreements among commercial property owners.

Township can use general funds or lobby for grants.

The Township should participate fully in the development of County plans for transportation improvements, including offering more modest design options for consideration.

Smart Growth Techniques:

Develop access management standards to manage the intersection of new streets and driveways with existing public roads.

Reserve important future rights-of-way through development and adoption of official maps, as permitted by Article IV of the Pa Municipalities Planning Code.

Use local street standards to eliminate new unnecessary dead-end streets.

Where possible, create alternative street standards that eliminate unnecessary street widths, or artificially increase development costs.

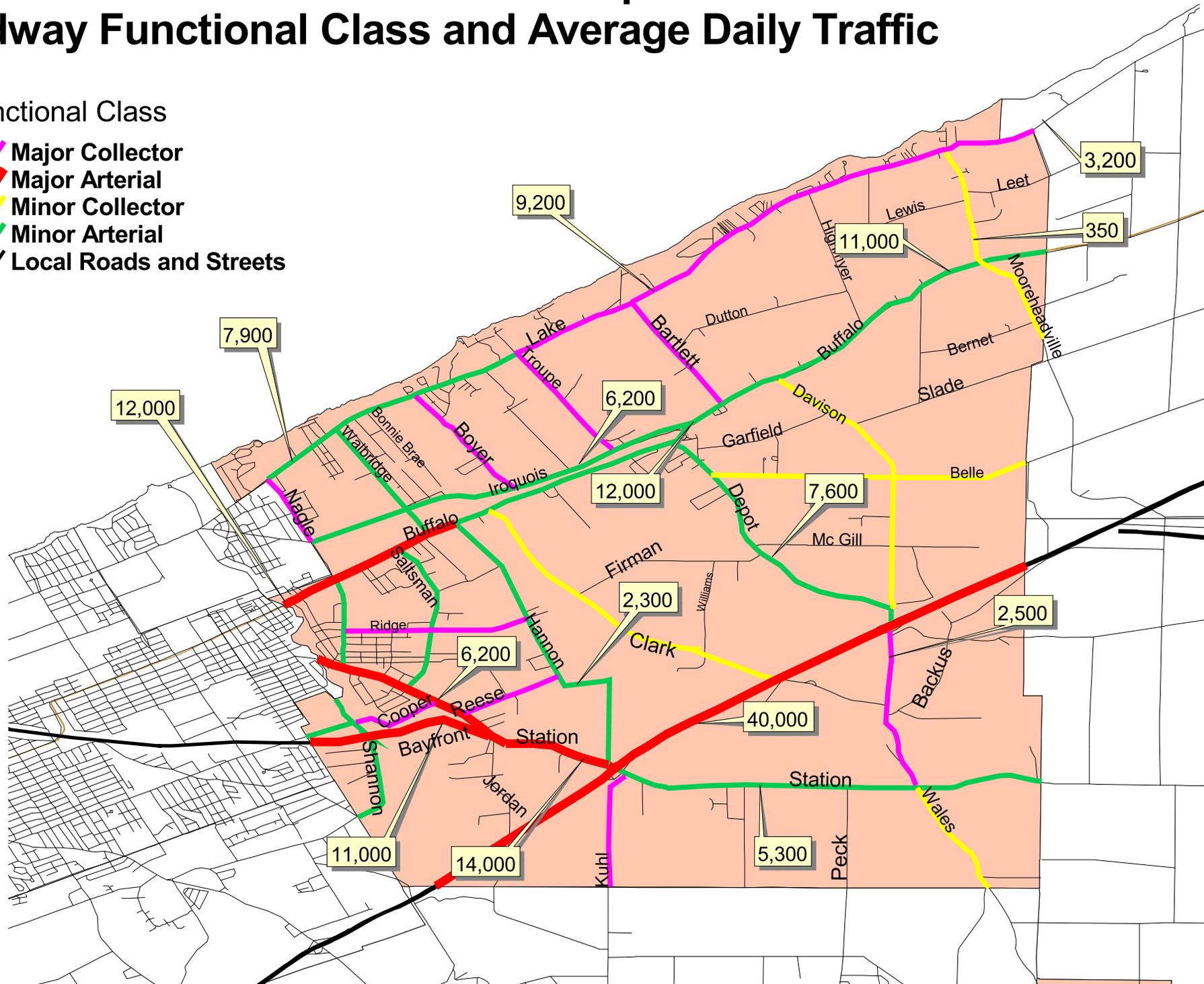
Continue the development of pedestrian and bikeway systems to offer alternatives to driving.

Harborcreek Township

Roadway Functional Class and Average Daily Traffic

Functional Class

-  Major Collector
-  Major Arterial
-  Minor Collector
-  Minor Arterial
-  Local Roads and Streets





Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 7
Plan For Community Facilities

Community Facilities Contribute to the Township's Growth and Quality of Life



Shades Beach Community Park, owned and maintained by the Township. Planning For Community Facilities is a key part of meeting the demand of current and future residents. With greater mobility, families can choose where they want to live, and the level of community facilities and services plays a major role in that decision.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires a municipal plan for community facilities and services, but does not have specific requirements for such a plan. This is because the level of community facilities, utilities and services that each municipality offers is unique. A small rural municipality may only have a municipal building to store its road equipment. A large city may offer professional police and fire, municipal garbage collection, and municipal libraries and museums. There is also a great diversity in the entities that provide public facilities and

services. There are private water companies, municipally owned electric systems, and volunteer organizations, such as fire departments.

Within this diversity, there is one consistent factor. The level and costs of community facilities and services play a role in attracting both residential growth and business investment. In a highly mobile free society, people who want to invest in a home or business have many choices. They will tend to gravitate towards those places that offer the most desired community

facilities and services at the best prices.

The task for any community is to examine the level of services offered within its boundaries and ensure that they are appropriate for the level of growth and development expected and desired. This chapter contains a brief inventory of facilities and services, trends over the past decade and establishes policies to guide future investments and action.

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Community Facilities Fact Sheet

Education: Harborcreek Township School District
Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

Recreation: Seven Township Parks (Community Park, Rolling Ridge Park, Sixmile Creek Park, Shades Beach, Eight-mile Creek and Twelvemile Creek)

Police Services: Troop E, Pennsylvania State Police (<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=4587&mode=2>)

Fire Departments (All Volunteer):

Harborcreek Fire Department (2 stations) (www.harborcreekfiredepartment.8m.com)

Fairfield Hose Company (1 Station) (www.fairfieldfiredept.8m.com)

Brookside Fire Department (1 Station) (www.brooksidefire.org)

Municipal Building: Municipal building campus with meeting rooms and maintenance garages on Buffalo Road adjacent to Township Park.

Libraries

Penn State Behrend Library (Free Library Card for Pennsylvania Residents)

Erie County Library System, Lawrence Park Branch (www.ecls.lib.pa.us)

Water System: Erie City Water Authority (www.eriewater.org) provides service to about 4,200 customers in the Township:

Domestic Customers 4040

Commercial 195

Industrial 6

Institutional 38

Other 26

Sewer System: Harborcreek Township has a sewer authority which was created by the Supervisors. The Harborcreek Township Sewer Authority manages a system of collection lines and pump stations that serve 3,900 customers.

Private Utilities:

National Fuel Gas

Pennsylvania Electric company (Pennelec)

Cable services (including DSL internet service) Time Warner

Solid waste collection provided by Waste Management , inc. through Township contract

Select Community Based Organizations:

Harborcreek Township Historical Society (harborcreekhistory@gmail.com)

Harborcreek Little League(www.eteamz.active.com/harborcreek)

A Township Chapter of the AARP meets in the Township Building

There is a Harborcreek Chamber of commerce. Interested persons may contact the Township.

The Township has about 15 churches. Other tax exempt organizations registered to Township addresses in the Township include a horseshoe club, an affordable public housing organization (associated with the Benedictine convent) , and two nonprofits associated with the School District. ([source:www.taxexemptworld.com](http://source.www.taxexemptworld.com))



Harborcreek Township Community Facilities Trends

On the continuum of locally provided community facilities and services, Harborcreek Township is in a middle position between a rural low service municipality, and a municipality like a typical city which offers a very wide range of goods and services at the Municipal level. As the Township has grown, it has expanded the range of community facilities and services commensurate with the level of new growth. The previous Comprehensive Plan included an extensive inventory of community facilities and services. Because more

current data is now available from internet sources, This plan summarized important facilities with Internet contact for each.

Major changes since the 1996 Comprehensive Plan are in the areas of Recreation and public water and sewer. The water system was expanded to include about 1000 new customers. The sewer system expanded from 8 to 12 pump stations, and service extensions to the I-90/Behrend College area, Parkside, Luxury Drive and Kuhl Road. A major interceptor was

also completed to better tie the Township collection system into the Erie City Sewer Authority system. Major changes to the Township's recreation areas included the acceptance of former County parkland at Shades Beach, and its development as a Township Park. During completion of this Plan, The Township acquired the larger County tract at Sixmile Creek. The Township now has a wide array of parks, ranging from sports fields to water recreation, and large tracts of conservation land.

How Does Harborcreek Township Compare?

The objective of good planning in a community that wishes to maintain a sustainable level of growth and development is to maintain the widest array of desired public services at the least cost. This can only be done when there is a favorable ratio of different kinds of development to the services needed by that development (See Page 28 of the Land Use Plan). It is apparent that Harborcreek Township has been successful at maintaining a balance between taxation and offering public services. As the table illustrates, Harborcreek has the lowest millage rate of any of the surrounding municipalities. This is remarkable as the Township rates are below the more rural municipalities (Such as Greene and Greenfield Township) that offer fewer services, as well as the more urban municipalities that supply professional police and/or fire protection. The Township makes most of its tax revenue from the Earned Income Tax of 1 percent, which is divided evenly with the Harborcreek School District. This tax is evenly imposed, and allows real estate taxes to be kept lower.

The Township has not funded its general operations through debt. Township debt has been incurred for major long term infrastructure projects. Harborcreek Townships per capita debt (Debt divided buy population) is \$59. This compares very favorably to the City of Ere (per capita debt \$1,966) Millcreek Township (\$450), Wesleyville (\$173), Lawrence Park (\$171) and Northeast (\$105). The more rural communities of Greene and Greenfield are debt free, but have no municipal water or sewer. The Township has used its annual revenue (both real estate tax and earned income tax to retire long term debt.

All data from the Pa Department of Community and Economic Development (www.newpa.com)

Municipality	Millage Rate
Harborcreek	0.001192
Northeast Township	0.001264
Greene Township	0.00159
Greenfield Township	0.0023
Millcreek Township	0.002594
Lawrence Park	0.00275
Wesleyville	0.007773
City of Erie	0.01145



School District and Enrollment Projections

The Township is served by the Harbor Creek school district. The District is one of only three in the County that only serves a single municipality (The City of Erie and Millcreek are the others). The school district is also an independent taxing body which derives a significant amount of its revenue from real estate taxes. Thus, the land use and public service policies of the Township will also effect the School District. For that reason, as well as their general interest in the success of the community, School District officials participated in the formulation of this Comprehensive Plan update.

Certain Township land use policies may have a benefit to the School District. These include efforts to promote more nonresidential development, preserving private farm and forest land, and providing housing for persons over the age of 55. All of these types of land



The local School District and its team, the Huskies, are a focus for community identity.

uses represent a very favorable tax to public service base ratio for the school district, as they put few students into the school compared to their assessed value. This is a very important for the relationship between the Township and School District, as school enrollment is expected to increase. The table below includes the most recent enrollment projects for the district by the Pa. Depart-

ment of Education. These projections are used for reimbursement purposes for expansion projects. As they are very conservative, the Township should work with the District to monitor those proposed housing developments that might increase enrollment more than 10 percent of current enrollment.

YEAR	Harbor Creek SD												Total	
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12
2003-2004	113	124	137	132	163	158	156	213	187	189	170	200	153	2095
2004-2005	134	120	129	139	130	171	159	185	191	177	188	164	188	2075
2005-2006	169	149	121	137	154	145	178	185	162	193	186	185	150	2114
2006-2007	133	174	151	120	142	156	151	188	167	159	195	176	181	2093
2007-2008	152	142	177	155	124	147	162	163	185	165	166	176	164	2078
P R O J E C T I O N S														
2008-2009	171	174	144	181	161	131	153	178	149	182	169	158	166	2117
2009-2010	130	186	176	147	188	170	136	168	163	146	187	160	149	2106
2010-2011	130	141	188	180	153	198	177	150	154	160	150	178	151	2110
2011-2012	162	141	143	192	187	161	206	195	137	151	164	142	168	2149
2012-2013	163	176	143	146	200	197	167	227	178	134	155	156	134	2176
2013-2014	164	177	178	146	152	211	205	184	208	175	137	147	147	2231
2014-2015	165	178	179	182	152	160	219	225	168	204	179	130	138	2279
2015-2016	167	179	180	183	189	160	166	241	206	165	209	170	122	2337
2016-2017	168	181	181	184	190	199	166	183	220	202	169	198	160	2401
2017-2018	169	182	183	185	191	200	207	183	167	216	207	160	186	2436



Cornerstone Policy: Maintain Current Facilities and Services

One of the temptations in a growing community is to increase the level and extent of community facilities and services to levels beyond a desired level of growth and development. Connecting community facilities policies to land use planning is necessary to ensure that the community maintains sound financial policies, as well as protecting quality of life. Township residents seem to recognize this. Those who attended the open house were asked their opinion about the extension of future water and sewer facilities. By a more than 2:1 Margin, Residents who attended the open house wanted no extensions of public water and sewer or such extensions to be made only with careful consideration of its effect on finances and rural quality of life.

Citizens correctly perceive that massive infrastructure projects can increase new growth and development to levels which can begin to erode small town and rural quality of life. Often, small town and rural quality of life was the original attractant for growth.

Anticipatory investments in water and sewer lines can also pose a fiscal risk. If investment exceeds the amount of new development, All taxpayers may end up subsidizing the improvements. As mentioned in the previous chapter on



Township Crews improving storm drainage on Saltsman Road. These type of investments enhance areas of the Township which have already developed, and can make private property more valuable.

funding transportation, it is important to identify equitable means to help ensure that new growth bears a fair proportion of its own public service needs.

For these reasons, the Township's cornerstone policy for community facilities is to generally maintain the current level of facilities and services. The Township will make capital improvements. It will also be responsive to the continued needs of growth.

This policy will be utilized as a means of careful consideration in the extension of public water and sewer. The Township will avoid extended water and sewer into rural resource areas unless there is a need to make such extensions to protect the health and safety of pre-existing devel-

opment. When this happens, there will also be efforts to mitigate the effect of infrastructure extension upon rural resource areas. Two priorities for such extension can be currently identified; the Village of Harborcreek and the Garfield Avenue area. Should the situation change that major development becomes necessary in a rural resource area, the Township will address this through comprehensive plan amendments to make land use and community facilities policies consistent.

The extension of water and sewer within identified growth areas will be done only after careful consideration of cost benefit ratios, based upon the land use policies of diversification. Developer funded extensions may be neces-

By a more than 2:1 Margin, Residents who attended the open house wanted no extensions of public water and sewer or such extensions made only with careful consideration of its effect on finances and rural quality of life.



Cornerstone Policy: Maintain Current Facilities and Services, continued

sary in some instances. In situations where extensions meet another Township goal, such as diversity of nonresidential tax base, the Municipality will consider partnering with private developers.

The primary reasons for the limited creation of new public water and sewer areas is public desire and consistent planning policies. However, maintaining a consistent level of service

also means ensuring that areas currently served by public sewer continue to have good service. For a number of years, the Township sewer collection system has dealt with freshwater infiltration that artificially raised the amount of effluent the system must carry. As this plan is being completed, The Township is undertaking a major update to its Act 537 Plan to address this problem. The inflow and infiltration issues

effect the ability of the system to treat new development, even within identified growth areas.

It is also hoped that this Act 537 update will allow the Township to examine the feasibility of addressing public sewer service to areas of historic development, such as the Village of Harborcreek and the area surrounding it.

Community Facilities and Smart Growth

The Township infrastructure policy of maintaining and consolidating, rather than extending is consistent with the smart growth principle of directing development towards existing communities. However the Township is also in a unique position to use its community facilities planning policies to actually create sense of place and protect natural resources.

The Township has developed an excellent network of parks and recreation areas. These focal points have the potential to serve as the hubs of a Township greenway system.

The idea of a greenway system is to identify major tracts of recreation and conservation lands within a community and work to conserve or create physical connections between them. There are two basic types of greenways. Recreation greenways are trails or pub-



Natural Infrastructure: places in the Township like Six Mile Creek serve as low costs means to provide recreation and naturally manage stormwater runoff.

licly accessible streams (water trails). Conservation greenways may include private areas of land that are not accessible to the public, but still serve as wildlife corridors or facilitate the natural management of stormwater runoff. This concept of “green infrastructure” can actually save money in building physical infrastructure. Greenway systems work best when

major areas (hubs) are connected by ribbons of trails or corridors. The County recently completed a greenway plan. The attached greenway sketch concept map can serve as a beginning point in developing a local greenway system. This is particularly pertinent with the Township acquiring the former Sixmile creek County park lands.

Geographic Priorities for Public Sewer Service

The Map attached to this chapter entitled, Plan for Future Public Sewer Service divides the Township into four areas for the purpose of sewer facilities planning.. The Current Public Sewer Service Area remains the highest priority, and Township resources will be devoted to maintaining and improving service in these areas. The Township has identified Short Term Public Sewer Extension priorities. These include the Village of Harborcreek and the area surrounding it, including the Garfield Road area, developed areas of the Lake Erie plain along Pa. Route 5, and the area to the west of Behrend Campus. In the case of the Lake Erie plain and Garfield Road, mitigation may be necessary due to agricultural resources. Long Term Study Areas should be examined for sewer service based upon the effect of sewer on rural resources, the need to meet the needs of existing development, and the ability of development to pay its own way. Sewer can be extended to these areas to both meet the needs of existing and proposed development. New or proposed development in long term study areas should follow the smart growth principles of the land use plan. Finally, Agricultural Preservation areas should not be the target of extensions unless absolutely necessary for public health and safety of existing residents. This does not mean sewer cannot be extended, only that its effect be carefully planned.

Summary of Community Facilities Policies and Actions

The Township has a wide array of community facilities and services that increase quality of life and support financially sustainable levels of growth.

The overall policy is to maintain the current level of community facilities and services to a level consistent with realized and realistically anticipated growth and development. In this manner, The Township will try to ensure that growth does not create an inordinate burden on current taxpayers.

The Township should continue to work closely with the School District to ensure that land use policies which effect future enrollment and tax base are consistent between both governments.

Consistent with resident desires, The Township will not extend public water and sewer into rural resource areas except to mitigate health and safety problems for existing development.

In some cases, the Township may need to retroactively improve community facilities and services, for such areas as the Village of Harborcreek, where growth preceded the availability of public sewer service.

The Township’s excellent recreation facilities are an important factor in attracting and retaining residents. The Township will examine greater connection of these facilities through trails, sidewalks and conversation corridors.

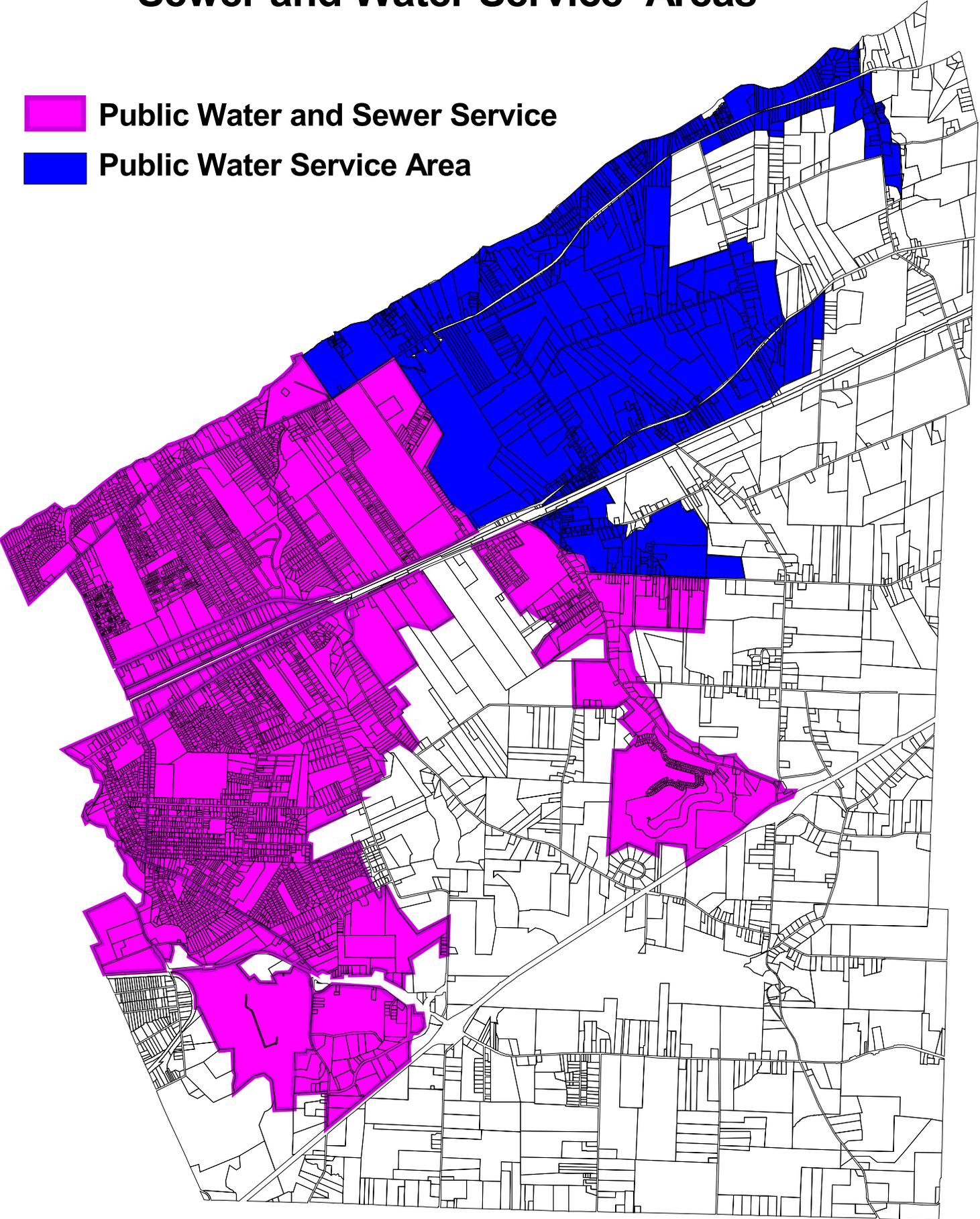


Local facilities, including public schools, create a place for volunteer efforts, like this Township Relay for Life event, benefiting the American Cancer Society.

Harborcreek Township Public Sewer and Water Service Areas

 **Public Water and Sewer Service**

 **Public Water Service Area**





Harborcreek Township Comprehensive Plan

Harborcreek Township
Erie County

Chapter 8
Interrelationships

Good Planning Requires Consistency

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires that each municipal Comprehensive plan contain a statement of interrelationships between the various required components or chapters of a comprehensive plan. This is to ensure that the plan's approach is consistent. There is also a requirement to plan for consistency between a municipality comprehensive plan and that of the neighboring municipalities and the county as a whole. The Code defines "consistency" as "an agreement or correspondence between matters being compared which denotes a reasonable rational, similar, connection or relationship".

Statement of Plan Interrelationships: The interrelationships among the five plan components of the Housing Plan, Conservation Plan, Transportation Plan, Community Facilities Plan, and land use plan with the community development objectives are complete. No single component was developed to stand alone or to dictate total control over the other components. The primary direction of each component influenced the direction of the other plan chapters until all the components of this plan were integrated together. Each plan chapter was de-



veloped to contain policies and actions to implement the general community development goals and objectives in Chapter two.

Statement of Consistency to Other Plans: As part of the Planning Process, the policies developed pursuant to the development of the Erie County Comprehensive Plan was utilized as a major information resource. In particular, the Planning Commission and Consultant relied upon the Erie County demographic report and populations projections, The Erie County Land Use Plan and the Erie County Long Range Transportation Plan. The reliance on these County Level planning documents was partially pragmatic in

order minimize unnecessary new data collection. However using the County Plan as a basis for the Township plan was also a means to ensure consistency.

Municipal Comprehensive plans were also examined, and are consistent. Harborcreek Township areas identified for current or future growth and development about similar areas in Erie, Lawrence Park and Wesleyville. Areas of the Township identified for rural resource uses about more rural municipalities, reflecting Harborcreek Townships' unique position as a transitional community between the Erie Metropolitan area and the rural portions of Erie County.

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Beyond Consistency: Exploring Intergovernmental Cooperation

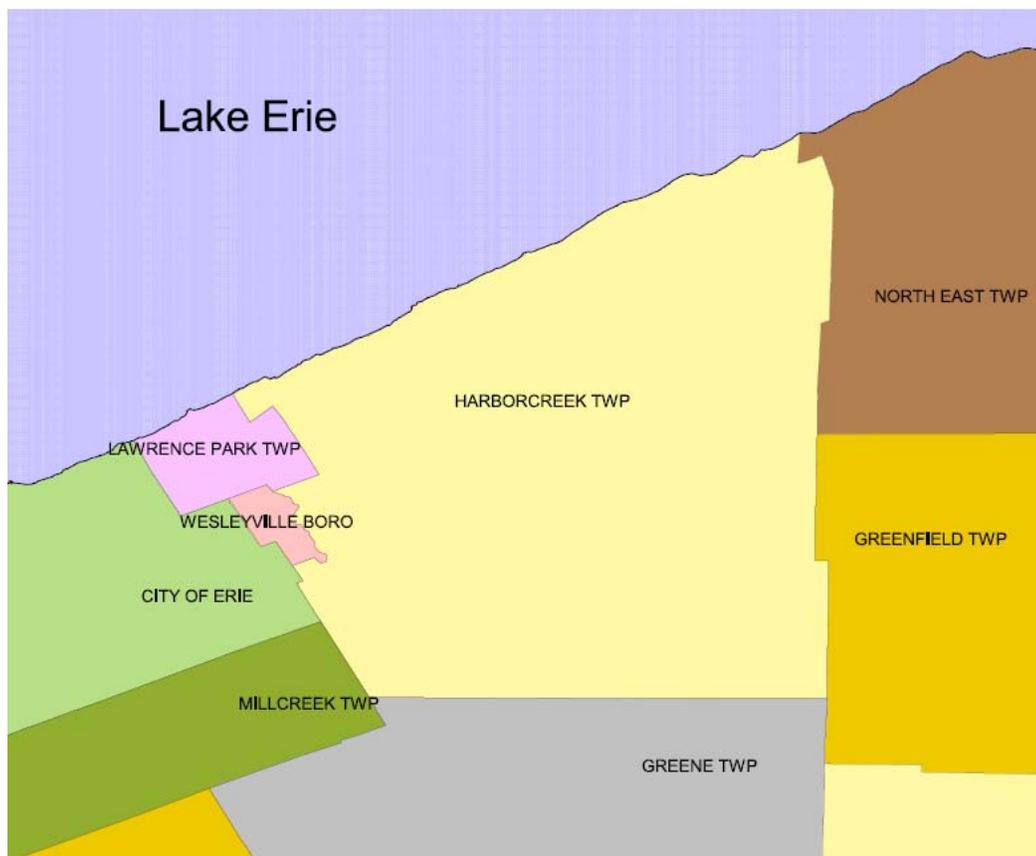
The Acts 67 and 68 amendments to the Pa Municipalities Planning Code made significant changes to cooperative planning ventures undertaken by more than one municipality. Prior to Act 67 and 68, joint planning by neighboring townships and boroughs were permitted, but were constrained by very complex law. Under the present planning code, it has been made significantly easier for contiguous municipalities to plan together. Most important, the code also now contains significant incentives for municipalities who wish to undertake regional planning.

Two or more contiguous

municipalities may now plan together by invoking the same intergovernmental cooperation law they routinely use to share road equipment. To prepare a multimunicipal comprehensive plan. It would be normative for communities to undertake a multimunicipal comprehensive planning process at the same time, but this is not required. Communities with existing comprehensive plans could meet together resolve any differences in the plan documents, and revise their existing plans to meet standards for a multimunicipal plan. Two communities which abut Harborcreek Township (Wesleyville Borough and Lawrence Park

Township) have already prepared and adopted a multimunicipal comprehensive plan. Harborcreek Township could use this process to plan with its eastern neighbors. It is important to note that this multimunicipal planning process would not require a complete planning update similar to the process used to update this plan. A much more truncated process would be sufficient, with only a brief amendment necessary which could be printed as a stand-alone document.

Incentives and benefits of this process are discussed on the next page.





Multimunicipal Planning Incentives

Once a multimunicipal comprehensive plan has been prepared and adopted, The municipality must prepare an intergovernmental cooperative implementation agreement to fully take advantage of multimunicipal planning incentives in chapter 11 of the Pa MPC. The required content of the multimunicipal cooperative agreement are listed below. Once the agreement is ratified there are several immediate and potential incentives in the law.

Municipalities will be given protection from exclusionary zoning challenges if land uses are accommodated within the entire

area of the plan without all uses being provided for in each municipality. This allows common sense land use sharing without full fledged joint zoning.

Municipalities will be given more favorable state decisions regarding funding requests and certain facilities permitted by the state. There is a higher level of priority for many grants as well.

Municipalities may share tax revenues and fees on current or future development for all or a portion of areas covered by the plan. This helps facilitate extending infrastructure across municipal boundaries to

priority areas for future growth.

Municipalities may adopt specific plans to guide development, in greater detail, of specific non-residential properties. The specific plan can be adopted by ordinance and creates unique regulations for one or more tracts of land. If developers adhere to the specific plan, their approvals are expedited.

None of these incentives are required, but if used judiciously, they represent enormously powerful planning approaches for the implementation of smart land use planning.

Intergovernmental Cooperative Implantation Agreements must meet the standards of both the MPC and the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act.

Implementation agreement content required by the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Law

1. Conditions of the agreement
2. Duration of the agreement
3. Purpose and objectives of the agreement, including powers and scope of authority delegated in the agreement
4. How the activities and actions specified in the agreement will be financed
5. Organizational structure necessary to carry out the agreement
6. Manner in which any property involved in the agreement will be acquired, licensed, or disposed
7. Provisions for employee insurance and benefit contracts, if any, associated with the agreement

Implementation agreement content required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code

1. Consistency review process to be used by participating municipalities to judge consistency of implementing actions, like zoning ordinances or capital projects, with the multi-municipal comprehensive plan
2. Process for the review and approval of developments of regional significance and impact
3. Roles and responsibilities of participating municipalities with respect to implementation of the multi-municipal comprehensive plan, including particularly the provision of public infrastructure and services
4. Yearly report of implementation activities, particularly infrastructure projects undertaken and development applications and approvals
5. Process by which the multi-municipal comprehensive plan can be amended



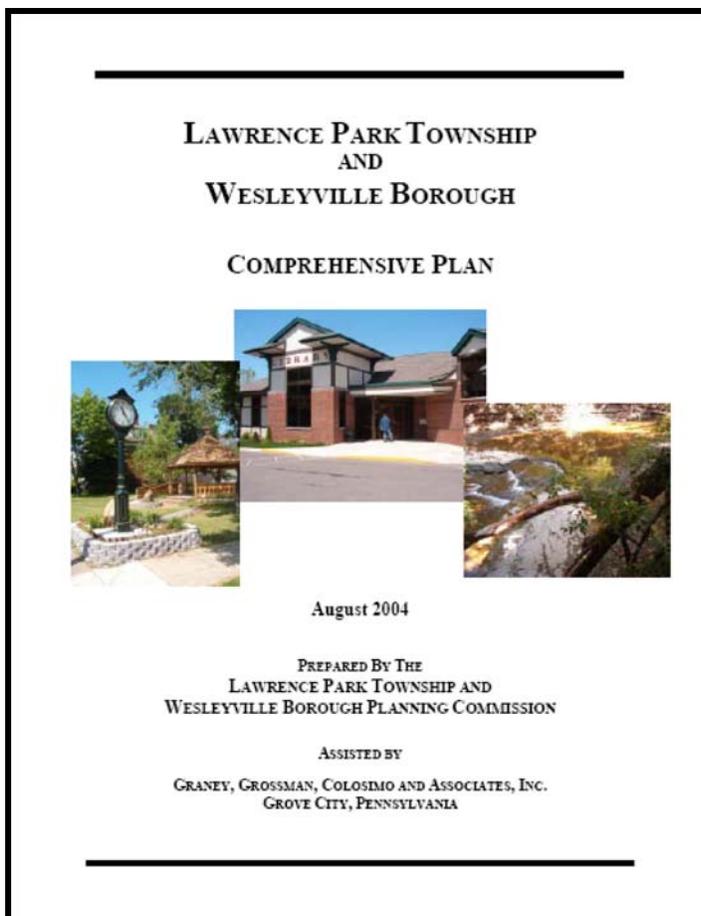
Intergovernmental Plan Summary of Policies and Actions

The natural partnership for Harborcreek Township is Lawrence Park and Wesleyville. These two communities have prepared and adopted a multimunicipal plan. The three communities have already cooperated on other projects and services. The Township leadership should review this plan, then meet with Lawrence Park and Wesleyville leaders. The plans could be merged by co-adoption, making Harborcreek's new plan a multimunicipal plan under Pennsylvania planning law. At this point the three communities could explore use of advanced planning tools such as:

Shared use zoning to eliminate inappropriate uses from one community, by accommodating those uses in another.

Specific Plans to guide development of key tracts

Request a County Comprehensive Plan update to make local projects County priorities.



The Lawrence Park/Wesleyville Plan can be accessed at www.lawrencepark.govoffice.com