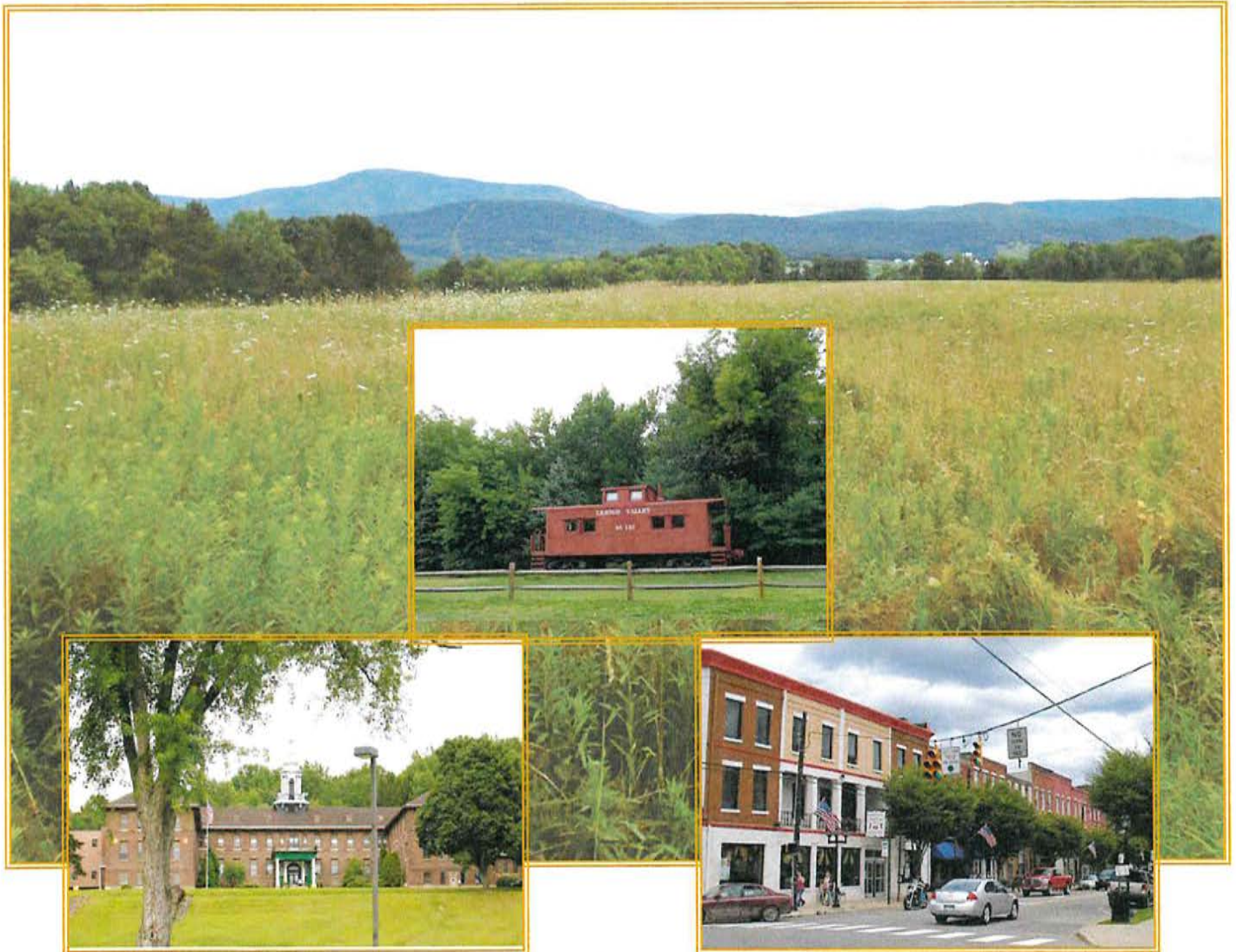
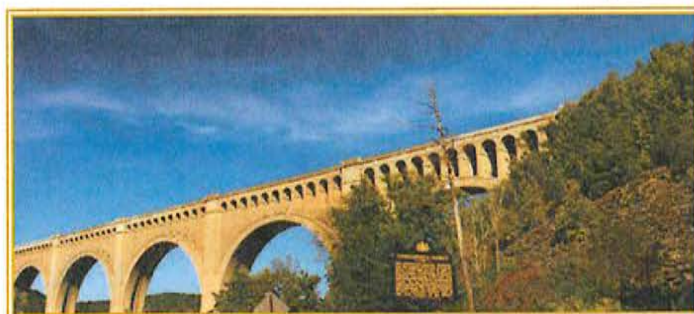


# Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan Wyoming County, Pennsylvania



*As Adopted April 30, 2019*



# Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan

Wyoming County, Pennsylvania



This Comprehensive Plan was adopted on April 30, 2019  
by the Wyoming County Board of Commissioners.

*This Comprehensive Plan was funded in part by a  
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*Full Length Version*



Community Planning Consultants  
Urban Research and Development Corporation  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	1
Executive Summary .....	3
Existing Conditions .....	5
Regional Location .....	5
Existing Land Uses Background .....	7
Historical Background.....	9
Community Facilities & Services Background .....	11
Transportation Background.....	19
Economic Development Background.....	20
Goals: The Overall Direction of This Plan.....	26
Natural Features & Agricultural Conservation Plan .....	29
Land Use & Housing Plan.....	53
Economic Development Plan .....	74
Historic Preservation Plan .....	79
Unconventional Gas Plan .....	82
Transportation Plan .....	87
Community Facilities & Services Plan .....	104
Putting This Plan Into Action.....	119
Action Program .....	127
Appendices	
Population, Housing and Income Characteristics .....	A-1
Agricultural Characteristics .....	B-1
Adjacent County Comprehensive Plans .....	C-1
Major Funding Sources for Community and Economic Development .....	D-1

## Maps

Regional Location Map .....	6
General Highway Map .....	6
Existing Land Uses - 2014 Map .....	8
Major Cultural and Historic Sites Map .....	10
Recreation Areas and Schools Map .....	14
Steep Slope Map.....	30
Topography Maps .....	31–34
Tree Cover Map .....	36
Water Features Map .....	39
Prime Agricultural Soils and Preserved Farmland Map.....	49
Agricultural Security Areas Map .....	51
Composite Map .....	54
Future Land Use and Housing Plan.....	55
Future Land Use and Housing Plan - Enlargements of Boroughs and Adjacent Areas .....	56
Gas Wells, Pipelines and Wind Turbines Map .....	83
Road Improvement Plan.....	91

## INTRODUCTION

### What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan provides an overall set of policies for the future development and conservation of Wyoming County over the next 15 years. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to help ensure that the change is positive and that Wyoming



County retains the qualities that make people want to visit, live, and do business within the County.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a regulation by itself. The Plan is intended to suggest policies for future changes to the municipalities' development regulations and/or to the County's current development regulations.

First, the county analyzed information and conducted interviews with a variety of knowledgeable persons to understand current conditions and trends. The County Planning Commission held monthly meetings to develop the Plan. Four regional meetings were held to discuss major issues and concerns. The draft Plan was also presented at two public meetings.

### Major Benefits of the Comprehensive Plan

The Plan builds upon County assets and addresses the concerns of both residents and businesses. The Plan recommends aspects of Wyoming County to be preserved or changed. The Plan offers many benefits, including the following:

- considering both land uses and roads, to avoid future traffic problems;
- avoiding conflicts between different types of development, such as having intense business uses placed next to a residential neighborhood, particularly across municipal borders;
- considering development policies in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, instead of reviewing individual lots in a piecemeal fashion;
- highlighting opportunities where the municipalities could save money by sharing services;
- recommending ways that natural corridors should be preserved; and
- recommending improvements to connect and complete recreation trails.

## **Interrelationships Among Plan Chapters**

The topics addressed in the Comprehensive Plan are closely tied together. Actions taken in one of area often affect the other areas. For example, decisions about the size, location and density of a new development can affect many different features of the County, such as traffic patterns, utility demand, the preservation of open space, and the provision of emergency and other public services. Natural features help to identify areas that are suitable for development of different intensities. In turn, roadway improvements, streetscape enhancements, and other public sector projects can directly increase a property's development potential.

## **Timing of the Plan**

The Plan identifies existing conditions and considers how the conditions are likely to influence the future of the County over the next 10 to 15 years. Some actions, events and future growth contemplated in the Plan could materialize in the next year or two. Other developments may not occur for years because they depend much more on market forces.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Comprehensive Plan provides an overall set of policies for the future development and conservation of Wyoming County for the next 15 years. The purpose of the Plan is to help make sure that growth and other changes are managed in a way that retains the qualities that make people want to live, visit, and do business in Wyoming County.

Topics discussed in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- future land uses and housing,
- transportation,
- community facilities and services,
- natural features conservation and agricultural preservation,
- historic preservation, and
- tools to carry out the Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is not another local regulation or restriction. The Plan does not change any current regulations. The purpose of the Plan is simply to suggest policies for any future changes to the current borough, township, or county development regulations.

### **Land Use and Housing Plan**

The Plan sets overall land use and preservation policies for the County by:

- a) encouraging new housing developments to use Open Space Residential (or Conservation) development options that allow homes on smaller lots if the developer permanently preserves 25 to 50 percent of the tract of land in some form of valuable open space;
- b) recommending various land use categories for different types and densities of development in different parts of the County; and
- c) promoting the development of a new business park. (Note - Some of the most promising locations are along Route 11, north of Route 6).

### **The Plan for Transportation**

The transportation section of the Plan explains how PennDOT, the Northern Tier Region Planning & Development Commission (NTRPDC), and adjacent property-owners can all work together to improve traffic safety. The Plan identifies the most crash-prone intersections.

Federal and state funding for transportation improvements in Wyoming County comes through the Northern Tier Rural Planning Organization (RPO), composed of representatives from Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wyoming Counties. In order to increase the likelihood of receiving state or federal funding, municipalities or the County should fund the initial engineering of the needed road improvement.

The transportation section of the Plan also addresses trucking impacts on roads, including the system of weight limits and bonding by businesses that applies to many roads. The Plan recognizes that the gas industry has made major improvements to many roads to handle increased truck traffic.

The transportation section also discusses the need for additional carpool parking areas, particularly along Route 6 to the east and Route 309 to the south.

### **Community Facilities and Services Plan**

The Community Facilities and Services part of the Comprehensive Plan discusses the need to make sure emergency service providers have the resources they need to provide emergency services in Wyoming County. The needs have rapidly increased with gas industry development, additional pipelines, and transportation of hazardous materials on trucks and railroad lines. The Community Facilities and Services section also discusses ways that the County, municipalities, emergency services, the gas industry, developers and other entities can work together to minimize the risk from gas industry activities and from pipelines carrying hazardous materials.

In addition, the Community Facilities and Services section discusses ways to provide central water and sewage services, where desired, in the most cost-efficient manner. The Plan pays particular attention to providing central sewage service in areas where septic systems are failing. The Plan also promotes proper maintenance of on-lot septic systems, and discusses the idea of requiring that a second, tested septic system location be reserved as part of every new lot. Furthermore, the Plan recommends that municipalities consider adopting water well construction standards.

The Plan also discusses ways to:

- Improve public access to the river and creeks,
- Extend and connect recreation trails, and
- Coordinate local recreation facilities with public schools.

### **Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan**

The Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation sections of the Plan discuss ways to:

- a) Minimize flood hazards,
- b) Protect creek corridors, using methods such as maintaining and planting thick vegetation along creeks and the river,
- c) Work with Conservancies to preserve important natural areas using a range of methods,
- d) Preserve wetlands and seek a buffer around them,
- e) Limit development on very steeply sloped lands,
- f) Purchase additional agricultural easements to permanently preserve prime farmland, and
- g) Make sure that zoning does not unreasonably restrict accessory farm-based businesses that provide supplemental income to farmers.

### **Historic Preservation Plan**

The Historic Preservation Plan recommends that municipalities with zoning add some provisions to require pre-approval to demolish the most important historic buildings. The prohibition on demolition would only apply to buildings that the municipality decides are most significant.

Municipalities should also consider zoning incentives that promote the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Such provisions could include allowing some additional uses (such as offices or antique stores) in historic buildings that would not normally be allowed in that area of a municipality.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following sections describe relevant conditions and trends in Wyoming County. Information on natural features is incorporated into the Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan section. Information regarding population, housing, incomes and agriculture is included in the Appendix.

Wyoming County's 23 municipalities have a total population of 27,975 residents, according to the 2016 U.S. Census estimate. The County was established in 1842, after being settled in the late 1700s. The County is governed by an elected three-member Board of Commissioners.

## REGIONAL LOCATION

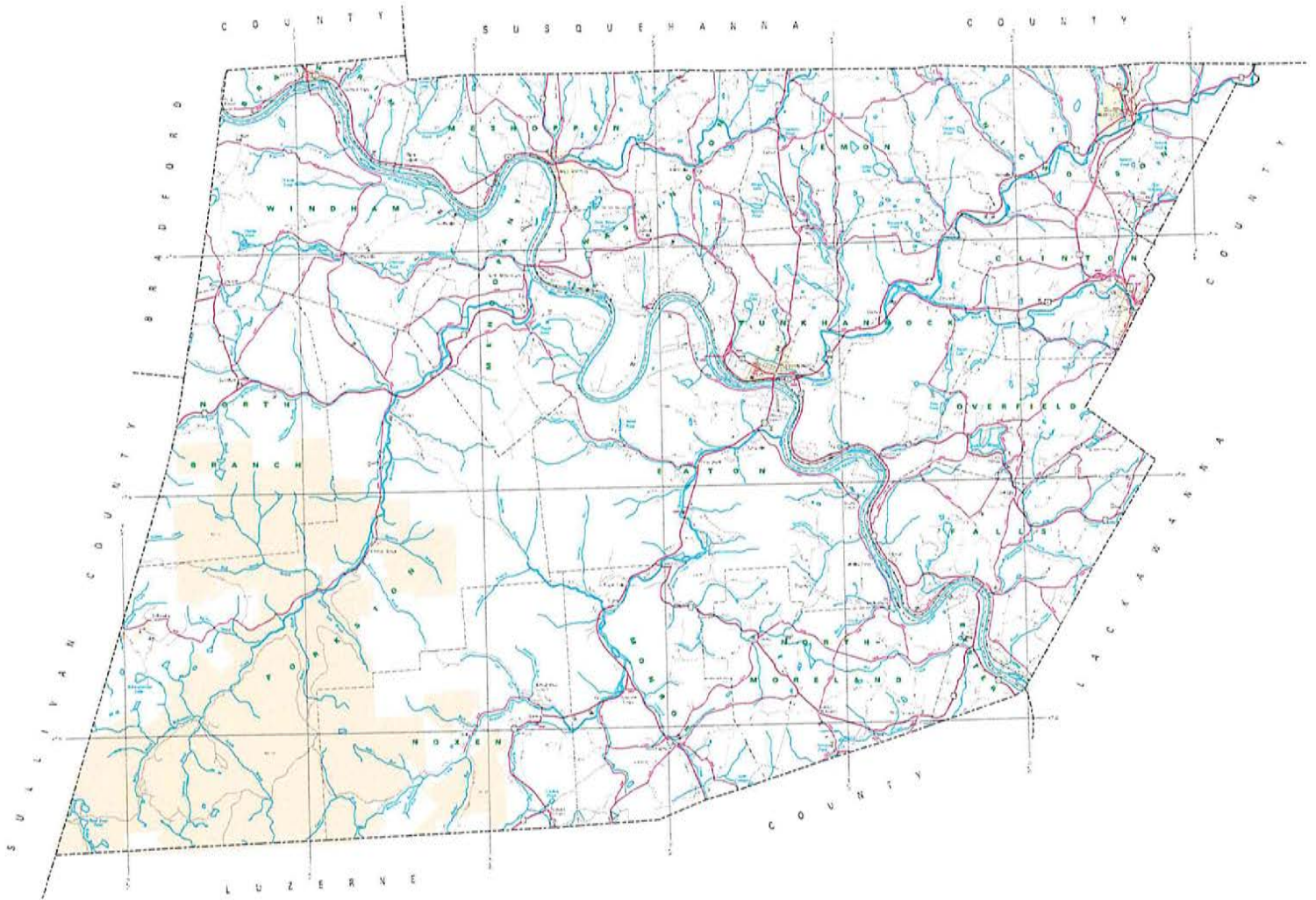
Wyoming County is located in northeastern Pennsylvania. The County is part of the four-county tourism region known as the "Endless Mountains", which also includes Bradford, Sullivan, and Susquehanna Counties. In addition, Wyoming County is part of the administrative region known as the Northern Tier, which includes the four counties of the Endless Mountains plus Tioga County. Wyoming County is adjacent to Lackawanna County to the east, Luzerne County to the south, Sullivan County to the west, Bradford County to the northwest and Susquehanna County to the north. The County is located northwest of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton metropolitan area.

U.S. Route 6 is the main east-west highway through Wyoming County, and provides connections to Bradford County to the west and I-81 and I-476 (PA Turnpike) to the east. I-476 connects southward to the Lehigh Valley and Philadelphia areas. I-81 extends north into upstate New York and to the southwest to the Harrisburg area and connects to I-380 and I-84 east of Scranton. Routes 29 and 11 link the County to Susquehanna County to the north. Routes 29, 309 and 92 connect to the Wilkes-Barre area to the south.

The drive from Factoryville to the exits of I-81 and I-476 is approximately 10 miles. From Nicholson to the east to the nearest exit of I-81 is approximately eight miles. The distance from the southern border of Wyoming County to reach I-81 is approximately 15 miles. I-81 connects southward to I-80, which crosses the entire United States.

The Susquehanna River flows from northwest to southeast across Wyoming County. The river then flows to Wilkes-Barre before turning to the southwest.

The map on the following page is the official Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Map for Wyoming County. The map is included to illustrate roads and municipal borders in the County.



## EXISTING LAND USES BACKGROUND

The generalized existing land uses are shown on the map on the following page. The main public uses are discussed in the Community Facilities and Services section.

### Residential

Information about existing housing is provided in Appendix A. Most residential units in Wyoming County are single-family detached houses, with scattered houses that have been converted into two or more units. Some upper-story apartments and apartment buildings are located in the downtowns of the boroughs. Recently, some rental townhouses have been constructed, such as in the village of Mehoopany. New twins, townhouses and apartments are hard to develop because most of the County outside of the boroughs and larger villages depends on septic systems for sewage disposal.

Wyoming County had very little market pressure to develop new housing until the arrival of the gas industry. Even now, Wyoming County is seeing few proposals for large new housing developments because many gas industry jobs have been filled by persons staying in the area for less than a year. Therefore, rental rates as well as hotel and campground occupancies have increased. Also, campgrounds serving recreational vehicles have seen increased year-round occupancy. The limited pressure for new housing construction in Wyoming County is also because the nearby Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area has a substantial amount of available, affordable housing.

### Commercial

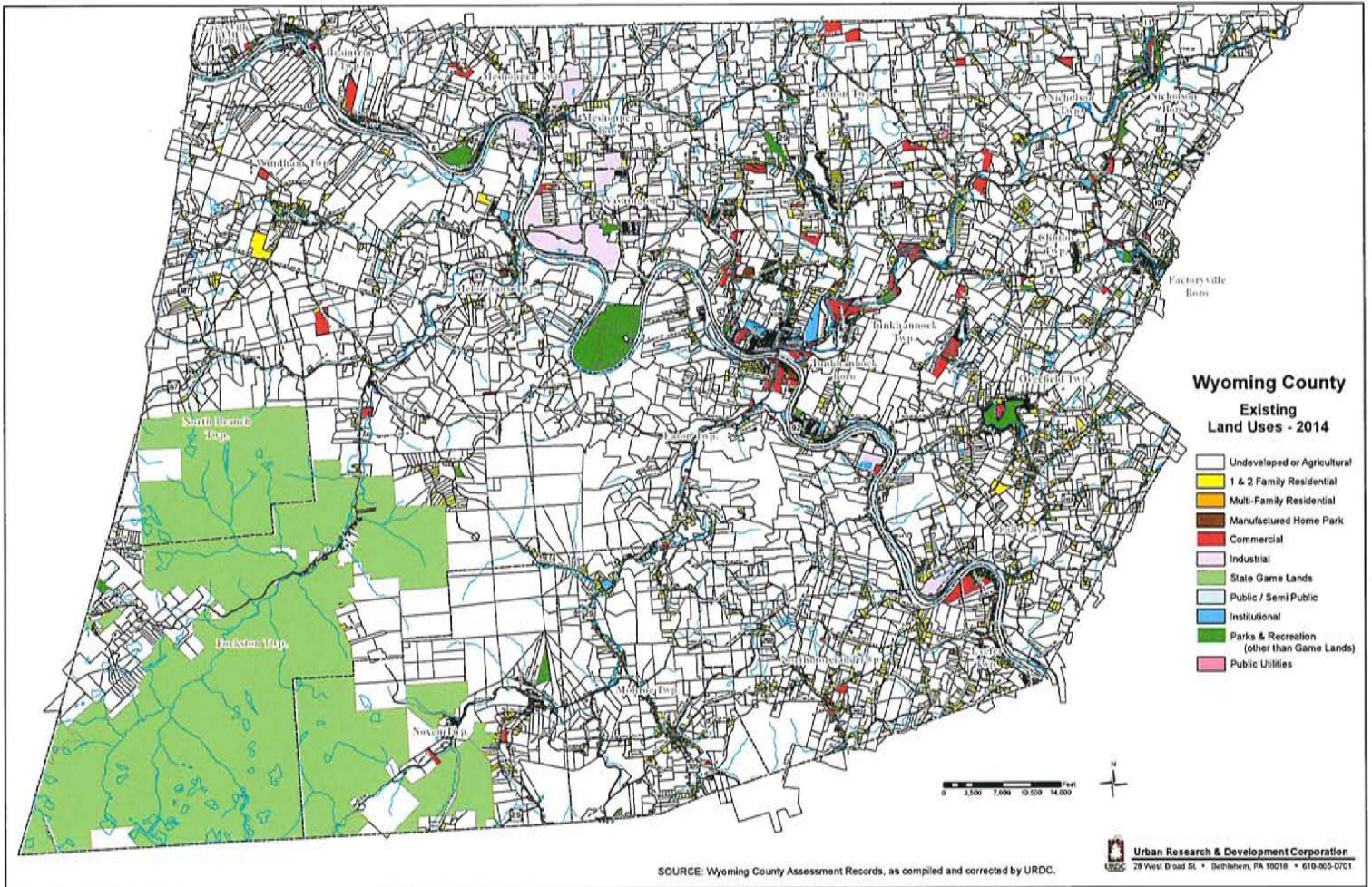
Commercial development is concentrated along Route 6, Business Route 6/Tioga Street, Route 29 and within the centers of the boroughs. The largest concentrations of commercial development are in 1) Downtown Tunkhannock, 2) Tunkhannock Township along Business Route 6/Tioga Street and the Route 6 Bypass, and 3) Along Route 29 in Eaton Township (which includes a Super-Walmart and other stores). Commercial uses are widely scattered, as seen on the Existing Land Uses Map, particularly along Route 92, along Route 11, in Nicholson, and in Laceyville.

### Industrial

The largest industrial employer is the Procter and Gamble facility in the village of Mehoopany, Washington Township. Other major industrial uses involve the lumber industry and trucking activities/businesses that provide services to the gas industry. The largest recent development has been the Williams Energy facility on Route 29 in Tunkhannock Township, a regional headquarters with office, training and support facilities.

### Mining

Mining is a major contributor to the economy and employment of the County. The mining industry in Wyoming County produces: 1) flagstone and bluestone, which are decorative building materials, 2) aggregate shale stone, and 3) sand. However, the types of sand used in fracking do not come from local quarries. The local mining industry has seen significant increases in demand from the gas industry and related road and driveway construction.



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Western settlers moved into Wyoming County in the late 1700s, establishing the Borough of Tunkhannock in 1790. The early economy was based largely on timbering. As land was cleared, agriculture became more prominent, as well as leather tanning. Quarrying of bluestone later became an important industry.



Settlers clashed violently with Native-Americans in the region during the 1770s. In 1779, General John Sullivan led an expedition of a few thousand troops through Wyoming County to address hostilities with Iroquois tribes, who were allied with the British. The expedition traveled along present-day Routes 92 and 6 and on boats on the Susquehanna River.

Wyoming County was established as a separate county in 1842. Previously, the county had been part of Luzerne County.

The North Branch Division Canal was constructed through Wyoming County parallel to the Susquehanna River starting in the 1830s. The Lehigh Valley Railroad purchased the Canal and completed tracks along the Susquehanna River in the mid-1800s. The canal, and then the railroad, helped to develop many of the towns and villages in Wyoming County.

The Nicholson (or Tunkhannock) Viaduct over the Tunkhannock Creek was completed by the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad in 1915. It is 2,375 feet long and 240 feet high. The construction required 500 workers moving massive amounts of materials. The viaduct is the largest reinforced concrete bridge in the world and is still used for freight service.

The development of the Procter and Gamble facilities in Mehoopany in 1966 greatly expanded the employment base of the County. The plant employs more than 2,000 people.<sup>1</sup>

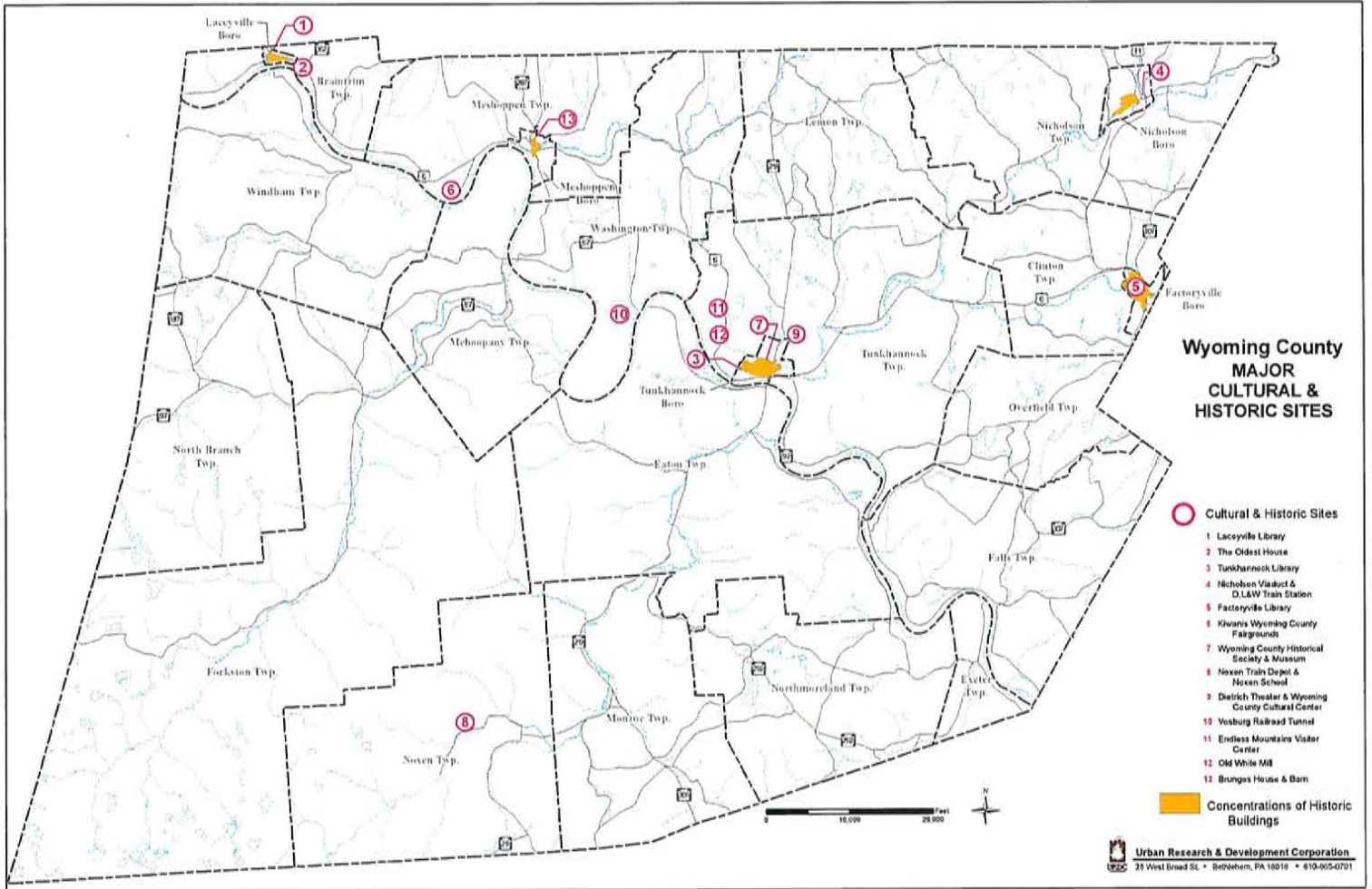
The Tunkhannock Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as is the Nicholson Viaduct. Other Wyoming County structures on the National Register include:

- The bridge over Tunkhannock Creek in the Village of Starkville, Nicholson Township,
- The former Noxen School in Noxen Township, and
- The Old White Mill off of Welles Street in Meshoppen.

Historic buildings and buildings with historic architecture are concentrated in Laceyville, Nicholson, Meshoppen and Factoryville. Notable prominent historic buildings include the County Courthouse in Tunkhannock and the Oldest House in Laceyville, which was built in 1771 on Main Street and is the oldest frame building in the four-county Endless Mountains area.

The Wyoming County Historical and Genealogical Society is based in historic former school buildings in Tunkhannock Borough. The buildings include a museum and library.

<sup>1</sup> Northeast Pennsylvania Business Journal, March 2012



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES BACKGROUND

The map on the next page shows the locations of major recreation facilities and schools. Most boroughs and townships have at least one municipal park, or sponsor one in partnership with other municipalities. Local recreation needs are also served by public school lands. The Existing Land Uses Map on a previous page shows the locations of other community facilities.

### Major Recreation Areas

Game Lands – The largest State-owned recreation area in Wyoming County is State Game Lands 57, which includes most of the southwestern part of the County. SGL 57 includes 44,600 acres, most of which is in Wyoming County. The Game Lands are mainly managed for hunting, but also are used for camping, hiking, fishing and nature study. The state lands also protect valuable natural resources and wildlife corridors. The Game Lands make up approximately 15 percent of Wyoming County. Work is underway to transform old logging roads into quality habitat for game. Local streams have excellent water quality for fishing.

State Parks – Although there are no State Parks within Wyoming County, three are located nearby. Ricketts Glen State Park is immediately south of Wyoming County’s border and includes 22 named waterfalls. Ricketts Glen includes 13,050 acres, a 245-acre lake, a swimming beach, 120 campsites, 5 cottages, and 24 miles of trails. Lackawanna State Park, east of Factoryville, features a lake, a campground and a pool. Frances Slocum State Park includes a lake and is located east of Dallas.

Little Rocky Glen – The Countryside Conservancy operates the popular 24-acre Little Rocky Glen preserve. The site is open to the public and is located south of Route 6 on Lithia Valley Road at Tunkhannock Creek. Hiking trails, a picnic shelter, and parking are provided along the creek. The preserve is used for fishing and also contains a hemlock forest and a sandstone gorge. Most parking is located on the gravel shoulder of a two-lane, curvy road.

Endless Mountains Nature Center – The EMNC is a non-profit center located along Vosburg Road. The EMNC is within Camp Lackawanna along the Susquehanna River. The EMNC contains trails, a lodge with educational displays, restrooms, a native plant garden, and a bird feeding station.

Camp Lackawanna – Camp Lackawanna is owned by a church organization and includes lodges, a pavilion, cabins, lean-tos and tent camping sites for rent. The camp also has access to the river for fishing and non-motorized boating. Additional signage and wayfinding would be beneficial for visitors driving to the area. In addition, current signage is unclear about which facilities belong to the EMNC and which facilities belong to Camp Lackawanna.

Howland Preserve – The Howland Preserve includes 667 acres along Vosburg Road that is owned by the North Branch Land Trust (NBLT). The preserve is located on a “neck” of land along the Susquehanna River and is adjacent to the Camp Lackawanna property, on which the NBLT holds a conservation easement. The preserve is open to the public for passive recreation. The NBLT is developing a plan for the property.

## Trails

Trails offer local residents a recreational activity and also attract tourists. Trail systems create physical activity environments for people of all ages. Trails promote both a healthy lifestyle and weight control.

The Iroquois Trail was constructed along a former railroad right-of-way for 1.8 miles in Tunkhannock Borough and Township. Plans are to extend the trail eastward to Lazybrook Park.

The Seneca Trail is a planned 8-mile-long walking and bicycling route in Eaton Township. The trail includes a new pedestrian bridge being constructed with PennDOT assistance. The bridge passes over Bowman Creek, which runs primarily along Route 29. The bridge replaces an older bridge. The route would mainly use Township roads and also a segment of Route 29.

The Countryside Conservancy is constructing a rail-trail, to be known as the Trolley Trail, stretching from South Abington to Dalton, running generally parallel to Route 6. Eventually, the trail will continue northwest through the Lackawanna College campus and through Factoryville. The trail will also include some loops and some on-road connections, including a connection to Lackawanna State Park. The original trolley line had an extension to the southwest of Factoryville, but the potential for acquiring any of the extended right-of-way in the future is unknown. The southwest extension used to connect to Lake Winola.

Very steep slopes limit the construction of a long, continuous recreation trail along many parts of the Susquehanna River. Also, almost all of the northern bank of the River is used by a major freight railroad. One exception is in the area of the Howland Preserve and Camp Lackawanna, at the end of Vosburg Road. Here, the railroad passes through the Vosburg Tunnel, and the riverbank is more natural. The Howland Preserve is proposing a loop trail starting at the north end of their property, continuing south along the river and running parallel to the historic canal.

The longest trails in the County are located within State Game Lands (SGL) 57, in southwestern Wyoming County. Many of the SGL trails are rugged and are not well-marked or publicized. The trails include:

- the Windfall Run Trail (5.5 miles),
- the Stack Trail (3 miles),
- the Gmitter Trail (8.2 miles), which has a trailhead along Route 29 at Noxen,
- the Rocks and Swinging Bridge Trail (1 mile), and
- the High Knob Trail (6 miles).

The main access points to SGL 57 in Wyoming County are from Wilson Ayers Road west of Noxen and from SR 3001/Windy Valley Road south of Forkston. Some roads into SGL 57 are only open during hunting season.



### Susquehanna River Water Trail

Water trails are made for boating, canoeing, and kayaking, just as land trails are made for biking, walking and running. The Susquehanna River Water Trail offers many scenic views and fishing and kayaking opportunities.

The main public access points to the Susquehanna River Water Trail include:

- Church Street in Laceyville,
- In Meshoppen,
- In Mehoopany (privately-owned),
- Howland Preserve (semi-public),
- Riverside Park in Tunkhannock,
- River Road in Falls Township,
- White's Ferry near Keelersburg, and
- West Falls in Exeter Township (which is south of the bridge).

Most of the river access points do not include quality boat ramps. Some of the sites are not easy to find. Some of the sites need improvements. The availability of additional boat or kayak launch sites would promote tourism and better serve local residents.

### Conservancy Lands

The North Branch Conservancy and the Countryside Conservancy have preserved several areas of land. Certain areas are open for passive recreation, while other areas remain in private use. The largest site is the Howland Preserve, which includes 690 acres on the north side of the Susquehanna River and is owned by the North Branch Land Trust. The conservancies have preserved lands by acquiring the land outright and by placing conservation easements on the land without taking ownership.

### Golf Courses

Wyoming County includes several golf courses, as seen on the Recreation Areas Map. Golf courses include the Shadowbrook Resort off of Route 6 and the Stonehedge Golf Course along German Hill Road.

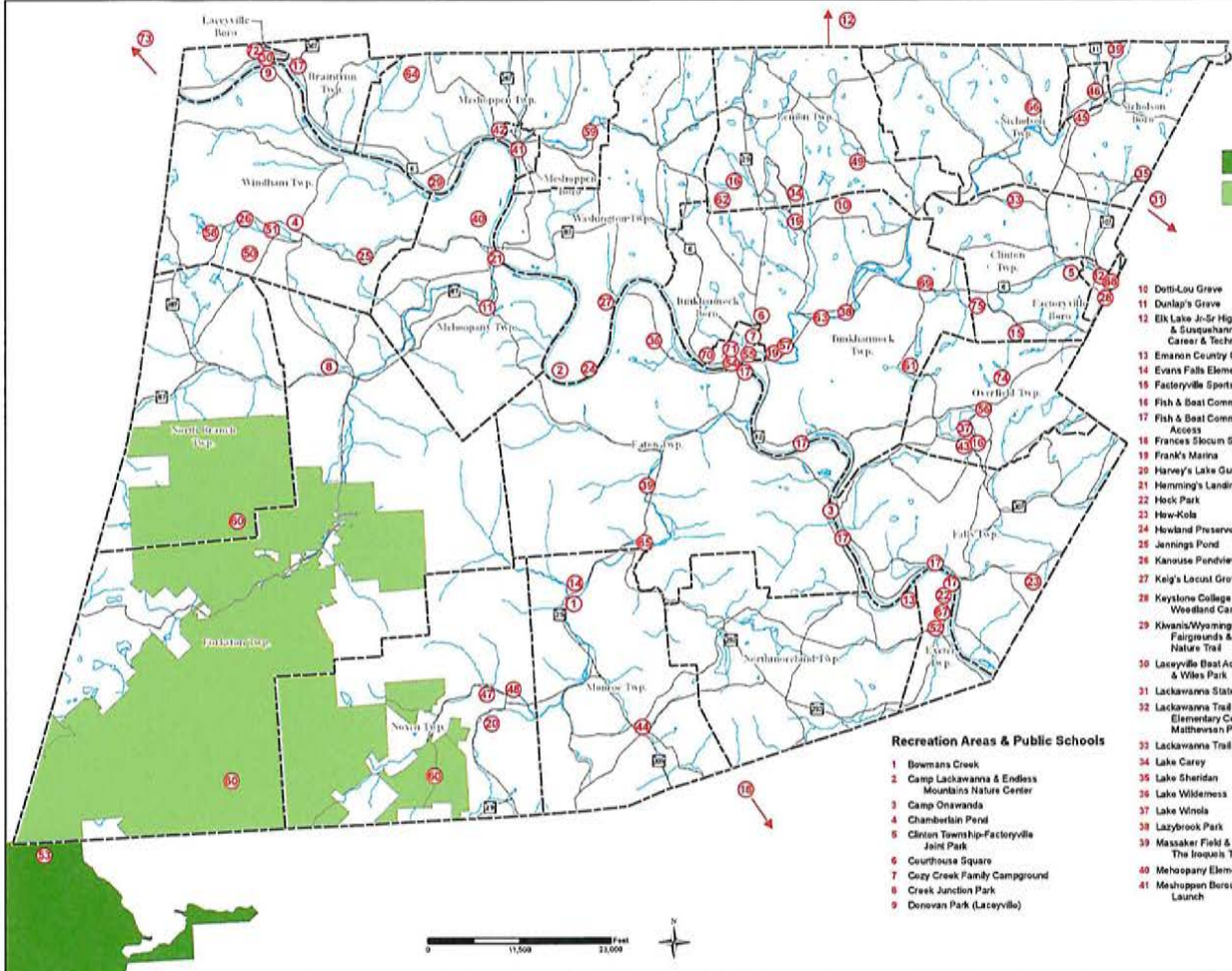
### Private Recreation Areas

Wyoming County includes several recreation solely for the use of members and guests. Private recreation areas consist of:

- camps,
- campgrounds,
- the Scranton Canoe Club property,
- Camp Lackawanna (which is a church-affiliated camp), and
- sportsmen's clubs.

# Wyoming County RECREATION AREAS & PUBLIC SCHOOLS

State Parks  
 State Game Lands No57



### Recreation Areas & Public Schools

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Bownans Creek</li> <li>2 Camp Lackawanna &amp; Endless Mountains Nature Center</li> <li>3 Camp Onawanda</li> <li>4 Chamberlain Pond</li> <li>5 Christon Township-Factoryville Joint Park</li> <li>6 Courthouse Square</li> <li>7 Cozy Creek Family Campground</li> <li>8 Creek Junction Park</li> <li>9 Donovan Park (Laceyville)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Dett-Lou Grove</li> <li>11 Dunlap's Grove</li> <li>12 Elk Lake Jr-Sr High School &amp; Susquehanna County Career &amp; Technology Center</li> <li>13 Emerson County Club</li> <li>14 Evans Falls Elementary School</li> <li>15 Factoryville Sportsman Club</li> <li>16 Fish &amp; Boat Commission Access</li> <li>17 Fish &amp; Boat Commission River Access</li> <li>18 Frances Slocum State Park</li> <li>19 Frank's Marina</li> <li>20 Harvey's Lake Gun Club</li> <li>21 Hemming's Landing</li> <li>22 Heck Park</li> <li>23 How-Kola</li> <li>24 Howard Preserve</li> <li>25 Jennings Pond</li> <li>26 Kanouse Pondview Farms</li> <li>27 Kelg's Locust Grove</li> <li>28 Keystone College &amp; Woodland Campus</li> <li>29 Kwan's Wyoming County Fairgrounds &amp; Interpretive Nature Trail</li> <li>30 Laceyville Boat Access &amp; Wiles Park</li> <li>31 Lackawanna State Park</li> <li>32 Lackawanna Trail Elementary Center &amp; Matthews Park</li> <li>33 Lackawanna Trail High School</li> <li>34 Lake Carey</li> <li>35 Lake Sheridan</li> <li>36 Lake Wilderness</li> <li>37 Lake Winola</li> <li>38 Lazybrook Park</li> <li>39 Massaker Field &amp; The Inquisit Trail</li> <li>40 Meshoppen Elementary School</li> <li>41 Meshoppen Borough Boat Launch</li> <li>42 Meshoppen Borough Park</li> <li>43 Mill City Elementary School</li> <li>44 Moreau Township Park</li> <li>45 Nicholson Borough Park</li> <li>46 Nicholson Horseshoe Park</li> <li>47 Nosen Township Park</li> <li>48 Nosen-Moreau Sportsman Club</li> <li>49 Osborn Lake</li> <li>50 Recreation Park</li> <li>51 Red's Landing</li> <li>52 Reaven Athletic Field</li> <li>53 Ricketts Glen State Park</li> <li>54 Riverview Park</li> <li>55 Roslund Elementary School</li> <li>56 Scranton Canoe Club</li> <li>57 Shadow Brook Golf Course &amp; Resort</li> <li>58 Sharpe's Lake</li> <li>59 Skumber Valley Campground</li> <li>60 State Game Lands No. 57</li> <li>61 Stonehedge Golf Course</li> <li>62 Stony Mountain Camp</li> <li>63 Stony Mountain Family Campground</li> <li>64 Story Lake</li> <li>65 Sugar Hollow Hatchery</li> <li>66 Sunrise Lake Family Campground</li> <li>67 Susquehanna Shores Campground</li> <li>68 Tolley Trail (New S. Turnpike Rd. to Lackawanna Trail. Proposed to continue through Factoryville)</li> <li>69 Tunshamock Creek</li> <li>70 Tunshamock High School</li> <li>71 Tunshamock Middle School</li> <li>72 Water Herks Park</li> <li>73 Wyalusing High School &amp; Elementary School</li> <li>74 Davis Crossing Sanctuary</li> <li>75 Little Rocky Glen</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

### Colleges

Keystone College is located along Wyoming County's eastern border, adjacent to Factoryville. Several other colleges are located within commuting distance from many portions of Wyoming County, including:

- University of Scranton,
- Lackawanna College,
- three local campuses of Penn State University (Hazelton, Wilkes-Barre and Scranton),
- Kings College,
- Marywood University,
- Wilkes University,
- Luzerne County Community College, and
- Johnson College.

Private career or technical training is also available. One example of private career/technical training is the McCann School of Business and Technology in Dickson City.

### Public Schools

The Tunkhannock Area School District (TASD) serves most of Wyoming County. In 2017-2018, TASD had an enrollment of 2,368 students, a decrease of 340 students in the past four years (since the 2013—2014 enrollment of 2,708).

The Lake-Lehman School District (LLSD) serves Noxen Township and areas to the south. In 2017-2018, LLSD had an enrollment of 1,859 students, a decrease of 131 students in the past four years (since the 2012—2013 enrollment of 1,990).

The Lackawanna Trail School District (LTSD) serves northeastern Wyoming County and areas to the east. In 2017-2018, LTSD had an enrollment of 991 students, which was a decrease of 79 students from the 2013-14 enrollment of 1,070 students.

The Wyalusing School District (WSD) serves the northwestern areas of Wyoming County and areas to the northwest. In 2017-2018, WSD had an enrollment of 1,274 students, a decrease of 69 students over the previous four years (since the 2013-2014 enrollment of 1,343 students).

The Elk Lake School District (ELSD) serves Meshoppen Borough and Meshoppen Township and areas to the north. In 2017-18, ELSD had an enrollment of 1,175 students, a decrease of 80 students from the 2013-14 enrollment of 1,255.

The Wyoming Area School District (WASD) serves Exeter Township and areas to the south. The WASD had a 2017-2018 enrollment of 2,267 students, which was a decrease of 174 students from the 2012-2013 enrollment of 2,441 students.

Wyoming County does not have a separate vocational-technical high school, although students in some school districts (such as Tunkhannock Area) can attend certain programs in their own high school, and students in other districts can attend vo-tech schools in neighboring counties.

### Library Service

Public library facilities provide important educational and informational resources and internet access. The largest public library is the Tunkhannock Public Library on West Tioga Street. Other libraries include:

- Factoryville Public Library on College Avenue,
- Kennard Library in Meshoppen,
- Laceyville Community Library on West Main Street,
- Mehoopany Area Library on Schoolhouse Hill Road,
- Schenck Library in Noxen, and
- the Wyoming County Historical Society Library in Tunkhannock.

### Emergency Management

County emergency services are managed by the Wyoming County Emergency Management Agency (EMA). The EMA is responsible for coordinating fire, police, emergency medical services (EMS), public works, volunteers, and other groups involved in emergency activities. Wyoming County EMA collaborates with the Pennsylvania State Game Commission for forest fire prevention and calls.

The Wyoming County Hazard Mitigation Plan was completed in 2013. The Plan analyzes potential local hazards, which involve mostly flooding and severe winter storms. The Plan recommends policies to prepare for natural disasters and to reduce the impacts of disasters.

### Police Service

Most municipalities in Wyoming County are served by local police services, including:

- Tunkhannock Borough,
- Tunkhannock Township (which also serves Falls Township),
- Laceyville,
- Meshoppen Borough (which also serves Mehoopany, Washington, and Meshoppen Townships), and
- Overfield Township (which also serves Factoryville, Exeter Township, Nicholson Borough and Northmoreland Township).

Some municipalities only provide police coverage during limited hours of the week. The remaining municipalities and other coverage times are served by the Pennsylvania State Police, which has a station on Route 6 west of Tunkhannock.

### Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Wyoming County provides all of the 911 emergency dispatch services. The fire companies include:

- Triton Hose (Tunkhannock Borough),
- Meshoppen,
- FWM Mehoopany,
- Laceyville Goodwill,
- Factoryville,
- Lake Winola,
- Nicholson,
- Noxen,
- Lake Carey, and
- Northmoreland.

The emergency medical/ambulance companies include:

- Tunkhannock Ambulance/Rescue/Dive,
- Meshoppen,
- FWM Mehoopany Emergency Squad,
- Lake Winola Ambulance,
- Noxen Ambulance, and
- Franklin/Northmoreland Ambulance.

Community Life Support also provides paramedic and advanced life support services from their facility west of Scranton.

Hospital services are provided at Tyler Memorial Hospital, a 48-bed full-service acute care facility in Tunkhannock. Many patients are also served by hospitals in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

### Solid Waste and Recycling

Solid waste is collected by private contractors. Recycling is not mandated by state law for most municipalities. However, several areas, such as Tunkhannock Borough, have curbside pickup of recyclables by their solid waste contractor. Wyoming County also operates a drop-off recycling center on Route 92 next to the Tunkhannock Township Building. The County also sponsors electronics recycling. A private waste contractor also operates a separate drop-off site.

### Wastewater Treatment

Wastewater (sewage) treatment facilities are concentrated within the boroughs and immediately adjacent areas. The central wastewater systems include:

- Factoryville (which also serves parts of Clinton Township),
- Tunkhannock Municipal Authority (which also serves the surrounding area),
- Laceyville,
- Meshoppen,

- Mehoopany Township,
- Westgate,
- Lake Winola,
- Eaton Sewer and Water Company, and
- Nicholson Borough Authority (which constructed a new system in recent years).

The Aqua Company took over the former Washington Park system and built a new treatment plant. The Wyoming County Housing Authority also operates two small treatment plants for its developments, and several manufactured home parks and apartment complexes have separate sewage disposal systems. The Rivercrest, Highfield and Saddle Lake developments all include private sewage disposal systems. Most other areas use individual on-lot septic systems.

For several years, Tunkhannock Township and Lemon Township have been jointly studying the potential extension of central sewage service to the Lake Carey area. A revised Sewage Facilities Plan has been approved by the PA Department of Environmental Protection. The Plan estimates that extending the current system to Lake Carey would cost \$9.5 million to serve 385 properties -- slightly under \$25,000 per property.

The Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537) was enacted to correct existing sewage disposal problems and prevent future problems. Act 537 is largely administered by individual municipalities, but may be administered by regional entities.

Homes and businesses throughout Wyoming County that do not have access to central sewage systems use on-lot septic systems. However, outdated systems or systems that are not properly maintained can be a significant source of groundwater contamination and health risks.

State regulations require tests of soil and permeability conditions before a site can be approved for an on-site septic system. In areas with soil limitations, sand mounds may be required to allow an on-site septic system. A sand mound system requires wastewater to pass through an elevated mound of sand for additional filtration after the effluent passes through the septic tank.

### Water Service

Each borough in Wyoming County, as well as several other developed areas, have central water systems. The following points describe water service in Wyoming County.

- The Washington Park system, Rivercrest in Tunkhannock Township and the Factoryville/Clinton Township/Bunker Hill systems are owned and operated by the Aqua Water Company.
- The Laceyville system also serves a small part of Braintrim Township.
- The Tunkhannock Borough Municipal Authority serves the Tunkhannock region.
- The developed area of Eaton Township is served by the Eaton Sewer and Water Company.
- The Nicholson Borough Authority, Mehoopany Township Municipal Water Authority and Meshoppen Borough Water serve their respective boroughs.
- The Noxen system is operated by United Water.
- Other central water systems centered on small developments are:

- Clarendon Acres in Tunkhannock Township,
- Westgate in Washington Township,
- Lake Winola, and
- Several small manufactured home parks.

Most public water supply systems in Wyoming County, such as in Laceyville, Tunkhannock and Factoryville, rely upon wells. To be sure that water systems with wells can continue operating if something goes wrong, the system must have enough water storage and a back-up water supply (such as a second well) if the main well becomes contaminated. Many water systems in Wyoming County must be aware of possible problems and have emergency plans because the systems are too far apart to be interconnected with other water systems.

Most rural areas use private wells. Pennsylvania does not regulate the construction of private wells. Some municipalities in Pennsylvania have adopted their own ordinances to set minimum construction standards for wells, which include making sure the wells have a proper casing.

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission allows private water companies serving the gas industry to withdraw millions of gallons of water per day directly from the Susquehanna River and other waterways. The amount of the allowed withdrawals depends on the average flow of each waterway.

## TRANSPORTATION BACKGROUND

The expansion of the gas industry greatly increased the number of heavy trucks carrying drilling equipment, water and other materials. The heavy trucks have taken a tremendous toll on area roads. At the same time, the industry has also made major improvements to many roads.

On-going improvements to Routes 6/11 in the Factoryville area will increase safety. Most other PennDOT projects involve replacing or making major repairs to bridges. The Transportation Plan chapter discusses traffic volumes, crash statistics, air transportation, rail transportation, and public transportation.

### Highways

Major traffic routes in and through Wyoming County include:

- U.S. 6, which extends across the entire length of Pennsylvania and connects to the Scranton area and I-81.
- PA 87, which extends from U.S. 6 in Washington Township to Lycoming County.
- PA 92, which connects U.S. 11 in West Pittston to Tunkhannock, Nicholson and points to the north.
- PA 107, which extends from U.S. 6/11 in Factoryville to U.S. 6 in Jermyn.

- PA 187, which extends from PA 87 to the PA/NY border.
- PA 267, which connects U.S. 6 to the PA/NY border.
- PA 292, which connects PA 29 near Evans Falls to PA 92 in Exeter Township.
- PA 307, which extends from PA 435 to PA 92 in Tunkhannock Township.
- PA 367, which extends from U.S. 6 in Braintrim Township to PA 267.

### Transportation Planning

Wyoming County is part of the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), along with Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, and Tioga Counties. The NTRPDC serves as the professional planning staff for the five-county area. One of the commission's many duties is to guide the transportation planning process required by the federal government. The process encourages public participation and ideas and also makes sure that transportation funds are spent on the highest priority projects. As a result of the transportation planning process, PennDOT and the NTRPDC produce four major plans/programs:

1. Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan – The Statewide Long-Range Plan is developed by PennDOT in collaboration with the NTRPDC and other county transportation planning organizations. The plan provides a vision, sets broad goals and direction, and is updated every four years.
2. Northern Tier Long-Range Transportation Plan – The regional long-range plan is developed by NTRPDC in collaboration with PennDOT and local governments. The plan identifies projects by priority: near-term (1–4 years), mid-term (5–8 years) and long-term (9–12 years). The plan is updated every four years.
3. Northern Tier Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) — The TIP must be updated every two years. The TIP is very important because the projects listed for the next four years are recommended by local officials, in priority order.
4. 12–Year Program — The 12–Year Program document includes all projects intended for state and federal funding in the next 12 years, using input from NTRPDC.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BACKGROUND**

Wyoming County and the local Chamber of Commerce hired the Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development at Wilkes University (“The Institute”) to develop an Economic Development Study and Plan for the county. The following points summarize the information and findings of the report. Please see the full report for additional details.



## Methodology

The following techniques were used to directly collect data:

- interviews with “stakeholders”, or local persons who know about the local economy, including representatives from local governments, the Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau, nonprofit organizations, and a variety of businesses,
- a survey of business owners within the County,
- a survey of municipal government representatives,
- an initial set of meetings with County and Chamber staff,
- an online survey of businesses that are members of the Chamber of Commerce, and
- an online survey of municipal officials.

The results of the data collection provided a detailed picture of Wyoming County's economy to understand the needs of the County's businesses and to develop recommendations to enhance economic development.

## Stakeholder Interviews

When asked about “your overall perception of the economy in Wyoming County,” stakeholders responses were almost entirely positive. The image of the local economy was largely attributed to the presence of both Procter & Gamble and the natural gas drilling industry. Many persons thought that downtown Tunkhannock has become more vibrant in recent years.

Many businesses serve the gas industry directly. In addition, workers in the natural gas industry and landowners who have opened their land to natural gas drilling now have more money to spend. However, some respondents were not as sure of the industry’s local effects, noting that many workers in the industry are transient so that 1) much of the wealth generated by the natural gas industry goes out of state and (2) local housing construction has not increased. One participant noted that there may be too much emphasis on natural gas, suggesting that the County should diversify the economy to avoid negative impacts during down-cycles in the natural gas industry.

Many respondents mentioned historic downtown Tunkhannock as a major asset, with strong dining and entertainment offerings. Participants identified The Dietrich Theater as a key part of the downtown's revitalization.

The survey respondents also identified tourism as an asset. The County has numerous festivals, events, and attractions that help bring in visitors from outside the area. Events such as the Airing of the Quilts, Christmas in Our Hometown, Founders Day, and River Day were mentioned as assets. Several interviewees mentioned the Susquehanna River as a key element of tourism.

When asked about “challenges faced by local businesses,” competition was mentioned most frequently. The number of “big-box” (such as Wal-Mart and Target) and chain businesses in the County has been an increasing. Several interviewees cited a belief that larger stores are harmful to small family-owned businesses in the area. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned competition

with larger retail centers outside the County. Local business owners indicated significant competition with neighboring counties, and more than one interviewee mentioned that the local population seems very willing to travel to businesses in Lackawanna or Luzerne Counties rather than patronize local shops. In other words, local retailers are having difficulty competing with shopping malls.

Parking in Tunkhannock was mentioned as a challenge during peak periods of demand, such as over the lunch hour. Public parking areas may also need better identification and signs. One interviewee believes that the 2-hour parking limit in Tunkhannock is too restrictive and is not long enough for people to shop, have a meal, see a movie, or other downtown activities.

Another interviewee commented that many small business owners are interested in doing business with the gas industry and employees. However, local business owners may not understand how to attract the gas industry businesses and employees.

At least one interviewee mentioned government regulation as a challenge. The respondent(s) cited both federal and state policy, such as environmental regulations, and local regulations, such as zoning.

When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the local workforce, most of the concerns came from businesses that need specialized skills. Several participants expressed a need for additional vocational and post-secondary training, including technical degrees, certification in trades, and commercial driver's licenses (CDL). One participant noted difficulty in finding CDL drivers due to a lack of candidates with clean driving records who will meet insurance requirements. The stakeholders interviewed indicated a severe need for CDL drivers in the region.

While many workers in the natural gas industry have come from outside the area, more than one interviewee reported increases in local workers receiving training for natural gas industry jobs. Several interviewees raised concerns about the ability of the local school districts to prepare graduates for the job market. However, other interviewees indicated that the public schools do a good job of preparing students for jobs or for post-secondary education.

Several participants mentioned the lack of a local vocational/technical high school as a potential impediment to job training. Currently, students have to leave the County to receive many types of vocational and technical training.

When asked about experiences with local governments, interviewees who were not business owners tended to report positive relationships between businesses and local government. In general, interviewees indicated that they were able to resolve permitting issues. However, some business owners reported problems with permitting. Several mentioned that signage on local businesses was a sticking point with local governments and zoning boards. One participant believes that permit approvals move too slowly and could be expedited. Another said that sometimes zoning or building regulations work against businesses.

Interviewees were also asked about the infrastructure to support business. Most interviewees felt that the County's transportation infrastructure is adequate but is also a matter of concern. Several felt that, while the natural gas industry heavily damaged some roads, the industry was also contributing

to repair or upgrade roads. One interviewee suggested that the railroads in the County are underutilized and that rail availability should be marketed to industries using rail service.

Many interviewees commented about the limited availability of natural gas service for local homes and businesses. Participants identified a demand for natural gas service, but the relatively small total number of potential customers has not provided enough financial incentive for UGI to make service available.

One participant expressed a desire for increased sewer service in the County, particularly on the Route 29 corridor. Also, respondents reported that high-speed internet service was unavailable in many parts of the County. Where available, the service has insufficient quality.

Most interviewees reported a limited amount of buildable land available for businesses in the County. Most available open land is either too steep to build on, or is prone to flooding, or does not have good road access.

Interviewees were asked about changes in the County's economy over the last 5 to 10 years, and many persons said the changes were mostly positive. However, the recent addition of "big box" and chain retailers has challenged locally-owned businesses with increased competition.

When asked "What would be welcome additions to the business community?", the most frequently cited requests were for additional retail, hospitality, and service businesses. Several participants expressed a desire for more industries, including an industrial or business park.

Some participants desired a compressed natural gas station for vehicles. One person indicated that plans for a natural gas station may already be in the works. A large truck stop was also mentioned as a need, particularly on the Route 6 corridor.

Asked about "what is working and not working" in economic development, most interviewees had positive opinions of the Chamber and its efforts. Several suggested that some municipal ordinances could be changed to better promote economic development. Respondents cited several samples:

- more consistency in zoning between municipalities,
- eliminating overly burdensome zoning regulations,
- expediting the permitting process, and
- coordinating zoning between municipalities.

Several interviewees said that the Chamber was already doing enough for economic development. In some cases, respondents felt that local government should be doing more, such as providing incentives and reducing regulations.

Some respondents requested improved public transit, but most recognized that public transit is difficult to provide with the low population density of Wyoming County. Several interviewees thought that additional biking trails and parks should be built to grow the tourism industry.

Some felt that the Chamber could spread the economic development message more broadly by using

the internet and social media. Some participants felt that the Chamber should help local governments meet difficult state and federal regulations. Others suggested that the Chamber should help set up mentorship programs between established business owners and new businesspersons.

Of the 84 businesses responding, 24 (or 29%) said they were planning to expand the size of their business facility within the next three years. The questionnaire then asked what types of resources, programs, or services are required to grow their business (table on following page). More than 40 percent of the respondents selected “marketing and public relations” as a service that was necessary to grow their business, followed by social media marketing at approximately 30 percent.

The respondents were also asked to discuss changes necessary for their business to improve or expand. Five responses occurred repeatedly:

- 1) improve the state of the economy and economic growth,
- 2) increase marketing and advertisement of products and services offered,
- 3) reduce taxes and costs as well as government regulations,
- 4) find qualified employees and other resources, and
- 5) facilitate the process of receiving loans and grants.

One struggle of the smaller businesses is convincing the consumers to buy local, which benefits both the local business and the local consumer.

**What types of resources/programs/services do you need to grow your business?  
(Select all that apply.)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (of 84 total responses)</b>
Marketing and Public Relations	34	40.5
Social Media Marketing	24	28.6
Networking	20	23.8
Hiring Employees	16	19.0
Access to Capital	12	14.3
Internet/Technology	12	14.3
Other	12	14.3
Business Planning	8	9.5

Source: stakeholder interviews

The survey also asked respondents to provide an opinion on needed improvements to the regional transportation infrastructure that would benefit their specific business. Two responses were common:

- Roads need to be better maintained.

- More public transportation must be available.

Other responses included:

- Bridges must be repaired.
- Certain roads must be widened.
- Complete street address information should be provided so that all locations can be found using GPS systems.
- Provide greater access to reliable high-speed internet service.
- Provide better cell phone coverage.
- Extend natural gas service to areas of the County that are now unserved.

### **Local Government Survey**

As part of the Economic Development Plan, an electronic survey was distributed to municipal officials throughout the County. The questionnaire included a list of 16 issues and asked respondents to select the most important issues facing their municipality. The two issues noted most frequently were roads/bridges (cited by 72 percent of the respondents) and public safety (45 percent). The issues of insufficient revenues, sewers, and economic development were also cited as important.

Respondents were also asked to answer the following open-ended question, "Is there any way the County government could help your municipality in any of these areas?" Responses included:

- Lead efforts to develop more parks and recreational facilities with open space,
- Raise funding for recreation facilities,
- Have block grants available for infrastructure,
- Provide assistance in regional police, and
- Provide assistance with downtown development.

Other issues that the municipal officials said are desired include:

- Increase funding for major road and bridge repairs.
- Increase funding for sewage projects, and other needs.
- Improve Routes 29 and 309, especially to increase capacity and safety.
- Expand sewer and water services along additional portions of the Route 29 corridor.

## GOALS: THE OVERALL DIRECTION OF THE PLAN

The Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan builds upon the great assets of Wyoming County, including the wonderful, high-quality creeks, the Susquehanna River, the scenic beauty of the County, the strong agricultural heritage, the thousands of persons employed by Procter and Gamble, the economic activity from the gas industry, and the historic towns and villages.

Wyoming County is the gateway to the larger Endless Mountains area, and is within convenient driving distances of tens of millions of potential visitors. The Susquehanna River has insufficient public access, which results in the river being underused as a recreational and tourism resource. While some of the river access is constrained by very steep slopes and the railroad that runs along the entire north side of the river (except near Camp Lackawanna), other access points could be added and improved.

The County also has opportunities to build on existing economic activity, such as

1. Providing natural gas service to local businesses and homes.
2. Seeking additional businesses that serve the gas industry and Procter and Gamble.
3. Seeking expanded use of compressed natural gas in trucking.

The Economic Development Plan section also includes an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

### MAJOR GOALS

The following text presents the major goals of the Plan. More specific “objectives” are listed under many of the goals.

#### Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation

- Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the creek valleys, lakes, wetlands and steeply sloped woodlands.
  - Protect the flows and quality of groundwater, creeks and the Susquehanna River.
- Work to continue agricultural activities and maintain an attractive rural character in large portions of the County.

#### Land Use and Housing

- Provide for orderly patterns of development that are compatible between land uses, particularly to protect the livability of existing residential areas.
  - Direct most new growth to areas within boroughs and areas with existing central water and sewage systems, in order to minimize the amount of farmland and forests consumed by each new use.

- Provide areas for a range of housing types and densities to meet needs of various types of households.
  - Strengthen and protect older residential neighborhoods, with an emphasis on encouraging home-ownership, rehabilitating older buildings, and avoiding incompatible development.

#### Economic Development

- Expand business activity to increase tax revenues and job opportunities.
  - Promote compatible types of business development in various areas.
  - Build upon the economic assets of the County, including the Procter and Gamble facilities, the natural gas resources, the historic downtowns, the forests, the Susquehanna River and other outdoor recreation opportunities.
  - Strengthen the downtowns and promote redevelopment of older business areas.
  - Provide for growth and employment in the unconventional gas industry, while also maintaining public safety, public health, environmental protection and safe transportation.
  - Improve access to job training programs so that County residents can take advantage of higher-paying jobs.

#### Historic Preservation

- Preserve important historic buildings and areas.

#### Transportation

- Make well-targeted cost-effective improvements towards congested and less safe road segments, in cooperation with PennDOT and adjacent landowners/developers.
  - Control heavy truck traffic, through-traffic and higher-speed traffic on residential streets / roads.

#### Community Facilities and Services

- Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner.
  - Provide phased extensions of public water and sewage services.
  - Expand the existing trail, parks and preserved open space system, including improving public access to waterways.
  - Emphasize coordination of municipal and emergency services across municipal borders.

*Putting The Plan Into Action*

- Continually work to put this Plan into action through a program of updated planning and short-term actions that maintain a long-range perspective.
  - Promote substantial citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues.



## NATURAL FEATURES AND AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PLAN

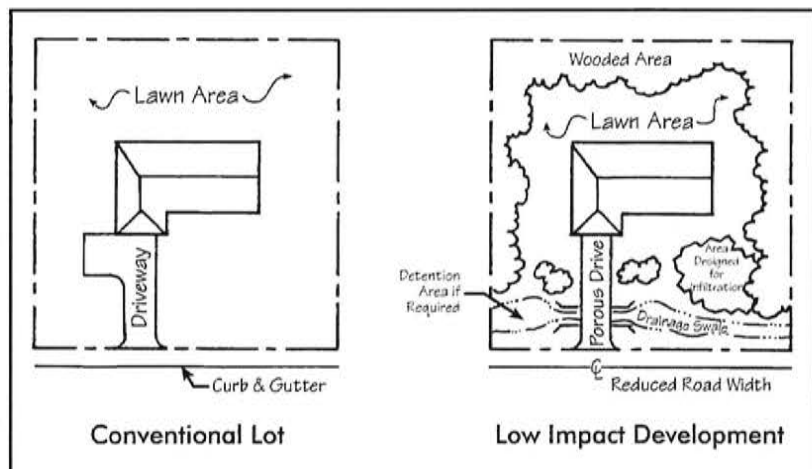
Land in Wyoming County varies greatly in its suitability for different intensities of development. Some areas, such as flood-prone areas, very steep sloped lands and wetlands, are not suitable for any development. Other areas are only suitable for very low-intensity development, such as moderately steep areas. Still other areas are appropriate for intensive development.

Policies involving outdoor recreation and greenways are addressed in the Community Facilities and Services Plan section, which also summarizes the recommendations of the Northern Tier Open Space, Greenway and Outdoor Recreation Plan. In addition, the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership has prepared a Strategic Action Plan that emphasizes organizational and educational efforts to improve the Susquehanna River Greenway corridor.

### Promote Low-Impact Forms of Development

Development can be designed to have a reduced impact on the environment by:

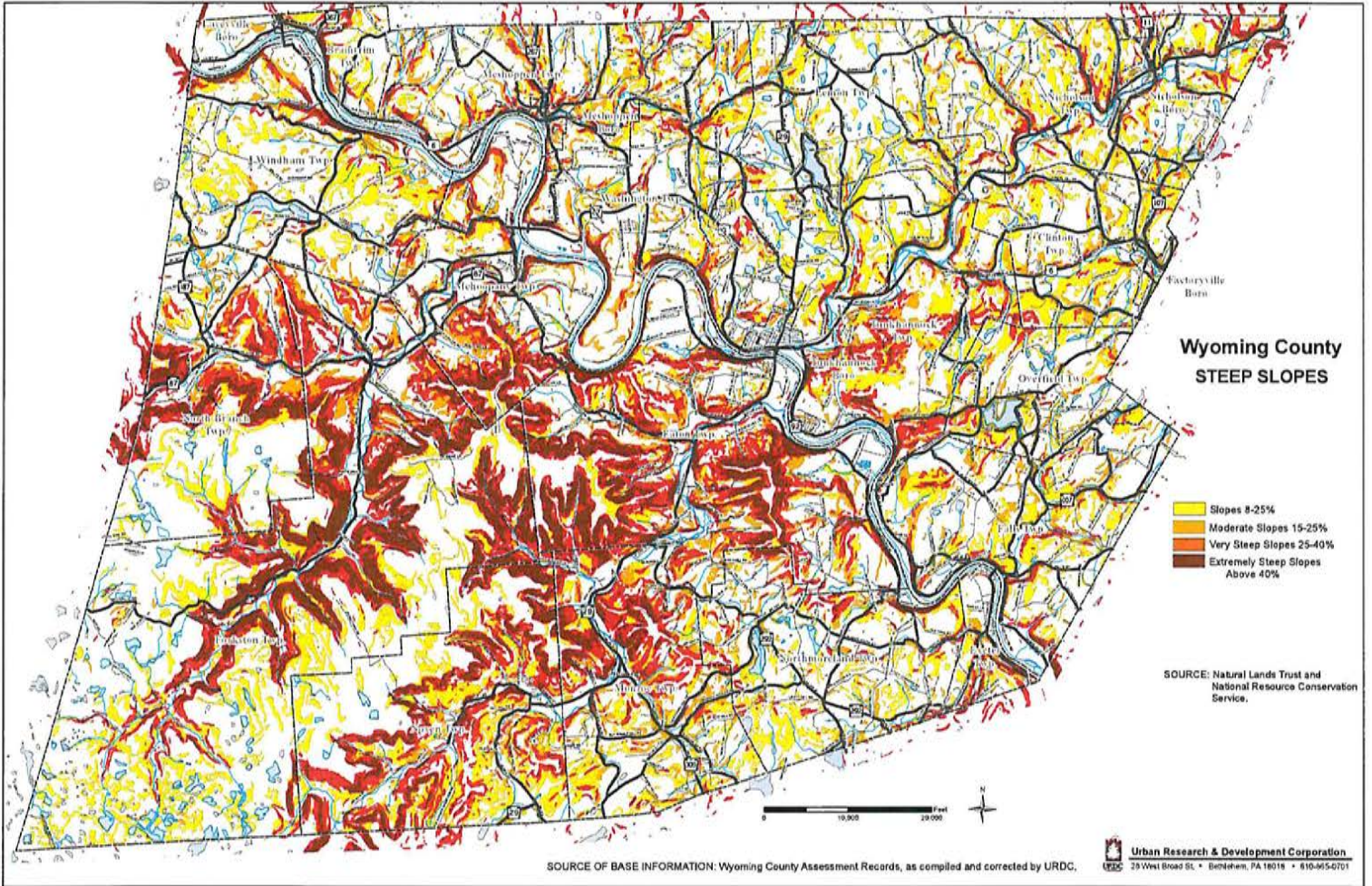
- minimizing regrading,
- maintaining natural drainage swales in open space,
- preserving existing trees and thick vegetation,
- planting new trees instead of expansive lawn areas,
- using porous paving that allows groundwater to infiltrate into the ground, and
- adding rain gardens to promote infiltration.

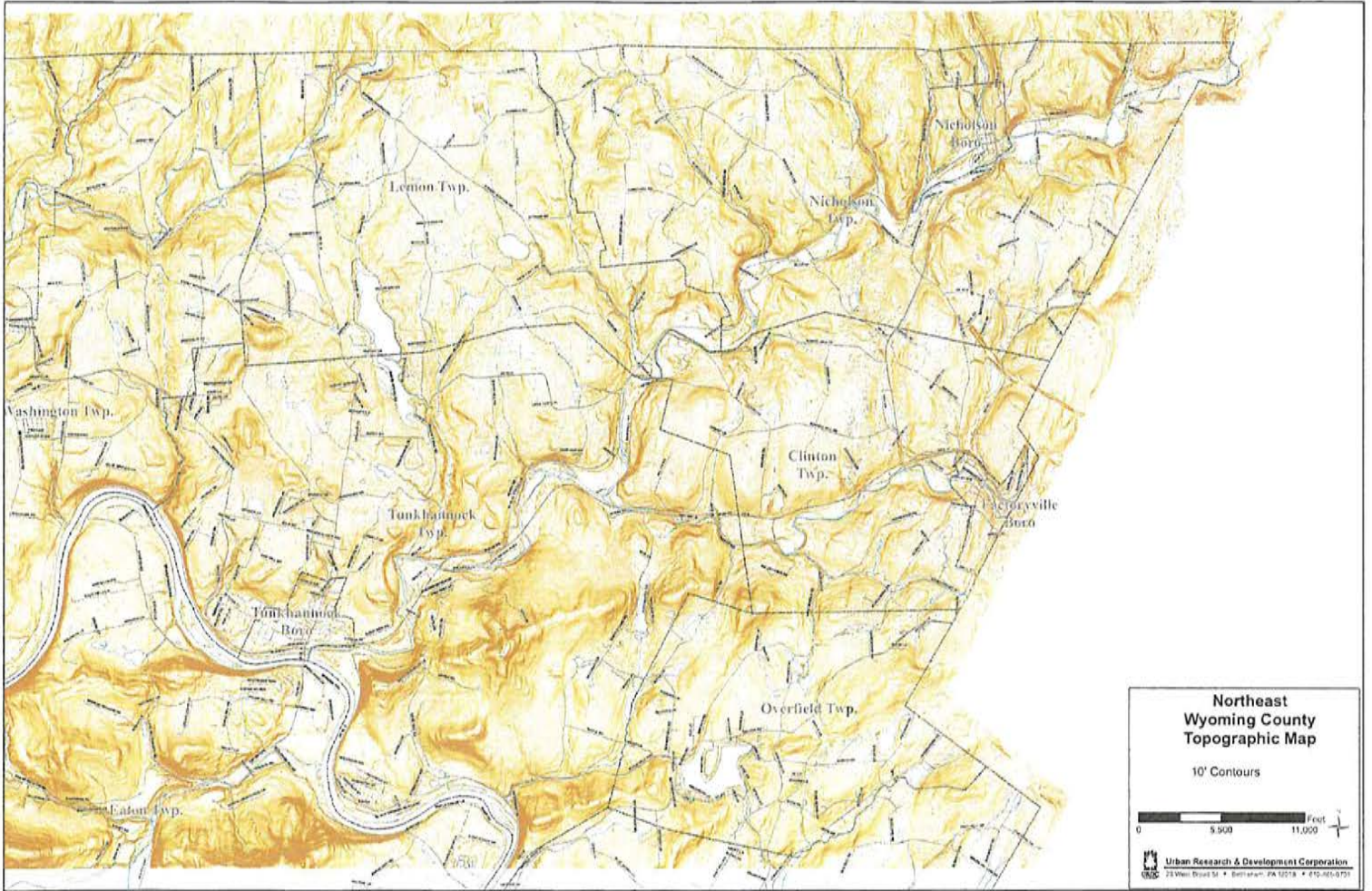


### Limit intensity of development on very steeply sloped lands.

Large concentrations of very steep slopes are shown on the Steep Slope Map. The Topography Maps show the more detailed contours of land throughout the four quadrants of the County.

A 15 percent slope has a rise of 15 feet for every 100 feet of horizontal distance. Moderately steeply sloped lands (15 to 25 percent) are generally only suitable for low-intensity development. Very steep lands (over 25 percent) are generally not suitable for any development.






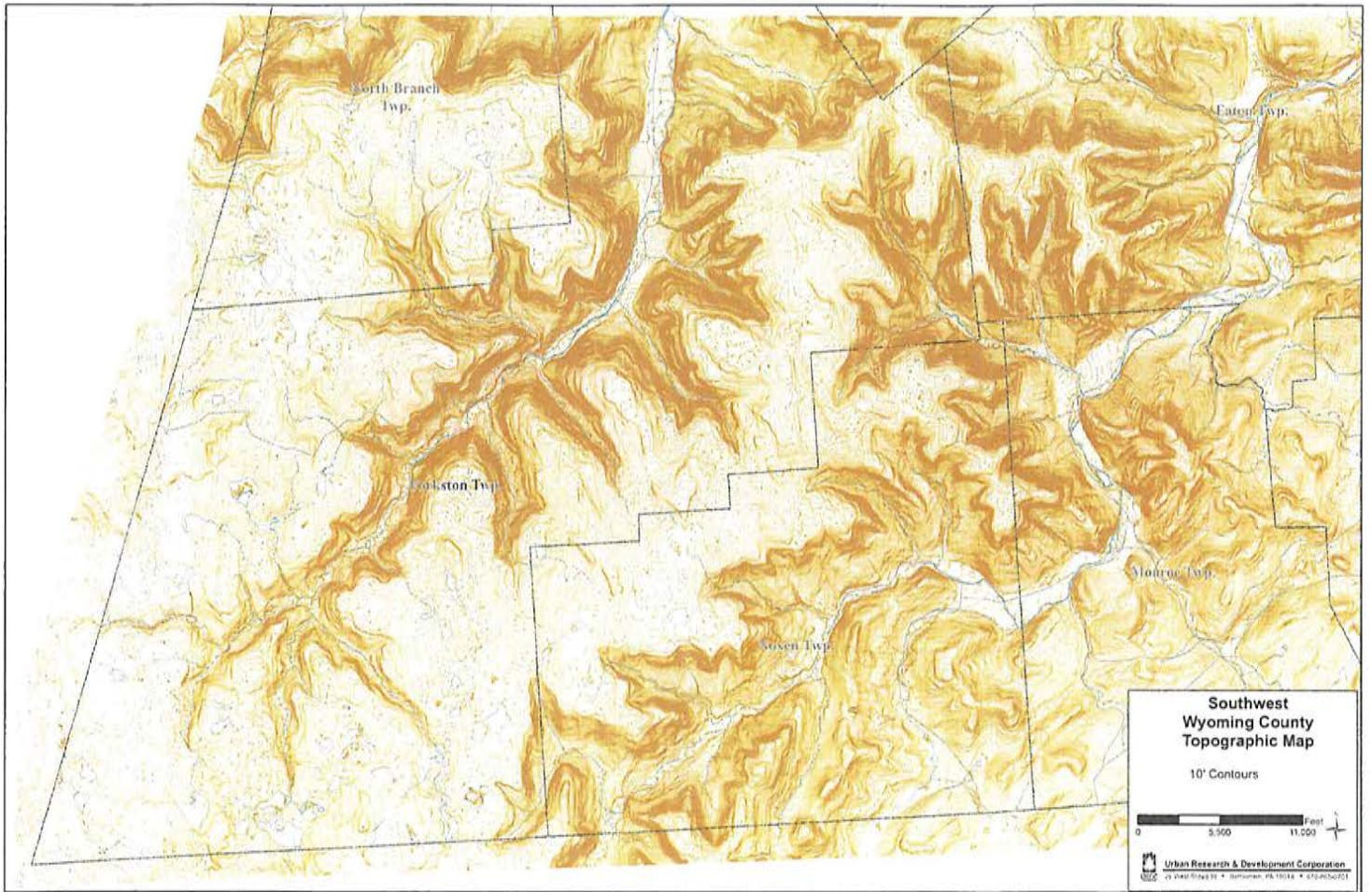


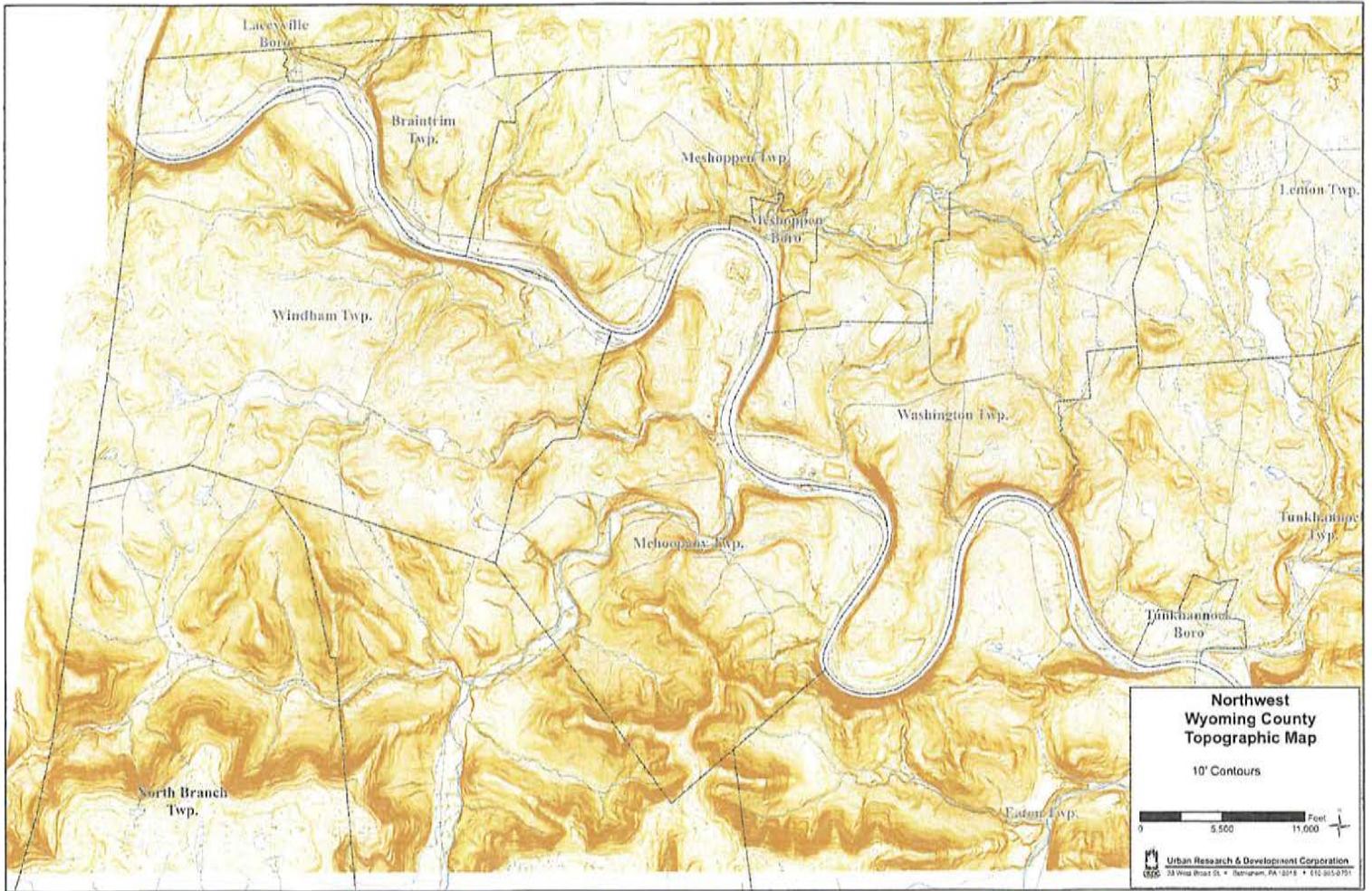
**Southeast  
Wyoming County  
Topographic Map**

10' Contours

0 5,500 11,000 Feet

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The steepest slopes are concentrated in the southwestern quarter of the County, including along the Mehoopany Creek Valley and west of Route 29. A large percentage of the steepest-sloped areas are within State Game Lands. Other concentrations of very steep slopes include:

- Along Route 87,
- On Miller Mountain in eastern Eaton Township,
- Along portions of the Susquehanna River,
- On Osterhout Mountain east of Tunkhannock,
- North of Meshoppen,
- North of Laceyville, and
- Surrounding Nicholson Borough.

It is important to limit intensive development and to maintain natural vegetation on steeply-sloped lands to avoid:

- Erosion problems,
- High speed storm water problems,
- Overly steep roads and driveways,
- Excessive costs to construct and maintain roads and utilities, and
- Destruction of scenic natural resources.

Steeply sloped roads and driveways are also hazardous in icy conditions, and can be difficult to access with fire trucks and ambulances.

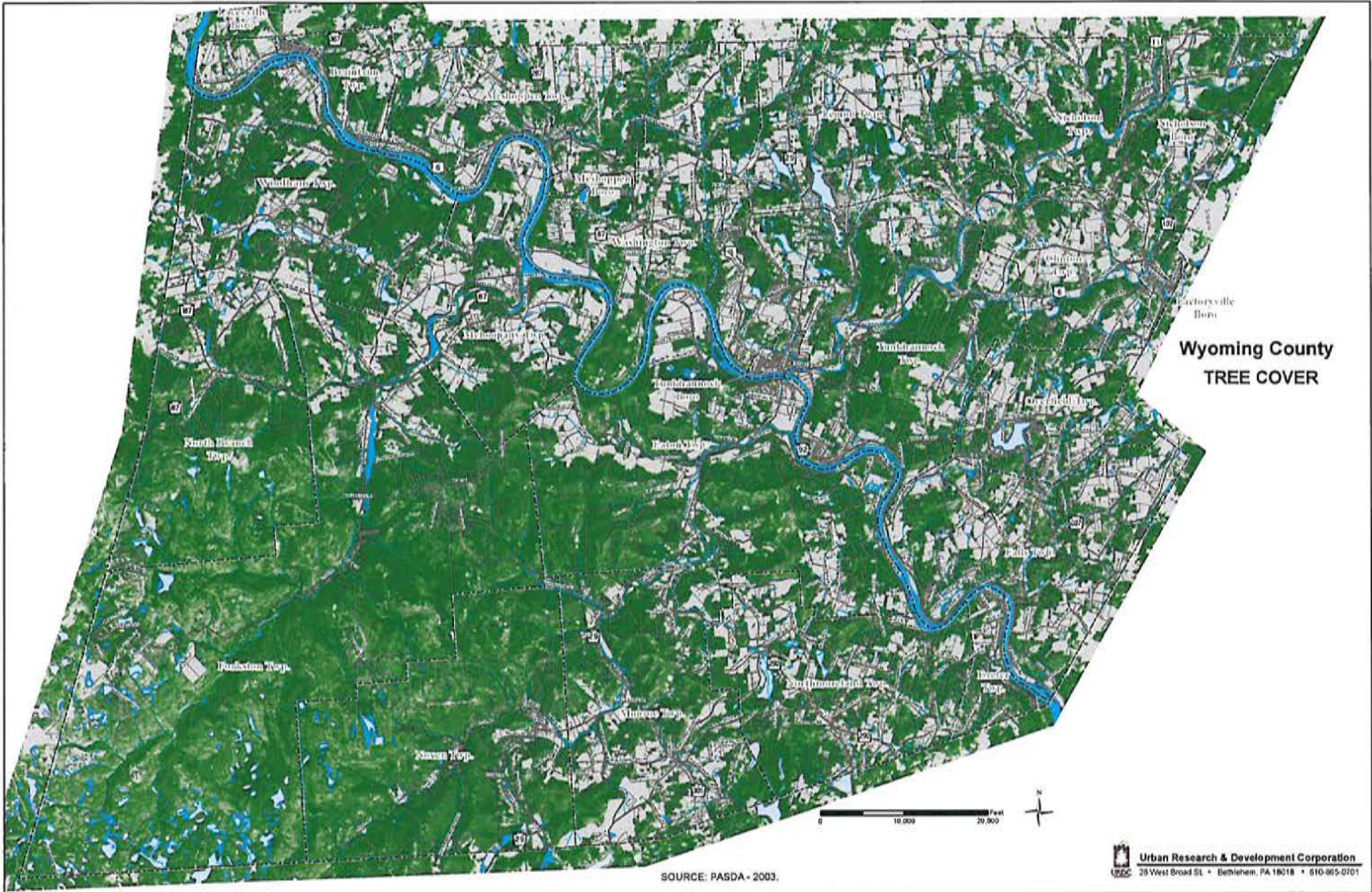
The County and municipalities should consider strengthening zoning regulations to control development on steeply-sloped lands. For example, if a new principal building would be proposed on steep slopes, larger lot sizes could be required. The additional requirements would not apply if a portion of a lot was steeply sloped but was not proposed for any development.

An alternative is to regulate the amount of steep slope areas that may be disturbed. For example, townships might require a minimum lot size of at least 1-2 acres if a principal building would be built on 15-25 percent slopes, and 2-5 acres if the building would be built on slopes greater than 25 percent. Some slope controls could also be placed in the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), to apply to municipalities without zoning.

#### **Promote proper management of forested areas.**

Woodlands are also important for the County's wood products businesses. With proper long-term management, woodlands can continue to provide needed lumber, while also providing environmental benefits. The Tree Cover Map on the following page shows the locations of wooded areas. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that forests covered 66.5 percent of Wyoming County in 2010, while agriculture covered 23.7 percent of the County.

Most forested areas of the County are located on areas that were too steep, too wet or too rocky for crop farming. The woodlands in the County add character to the landscape, help preserve the water quality of creeks and provide important wildlife habitats. Trees also are important to purify the air and control erosion. The root systems of trees and other woodland vegetation stabilize the soil, preventing erosion. Woodlands act as natural stormwater control by absorbing and reducing runoff.



**Wyoming County**  
**TREE COVER**

SOURCE: PASDA - 2003.

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The Penn State University School of Forestry reports that 75 percent of forested land in Wyoming County is in private ownership, which comprises 137,000 acres. These forests have 5,623 owners. They report that approximately 7,822 persons work in forest or forest product businesses within Wyoming County.

There are problems with destructive pests harming forests. One of the biggest threats is the Emerald Ash Borer, which is a type of beetle. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry has begun releasing biological control agents to start to control it. Certain insecticides can also be used to protect trees before they are infested. To avoid spreading this and other pests, firewood should not be imported from other areas.

Gypsy moths have again become a serious problem. Counties can agree to participate with the state in spraying to control the problem. Spraying operations normally emphasize public lands, but a County can expand spraying to large areas of privately-owned forests, which will better contain the problem.

Forestry must be allowed in all municipalities under Pennsylvania law. However, proper erosion controls should be in place.

In development plans, developers should be required to show that they have minimized the removal of woods as part of their project. Great care should be used during construction to minimize the number of trees that are removed. Trees can add substantial value to a residential lot. During construction, temporary fences should be placed around trees to prevent the compaction of root systems by equipment and to prevent damage to tree trunks.

A variety of programs can provide funding for tree planting, particularly in towns and along waterways. These programs are described in the Appendices. A Federal conservation program also provides funding to farmers who take steep areas and areas along creeks out of crop production.

### **Seek to conserve Unique Natural Areas.**

The Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) identifies important land areas that provide habitats for national, statewide and locally important, rare, threatened, and endangered species of plants and animals within Wyoming County. The inventory was updated in 2005 by the Nature Conservancy. Sites are mapped and ranked from highest importance to the least. Most of the high-priority sites are within the State Game Lands or islands within the Susquehanna River. A number of the river islands are owned by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

The NAI ranks the following sites as having the highest priority, in terms of natural diversity:

- Bartlett Mountain in Forkston Township, which is within the State Game Lands.
- Coalbed Swamp in North Branch Township, which is within the State Game Lands.
- Tamarack Swamp in North Branch Township, which is within the State Game Lands.
- Perrins Marsh in Northmoreland Township, south of Center Moreland.
- Schmitthener Lake in North Branch Township, which is within the State Game Lands.
- Turkey-foot Island in Windham Township, which is within the Susquehanna River.
- Broadbent Swamp in Clinton Township, which is west of Lithia Valley Road.
- Falls Cliff in Falls Township, which is along Hopy Road, south of Falls Road.

- Keelersburg Island in Eaton, Falls and Northmoreland Townships, which is within the Susquehanna River.
- Scottsville Island in Meshoppen Township, which is within the Susquehanna River.
- Splashdam Pond in Forkston Township, which is within the State Game Lands.
- Tunkhannock Islands in Eaton Township, which are within the Susquehanna River near Tunkhannock Borough.

When lands are proposed for development in these areas, state environmental permits will often require that measures be used to minimize the disturbance of these types of habitats.

### **Maintain open space corridors for wildlife.**

Ideally, corridors along steeply sloped areas and along creeks would be permanently preserved as inter-connected open space. In addition to the benefits of preserving natural features, these inter-connected corridors also provide cover for wildlife to move throughout the region. It is particularly important to have areas with woods or other thick natural vegetation that connect large areas that have been preserved. Too often, land preservation involves fragmented areas that do not allow for wildlife travel.

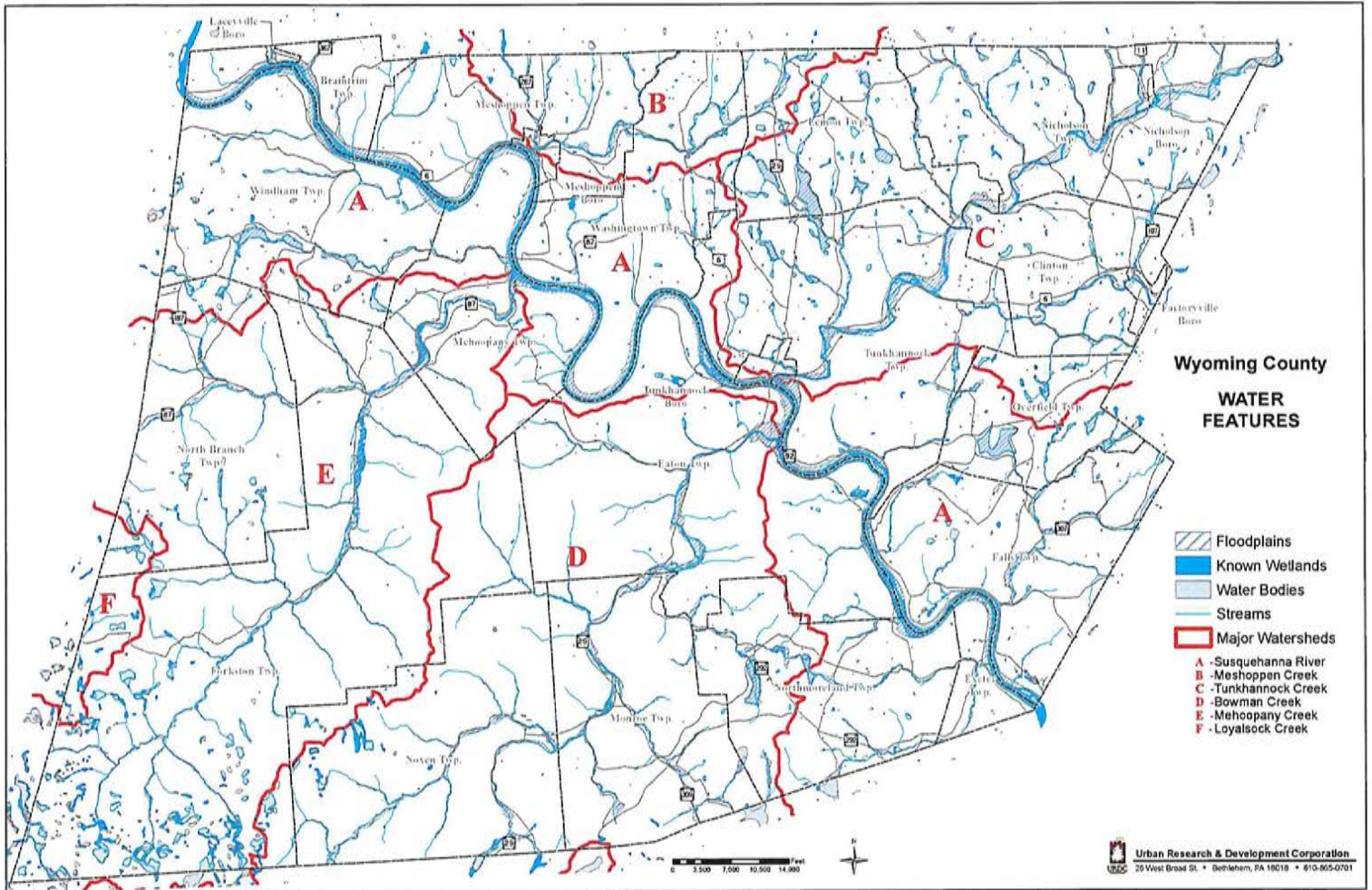
### **Preserve wetlands.**

Protecting wetlands is extremely important to protect water quality, control flooding, provide aquatic habitats and recharge groundwater. Wetlands are defined based upon the soil types, depth of the water table and types of vegetation. Wetlands not only include swamps, but also areas that are typically wet during parts of the year. The municipalities and local residents need to help state and federal agencies ensure compliance with wetland regulations.

Larger areas of known wetlands are shown on the Water Features Map on the following page. However, additional wetlands must be mapped as part of any development project.

In addition, areas with “hydric soils” that are likely to include wetlands should be identified. Within suspect areas, an applicant for development should be required to provide a study by a qualified professional that determines whether wetlands will be disturbed by the proposed development.

Each township should consider requiring a setback of at least 20 feet between a designated wetland and a proposed new building. The setback is valuable to help keep construction equipment out of the wetlands and to avoid other alterations to wetlands after construction. A larger setback may be suitable for larger and more ecologically important wetlands. An exception could be included for wetlands that were man-made. Establishing wetland setbacks in a borough is much more difficult but should be considered in conservation-oriented portions of a borough, such as near public wells.



### Carefully manage waterways and watersheds.

A watershed is an area where all runoff is naturally directed into a particular creek or river. Watersheds are defined by topographic ridge lines, which may be prominent ridges or less notable areas of high ground. Since the activities occurring within a watershed affect the quality of the collecting stream, environmental protection measures are often performed on a watershed basis.

Wyoming County is completely within the Susquehanna River Watershed. As seen on the Water Features Map,

- Most of the southwest area of the County flows to Mehoopany Creek.
- Most of the south central area of the County flows to Bowman Creek.
- Most of the southeast area of the County flows to Buttermilk Creek.
- Most of the north central area of the County flows to Meshoppen Creek.
- Most of the northeast area of the County flows to Tunkhannock Creek.

Each of the creeks then flows to the Susquehanna River. The one exception is an area on the western edge of Wyoming County along the Sullivan County line that flows west to the Loyalsock Creek.

Waterways are valuable aquatic habitats that provide both active and passive recreation opportunities. Pennsylvania's water quality standards designate protection categories for streams, which determine water quality regulations for discharges into the waterway. Pennsylvania uses the following categories of streams:

- EV, Exceptional Value Waters – a stream or watershed that is an outstanding resource, such as:
  - a) waters of national, state or county parks, State Game Sands or State Forests,
  - b) waters which are used as a source of unfiltered potable water supply,
  - c) waters which have been classified by the PA Fish & Boat Commission as “Wilderness Trout Streams”, or
  - d) other waters of substantial recreational or ecological significance.
- HQ, High-Quality Cold Water Fisheries – streams that are managed for fish accustomed to cold water and that have excellent water quality.
- CWF, Cold Water Fisheries – streams that should be protected as habitat for cold water fish.
- WWF, Warm Water Fisheries – streams that are intended for fish accustomed to warm water.
- TSF, Trout Stocking – trout and fish species that are accustomed to warm water are stocked and promoted.

Exceptional Value and High Quality designations not only include additional requirements for water pollution but also, in most cases, require that a vegetated buffer at least 150 feet wide be maintained on each side of the creek for many types of developments.

Wyoming County includes three relatively small watersheds that are designated as Exceptional Value:

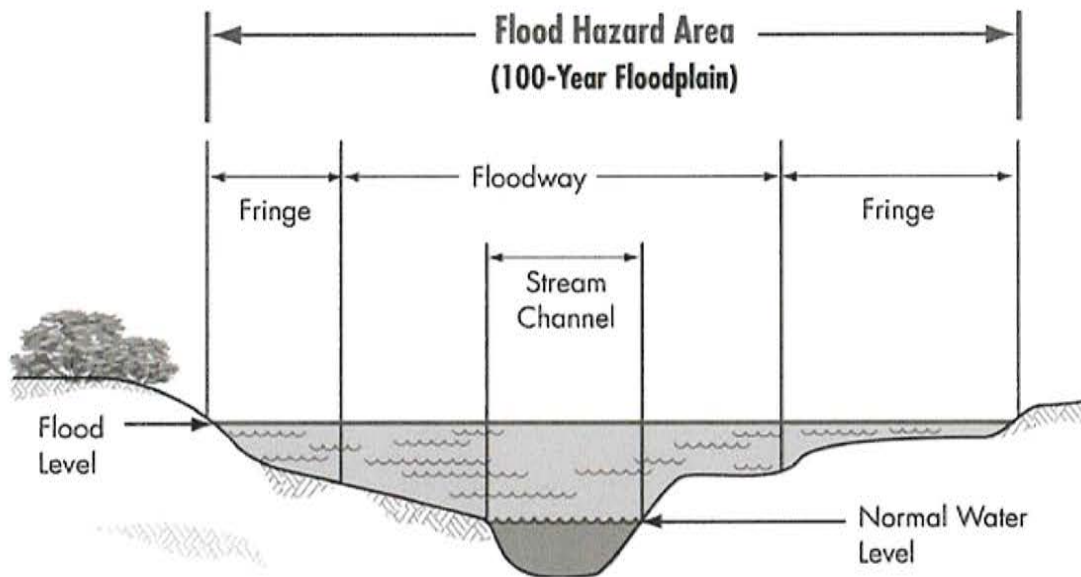
- 1) Cider Run, which is within the State Game Lands,
- 2) Sober Run, which is near Noxen, west of Route 29, and
- 3) the area along the Sullivan County border that flows into the Loyalsock Creek.

The southwestern one-third of Wyoming County is classified as “High Quality” watersheds. The area includes the Bowman Creek watershed and most of the Mehoopany Creek watershed.

Most of the remaining areas in Wyoming County are simply classified as Cold Water Fisheries, without any special water quality protections. Some are trout-stocked.

### **Minimize flooding hazards.**

“100-year floodplains” are areas expected to be inundated in the worst storm expected in an average 100-year period (see graphic below), according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In other words, the areas have a one percent chance of flooding in any given year. Floodplains are shown on the Water Features Map. Each municipality has floodplain regulations to meet State and Federal standards, using floodplain maps provided by FEMA.



The 100-year floodplain is comprised of the floodway (which is the main channel that carries floodwaters and has the strictest regulations) and the adjacent flood fringe (which often has less deep flooding). Ideally, the entire 100-year floodplain would be kept free of all new buildings and any structures that could catch debris and obstruct floodwaters, as well as any hazardous materials that could be carried by floodwaters.

Thick vegetation along floodplain areas also produce environmental benefits. The benefits include erosion control, sustaining water quality by filtration, and shading streams and habitats for many flora and fauna.

Wyoming County has experienced several major flooding events, including back-to-back storms in September 2011. The storms destroyed or damaged multiple buildings and eroded parks and stream banks with 10-12 inches of rain. Many persons had to be evacuated to shelters, and some water rescues were needed.

The 2011 flood caused the highest flood levels on record for the Susquehanna River at Meshoppen: 44.5 feet, which was one foot higher than the previous record of Hurricane Agnes in 1972. In the past, Agnes was considered equivalent to a 100-year storm, or the worst storm expected in an average 100-year period. (FEMA now refers to a 100-year flood as a "1% flood" because the estimated chance of such an event is one percent in any given year.)

The highest recorded flood level along the Tunkhannock Creek at Tunkhannock was 20.9 feet in 2006, compared to 13.7 feet in 2011. Other severe flood events were in 1996 and 2004.

In May 2014, FEMA sent out a written advisory to Wyoming County and many municipalities stating that the 100-year floodplain elevation in the watershed is estimated to be from two to six feet higher than shown on the latest official floodplain maps. Specifically, FEMA estimates that the 100-year flood levels are 4.3 feet higher along the Susquehanna River at Meshoppen than is shown on current floodplain mapping. FEMA is asking municipalities and the County to warn applicants for building permits because the floodplain maps "significantly underrepresent actual flood risk."

If the official FEMA floodplain maps would be revised, more properties would be required to have flood insurance to comply with mortgages. The flood insurance premiums could also increase because of the increased hazards. However, FEMA reports that there are no current efforts to revise the official floodplain maps.

At the same time, some property-owners should be encouraged to buy flood insurance, even though the insurance may not be required by the mortgage company. Flood damage is typically *not* covered in the standard homeowner insurance policy. However, flood insurance is inexpensive if a property is not within an officially mapped floodplain.

Freeboard is the difference in height between the bottom of the lowest level of a building and the anticipated height of floodwaters during a 100-year storm. For municipalities and projects that are under the Wyoming County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), a 1.5-foot minimum freeboard already applies. However, the provision only applies to subdivisions and land developments.

Pennsylvania's model floodplain ordinance recommends that every municipality require a 1.5 feet freeboard above the regulated flood elevation. The model also says that the freeboard can be increased based upon local conditions and historical data. For example, a floodplain ordinance could require that the lowest level of a new or substantially renovated building be elevated a minimum of 3 feet above the official regulated flood level. The space below that elevation might not be enclosed, but, instead, typically involves piers or support columns.

Increasing the freeboard requirement would not require any additional persons to buy flood insurance. Also, the increase would not require changes to existing buildings, except if any renovation increases the value of the building by more than 50 percent. (A building owner may also receive

FEMA funding assistance to help pay to elevate an existing building.)

If a municipality increases the freeboard above the official flood level and completes the paperwork under the federal Community Rating System, flood insurance premiums might be lowered for everyone in that municipality. The higher the freeboard requirement, the more points the municipality receives towards achieving an insurance premium reduction.

For the last several years, the federal government has been offering substantially lower flood insurance costs to the owner of an existing or new building that is elevated above the official flood level. The higher the elevation, the greater the reduction in costs. The provision is described in a FEMA online brochure entitled “Cheaper Flood Insurance.”

The floodplain ordinances in the townships could be strengthened by prohibiting any new principal buildings in the 100-year floodplain. Currently regulations allow a new building in parts of the floodplain if the building is elevated and flood-proofed. However, the more restrictive provision may not be acceptable in the boroughs because the policy may adversely affect revitalization efforts.

In 2013, Wyoming County adopted an updated Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is available online. The Plan identifies major flooding problem areas and recommends various projects to address the problems, such as clearing debris from creeks and culverts. Federal mitigation funds are expected to be available to carry out some but not all of the projects.

FEMA has provided a majority of the funds needed to buy some properties with repetitive flood damage. The land is typically turned over to the municipality for use as parkland, as occurred in Tunkhannock Borough and Eaton Township.

Many residents are seeking additional cleanup work along creeks to increase the capacity of the flood channels, but the work can be difficult because of federal and Pennsylvania requirements. Local officials and other municipal officials throughout Pennsylvania have noted the difficulty of reducing flood conditions along creeks. Many creeks have become filled with sediment and debris, which has caused floodwaters to rise. Concerns have been expressed throughout Pennsylvania that state and federal regulations make it very difficult for local officials to have mechanical equipment enter a creek to clear it. However, trees and debris are allowed to be pulled out of a creek if the equipment does not enter the creek.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reports an ability to give approval over the telephone for emergency removal of trees, rocks or debris blocking creeks that could cause increased flooding. Activity involving 1) creek dredging, 2) changes to the stream bank or the channel of the creek, or 3) use of mechanical equipment within the creek all require a more involved permit process. Some activities also require approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Some permits require the preparation of extensive plans by a professional, which can be expensive. If a wetland is involved, obtaining approval to alter the wetland is extremely difficult.

DEP does not typically approve dredging of creeks because, the Agency reports, dredging can have unintended consequences, including harm to fish life, increased downstream flooding, and increased erosion. DEP also reports that minor dredging of a relatively narrow creek bed often has little impact on reducing flood levels, because the floodplain is often so much wider than the creek bed.

Municipalities should watch out for items stored within flood prone areas that could be carried by floodwaters and could become obstructions to floodwaters. Property owners should be encouraged or required to move such items, as well as fallen trees, out of the floodplain. Pennsylvania law specifically requires floodplain ordinances to regulate storage of petroleum products and hazardous materials within the floodplain, both of which could cause severe water pollution. Accessory buildings are often placed near creeks without permits and are carried away by floodwaters.

Even baseball backstops (which catch debris) can become obstructions to floodwaters. One municipality designed backstops with hinges so the bottom section lifted up during floods.

Some other municipalities notify residents that they are willing to assist, if needed, in removing fallen trees from creeks, if the landowner provides written permission and signs a liability waiver for the Township.

### **Protect creek corridors with thick vegetation along creeks.**

Land along creeks can be preserved in private ownership, in public ownership, or by homeowner associations. Land along creeks is particularly valuable for public passive recreation, particularly for hiking trails and picnic areas.

The primary goal is to maintain thick natural vegetation along creeks and to replant areas along creeks where thick vegetation does not exist. The thick vegetation is essential to provide high quality habitat for fishing, to avoid erosion, and to filter out eroded soil and pollutants from storm water runoff. At best, to maintain the proper temperature of creeks and filter out pollutants, mature canopy trees should be maintained over a creek, in addition to the thick underbrush. While mowed grass is better than pavement, thick vegetation is much more beneficial to water quality.

The municipal zoning ordinances could also be strengthened by requiring a setback of approximately 25 to 100 feet from the bank of perennial creeks. (A perennial creek carries water throughout the year, except possibly during drought conditions.) The setbacks should vary by zoning district. For example:

- A relatively narrow width, such as 25 feet, may be necessary in denser areas of the boroughs.
- A larger setback, such as 100 feet, would be appropriate along the Susquehanna River.
- A setback of 75 feet from perennial creeks should suffice in the townships.
- A 50-foot setback might be suitable from perennial creeks in the boroughs outside of the downtowns).

In the townships, the setback should apply for buildings, parking areas and business storage. The distances may be required from the top of the primary bank, the centerline of a creek, or the average water level.

Within watersheds that are classified High Quality or Exceptional Value under Pennsylvania regulations (as described above), the DEP requires a 150-foot wide buffer on each side of the waterway *in most cases*, as of 2015.

The preservation and creation of vegetated drainage swales should be encouraged. Vegetated



channels slow runoff, allow recharge and filter out pollutants.

The locations of potential chemical hazards to water supplies should be identified. Local fire companies should be aware of the hazards and be well-trained and prepared to quickly address any potential leaks, spills or other emergencies.

Continued efforts are needed to educate owners of properties with on-lot septic systems about the need for proper operation and maintenance of the systems to avoid groundwater pollution. The municipalities should continue to work to identify malfunctioning septic systems and inadequate cesspools and should require timely repair or replacement of the systems. Lower income homeowners can apply for low-interest loans from PennVEST to help fund repairs.

### **Use a range of methods to fund land conservation.**

Open space can be preserved in public, semi-public or private ownership. Natural open space should be preserved to:

- Protect the quality of creeks and the groundwater,
- Provide an important visual relief between developments,
- Preserve areas of scenic beauty, including scenic views, while also promoting tourism,
- Avoid development on lands that are prone to erosion or are otherwise not physically suitable for development,
- Reduce flooding, slow the speeds of stormwater runoff, avoid soil erosion and allow for recharge back into the groundwater,
- Maintain vegetated natural areas that filter pollutants from runoff before the water reaches waterways,
- Protect trees that improve air quality,
- Provide land for a wide range of recreational activities,
- Promote exercise that is essential for physical and emotional health and weight control,
- Preserve habitats and cover for birds, fish and wildlife, and
- Provide opportunities for children to connect with nature.

Greenways are linear natural corridors, such as stream valleys or ridgelines, which conserve important natural resources. Some greenways cross privately-owned lands and are only intended for natural feature conservation. On the other hand, public greenways are often intended to allow public access for bicycling, hiking, kayaking, and other recreation. Some greenways also include trail links, which are not only useful for recreation but may also be used for trips to work, school or stores.

Conservancies can work with individual landowners to find ways to preserve the land. Methods often include purchasing a property for a price that is lower than market value, and then helping the property-owner receive a Federal income tax deduction for the difference between the market price and the sale price. Conservancies often work with landowners to find ways to sensitively develop part of the property while permanently preserving other parts.

"Conservation easements" can be used to permanently preserve land without outright purchase of the land. Under a conservation easement, the land remains privately-owned. The property owner

voluntarily agrees to donate or sell the right to develop the land. In addition, the owner agrees to place a restriction in the deed of the property which becomes binding on all future owners of the land. The easement can be written in many different ways to restrict or not restrict certain types of activities. Most conservation easements prohibit the construction of new buildings and subdivision of the land. Conservation easements also may prohibit intensive forestry and regrading of the land. A conservancy is often paid to oversee the easement.

A property owner may also receive federal income tax benefits from donating a conservation easement. The benefit would come from a complete donation of the easement or a sale of the easement for a price that is less than the value of the easement. For example, if an area of land is worth \$1 million, the development value might be \$800,000. The remaining \$200,000 would be the residual value of the property after the easement. If the landowner donates a conservation easement, it may be possible to deduct \$800,000 from his or her taxable income. By selling the easement for \$200,000, the owner may be able to deduct \$600,000 from his or her taxable income: \$800,000 of value minus the \$200,000 purchase price. The method is known as a "bargain sale". The same type of deduction could apply if the land is sold outright to a municipality or conservancy for less than market value.

A program is available through Wyoming County to purchase conservation easements for agricultural land, as described later in the Plan.

A variety of state funds also available through DCNR for purchase of recreation land or conservation easements. The programs typically require a 50-50 match with other sources of funding, and the programs are very competitive. One portion of the money is specifically set aside for applications sponsored by conservancy organizations.

Municipalities have additional alternatives to raise money for purchase of recreation land and preservation of open space. A township or borough is also allowed to use municipal funds to buy easements on agricultural land. Township programs to preserve farmland are particularly worthwhile to preserve farms that do not rank highly under Wyoming County's easement program. These alternatives to raise funds should be considered especially to provide matching dollars for Pennsylvania and Wyoming County grants.

One land preservation alternative is to require developers to provide recreation land within new developments or to pay recreation fees "in lieu of" providing recreation land. Such requirements are allowed under Pennsylvania law if they are placed in a SALDO. The Land Use and Housing Plan also describes incentives that can be used in zoning to result in higher percentages of open space within new development.

A second alternative is to set aside funds from the general fund budget or to issue a municipal bond for land purchase and preservation.

A third option is to ask voters to approve the municipality issuing a bond for land purchase and preservation. The referendum may also involve asking voters to approve an additional tax that would be dedicated to land purchase. A bond is typically issued, with the annual payments on the bond paid from the tax receipts. State law allows voters to approve an increase in the earned income tax (up to 0.25 percent) or an increase in the real estate tax millage (up to 2 mills).

Land can be preserved through the following ownership methods:

- Fee Simple Acquisition - The most effective means of preserving land is through fee simple purchase. Fee simple purchase gives the owner complete control of the land, including all public access and conservation practice decisions. In most situations, fee simple acquisition is also the most expensive method of land control. Therefore, many entities interested in land preservation, particularly public agencies or land conservancies with limited budgets, will explore other, less expensive options for land control.
- Easements - Conservation easements are frequently used for environmental or agricultural preservation without providing for public use of the land. A conservation easement involves a landowner voluntarily selling the development rights to a property in return for compensation. The landowner continues to own the land and can sell it, but the uses of the land are limited. The easement typically prohibits non-agricultural development, except for one or two houses.

A conservation easement can also be combined with a pedestrian easement to allow certain public access. State law limits the legal liability of landowners who allow a public trail to cross the property.

The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA) is the statewide organization of nonprofit, land conservation groups. PALTA has developed model easements that are available on the association website (<http://www.conserveland.org>). The model easements include: Conservation Easement, Riparian Forest Buffer Protection Agreement, Trail Easement Agreement, Fishing Access Agreement, and Water Quality Improvement Easement.

- Joint-Use Easement – The joint-use easement accommodates multiple uses under one easement. Joint-use easements are particularly appropriate for public utility corridors. Electric transmission lines, sanitary sewer lines, petroleum or gas pipelines, and other such corridors often contain a cleared pathway, making the easement ideal for trail connections. However, most utility companies do not have the legal rights to allow public access to their current easements.
- Purchase and Leaseback or Resale - A conservancy can purchase land, place restrictions on the deed prohibiting certain uses (such as non-agricultural development), and then sell or lease the land to interested parties. The original buyer gains the potential for future use at the current price and may recover some or all of the purchase price through leasing. The land is maintained in open space and may be developed as a park if and when future demand warrants. Resale of some or all of the land with deed restrictions may maintain open space, relieve the municipality of maintenance obligations, and return the land to the tax rolls.
- Donations - Open space can be acquired through donations from private owners, organizations, and corporations, particularly if the land has limited development value. If the land does have development value, federal income and estate tax provisions may benefit the donor.
- Land Exchange - A land exchange, or “land swap”, is useful when a private landowner and a conservancy or municipality both own land that would be more appropriate to the mission of the other entity. For example, a residential developer may own a wetland area next to a park,

while a township government owns a vacant tract near an existing developed area. With a land exchange, the environmentally sensitive land is preserved, and the developer builds houses in an appropriate location. Any mismatches in land value can be negotiated.

- Municipal Ordinances - Municipal zoning ordinances and subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDOs) offer one of the least expensive methods to protect environmentally-sensitive land, such as by restricting the intensity of development near creeks and on very steeply sloped lands.
- SALDO Recreation Land - The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) allows municipalities to require that residential developers dedicate land for public recreation. Municipalities must have an adopted recreation plan and SALDO provisions specifying the requirements. With mutual consent of the municipality and the developer, fees can be paid in place of requiring land. The fees must be used to acquire or improve recreation land.
- Official Map - The Official Map is a tool that can be used to effectively give a municipality the right of first refusal for up to a year to buy land for a trail or public parkland. The Official Map is described in the Action Program of the Plan.

#### **Use state-authorized tax incentives to promote voluntary land preservation.**

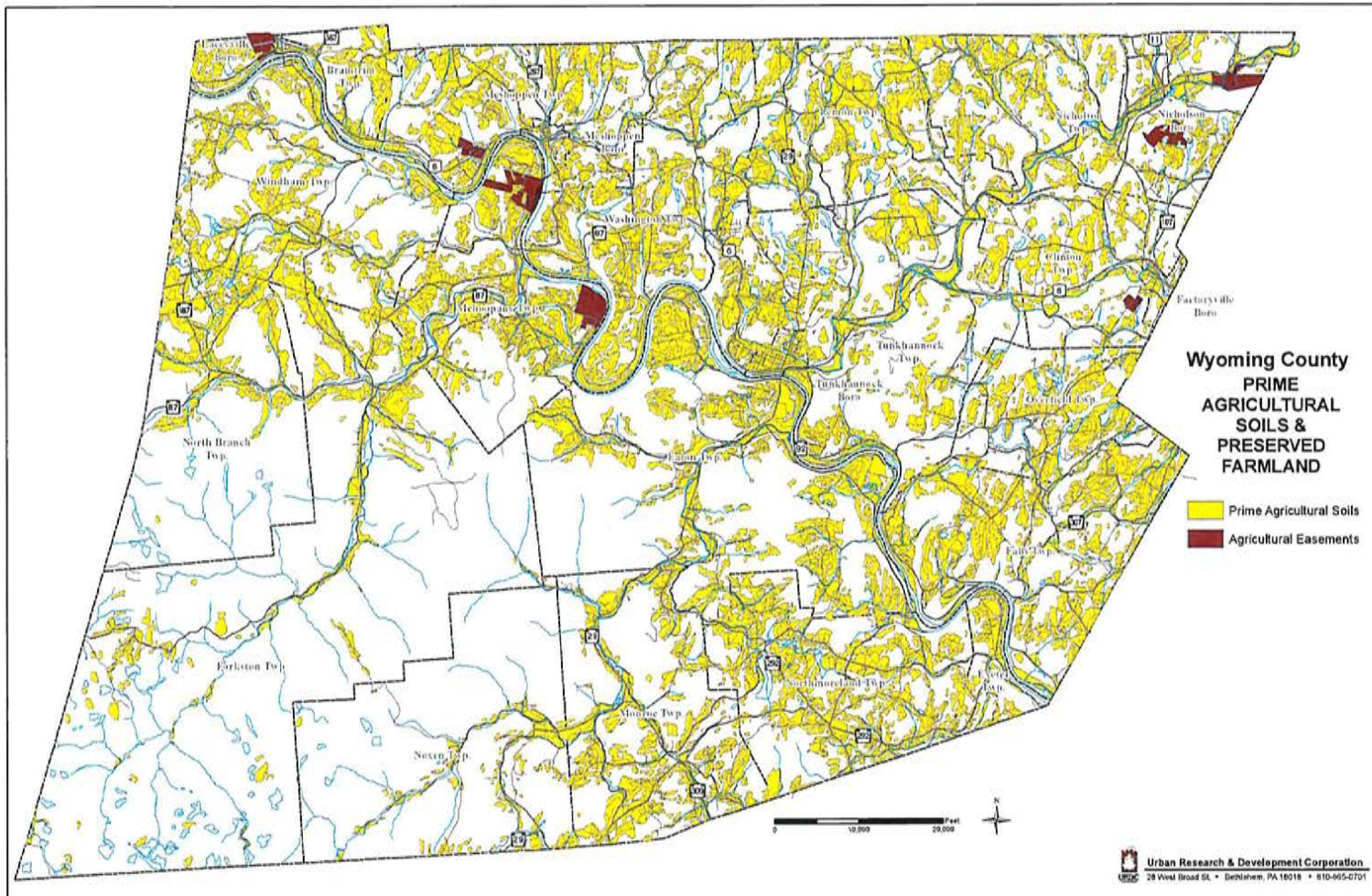
Almost all eligible lands in Wyoming County take advantage of the state's Act 319 program to have real estate tax assessments reduced while the land remains undeveloped. However, Act 319 does not provide any long-term preservation of land. Land under Act 319 can be developed at any time, if the landowner pays back taxes and interest. Therefore, a stronger incentive is needed for permanent preservation.

Act 4 of 2006 is a state law that can be used to help preserve additional land through permanent easements. The municipalities, school district and county can jointly agree to freeze real estate taxes on preserved lands. The law provides a strong incentive for landowners to offer easements for purchase by Wyoming County and may even encourage some landowners to voluntarily donate easements.

#### **Maintain concentrations of prime agricultural soils in agricultural use.**

The Prime Agricultural Soils and Preserved Farmland Map on the following page shows areas with the best soils for common types of crops, as estimated in the Wyoming County Soil Survey. The agricultural soil capability classes range from Class I (best) to Class VIII (not very productive). Prime agricultural soils include Classes I, II and III.

Prime agricultural soils often drain well and have other characteristics that are physically well-suited for development, such as an ability to support on-lot septic systems. As a result, land that is good for farming is typically among the property most sought by developers. The majority of prime agricultural soils are located in the north central, northeast, and southeast parts of Wyoming County, such as areas of northern Eaton Township, northern Mehoopany Township, northern Leman Township, and Clinton Township west of Factoryville. The Land Use and Housing Plan Map highlights the larger concentrations of prime agricultural soils that are not within proposed growth areas.



### **Encourage landowners to join agricultural security areas.**

Large areas of farmland in Wyoming County have been designated as “Agricultural Security Areas”. The areas, as of 2015, are shown in the map on a following page. Farmers voluntarily ask the township supervisors to include the land as a Security Area. A Security Area does not result in any additional regulations upon a private property owner, nor upon private development. When designated, the landowners become eligible, if they wish, to ask to have the land preserved under an Agricultural Easement (as described below). Moreover, a Security Area provides a farmer with extra protection against nuisance lawsuits, municipal regulations of agriculture and government condemnation.

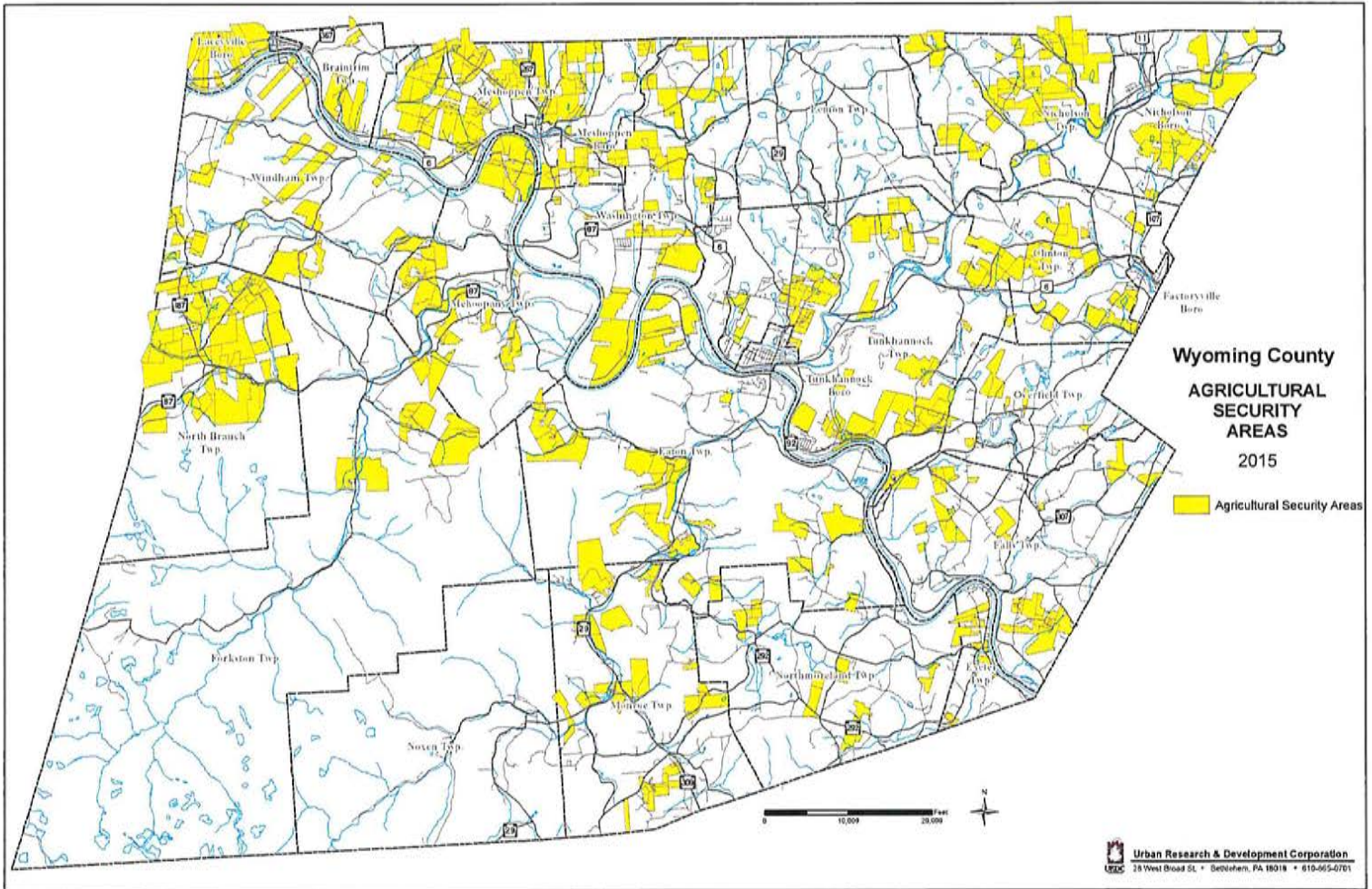
### **Promote additional agricultural easements to preserve farmland.**

The most effective method to permanently preserve farmland is to purchase the “development rights” of the land. The goal is to preserve large contiguous areas of farmland over time, as opposed to smaller isolated farms. The program uses funds from Pennsylvania and Wyoming County to pay property owners to preserve the land. Property owners voluntarily apply to the county for consideration. The farms are then ranked according to a set of standards, such as the quality of the soils for crops and the proximity to other farms that have been preserved. Within the funds available each year, the highest ranked farms are selected, the lands are appraised, and offers are made to the landowners. If the landowner agrees to the sale, he is paid the difference between the market value of the land and the value as farmland.

A landowner can voluntarily agree to a payment that is less than the value of the land, particularly if insufficient funds are available to the county for the full amount. In that case, the landowner can deduct the difference on their federal income tax as a charitable donation. A permanent “Conservation Easement” is then placed on the land that permanently prevents any use for non-agricultural uses. The land remains privately-owned and can be sold to other farmers. The easement does not require that access to the land be provided to the public. The locations of preserved farmlands are shown on the Prime Agricultural Soils and Preserved Farmland Map.

The emphasis should be placed upon using easements to preserve farmland in areas near previously preserved farmland and where multiple preserved farms are adjacent to one another. A large amount of the most productive farmland is two miles from the Susquehanna River, which could have the added benefit of helping to preserve that corridor. Extensions of public sewage systems into areas of prime farmland that are not planned as Growth Areas by the Comprehensive Plan should be avoided.

Funds available each year to buy easements to preserve farmland are very limited, and many farmers must sit on a waiting list for years. While the farm owner is waiting to rise up on the list, he/she may face pressure to sell the land for development. Also, some farms may not rank high enough according to the standards to be funded, particularly if a farm does not have the best soils for crop farming.



## LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN

A map of existing land uses is included in the Land Uses background section. The Composite Map on the following page shows a compilation of key information from the Background Studies that was used in preparing the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Carry out the Land Use and Housing Plan recommendations.**



The Comprehensive Plan Map on a following page shows the main future land use and housing recommendations. The categories on the Comprehensive Plan Map are described in the following sections. The Plan sets overall land use and preservation policies for Wyoming County and is primarily intended to:

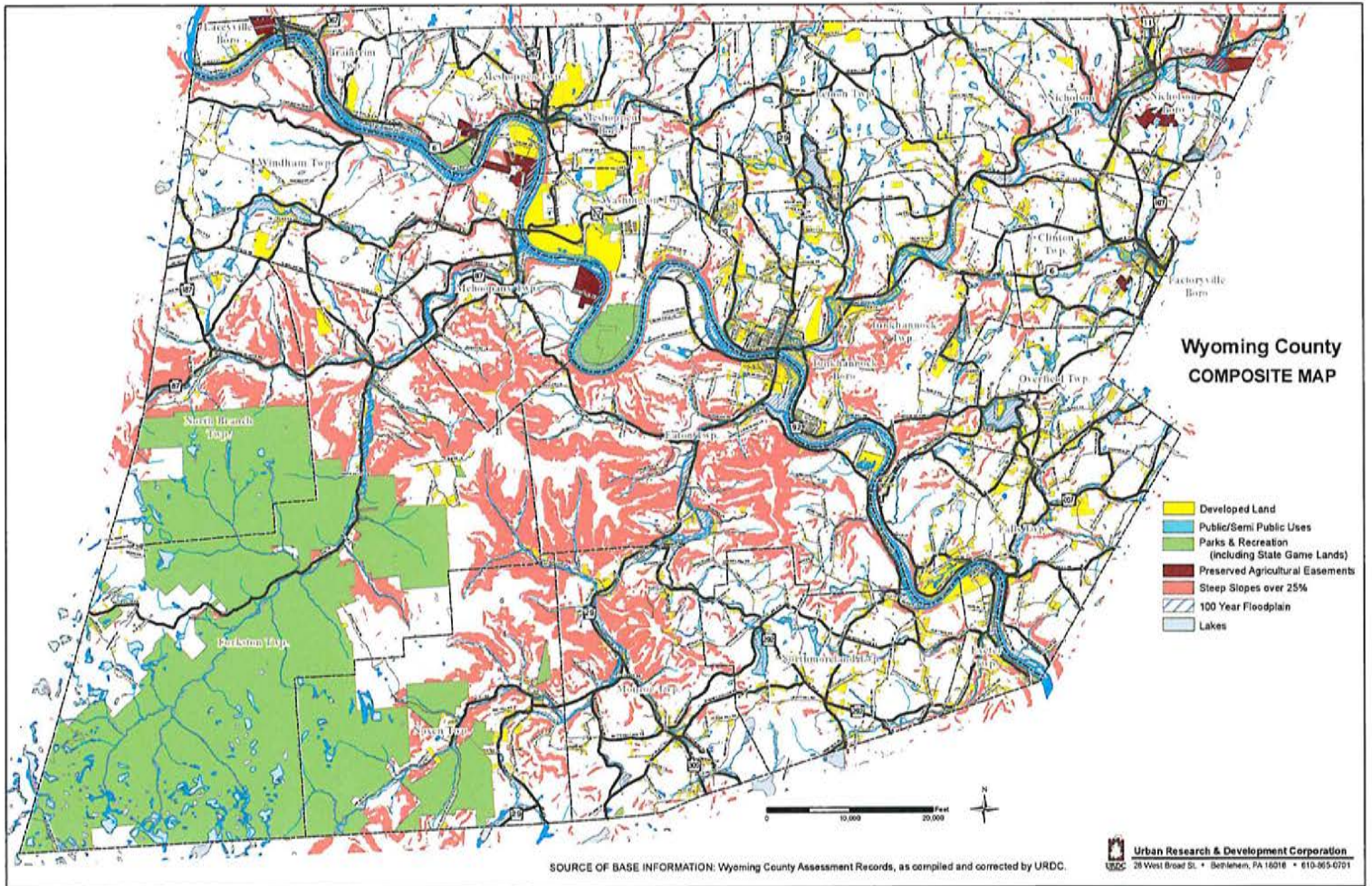
- a) Protect existing residential neighborhoods,
- b) Coordinate development across municipal borders,
- c) Avoid serious traffic congestion and safety problems,
- d) Promote new business development in appropriate locations, particularly by strengthening older business areas, with careful attention towards controlling very intense new businesses allowed in areas near homes, and
- e) Make sure that development properly relates to the natural features of the land, particularly to protect steeply sloped areas and creek/river valleys.

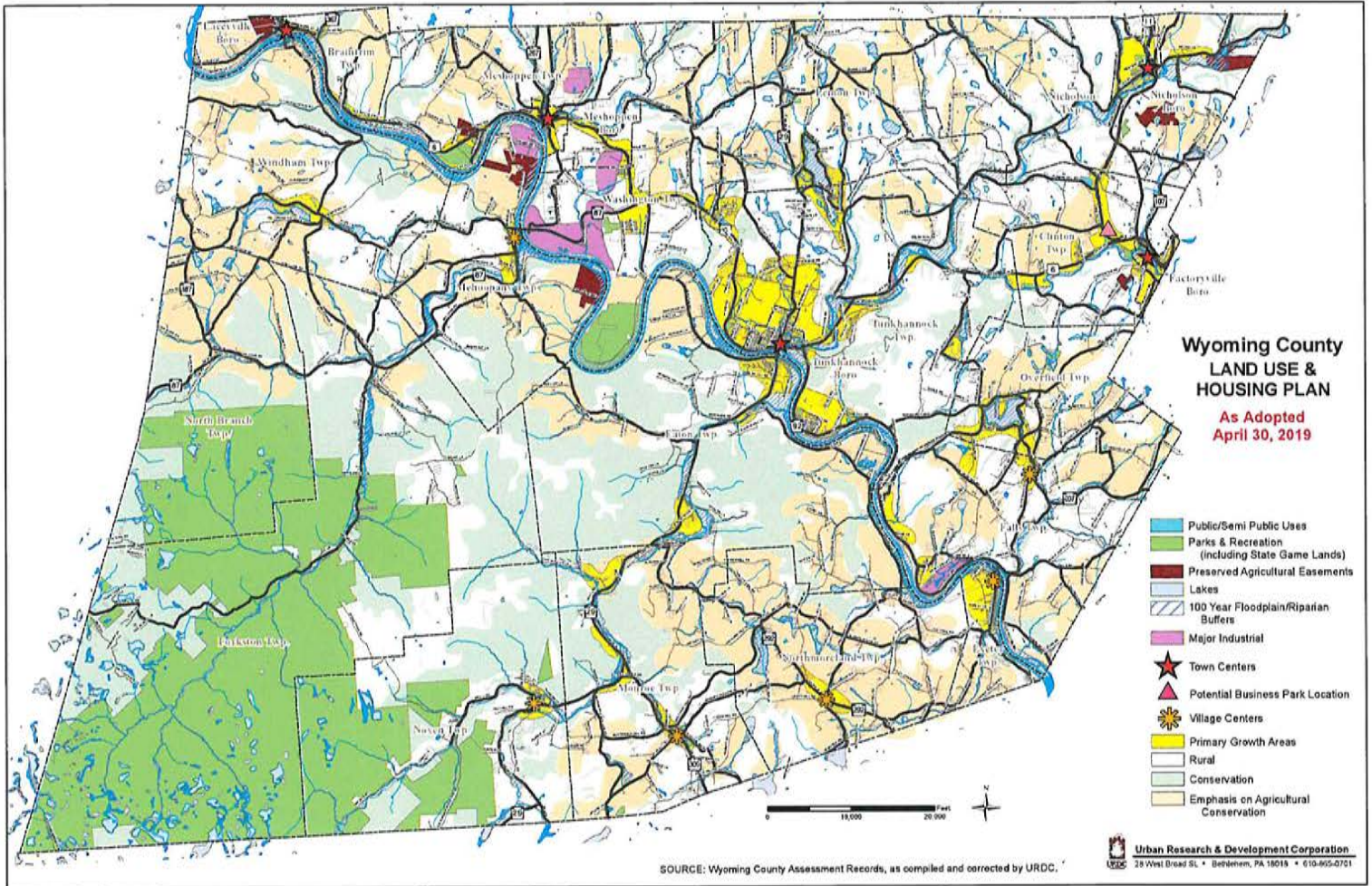
The Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the conservation of important natural features, including flood-prone land, wetlands and very steeply sloped lands (which are highlighted on the Composite Map on the following page). To minimize the amount of farmland and forest land that is consumed by new development, the Plan also promotes steering most new development to locations served by public water and sewage disposal systems. Public water and sewage service allows the same amount of development to be accommodated on much less land than the same development located on land with wells and septic systems.

It may be desirable to offer a density bonus or greater flexibility in housing types if housing is limited to persons age 55 and older and their spouses. These density bonuses are logical because the typical household of older persons generates less traffic, less need for parking and less water and sewage usage compared to other types of housing. Housing for older persons also does not generate additional public school students, thereby avoiding negative impacts upon school finances.

To promote home ownership and neighborhood stability and to avoid parking problems, converting existing one-family homes a higher number of housing units should be prohibited or very strictly regulated in the boroughs. An exception may be appropriate for unusually large existing houses.







If any lot is not served by both central water and central sewage service, then the Plan recommends a minimum lot size of at least one acre. Higher densities should only be allowed where both central water and central sewage services will be provided. If a new lot will be served by an on-lot septic system, the lot should be approved for both a primary and an alternative drain field location before the lot is created.

Trails should extend from neighborhoods into the downtowns, parks and schools. Trails are not only beneficial for recreation but also could be useful for bicyclists to reach work. An emphasis should be placed on developing off-road trails which run parallel to roads that are unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists and cannot be easily improved.

### **Open Space Residential Development**

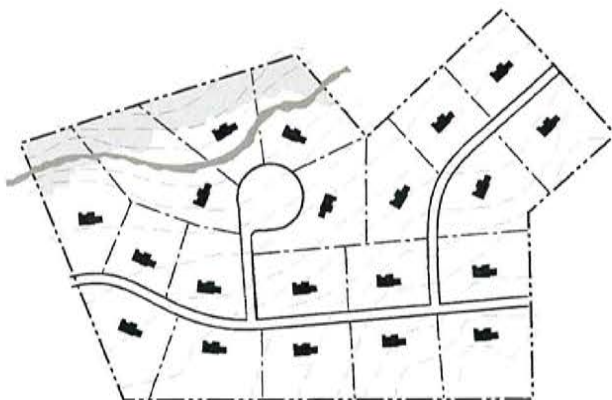
Open Space Development (or “Conservation Development”) involves allowing homes on smaller lots in return for permanent preservation of a substantial percentage of the tract of land in some form of open space. Open Space Development, including meaningful incentives, should be strongly encouraged. Proper standards should make sure that homes are located on the most suitable portions of a site.

The areas of the tract that are to be preserved as open space should be determined very early in the site design process—not as an afterthought. Standards for the open space should be very carefully considered to avoid narrow and unusable areas counting as open space. Conservation easements are a legal tool that should be used to make sure the open space can never be subdivided or developed with buildings.

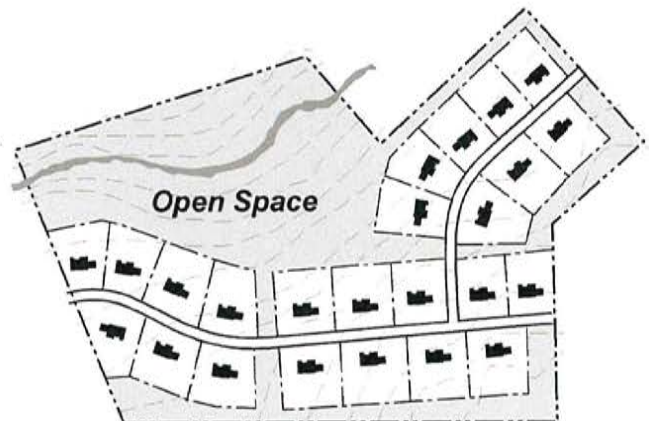
Many Open Space Developments are designed with 25 to 50 percent of the total land area preserved in some form of open space. Open Space Development typically allows smaller lots and smaller setbacks than would be allowed under conventional development without open space.

The Open Space Development concept is currently allowed under the County’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance but only applies in municipalities that have not adopted their own zoning ordinance. Several townships with their own zoning have included this option in their regulations. Where existing provisions are in place, they should be re-examined to make sure they are workable, practical and will address the issues discussed in this section. To provide an incentive, the overall number of homes possible on a tract should be slightly higher (such as 20 percent higher) in an Open Space Development than under conventional development.

*Example of Conventional Development*



*Example of Open Space Development*



To make sure that Open Space Development is not misused to result in a dramatic increase in the number of homes allowed on a tract, a "Yield Plan" should be developed. A Yield Plan requires a developer to submit an accurate sketch plan showing the number of homes that would be possible under conventional development. The Yield Plan should be subject to acceptance by the municipality. After the Yield Plan is accepted, the developer would be allowed to build a certain percent increase in density (such as 20 percent higher) than is possible under the conventional development. Proper standards are also needed to make sure that the open space serves a public purpose instead of being fragments of "leftover" lands with little development or recreation value.

Advantages of Open Space Developments - Major advantages of Open Space Developments include the following:

- Houses can be clustered so that they are further away from active farmland. The open space can be placed as a buffer between new homes and adjacent farms in order to minimize conflicts and complaints from new residents about nuisances. The greater the distances between new homes and livestock or poultry operations, the less potential there is for severe conflicts.
- Houses can be placed further away from conflicting uses, such as highways, industrial uses, gas facilities and pipelines because the developer will not lose any units due to the larger buffer.
- On larger tracts, land can be preserved for agricultural uses, including hayfields, orchards, horse farms or tree farms.
- Important natural features can be preserved, particularly along creek and river valleys. Open Space Developments should include standards that direct buildings away from steep slopes, wetlands, waterways and other important natural features. As a result, homes are placed on portions of the tract that are most environmentally suitable for development, as opposed to being evenly spread across the land. Large contiguous areas can remain in woods and other natural vegetation, which are important as wildlife corridors. Thick natural vegetation can be preserved along creeks, which is essential to filter out eroded soil and other pollutants from runoff before it enters the creek. The vegetation along creeks is also important to maintain high-quality fishing habitats.
  - In comparison, an entire tract divided into lots is more likely to be in mowed grass, which is a "mono-culture" that does not have the same environmental benefits.
  - Open space preservation manages stormwater runoff in a more natural and attractive manner that encourages recharge into the groundwater.
- Scenic features can be preserved. Open Space Developments can place homes on less visible portions of a tract, while maintaining scenic views. For example, many open space subdivisions setback homes from main through-roads and limit placement of homes on major ridge-lines. As a result, the main angle of vision along major roads reveals green space. Mature woods can be preserved in locations that hide views of development. Open Space Developments also provide pleasant views of green, natural areas instead of views of continuous development.
- Recreational opportunities can be increased. Open Space Developments can include attractive areas for walking, jogging, cross-country skiing and nature study. In some cases, open space can include active recreation facilities, which can also increase interaction among neighbors.

- Development costs for grading, lengths of roads, lengths of utilities and other improvements are usually less than for conventional development. Developers may also be able to save time and money by avoiding wetland alterations and waterway crossings.
  - Open Space Developments can provide the flexibility in layout to move homes off of steep slopes, which are more expensive and, in some cases, more dangerous to build upon. Avoiding steep slopes can also reduce the need for blasting.
  - By allowing flexibility in the placement of buildings, suitable sites for septic systems are easier to find, and separation requirements between wells and septic systems are easier to meet.
- The municipalities can save on maintenance costs. Shorter lengths of roads, utilities and other improvements mean lower maintenance costs. Plowing snow from steeply sloped roads is expensive. Open Space Developments can also result in roads placed on more modest slopes.
- Developers can often achieve higher sales prices. More and more developments are advertising that homes are adjacent to preserved open spaces. Developers can often receive a premium price for lots that are adjacent to or overlook preserved open space. Trails and other open space amenities can also spur sales.
- Reliable central water and sewage services can be extended. Providing central water and sewage services to lots of two acres or larger is usually uneconomical. However, if homes are clustered on a tract, providing central water and sewage services is often possible and, in some cases, necessary. Central water and sewage services typically are more reliable than individual wells and septic systems.
  - Central sewage service avoids the threat of groundwater contamination from failing septic systems. Central water service avoids the risks of well water contamination from various sources.

**Design and locate preserved open spaces very carefully within development.**

Proper standards are needed to make sure that the preserved open space is well-located and improved to serve important public functions. In many cases, mature woods, steep slopes and creek valleys should simply be preserved in a natural state. In other cases, the open spaces may be used for active recreation. In still other cases, trees should be planted in the open spaces, and trails should be installed. The key is to avoid a process in which the “open space” is simply the land that is left over after the most economical set of lots and roads are laid out. Narrow strips of open space should be avoided, unless the strip preserves a scenic tree line or provides an important trail link.

In most cases, at least half of the required open space should be in one contiguous area. Isolated areas (such as less than one acre) and narrow areas of land (such as less than 75 feet wide) should not be counted as open space. However, more narrow stretches may be suitable as open space if they truly serve as part of a regional trail system. Detention basins should not be considered open space unless they are designed as a major scenic asset (such as a pond with a natural appearance) or are clearly suitable for *recreation*.

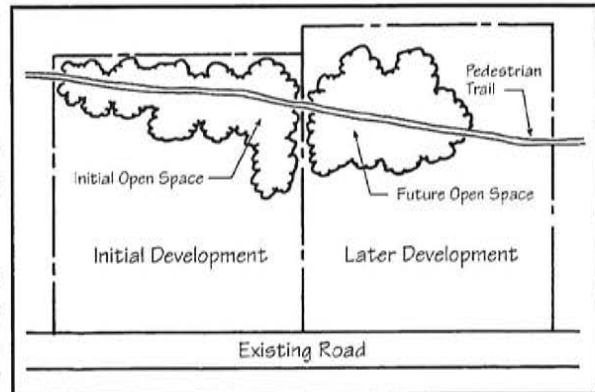
To count towards the required open space, land should need to:

- be landscaped in trees, shrubs and other attractive vegetation,
- be maintained in agricultural uses, such as a tree farm,

- be preserved in woods or natural wetlands vegetation,
- not be used for commercial recreation, other than a golf course, and/or
- be developed as recreational facilities, but not including buildings (other than pavilions).

Open Space should be interconnected with common open space areas on abutting parcels where possible, including provisions for public trails to link trail systems. Where the adjacent lands are undeveloped, open space should be located toward the edge of the tract to be combined with future open space on the adjacent tract.

At the same time, if 1) there is little chance of ever joining new recreation land into any adjacent recreation land, and 2) the new recreation land would be small in size, a logical approach is to agree to pay recreation fees in-lieu-of requiring recreation land in the location.



### **Use a four-step process to result in conservation-oriented design in development.**

The following text builds upon the Natural Lands Trust’s ideas of a four-step process in the design of new development, in order to emphasize land conservation principles. The townships’ development regulations and procedures could require that, in general, the four-step process be followed. The process is recommended in several of the local comprehensive plans that have been adopted by Wyoming County municipalities. Steps should be accomplished at the sketch plan stage, before any detailed engineering is completed.

#### **1. *Identify Lands that Should Be Preserved.***

The mapping should not only consider the area proposed for development, but also any future phases of development, plus the areas that are immediately adjacent to the development site on other lots.

First, the areas that are most worthy of preservation should be mapped, including wetlands, flood-prone areas, creek valleys, and very steeply sloped lands, which are known as the Primary Conservation Areas.

Then, other features that are important for conservation should be mapped, such as woodlands, tree lines, scenic views, historic buildings, and prime farmland, known as the Secondary Conservation Areas.

Then, the most important areas for preservation should be identified. The areas with the fewest important natural, scenic and historic features should be considered the “Potential Development Area.”

#### **2. *Locate Home Sites.***

The second step is to choose the most appropriate locations for homes. The zoning ordinance should establish a maximum overall density for the site, but should not overly restrict lot requirements that prevent reasonable flexibility in the site layout. Home sites should be chosen

to avoid the important features mapped in the first step. Home sites should also take advantage of scenic views within the tract.

### **3. *Locate Roads and Trails.***

After the home sites are selected, a road system should be designed to serve the homes. A trail system should also provide links between homes and to destinations outside of the tract.

### **4. *Draw in the Lot Lines.***

The fourth and final sketch plan step should be to draw in lot lines. In conventional development, with strict, standardized minimum lot requirements, drawing lot lines is often the first step, before any consideration of natural features on the site.

## **Land Use Plan Categories**

### **Plan for Conservation Areas.**

Most of the concentrations of very steeply sloped lands and immediately adjacent lands are categorized as Conservation. For conventional development, conservation areas should require a 2- to 5-acre minimum lot size, and mainly allow single-family detached houses, forestry and open space related uses, such as summer camps. An Open Space Development option should be offered that would allow homes to be clustered on 1-acre minimum lots provided that at least 50 percent of the land is permanently preserved as open space, and provided that the homes are placed on less steep portions of the tract. The open space is valuable: a) to buffer homes from adjacent industrial uses, gas facilities, pipelines, and farms; and b) to add areas to State Game Lands and other public lands. The Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan section describes methods that should be used to protect important natural features in the open space areas.

New homes should have a significant setback from State Game Lands. Otherwise, the construction of one new home can make many adjacent areas of State Game Lands unusable for hunting.

### **Plan for Areas Where Agricultural Conservation is Emphasized.**

Agricultural Conservation areas include larger concentrations of lands with prime agricultural soils that are not in another land use category. Landowners should be strongly encouraged to apply to have the County purchase their development rights. Methods to help maintain farming are described in the Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation section.

### **Plan for Rural Areas.**

For conventional development in rural areas, the plan recommends a minimum lot size of approximately 1.5 acres. Larger lots may be appropriate in areas with concentrations of very steep slopes. An Open Space Development option should then be offered, with minimum lot sizes of one acre, if at least 30 percent of the total land area is permanently preserved.

The Conservation, Agricultural Conservation and Rural areas are not anticipated to be served by central sewage systems. Isolated, new, privately-owned central sewage systems should be avoided because such systems may not be financially viable over the long-term and may encourage inappropriate development.

## **Plan for Growth Areas as shown on the Future Land Use and Housing Plan Map.**

The land areas designated as “Growth Areas” on the Future Land Use Plan Map are intended to be the locations for the majority of new development in the County. The goal is to direct growth to the existing boroughs and immediately adjacent areas, particularly where public water and sewage services can be efficiently provided.

As part of zoning policies, the Growth Areas should be designated with the following types of categories:

Low Density Residential – Low Density Residential areas are physically suitable for development where central water and sewage services are available or could be efficiently extended.

Low Density Residential areas should mainly provide for single-family detached houses (and, possibly, side-by-side twin homes and townhouses) at an average of one to three homes per acre. In townships where central water and sewage services are provided, an Open Space Development option would be appropriate; for example, to allow a reduction from half-acre lots to quarter-acre lots if 25 percent of the tract is preserved in open space.

Growth areas that are primarily intended for low density residential uses are proposed in locations such as:

- West Falls,
- Along Route 92 in Exeter Township,
- Along Route 29 in the Evans Falls area,
- In northern Eaton Township west of Route 29,
- Surrounding Tunkhannock Borough,
- In Mehoopany along Route 87,
- Around Meshoppen Borough,
- Around Laceyville,
- Around Lake Winola and Mill City,
- Around Lake Carey,
- Around the Shadowbrook Resort, Around the Stone Hedge Golf Course, and
- Adjacent to Factoryville.

The residential area around Lake Carey is purposefully proposed to be limited to areas of existing homes due to the difficulty of improving the road system to handle additional traffic.

Medium and High Density Residential – Medium and high density residential areas should provide for a variety of housing types at an average of four or more homes per acre. The highest density areas should continue to be in the centers of the boroughs. Higher densities and taller heights may be desirable for apartments that are limited to residency by older persons. Apartments should be encouraged in space above downtown businesses.

Village Centers - Municipalities should promote compatible development within and around villages. New development should occur in a manner that is consistent with older patterns of development. For example, at best, parking would be located to the side or rear of buildings.

Village Centers should provide for less intense types of commercial uses that would be compatible with nearby homes and that would not create traffic conflicts along the narrow twisting roads. Such uses may include small retail stores, personal service uses, offices, day care centers, places of worship and banks. Where public sewage service is provided, a mix of housing types should be possible, such as a density of up to 6 homes per acre.

Village centers include Mehoopany, Beaumont, West Falls, Center Moreland and Noxen.



Town Centers - The downtowns of the boroughs (also called Town Centers) should be treated differently from the more highway-oriented commercial areas. The goal is to provide for types of commercial development that are compatible with nearby homes and that are less likely to spur large-scale demolition of older buildings. Town Center uses may include retail stores, personal service uses, offices, funeral homes, day care centers, places of worship and banks. A variety of housing should also be encouraged, especially apartments above first-floor commercial uses.

In the downtowns, the goal is to promote patterns of commercial uses that will be more pedestrian-friendly. A mix of light business and residential uses allows persons to live close to work and promotes walking. In areas near homes, businesses open after midnight should be avoided or prohibited.

The Town Centers include the downtowns of Laceyville, Meshoppen, Factoryville, Tunkhannock and Nicholson.

Commercial - Providing opportunities for new business growth should be balanced with allowing roads to handle through-traffic. Access management methods are discussed later in this chapter.

Many areas along major highways in Wyoming County are steeply sloped, flood prone or have poor sight distance of oncoming traffic, all of which limit opportunities for commercial development.

Near residential neighborhoods, only less intense types of commercial uses are appropriate. For communities with zoning, these areas should be limited to a "Neighborhood Commercial" zoning district, as opposed to a more permissive "Highway Commercial" district. Highway Commercial areas are more suitable for late night uses, gas stations and vehicle repair businesses).

The main commercial areas in Wyoming County include:

- various portions along Route 6,
- areas along Route 29 in northern Eaton Township, and
- areas along Route 11 north of Route 6.

As a matter of priority, business areas in the downtowns and other older business areas should be reused and redeveloped with suitable uses before large areas of new farmland or forests are developed.

Industrial - The largest industrial uses are the Procter and Gamble complex, nearby trucking and distribution uses, and the quarries. Scattered, smaller industrial uses include natural gas companies. In addition, Business Park development (as described below) should occur in suitable locations, such as along Route 11 north of Route 6.

The topography and highway system of Wyoming County limits the potential to develop large new industrial areas. Most new industrial development should be located in areas with public water and sewage services, since individual wells and on-lot septic systems limit the number of employees and the types of industrial processes that can be accommodated. Municipalities should also seriously consider which types of commercial uses to allow in various industrial areas. Large quarries and solid waste uses should be limited to industrial areas.

### **Promote the development of a new Business Park.**

Wyoming County should further refine sites that would be suitable for a light industrial/business park. The comprehensive planning process included an initial review of lands that are physically suitable for business park development, that have access to a major road, that are within a reasonable distance of an expressway, and that are near public water and sewage services.

Based upon the review, the land that appears most suitable for business park development is along the Route 11 corridor north of Route 6. While a portion immediately along Route 11 includes wetlands, many other areas are buildable and include few homes.

After one or more sites are selected, the County should obtain state grants, negotiate acquisition of the land, and make improvements to the land in phases so that sites are always ready to build upon.

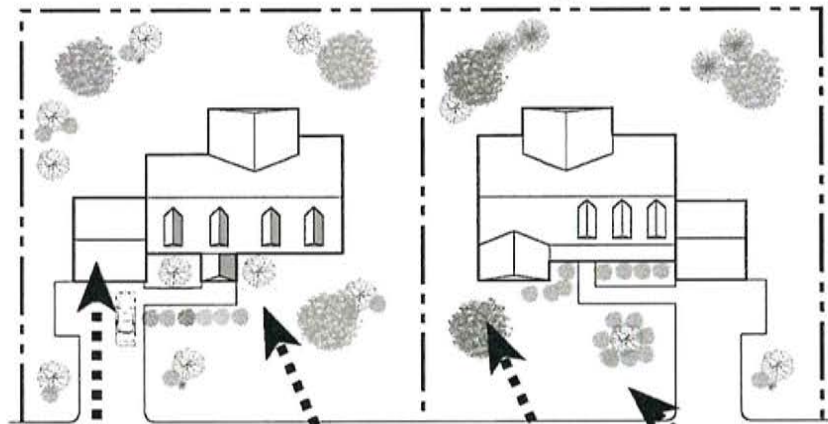
### **Extend the best features of older development into newer development.**

The Plan strongly encourages various forms of “traditional neighborhood development” (TND). TND involves extending the best features of the older areas into new neighborhoods. The concept also ensures that development or redevelopment of lots within older neighborhoods, downtowns or villages occurs in a way that fits within the character of the area. The TND concept is illustrated by the sketch on a following page. TND involves the following key items:

- Plant street trees to eventually provide a canopy of shade over streets. Studies show that mature street trees can increase the value of homes up to 10 percent. If shade trees are not appropriate in the right-of-way, they can be required immediately outside of the right-of-way.
- Require new street lights to meet a certain design standard that is similar to older styles of street lights. Shield any street lights to prevent glare and night glow into the sky. Street lights in residential or historic areas should have a limited height (such as less than 20 feet).
- Provide sidewalks (or asphalt paths along main roads in rural areas). Pedestrians should be readily accommodated, having the ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks. Avoid making residential streets and intersections very wide in order to discourage speeding and allowing pedestrian to cross streets safely and easily.
- Encourage a modest density (such as four homes per acre) in areas with public water and sewage service. However, a traditional village type of development can also occur with on-lot septic systems if the lots extend back from the road very deeply.
- Whenever practical, locate parking to the rear or side of buildings so that the front yard can be landscaped. At best, parking and garages would be placed to the rear of lots, with access using alleys. Rear lot access avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking.
  - If rear access to garages is not practical, then garages should enter onto the side of homes whenever possible, particularly on corner lots. When proposed, front-entrance garages should be designed to avoid being a prominent part of the street. For example, a one-lane driveway can pass along the side of a house and then widen to enter a two-car garage that is setback from the front of the house. Avoid having houses with front entrance garage as the home’s most prominent feature (also called "Snout" houses).

# Suburban vs. Neotraditional Design

## Suburban Design

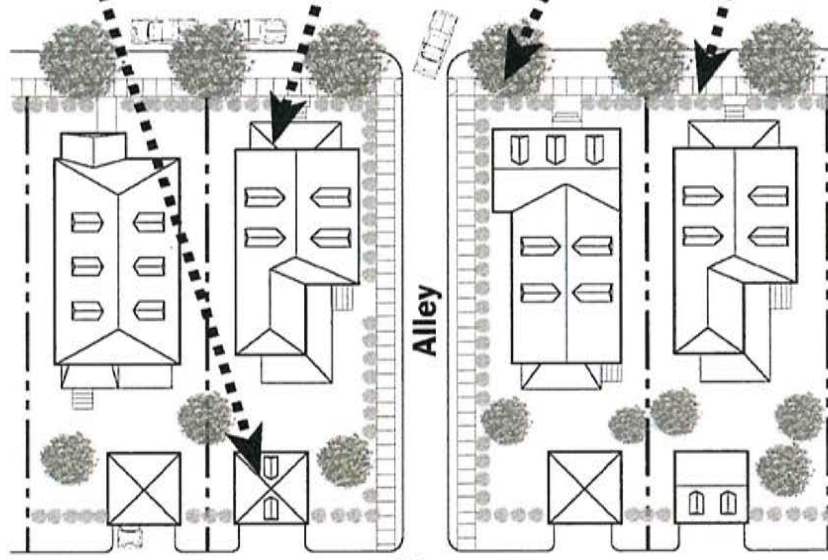


Garages forward  
Garages on alleys

Deep front yards  
Shallow yards, porches

Trees in yards  
Trees along street

No Sidewalks  
Sidewalks



Alley

## Neotraditional Design

- Discourage new twin and townhouse development that has numerous driveways entering directly onto a street from the front. Garage doors should not be an overly prominent part of the front views of housing. Where garages and parking cannot be avoided in the front yard, larger lot widths should be required to make sure that the front yard includes green space. Regulations are needed to make sure that the majority of the front yards in housing developments are not covered by paving.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front or side porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors. On a corner lot, a side porch can have the same effect. Residents spending time on the front porch can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

Under the State Planning Code, a municipality can require some features of TND in selected areas through a zoning ordinance. For example, a maximum building setback could be established from the front lot line along a street. Driveways and garages could be required to have access from an alley, where available. New vehicle parking can be prohibited in locations that are between a new building and a pedestrian-oriented main street (a provision that pushes most parking to the rear or side of buildings).

In addition, a municipality could offer density incentives for TND, such as through use of an optional “overlay” district. Traditional Neighborhood Development can be particularly attractive to developers by allowing single-family lots that are narrower than would otherwise be allowed. The reduction in lot width can result in dramatic reductions in the average costs of improvements per housing unit. Allowing relatively narrow single-family detached lots can also provide an alternative to building townhouses, but at the same density as townhouses.

**Promote the adoption of zoning in municipalities where zoning is not in place, and update existing zoning ordinances.**

Nine municipalities in Wyoming County have adopted zoning regulations. Other municipalities in the county have considered enacting zoning in recent years.

Most of the land areas in townships that have zoning are zoned “Rural Agriculture,” “Agricultural” or a similar name. However, in most of the zoned townships, a very wide range of intensive uses is often allowed in the Rural Agriculture or Agriculture areas, including restaurants, offices, light manufacturing uses, boarding houses, manufactured home parks, mining, apartments, vehicle sales and gas compressor stations. While conditional use approval may be needed, a conditional use is still considered to be an allowed use that must be approved if the application meets standards of the ordinance.

A one-acre minimum lot size or larger should be required whenever an on-lot septic system will be used. Each lot should also be required to include a tested alternate drain field location that is kept open and uncompacted.

Where a municipality does not have zoning, the main development control the Wyoming County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), which is not intended to control the locations or types of land uses.

If a municipality is hesitant to adopt a regular zoning ordinance, one alternative is to adopt a very limited zoning ordinance. A zoning ordinance can be crafted to only regulate the most intensive or controversial uses, such as landfills, gas compressor stations, gas industry facilities, trash transfer stations, manufactured home parks, recreational vehicle campgrounds, hazardous chemical operations, asphalt plants, junkyards, concrete plants, and adult entertainment uses (such as strip clubs and illegitimate massage parlors). Some of the intense uses could be limited to a single, relatively small zoning district, while other uses could be regulated with large setbacks from homes or limits on intensity. Municipalities might then later decide to enact a more comprehensive zoning ordinance. (Zoning for natural gas facilities are discussed in the Unconventional Gas Plan, which is found later in the Plan.)

Municipalities should also carefully regulate the density of manufactured/mobile home parks, apartment complexes and recreational vehicle campgrounds. Some of the uses could potentially involve a proposed new private sewage plant, which may not be appropriate because of long-term concerns about financial viability.

If a municipality adopts a zoning ordinance consistent with a multi-municipal comprehensive plan and has an inter-municipal implementation agreement, then the municipality can receive additional protection against legal challenges that the municipality has not provided for every use in its zoning. Many municipalities in Wyoming County already have a multi-municipal plan in place. For example, two adjacent municipalities may develop zoning ordinances in which only one municipality provides for manufactured home parks. In that case, the other municipality may not need to provide for manufactured home parks.

Similar legal protection is also available for two or more municipalities that adopt a single joint zoning ordinance (which was done by Eaton and Monroe Townships, as well as Clinton Township and Nicholson Borough).

In order to attract additional tourism and outdoor recreation spending to Wyoming County, the scenic attractiveness of the County absolutely must be maintained. As a result, municipal zoning ordinances should prohibit flashing signs and overly large or tall signs, and should control the locations and sizes of new billboards. Landscaping should also be required as part of new business development, particularly along major roads and next to homes.

### **Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDOs) of the County and municipalities.**

The primary purpose of a SALDO is to establish procedures that must be followed in order to have a new lot or a “land development” approved. A land development is mainly a commercial, industrial or multi-family development, such as building a new business building on a lot. The SALDO also establishes engineering and improvement construction standards, such as specifications for construction of new roads or road extensions as part of a development.

The County’s SALDO applies in municipalities that have not adopted a local SALDO. Only five municipalities in Wyoming County have a local SALDO (Factoryville Borough and Falls, Overfield, Washington and Clinton Townships).

The County SALDO also has lot size requirements that apply in municipalities that have not adopted a local zoning ordinance or SALDO. If a municipality does not have zoning, the County SALDO applies and requires a 1-acre lot if there is no central sewage service and an approximately ½-acre lot if there is central sewage.

The County SALDO includes a floodplain requirement that is more restrictive than most local ordinances. The County requires that the lowest floor of a building be elevated 1.5 feet above the 100-year flood level. The requirement is particularly valuable because FEMA has reported that the 100-year level is actually a few feet higher than is shown on official FEMA maps.

The County SALDO should include additional, enforceable standards for environmental protection.

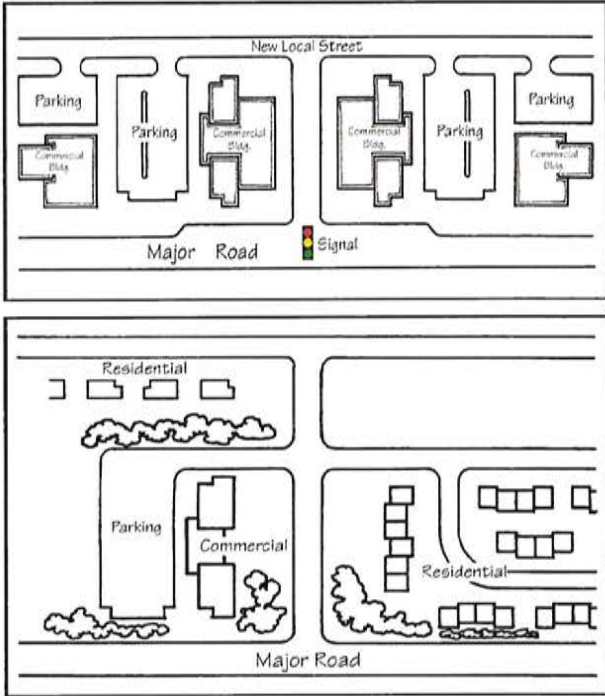
Under the County SALDO, a developer has an option of proposing a “conservation development” (which is the same as the term “open space development” used above) if the site is at least 10 acres. The provision can result in single-family detached house lots of 7,000 square feet if central sewage and water services are provided. A minimum of 50 percent of the land must be permanently preserved, which can include land maintained as a farm. Portions of unbuildable areas do not count toward the 50 percent, so most sites would actually result in more than 50 percent preserved land. The intent is that a developer would achieve 15 percent more homes than would be possible with a conventional development.

Where zoning does not apply, the current County SALDO also includes standards for other types of housing. Townhouses can be developed at six homes per acre, apartments at 8-10 homes per acre, and units in a manufactured/mobile home park at seven units per acre. Campgrounds can be developed at a maximum of 10 sites per usable acre.

**Use traffic access management techniques, particularly for commercial development along major roads.**

If traffic access onto a major road is properly managed, the road will be able to safely handle large volumes of traffic. However, if a road combines a large number of business driveways entering a road at many locations, right-hand turns and left-hand turns will occur at many locations. The constant stopping and starting from these turns greatly affects the smooth flow of vehicles and creates safety hazards. Such development is known as “strip” commercial development.

New development along major roads should be coordinated to minimize the number of new driveways that directly enter onto the major road, as shown on the illustration at right.



Maximum access should be provided to any current traffic signals or to locations where a traffic signal would be desirable in the future. New internal roads should be developed to minimize the number of driveways onto the major road, as shown in the graphic to the right.

At best, most new business development along major roads should occur with a substantial depth of development from the road. The large buffers will reduce the demand for long expanses of strip commercial development along major roads. Also, business development located further from the road is more likely to be served by a shared driveway or new road that can be properly located with excellent sight distances and, possibly, turn lanes and a traffic signal.

Adjacent commercial uses could be designed with have interconnected parking lots. Using such interconnections, a motorist can visit more than one adjacent business without having to enter and reenter a major road. Interconnections may also allow customers of multiple businesses to access an existing or planned traffic signal location to make safer left-hand turns.

Locating industrial uses requires special attention. Most industrial uses generate tractor-trailer traffic, which consumes a great amount of capacity on the road system and at intersections. Also, tractor-trailers need sufficient maneuvering space to turn at intersections.

Ordinances should require a traffic impact study for all major developments. The study should also address traffic safety hazards and require that the applicants agree to fund or construct any necessary road improvements.

### **Promote Home Ownership.**

Many households could afford the monthly costs of owning a home but do not have sufficient savings for a down payment and closing costs. Households with financing difficulty need to be linked with available programs to help achieve home ownership, such as programs of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, the Federal Housing Administration, the Veterans Administration, and programs of the County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Housing funding has been increased as a result of the gas impact fees. Also, under State law, Wyoming County has enacted an additional fee on mortgage and deed recording, which is committed to funding housing programs.

The County should promote new housing types that are more likely to be owner-occupied, such as singles, side-by-side twin homes and townhouses, as opposed to apartments or one unit above another unit.

### **Work to maintain housing conditions and to avoid blight.**

Housing blight and deterioration should be avoided, if at all possible. A single problem property can encourage responsible residents of nearby properties to move out of the neighborhood and can discourage new homebuyers from investing in the neighborhood. A problem property can also discourage nearby homeowners from making improvements, believing that improvement(s) will not result in a positive return on the investment at the time of selling. To control problem properties, municipalities should consider enacting a Property Maintenance Code. A national model code is available, or a code can be tailored to a municipality's particular concerns.

The intent of code enforcement is to require property-owners to: a) properly maintain buildings or b) sell the buildings to another party who will make the needed improvements. The goal in code enforcement must be to intervene before buildings deteriorate to the point where repairs are no longer cost effective. If property owners are forced to complete basic maintenance and repairs in a timely manner, severe deterioration can be avoided.

Some County residents commented at public meetings that blighted buildings are a major problem, and municipalities do not have staff to complete the time-consuming steps to address the problem. Municipalities can contract to share an inspector, which can be done through a council of governments, through mutual agreement (such as several municipalities legally contracting to share the costs of one inspector), or by hiring a private inspection firm on an as-needed basis. Special certifications are not needed to enforce a Property Maintenance Code, because the code is not technical in nature.

Another option would be to ask the Wyoming County Housing & Redevelopment Authority to take a larger role on the issue. The Authority already administers the County's federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME housing funds. However, that option may require the funding of an additional staff-person by the County.

The Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania has assembled a very useful set of materials that describe ways that municipalities can address blight. Many of the publications discuss state laws that have been passed over the last decade to provide additional tools to municipalities.

### **Emphasize housing rehabilitation.**

A portion of available federal and state housing funding should be directed to providing low-interest loans to rehabilitate homes owned by households with low or moderate incomes. The County should expand marketing efforts to make sure that eligible owners of properties in need of rehabilitation are aware of the available financing programs. Particular attention needs to be paid to low-income resident property owners who need to make improvements to comply with municipal codes. For example, buyers of older homes should be encouraged to take advantage of the Federal Housing Administration's 203(k) program. The 203(k) program allows a homebuyer to receive a single loan to both purchase a home and to complete a major rehabilitation of the home.

### **Promote additional amounts of affordable housing.**

Residents attending public meetings commented about the need for additional affordable housing, particularly for seniors. The influx of gas industry workers caused a spike in rental housing prices, and another spike could occur as part of upward and downward cycles in gas activity.

The County has been using a portion of its Act 13 impact fee funds and federal HOME grants to assist in funding new affordable housing projects. The developments are being assisted by the Wyoming County Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

Grant funding for new housing is generally limited. Some projects are funded using federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). In Pennsylvania, the LIHTC program is administered by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). In general, the amount of credits is limited, and PHFA reports serious competition for the credits in Pennsylvania.

### **Work to strengthen the downtowns as business, cultural, entertainment and civic centers.**

Even if a borough cannot obtain funding to hire a single or shared Main Street Manager, the Nationwide Main Street Program can serve as a model for revitalization of the downtowns. The program stresses four major approaches:



- Organization and Cooperation – To have a strong organization of all interested parties working cooperatively in partnership to carry out needed actions.
- Design and Renewal – To improve the physical environment, including the “streetscape” and attractive building fronts (particularly by rehabilitating historic features), and to provide adequate parking.
- Economic Development – To recruit and retain businesses and investors to expand job opportunities and generate additional local tax revenue. To provide information to support new business development. To maintain regular contacts with existing businesses to help business retention and growth in the downtown.
- Promotion – To market a downtown with a unified identity. To use special events to attract new customers and businesses. To emphasize high-quality distinctive products and services, including businesses serving a special market niche that is not served by mass-market discount retailers.

Improving Appearance – The appearance of downtowns can be improved through street trees, decorative lighting, facade improvements, and placing well-designed signs at major gateway entrances. Storefronts can often be made more inviting to new customers with low-cost improvements, such as window displays, replacement of a sign, addition of a decorative awning, and careful selection of paint colors.

A set of public improvements should be selected, such as street lights, street trees, traffic signal poles, benches, trash cans and sidewalk paving accents. The list would allow some features to be replaced gradually over time, following a pattern that will eventually be consistent throughout the downtown. For example, an existing unpainted aluminum traffic signal post that needs to be replaced could be replaced by a post coated with a dark color. On individual properties, owners could be encouraged to plant species of trees and install light fixtures that follow the overall scheme.

The boroughs should take advantage of State programs, such as building facade improvement grants. Some funding may also be provided by a loan pool from banks or a donation from a corporation.

A facade improvement program should be developed to work with private property owners on improving the appearance of building fronts. The program may include matching grants or low-interest loans. The improvements typically must be approved by local committee. The emphasis should be placed on improvements that restore or uncover historic architectural features or that are generally consistent with the historic architecture of the corridor.

Most grants and low-interest loan programs should focus on physical improvements that will have long-term benefits, regardless of the business that occupies a particular space.

Financing programs can be valuable to spur reuse of upper story spaces, such as for market-rate apartments or offices above first-floor commercial space. Financing is very useful in meeting fire safety requirements, which can be expensive if the use of upper story space is changed. For example, if storage space is proposed to be converted to apartments, then a second fire-safe stairwell and fire-resistant wall and ceiling separations are often needed.

Decorative banners can add a great deal of color to a downtown. Banners also help to unify the identity of a downtown.

Street Trees – Street trees are important to make older areas more attractive and to make walking more pleasant during the summer. Species of street trees can be carefully chosen so that the trees do not obstruct the visibility of businesses and do not cause damage to sidewalks.

In some places, the small size of the street right-of-way may prohibit tree planting. If a right-of-way is too narrow for trees, property owners could cooperate with the municipality to plant trees just outside of the right-of-way.

State grants are available to pay for street tree plantings. The adjacent property-owner is typically asked to maintain the tree, including watering during dry periods.

Pedestrian Safety – Pedestrian street crossings are particularly troublesome for senior citizens and persons with disabilities who cannot walk very fast.. Unfortunately, few motorists comply with the State law regarding pedestrian crossings. Crosswalks should be highly visible. Different paving patterns can make crosswalks very visible at locations where many people cross. The color of the crossing increases visibility, and the texture makes a noise that discourages speeding.

Sidewalks – If downtown sidewalks need to be replaced, decorative paving patterns, such as adding a row of brick pavers along the curb, should be considered.

Parking – Parking is very important in downtowns. A sufficient amount of parking should be provided, and available spaces should be properly managed. Parking demands in various parts of the downtowns should be periodically reexamined to determine appropriate maximum time limits. Spaces in front of a business where many people make short visits might have a very short time limit (such as 15 minutes). In other areas, a 2-hour maximum limit may be appropriate. In areas with less demand, time limits may not be needed at all. The goal is to make sure that the spaces that are most in demand are available for frequent turnover to accommodate many customers. If prime parking spaces are allowed to be occupied by one vehicle for an entire day (for example), persons wishing to visit a downtown business for a quick trip will turn away and not return.

The boroughs should not try to replicate suburban parking which may destroy the historic character and streetscape that makes the town special. However, some future actions may offer additional opportunities over time to provide more parking, such as demolishing accessory buildings and underused rear extensions of buildings in the inside of blocks. This is a method to increase parking supply without harming the “face” of the downtown along main streets.

Marketing and Promotion – Marketing efforts are needed to persuade persons visiting the area to patronize downtown businesses. Many individual businesses have little money to advertise individually, but, when their resources are pooled, they can afford joint advertisements and flyers and other promotions. This type of advertising is particularly important because the goal is to get customers to visit more than one downtown business at one time.

It is difficult for a business to be successful if it is not open during the hours when most people have free time to shop - which is evenings and weekends. At the same time, operators of small family businesses often are overextended with long hours. One option on weekdays would be to shift business hours from 10:00-5:00 to 11:00-6:00. Emphasizing a single weekday shopping night when most businesses would be open may also increase patronage.

One goal is to encourage visitors to stay in the area longer to generate additional economic activity. Persons visiting one type of attraction should be aware of other nearby attractions. Joint packages should be offered so that downtowns, campgrounds, motels, restaurants, resorts and other attractions can benefit from each other's customers.

Special Events – Special events are important to bring people into the downtowns so that they can see what is available. Even if visitors do not purchase many goods or services on the day of the event, they are much more likely to come back another day if they know what is available. Many area residents have gotten out of the habit of shopping in a downtown. Special events can provide the motivation for residents to return to downtown. Special events featuring children are particularly valuable in attracting parents and other relatives to the downtown. Tunkhannock Borough, for example, has an extremely successful set of special events.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following information is summarized from the Wyoming County Economic Development Strategy, which was prepared by the Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University. Additional information and analysis is provided in the full report.



The primary organization conducting business support activities is the Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce. Many of the Chamber's economic development efforts focus on supporting members through professional development. The Chamber hosts workshops, networking sessions and special events and facilitates business-to-business relationships.

The Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission (NTRPDC) engages in regional economic development efforts for a five-county area that includes Wyoming County. In addition to coordinating transportation planning, NTRPDC provides businesses loans, assistance in export markets, information technology assistance, and other forms of technical assistance to local governments and businesses. The Endless Mountains Visitors Bureau is the agency responsible for promoting tourism in Wyoming, Susquehanna, and Sullivan Counties.

### Survey Analysis

The Wyoming County Economic Development Strategy included a survey of businesspersons and government officials in questionnaires and interviews. The responses were useful in determining the business aspects which need improvement as well as those that are functioning properly.

The responses showed highest satisfaction with recreational activities, although there is interest in seeking more programs geared towards youth and seniors. Many respondents believe that public transportation services and options are not sufficient. The following table summarizes the primary strengths and weaknesses of the County as reported by local government officials and businesspersons.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rural character and scenic beauty	Steep slopes, floodplains, and other geographic challenges leave little land available for business development.
Natural gas drilling industry	Not all municipalities are interested in collaboration to promote businesses.
Relatively low cost of living and low cost of doing business	Difficulty generating demand with relatively small population of the County.
Existing Chamber of Commerce activities to engage businesspersons and encourage networking	Transportation challenges.
Procter & Gamble is a major economic engine for the area	Some businesses are having difficulty finding workers with necessary skills in the local workforce.

Strengths	Weaknesses
The total number of businesses in the County is growing	Little economic development planning at the municipal level.
Relatively low rates of crime and poverty compared to PA as a whole	Limited access to natural gas utility service and high speed internet service.
High level of economic activity and revitalization in downtown Tunkhannock	
Strong community pride and spirit	

Opportunities	Threats
Potential for growth of businesses that support established industries (transportation, environmental services, etc.)	Economic impact of natural gas industry may be limited because many workers in that industry are transient, and the activity is cyclical.
Municipal governments may have interest in increased collaboration.	Small municipal governments are under fiscal pressure; lack funding for proactive solutions to issues.
Extensive natural areas and open space can be utilized for parks and/or trails.	People tend to leave the County for many types of businesses, which leads to reduced local sales.
Many employees and business owners would take advantage of training opportunities provided for them.	The divide between workers with sufficient education / skills and workers without sufficient education / skills is growing.
Recreation and entertainment assets could provide a foundation for tourism growth.	
As pipeline infrastructure is increased, the gas industry may see another growth cycle, which could increase governmental and individual revenues (including royalties to landowners).	

**Convene and facilitate projects to increase intergovernmental collaboration.**

The County can promote economic development by convening agents of change. For example, the County and the Councils of Government can facilitate meetings with municipal officials to increase collaboration. Local governments should create an environment conducive to starting, growing, attracting, and retaining businesses.

For example, a number of municipalities have expressed an interest in greater sharing of equipment, joint bidding and joint purchasing of supplies, which can offer economies of scale. Greater collaboration would also improve public safety, such as providing joint police forces.

Local government regulations and approval processes can be an obstacle in business development. The level of regulation varies greatly between different municipalities. The County can help to coordinate zoning regulations across municipal borders, seek to avoid unnecessary delays in approvals, and encourage local governments to target regulations to achieve the objective in the least burdensome, feasible method.

## **Preserve Natural Assets as part of Economic Development.**

Wyoming County's primary assets include rural character, small town atmosphere, and natural beauty, all of which provide the County with opportunities for economic growth through tourism and a high level of satisfaction for residents.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends areas that are targeted for growth and areas that should be preserved. Most of the growth areas are located within and around established communities, major highways and nearby businesses. The County should encourage municipalities to adopt or revise zoning ordinances to be consistent with the Plan.

Major economic development efforts should be aimed at promoting growth within the targeted growth areas. The Plan will guide growth to appropriate areas while preserving important natural areas. It will also assist existing businesses by guiding infrastructure investment (roads, utilities, etc.) to areas near or within existing development.

The County's Planning Office should work with interested municipalities in developing design guidelines, particularly for signage and lighting. In older downtowns, such as Tunkhannock's central business district, signage should support the historic character of the neighborhood while not overburdening business owners with unnecessary regulations. Municipalities should be prepared to provide additional guidance to businesses in conforming to regulations and guidelines.

Transit service for Wyoming and Susquehanna counties is now provided by a nonprofit agency through the Shared Ride, Medical Assistance Transportation, and People with Disabilities transportation programs. The County could study the feasibility of investing in an expansion of services as well as encourage large employers in the County to offer employee shuttles or carpooling incentives. Increased transportation services may permit more residents to visit downtowns, reach services, and have wider employment opportunities.

## **Expand Façade Improvement Programs**

The County and Chamber can work together to build a façade improvement program that mirrors the now inactive Elm Street program, focusing on commercial buildings. Some smaller communities have "Main Streets" that offer opportunities to build both small, niche businesses to cater to day travelers as well as services to cater to residents. A matching façade grant program will help to reinvigorate older structures in need of rehabilitation.

## **Enhance Tourism Opportunities**

Tourism is a great economic development opportunity while diversifying the County's economic base. A diverse economic base is more resilient in times of economic restructuring or recession. For tourism development, Wyoming County can capitalize on its natural resources and scenic beauty as well as entertainment, dining, and retail offerings in downtown Tunkhannock.

The County can do several things to promote tourism. The County can work to develop additional trails for walking, hiking, and biking throughout the County. Trails should be developed in areas with unique and attractive natural features and should expand connectivity between existing tourism and recreation facilities wherever possible.

Wayfinding signage will also help promote tourism and commerce. Gateways into the County and to major communities should be clearly marked with attractive signage wherever possible.

The County should also mark key tourist attractions, historic sites, and other points of interest with additional interpretative signage.

Signs are needed in downtown Tunkhannock to direct persons to both short-term parking spaces and to those parking lots and blocks that do not have time limitations. Ample and consistent signage should direct drivers from all major highways to the parking areas. Good signage helps tourists and other visitors to Tunkhannock find appropriate parking for stays longer than two hours, thus encouraging longer stays and more commerce in the downtown business district. In the event that demand for parking grows over time due to increasing tourism, the County and the Borough of Tunkhannock should explore other parking options, including metered parking.

#### **Continue to improve public infrastructure.**

Wyoming County should explore opportunities to work with municipalities to jointly address major infrastructure needs, such as regional flooding problems.

The County can also work with utility and telecommunications companies to help promote infrastructure investment that will benefit businesses. Greater access to natural gas service lines would reduce costs for businesses, residences and governments. The County also needs greater access to high-speed internet to allow modern business activity to occur in larger areas. The County can work with providers to demonstrate demand and build a case for further investment. Municipalities should not overregulate towers and antenna that could improve high-speed cellular service.

#### **Establish a Business/Industrial Park.**

The County should identify sites that would be suitable for a light industrial/business park. The site should be accessible from a major road (possibly a new road link), be within a reasonable distance of an expressway, be well-drained and not steeply sloped, and have access to all needed utilities, including high-speed internet service. Electricity and, hopefully, natural gas service should be available at the capacity needed by businesses. The Land Use and Housing Plan recommends initial consideration of lands along the Route 11 corridor north of Route 6.

#### **Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce on Economic Development.**

The Chamber has adopted short- and long-term recommendations to foster business development through start-up promotion, expansion, retention and new business attraction.

#### **Work with the Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce to Reconfigure the Industrial Development Authority (IDA).**

The IDA has been less active for a number of years. The IDA is a vehicle to support business development and should be utilized as a countywide resource.

#### **Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce on Education/Workforce Partnerships.**

This initiative is promoted by the Chamber through its Strategic Plan. The activity not only promotes business education partnerships but also suggests working with Keystone College to provide college level courses to high school students. While some college level courses are available through the Tunkhannock Area School District, the courses are not available at all high schools.

The County should work with Keystone College to expand online programming for adults and/or to establish a satellite facility in a more centralized location in the County to provide college level or continuing education programs for adults.

Extensive career readiness programs are needed in all high schools. Further, school districts should refocus senior projects to concentrate on career exploration and career readiness as an additional tool to foster and develop Wyoming County's future workforce.

**Expand Career & Technology Center (CTC) Offerings.**

Wyoming County youth attend five different school districts. Some of the schools in districts serving parts of the Wyoming County are not located in the County. The Tunkhannock Area High School offers some technical programs on-site. Other programs are available at the Susquehanna County Area CTC. Other school districts partner with the West Side Area CTC in Luzerne County. Access to programming is not equal for all Wyoming County students, and the distance to some sites outside the County may dissuade some students from pursuing career and technical education. Coordinated regional planning should be undertaken to evaluate the feasibility of additional CTC programming at an existing site within Wyoming County that would be accessible to all students. If a public school is closed in Wyoming County, the school may be suitable as a satellite CTC location.



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

The Historic and Cultural Sites Map is included in the Background section towards the beginning of the Plan.

### **Historic Designation**

The County should consider making efforts to list additional buildings and districts on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on the Register does not by itself involve any additional regulations upon a private property owner. However, listing does offer public recognition of the importance of a building and can provide limited Federal income tax benefits as part of a major historic rehabilitation of a commercial or investment property. Listing on the National Register provides protection against actions involving Federal or State funds that would adversely affect the building. For example, a National Register designation makes it very difficult to use federal funds to demolish a historic building for a road improvement.

To become listed, a site or district must go through a research and review process. The research involves a description of the site/district and an explanation of the site/district's importance. The nomination is submitted to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission for certification.

### **Consider historic zoning provisions to protect the most important historic buildings.**

Some form of zoning provisions should be considered by each municipality to protect important historic buildings. Protections could include a layer of provisions for historic buildings in addition to standard zoning. The provisions could be created under the authority of the State Municipalities Planning Code, as opposed to the State Historic District Act, which is much more difficult to use.

Unlike a historic district ordinance, zoning regulations on demolition would not regulate changes to buildings, such as window replacements or installation of siding. Zoning provisions for demolition also would not regulate the architecture of new construction or building additions. Instead, the historic zoning provisions could be limited to regulating only demolitions of the most important buildings. For example, the zoning ordinance could require that any demolition of a very significant historic building needs zoning approval from the Board of Supervisors or Borough Council as a "conditional use" or from the Zoning Hearing Board as a special exception use. The demolition would only be allowed if the applicant proved that the building could not be economically reused or that the demolition is necessary to allow a project of special public importance (such as an intersection improvement needed to improve public safety). The prohibition on demolition would only apply to buildings listed by the municipality as the most significant.

In addition, a municipality's ordinance could require that any application for a proposed subdivision, land development, conditional use or special exception use must include a full description of any historic building on the property and how the application may adversely affect the building. The Zoning Hearing Board could also be authorized to consider impacts upon historic buildings in determining whether to approve a special exception use or a variance.

An alternative to regulating demolition could involve a simple delay of up to 90 days from the time a person applied for a demolition permit until it could be approved. The delay would only apply to a list of important historic buildings. The delay is intended to provide time for interested persons to help a property owner understand alternatives to demolition. For example, a new buyer might be willing to restore the building, or the owner might be persuaded to incorporate the building into his or her plans for the property.

In any case, an exception should be allowed where a building inspector certifies that a building must be demolished because of an imminent public safety hazard.

### **Consider zoning incentives for rehabilitation of historic buildings.**

If a designated building is preserved and rehabilitated in a sensitive manner, the zoning ordinance could allow the building to be used for certain additional uses beyond uses normally allowed under zoning. For example, a historic building in a non-commercial zoning district should be allowed to be used as a bed and breakfast inn, office, day care center, antique store, funeral home or similar light commercial use. The additional permitted uses should help create a stronger market to encourage investment in the restoration of historic buildings. The additional uses would only be allowed within existing buildings and for modest-sized building additions that are designed to be compatible with the historic building as viewed from the road.

The zoning provisions could require an applicant to submit plans prepared by a registered architect showing that the important features of the building that are visible from a public road will be preserved and rehabilitated. Modern features could be added in areas that are not visible from a public road or street.

### **Promote increased interest and awareness in historic resources and more detailed identification of historic buildings.**

Increased public interest in historic buildings can help encourage prospective owners to buy and rehabilitate historic properties. The County Historical Society and local historic groups have valuable roles in collecting information on local history, compiling historic materials and photos, and generating interest in the County's heritage.

### **Encourage property-owners to follow proper standards in making changes to older buildings.**

Property owners should be aware of appropriate ways to modernize old buildings can be or rehabilitate them in ways that retain the historic appearance as viewed from a road or street. The Plan recommends the following advisory guidelines (not regulations) for older buildings in the region:

1. Modern uses should require minimal changes to the exterior features that define the building's character.
2. Historic exterior materials and features should be preserved and not be removed or covered.
3. A new building in a historic area does not need to appear old but should include features that respect nearby historic buildings, such as similar dimensions, materials, window openings and scale.

4. If deteriorated historic features cannot be repaired, they should be replaced with new features having the same appearance.
5. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials should not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
6. The proportional relationship between the width and the height of the front of historic buildings should be maintained.
7. If doors or windows are replaced, the door/window openings should remain the same size.
8. Any pattern of solid wall areas vs. windows and doors should be maintained.
9. Any new construction or additions should continue setbacks from a road that are similar to nearby historic buildings.
10. Any pattern of building projections should be maintained.
11. Materials used should be similar in appearance to authentic materials of surrounding buildings.
12. Roof shapes and roof lines should be maintained, and new buildings should have roof lines similar to nearby historic buildings.
13. Barn walls should be maintained in wood, preferably painted red, white or other historic colors.
14. Views of outdoor storage from roads and residential properties should be minimized.