



# **WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

---

*including the municipalities of*

**Heidelberg Township**

**Marion Township**

**North Heidelberg Township**

**Robesonia Borough**

**Womelsdorf Borough**

**Berks County, Pennsylvania**

**Urban Research and Development  
Corporation**

**Bethlehem, Pennsylvania**



# **WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Adopted By

Heidelberg Township Board of Supervisors - December 21, 1999

Marion Township Board of Supervisors - December 30, 1999

North Heidelberg Township Board of Supervisors - December 22, 1999

Robesonia Borough Council - January 3, 2000

Womelsdorf Borough Council - March 8, 2000

Urban Research & Development Corporation  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE VISION

The Western Berks area includes the boroughs of Robesonia and Womelsdorf, and the surrounding townships of Heidelberg, Marion and North Heidelberg. The Western Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan is a vision for the future of five unique rural and small town landscapes. The plan shows how residents can help preserve their area's character and environment by avoiding unplanned growth and accommodating only desirable changes in the area's current land use pattern.

Most growth in the Western Berks area should be in and around existing developed areas, including Robesonia Borough, Womelsdorf Borough and, to a lesser extent, the village of Stouchsburg. The extensive prime agricultural soils of Heidelberg, Marion and North Heidelberg townships should be reserved for farming. The vital environmental functions and limitations of steep slopes, woodlands, flood prone lands and other natural areas should be respected. Where new homes are constructed, they should be sited on the most physically suitable land. Open space should be preserved within new developments wherever feasible. Sewage treatment should be engineered to maintain public health and protect local water quality without encouraging sprawl.

The Western Berks area encourages new commerce and industry that is well planned, environmentally safe and located near existing infrastructure. Businesses along major roads such as Route 422 and Route 419, should use common entrances and exits to improve traffic safety, facilitate circulation and help prevent commercial strip development. In both residential and non-residential areas, people should exercise care in using and reusing historic structures. Commercial signs should complement, not detract from, the local environment, particularly in the area's most historic locations.

Working with local organizations, the five municipalities should continue to promote fire protection and emergency services. Education, recreation, and culture should remain priorities. The spirit of intermunicipal cooperation that led to this plan should be maintained and extended.

### OTHER JOINT PLANNING INITIATIVES

Intermunicipal cooperation should also be extended beyond the borders of the Western Berks area. Nearby Jefferson Township and Bernville Borough have completed their own joint comprehensive plan. The adjacent municipalities of Lower Heidelberg, South Heidelberg and Wernersville are also nearing completion of a joint comprehensive plan. A joint meeting was held between the five Western Berks area municipalities and the three municipalities referenced above to discuss common issues and coordinate progress of the two comprehensive plans before they were completed. These and other regional planning initiatives are necessary to effectively deal with the area's growth and conservation issues, issues not confined by municipal borders.

## THE PLAN

The Western Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan has three major parts:

- The Background Reports summarize existing conditions and trends in the area.
- The Plan For the Future contains the goals, recommendations and policies on future conservation and development in the five municipalities.
- The Action Program summarizes the actions these five municipalities can take to put the plan into practice.

The five municipalities will derive the most benefit from this plan if they follow it in the future. Local officials, business leaders and other residents should only support proposals for change that are consistent with the visions outlined above and that help carry out this plan.

## BACKGROUND REPORTS

Current and future trends in the following areas will continue to influence the conservation and development of the Western Berks area:

- Regional Location
- Historical Origins
- Natural Features
- Population, Housing and Employment
- Existing Land Use
- Community Facilities and Services
- Local Government
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Land Use and Zoning Policies in the Region

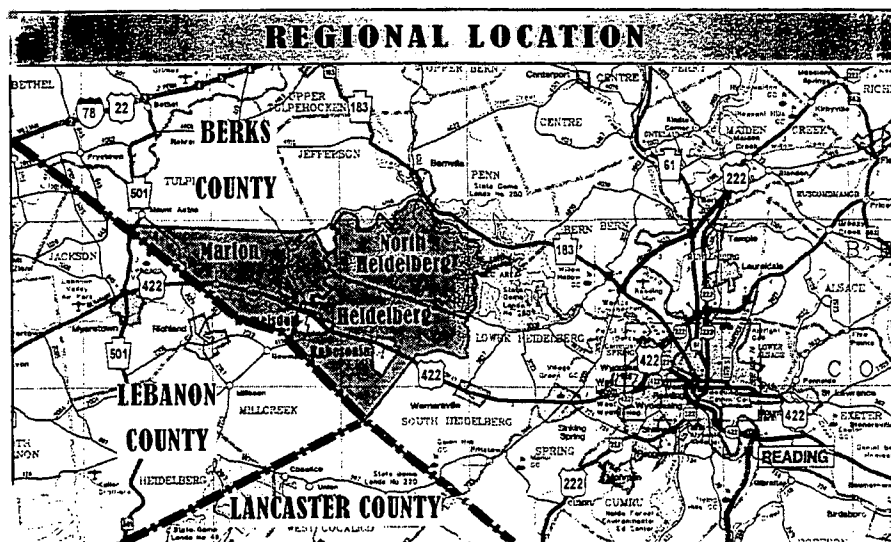
The following reports summarize the most relevant information about existing conditions in the Western Berks area.

### REGIONAL LOCATION

The Western Berks area is along the Berks County-Lebanon County border between the City of Reading and I-78. U.S. 422 connects the Western Berks area with Reading to the east and cities of Lebanon and Harrisburg to the west. Three state routes provide access to I-78, including PA 501, PA 419 and PA 183 via Bernville Road.

Regional growth pressures are affecting Berks County from several directions. From the east, suburbanization is spreading through Montgomery County and Chester County from Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River corridor. This trend has accelerated since the Schuylkill Expressway extension was completed in the early 1980's. From the northeast, major growth from the Lehigh Valley has moved into Berks County along both PA 222 and PA 100. Development is also moving northward along PA 222 from Lancaster County.

Closer to home, the Western Berks area is primarily affected by growth spreading westward along U.S. 422 from Reading via the Sinking Springs and Wernersville vicinities. Harrisburg and Hershey area growth has the potential to affect the Western Berks area along U.S. 422 from the opposite direction.



## HISTORICAL ORIGINS

The Delaware or Lenni Lenape Indians were the earliest known inhabitants of Berks County. Their symbol was the turtle and they named the area "Tulpehocken" meaning land of the turtles. The first Europeans came in the early years of the 1700's after England's King Charles granted 40,000 square miles to William Penn in what is now eastern Pennsylvania. Immigrants came from Germany, France, Sweden, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and elsewhere, often seeking religious freedom. Many moved inland from Philadelphia along the Schuylkill River. The Delaware were unable to obtain assurances of protection from settlers from the colonial government and most moved further west by 1724.

Settlers from the Palatine region in Germany proved to be most influential in the formative years of the Western Berks area. Many had originally settled along the Hudson River in New York and later resettled in the Tulpehocken valley. Known as the Tulpehocken Settlement, they arrived in three successive waves beginning with 15 families in 1723 and followed by an additional 18 families in 1725. A third group arrived in 1729.

By the first federal census in 1790, Germans and German descendants comprised almost 75% of Berks County's population. Their farming traditions, religious convictions and self-reliance, which came to be known as "Pennsylvania Dutch" characteristics, have dominated in the region for nearly 300 years. Religion was a major factor in the development of the Western Berks area. Mennonites, Lutheran, Reformed and other congregations each built places of worship in the area prior to the mid 1800's. The Mennonite/Amish presence in the Western Berks area is still distinct today, particularly in Marion Township, the Western Berks area municipality where farming is most prevalent.

As early as 1690, William Penn conceived the idea of a grand canal to connect the people of his lands with its resources and goods. In 1791, the Union Canal was begun to connect the Schuylkill River and Schuylkill Canal with the Susquehanna River. Work continued until the canal was completed in 1828. The canal proved to be a strong boost to the area's industrial and commercial growth. Railroads led to the demise of the canal during the 1850's and the canal ceased operations in 1884. Today the Tulpehocken Creek Historic District protects the canal and other historic architecture along the canal.

Early highways also played an important role in the early growth of the area. The first highway in the area was the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike. Built in 1729, it connected Reading with Lebanon. The present day U.S. Route 422 closely follows this same alignment. This roadway has become the major highway in western Berks exerting development pressures and economic opportunities.

Aside from farming, water powered industry was the dominant economic activity in the area's formative period. Mills for grain, lumber, paper and other commodities were common along local creeks until the mid 1800's. The furnace and ironworks in Robesonia were the largest of the area's water powered industries. Evidence of the area's early industries still exist, including old mill buildings, furnace sites, mine holes and other remnants.



According to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Western Berks area has four National Historic Register Districts, three individual sites listed on the National Historic Register and two sites that are considered eligible for the Register. These are as follows:

Historic Districts

- Stouchsburg Historic District
- Womelsdorf Historic District
- Robesonia Furnace Historic District
- Tulpehocken Creek Historic District

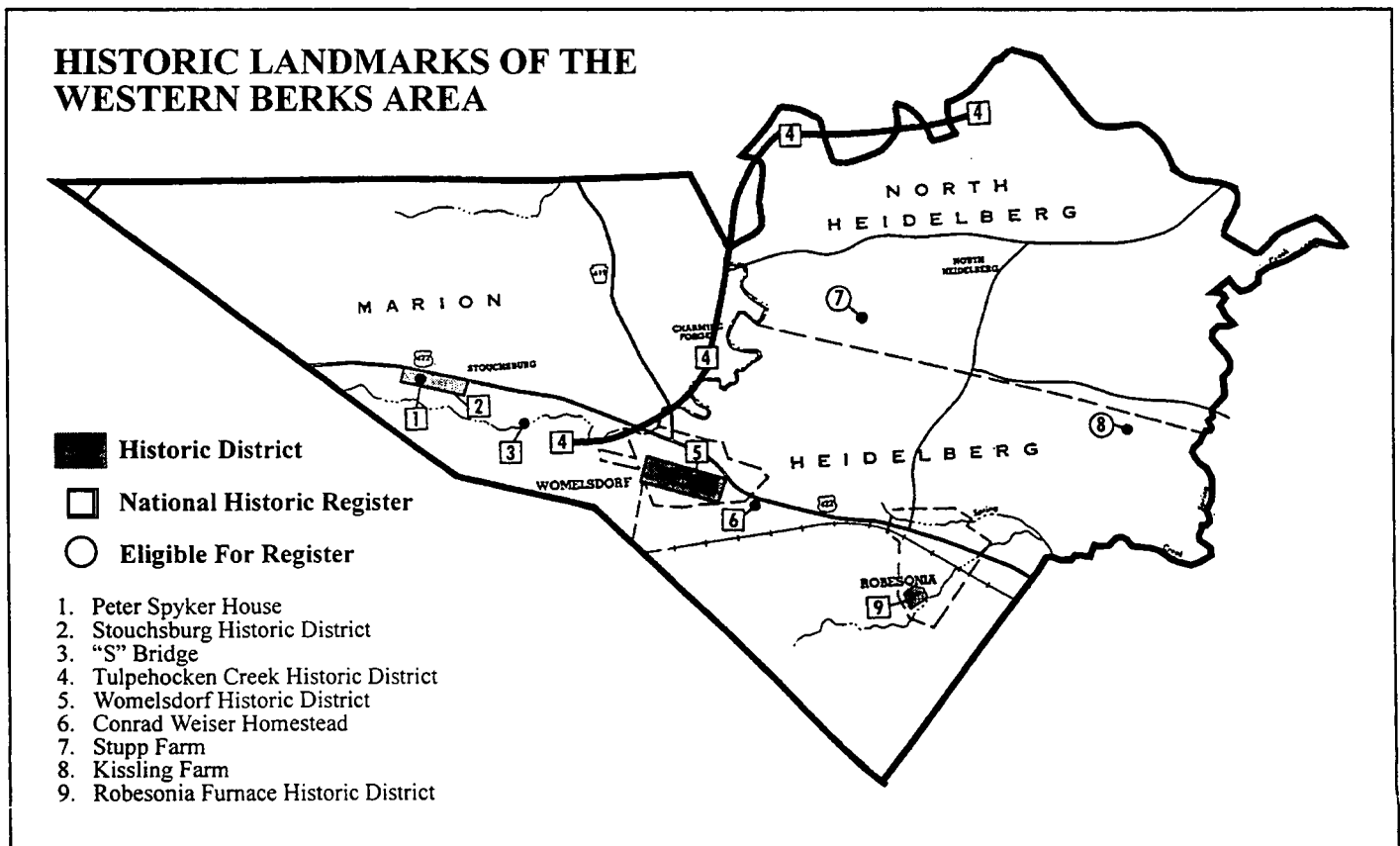
National Register Sites

- Conrad Weiser Homestead
- Peter Spyker House
- "S" Bridge

Sites Eligible for the National Register

- Kissling Farm
- Stupp Farm

The following map shows the Historic Landmarks of the Western Berks area.



## POPULATION, HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

### Total Population

Womelsdorf Borough is the most populous of the five municipalities in the Western Berks area with an estimated 2,791 residents in 1996. Each of the other four municipalities had a total population of between 1,400 and 2,000 people in 1996. Womelsdorf has also added the most people since 1980. The Borough's population increased by 24.3 % during the 1980's and by an additional 23.0% between 1990 and 1996. In the overall vicinity, South Heidelberg added the most people during the 1980's and Lower Heidelberg has added the most people since 1990. Within the Western Berks area, North Heidelberg had the highest percentage growth during the 1980's (35.2%). Womelsdorf's 23.0% increase has been the highest growth rate in the Western Berks area for the 1990's.

**TABLE 1**  
**TOTAL POPULATION**  
**Western Berks Area, Surrounding Municipalities and Berks County**  
**1980 - 1996**

MUNICIPALITY	1980 Population	1990 Population	Change 1980 to 1990	% Change 1980 to 1990	1996 Estimated Population	Change 1990 to 1996	% Change 1990 to 1996
Heidelberg Township	1,561	1,513	- 48	- 3.1	1,599	86	5.7
Jackson Township (Lebanon County)	5,028	5,732	704	14.0	5,990	258	4.5
Jefferson Township	1,310	1,410	100	7.6	1,504	94	6.7
Lower Heidelberg Township	1,819	2,209	390	21.4	3,104	895	40.5
Marion Township	1,341	1,415	74	5.5	1,502	87	6.1
Mill Creek Township (Lebanon County)	2,564	2,687	123	4.8	2,703	16	0.6
North Heidelberg Township	953	1,288	335	35.2	1,420	132	10.3
Penn Township	1,254	1,831	577	46.0	2,101	270	14.8
Robesonia Borough	1,748	1,944	196	11.2	1,962	18	0.9
South Heidelberg Township	3,355	4,382	1,027	30.6	4,963	581	13.3
Tulpehocken Township	2,569	2,843	274	10.7	2,979	136	4.8
Womelsdorf Borough	1,827	2,270	443	24.3	2,791	521	23.0
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	<b>312,497</b>	<b>336,523</b>	<b>24,014</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>352,353</b>	<b>15,830</b>	<b>4.7</b>

Source: U.S. Census, Berks County Planning Commission, Lebanon County Planning Commission

## Population Projections

The Berks County Planning Commission projects that the five Western Berks area municipalities will add 864 people during the next decade. This is an average of 86 people per year, or approximately 29 new homes annually across the five municipalities. By comparison the five municipalities added an estimated 844 residents between 1990 and 1996.

While overall growth is expected to be moderate, the County projects that Womelsdorf will increase its population by 20.9% during the next decade and continue to be the fastest growing of the five Western Berks area municipalities. North Heidelberg is expected to increase its population by 16.6% over the same period.

**TABLE 2**  
**BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**POPULATION PROJECTIONS**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**2000 and 2010**

AREA	1990 Population	2000 Projected Population	Change 1990 to 2000	% Change 1990 to 2000	2010 Projected Population	Change 2000 to 2010	% Change 2000 to 2010
Heidelberg Township	1,513	1,570	57	3.8	1,537	- 33	-2.1
Marion Township	1,415	1,495	80	5.7	1,530	35	2.3
North Heidelberg Township	1,288	1,617	329	25.5	1,886	269	16.6
Robesonia Borough	1,944	2,075	131	6.7	2,150	75	3.6
Womelsdorf Borough	2,270	2,477	207	9.1	2,995	518	20.9
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	<b>336,523</b>	<b>354,370</b>	<b>17,847</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>367,291</b>	<b>12,921</b>	<b>3.7</b>

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

## Population Density

The three townships in the planning area are very close in total land area as are the two boroughs. Womelsdorf Borough is the most densely developed municipality at 3,101 persons per square mile in 1996. Robesonia is next at 2,180 persons per square mile. The population density of the three townships in 1996 ranged between 102 and 116 persons per square mile. Most of the surrounding municipalities are more densely developed.

**TABLE 3**  
**POPULATION DENSITY**  
**Western Berks Area, Surrounding Municipalities and Berks County**  
**1996**

MUNICIPALITY	Estimated 1996 Population	Land Area (in square miles)	Population Density (in persons per square mile)
Heidelberg Township	1,599	13.9	116
Marion Township	1,502	14.3	105
North Heidelberg Township	1,420	13.9	102
Robesonia Borough	1,962	0.9	2,180
Womelsdorf Borough	2,791	0.9	3,101
Jackson Township (Lebanon County)	5,990	23.8	252
Jefferson Township	1,504	15.8	95
Lower Heidelberg Township	3,104	15.9	195
Mill Creek Township (Lebanon County)	2,703	19.9	136
Penn Township	2,101	19.0	111
South Heidelberg Township	4,963	13.7	362
Tulpehocken Township	2,979	23.1	129
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	<b>352,353</b>	<b>864.4</b>	<b>408</b>

Source: U.S. Census, Berks County, URDC

### Population By Age

In 1990, 5-17 year olds were the largest age group in two of the three Western Berks area townships. In the two boroughs, the largest age groups were 22-34 year olds. The number of residents in the 4 and under age group was exceeded by people 65-74 and people 74+ in both Robesonia and Womelsdorf. The opposite was generally true in the townships. In three of the five municipalities 35-54 year olds were the fastest growing age group between 1980 and 1990. They were second fastest in the fourth municipality and third fastest in the fifth.



**TABLE 4  
POPULATION BY AGE  
Western Berks Area and Berks County  
1980 - 1990**

AGE	HEIDELBERG TOWNSHIP			MARION TOWNSHIP			NORTH HEIDELBERG TOWNSHIP		
	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990
	%	Number		%	Number		%	Number	
4 and Under	5.6	85	- 7.5	7.9	112	- 1.8	7.3	94	22.1
5 - 17	20.4	308	- 32.8	21.7	307	- 0.7	17.4	224	- 0.9
18 - 21	5.6	86	11.7	5.0	71	- 34.9	6.7	86	62.3
22 - 34	16.3	246	- 13.1	19.8	280	6.1	18.5	238	9.7
35 - 44	16.2	245	18.4	15.1	214	35.4	20.4	263	122.9
45 - 54	13.7	207	21.8	11.2	158	29.5	14.2	183	67.9
55 - 64	9.6	145	- 21.2	8.2	116	- 17.7	7.2	93	19.2
65 - 74	9.1	137	80.3	7.0	99	32.0	5.2	67	26.4
75 +	3.5	53	60.6	4.1	58	18.4	3.1	40	81.8
TOTAL	100.0	1,513	- 3.1	100.0	1,415	5.5	100.0	1,288	35.2

**TABLE 4 - CONTINUED**

AGE	ROBESONIA BOROUGH			WOMELSDORF BOROUGH			BERKS COUNTY		
	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990	1990 Population		% Change 1980 to 1990
	%	Number		%	Number		%	Number	
4 and Under	7.3	141	34.3	6.4	146	32.7	6.7	22,510	19.0
5 - 17	15.8	307	- 12.8	16.8	381	11.7	16.7	55,936	- 6.9
18 - 21	4.8	94	8.1	5.1	116	- 3.3	6.0	20,079	- 7.5
22 - 34	21.1	411	- 8.7	24.0	545	32.9	20.1	67,689	9.6
35 - 44	16.4	319	66.1	13.9	315	86.4	14.8	49,668	44.6
45 - 54	10.5	204	9.7	8.3	189	10.4	10.3	34,648	- 3.0
55 - 64	8.7	170	- 7.1	9.3	210	- 0.5	9.9	33,467	- 6.5
65 - 74	8.0	155	- 11.4	8.1	184	7.6	8.8	29,701	9.9
75 +	7.4	143	55.4	8.1	184	119.1	6.8	22,825	33.1
TOTAL	100.0	1,944	11.2	100.0	2,270	20.6	100.0	336,523	7.7

**Gender**

Gender refers to the number of males and females in a population. There are no special conditions in the Western Berks Planning area that have altered the traditional 50/50 balance between total males and total females.

**TABLE 5  
GENDER  
Western Berks Area and Berks County  
1990**

AREA	TOTAL POPULATION	MALES		FEMALES	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Heidelberg Township	1,513	745	49.2	768	50.8
Marion Township	1,415	732	51.7	683	48.3
North Heidelberg Township	1,288	670	52.0	618	48.0
Robesonia Borough	1,944	939	48.3	1,005	51.7
Womelsdorf Borough	2,270	1,092	48.1	1,178	51.9
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	<b>336,523</b>	<b>162,646</b>	<b>48.3</b>	<b>173,877</b>	<b>51.7</b>

Source: U.S. Census

**Household Size**

Households refer to persons living in a housing unit whether related or not. Reflecting a national trend, the area's and the County's average household size has become smaller in recent decades. Later marriages, more divorces, fewer children and more elderly households have contributed to this trend across the U.S.

**TABLE 6**  
**AVERAGE PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1980 - 1990**

AREA	AVERAGE PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD	
	1980	1990
Heidelberg Township	3.06	2.76
Marion Township	3.19	3.04
North Heidelberg Township	3.08	2.89
Robesonia Borough	2.72	2.56
Womelsdorf Borough	2.51	2.42
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	2.66	2.56

Source: U.S. Census

### Income and Poverty

Median income is the level at which half an area's households earn more and half earn less. Median income in four of the five Western Berks area municipalities exceeds the Berks County median. Only Womelsdorf's is lower. Only Marion Township comes close to Berks County's percent of persons in poverty. Poverty levels are based on a federally established minimum income that changes based on number of persons in a household.

**TABLE 7**  
**INCOME AND POVERTY**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1990**

AREA	MEDIAN ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PERCENT OF PERSONS IN POVERTY
Heidelberg Township	\$36,250	5.5
Marion Township	33,182	7.3
North Heidelberg Township	39,643	2.6
Robesonia Borough	34,318	4.9
Womelsdorf Borough	29,594	3.2
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	32,048	7.8

Source: U.S. Census

## Total Housing Units

Trends in total housing units mirror population trends. However, even areas losing population tend to add housing units to accommodate new households being created by singles, divorced people and the elderly. Between 1980 and 1990, Womelsdorf and North Heidelberg added significant numbers of housing units. Housing growth in the other three Western Berks area municipalities was more moderate.

**TABLE 8**  
**TOTAL HOUSING UNITS**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1980 - 1990**

AREA	TOTAL HOUSING UNITS		1980 - 1990 CHANGE	
	1980	1990	Number	Percent
Heidelberg Township	481	524	43	8.9
Marion Township	464	496	32	6.9
North Heidelberg Township	323	468	145	44.9
Robesonia Borough	662	772	110	16.6
Womelsdorf Borough	768	948	180	23.4
BERKS COUNTY	119,934	134,482	14,548	12.1

Source: U.S. Census

## Housing Type

Households often need different types of housing as they mature. Young couples look for starter homes and move to larger homes as their families grow. As children leave and the remaining occupants grow older, requirements often return full circle to apartments, townhouses and other smaller units.

As in most suburban and rural areas, single-family detached homes comprise most of the housing stock in the three Western Berks area townships (87.8% in Heidelberg, 76.4% in Marion and 85.9% in North Heidelberg). Single-family detached units are also the most popular housing type in the two boroughs (51.2% in Robesonia and 37.0% in Womelsdorf).



**TABLE 9**  
**HOUSING TYPE**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1990**

AREA		Single-Family Detached	Single-Family Attached	2-4 Unit Structure	5+ Unit Structure	Mobile Home & Others	TOTAL
Heidelberg Township	Number	460	17	18	7	22	524
	Percent	87.8	3.2	3.5	1.3	4.2	100
Marion Township	Number	379	31	46	0	40	496
	Percent	76.4	6.3	9.2	0	8.1	100
North Heidelberg Township	Number	402	9	5	5	47	468
	Percent	85.9	1.9	1.1	1.1	10.0	100
Robesonia Borough	Number	395	250	93	19	15	772
	Percent	51.2	32.4	12.0	2.5	1.9	100
Womelsdorf Borough	Number	351	342	65	175	15	948
	Percent	37.0	36.0	6.9	18.5	1.6	100
BERKS COUNTY	Number	68,688	33,036	13,594	12,282	6,882	134,482
	Percent	51.1	24.6	10.1	9.1	5.1	100.0

Source: U.S. Census

### Housing Tenure and Vacancy

The amount of rental housing in an area affects housing affordability and the ability to accommodate the life cycle changes described earlier. More rental housing usually signifies an area more affordable to singles, young families and older people. Areas with high rates of owner-occupied housing may be less accessible to singles, starter families and the elderly.

The percent of owner-occupied homes exceeds the Berks County ratio in four of the five Western Berks area municipalities. Only Womelsdorf, at 68.2%, has a lower percentage of owner-occupied homes than the County overall. Conversely, Womelsdorf has the highest proportion of renter-occupied units in the five-municipality area.

Marion Township, at 6.0% had the highest housing vacancy rate at the time of the 1990 census. Marion was the only municipality to exceed Berks County's rate of 5.1%. Vacancy rates of between 3% and 5% are usually considered desirable to offer sufficient choice on the housing market. Rates lower than this range typically reflect a more stable developed area.

**TABLE 10**  
**HOUSING TENURE AND VACANCY**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1990**

AREA	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Vacant		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Heidelberg Township	945	85.4	120	10.9	41	3.7	1,106	100
Marion Township	354	71.4	112	22.6	30	6.0	496	100
North Heidelberg Township	390	83.3	55	11.8	23	4.9	468	100
Robesonia Borough	585	75.8	165	21.4	22	2.8	772	100
Womelsdorf Borough	647	68.2	275	29.0	26	2.8	948	100
BERKS COUNTY	94,336	70.1	33,313	24.8	6,833	5.1	134,482	100

Source: U.S. Census

### Housing Age

In North Heidelberg Township and Robesonia Borough, more homes were constructed in the 1980's than any other decade. In Berks County, Marion Township and Womelsdorf Borough, homes built prior to 1940 are the most prevalent. The 1960's were the most popular decade for housing construction in Heidelberg Township.

**TABLE 11**  
**YEAR HOUSING BUILT**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1990**

AREA	TOTAL UNITS	PERCENT OF TOTAL UNITS					
		Before 1940	1940 - 1959	1950 - 1959	1960 - 1969	1970 - 1979	1980 - 1989
Heidelberg Township	524	22.9	4.4	15.6	25.4	15.5	16.3
Marion Township	496	49.8	3.2	8.9	8.5	19.0	10.7
North Heidelberg Township	474	19.8	2.3	5.9	19.0	24.7	28.3
Robesonia Borough	772	48.2	8.8	10.9	5.3	16.1	10.7
Womelsdorf Borough	948	43.8	4.0	6.3	5.2	17.3	23.4
BERKS COUNTY	134,482	39.7	7.2	12.1	11.1	16.0	13.9

Source: U.S. Census

## Employment by Sector

Many residents of the Western Berks area work elsewhere. Within the overall regional economy, Reading Metropolitan Statistical area (Berks County) figures show that jobs are growing in retail trade, finance/insurance/real estate, government and communications and public utilities. Construction, manufacturing and wholesale trade lost jobs between November 1997 and November 1998. Services and transportation neither gained or lost jobs during this period.

**TABLE 12**  
**EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR**  
**Reading Metropolitan Statistical Area (Berks County)**  
**November 1997 - November 1998**

ECONOMIC SECTOR	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT		CHANGE	
	November 1998	November 1997	Number	Percent
Construction and Mining	7,100	7,600	- 500	- 6.6
Durable Goods Manufacturing	26,400	28,100	- 1,700	- 6.1
Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing	15,300	16,000	- 700	- 4.4
Transportation	4,800	4,800	0	0
Communications and Public Utilities	3,500	3,300	+ 200	+ 5.7
Wholesale Trade	7,400	7,700	- 300	- 4.1
Retail Trade	32,400	32,100	+ 300	+ 0.9
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	8,900	8,500	+ 400	+ 4.7
Services	40,300	40,300	0	0
Government	20,200	20,000	+ 200	+ 1.0
Total Non-Agricultural Employment	166,300	168,400	- 2,100	- 1.3

Source: PA Department of Labor and Industry

## Employment by Industry

The U. S. Census reported on the industries in which people were employed as of 1990. As in Berks County, four of the five Western Berks area municipalities reported more residents employed in the Technical/Sales and Administrative Support trades category than in any other category. In the fifth municipality, Marion Township, the Operator/Fabricator/Laborer category was the primary employer.

**TABLE 13**  
**EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY**  
**PERSONS 16 YEARS AND OLDER**  
**Western Berks Area and Berks County**  
**1990**

AREA	TOTAL	PERCENT OF EMPLOYED PERSONS					
		Management/ Professional Specialty	Technical/ Sales/Admin. Support	Service	Farming/ Forestry/ Fishing	Precision Production/ Craft/Repair	Operator/ Fabricator/ Laborer
Heidelberg Township	806	22.8	27.2	10.8	6.5	11.2	21.6
Marion Township	711	13.2	21.5	13.2	15.3	10.0	26.7
North Heidelberg Township	709	20.2	25.8	8.6	4.4	17.6	23.4
Robesonia Borough	1,039	22.6	31.7	11.2	0.7	10.5	23.4
Womelsdorf Borough	1,214	16.7	30.0	13.0	0.5	14.2	25.6
<b>BERKS COUNTY</b>	<b>166,292</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>21.5</b>

Source: U.S. Census



## NATURAL FEATURES

### Geology

The geology of an area dictates its groundwater potential and is an important determinant of soil types. The Western Berks area is underlain by three geological groupings: Ordovician, Cambrian and Precambrian formations. These formations represent different geological time periods, with Ordovician being the most recent and Precambrian being the oldest. Each geologic grouping has distinctive rock formations.

The oldest rock formations in the Western Berks area are located generally south of Route 422 particularly in the very steep area south of Robesonia, which is characterized by Precambrian gneiss. Quartzite and dolomite formations from the Cambrian area underlie most of Robesonia and Womelsdorf. North of Route 422, Heidelberg Township's geology consists of Ordovician formations, including shale, dolomite/limestone and limestone deposits. Marion is primarily limestone, a factor in the township's extensive prime agricultural soils. North Heidelberg is entirely underlain by shale formations. The following geological formations, their characteristics and their effect on planning are described below:

#### Ordovician Formations

Ordovician formations are composed of gray shales, sandstone interbeds and crystalline limestones. Ordovician shales are non-permeable and cause poor drainage. Both dolomite with its magnesium component and limestone are associated with the highly productive agricultural soils of the Western Berks area. Limestone has also supplied lime and other stone for the area's quarries. However, Ordovician dolomite and limestone are comprised of calcium carbonate, which is soluble and easily weathered. These formations tend to be perforated with depressions, sink holes and other vertical fissures that transport pollutants to the water table instead of filtering the pollutants through slow percolation. This tendency should be considered in limiting permitted densities where development is served by conventional on-lot septic systems. Ordovician formations tend to be small to moderate suppliers of ground water, but adequate for residential uses.

#### Cambrian Formations

Cambrian formations are composed of quartzite, dolomite and limestone. The Cambrian formations tend to have an abundance of surface depressions and sinkholes due to the relative purity of the limestone bedrock found here. Like Ordovician limestone, Cambrian limestone is highly porous and easily weathered. The relative purity of these limestone formations increases their tendency to form solutions when they come into contact with water. Larger and larger cavities are gradually carved out below ground until sinkholes are formed and the surface eventually collapses. Vertical fissures that permit the easy transport of pollutants down to groundwater are a related problem. Like Ordovician dolomite and limestone, Cambrian formations are generally associated with productive farm land.

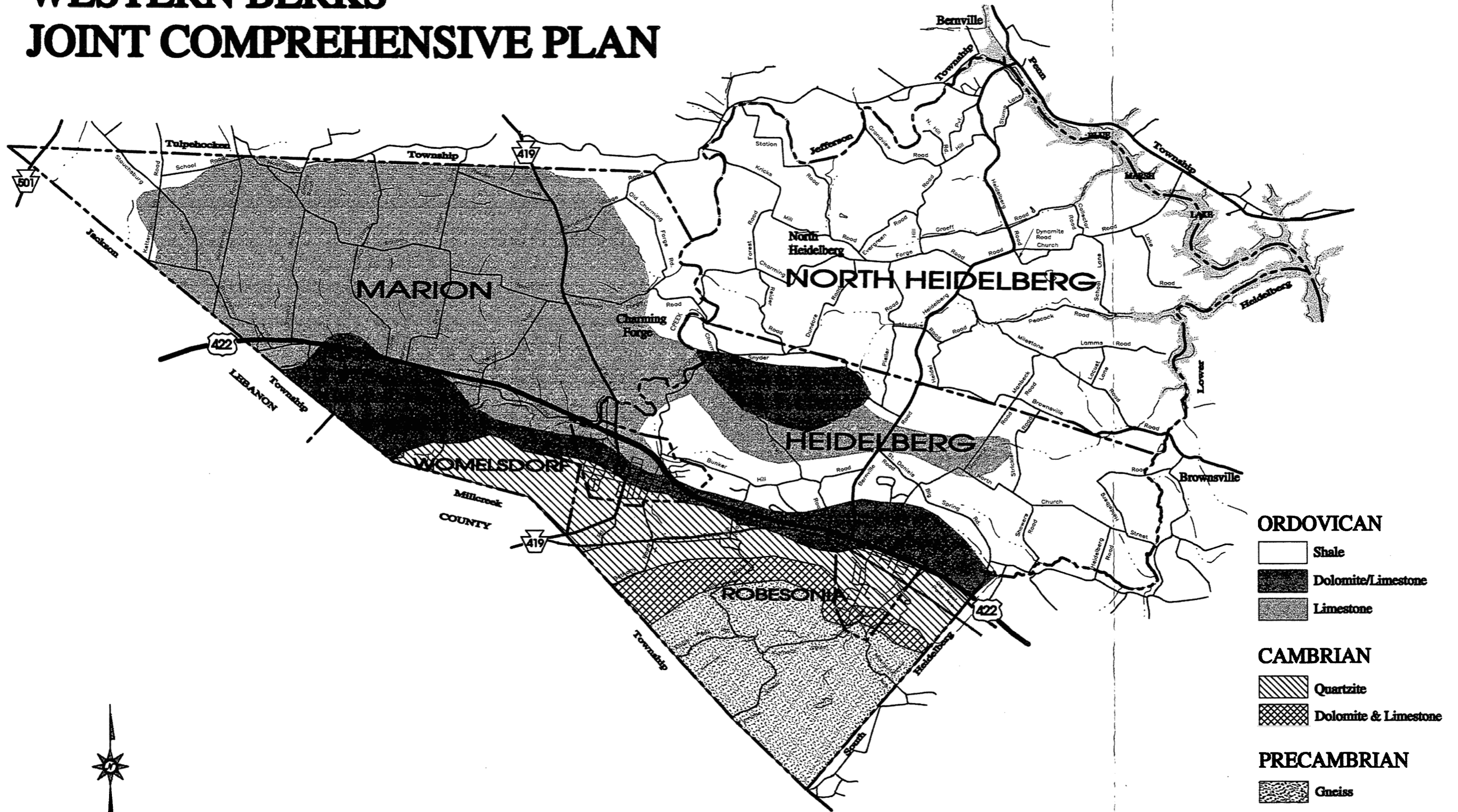
### Precambrian Formations

Precambrian formations were the earliest rocks to form in Berks County. They are composed of Hornblende and Granite gneiss, a very hard and compact rock which resists erosion. Precambrian formations underlie the concentration of hills and ridges found in North Heidelberg Township. Precambrian formations tend to be poor aquifers. Locating and sustaining high yield wells can be difficult, although flows are usually sufficient for residential uses.

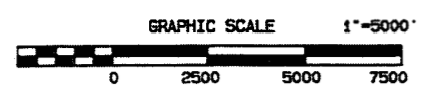
On a larger scale, Berks County contains the Reading Prong, a geological region that extends along the Blue Mountain corridor from Reading to the Lehigh Valley. The Reading Prong produces a high level of radon gas, an invisible, tasteless and odorless gas that can pose health risks when concentrations build up in enclosed areas, like basements. Houses vary significantly in their ability to resist radon. Yet there is no reliable way to predict where, within the radon-prone areas, that radon is likely to accumulate to dangerous levels.

# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## GEOLOGY



- ORDOVICIAN**
- Shale
  - Dolomite/Limestone
  - Limestone
- CAMBRIAN**
- Quartzite
  - Dolomite & Limestone
- PRECAMBRIAN**
- Gneiss



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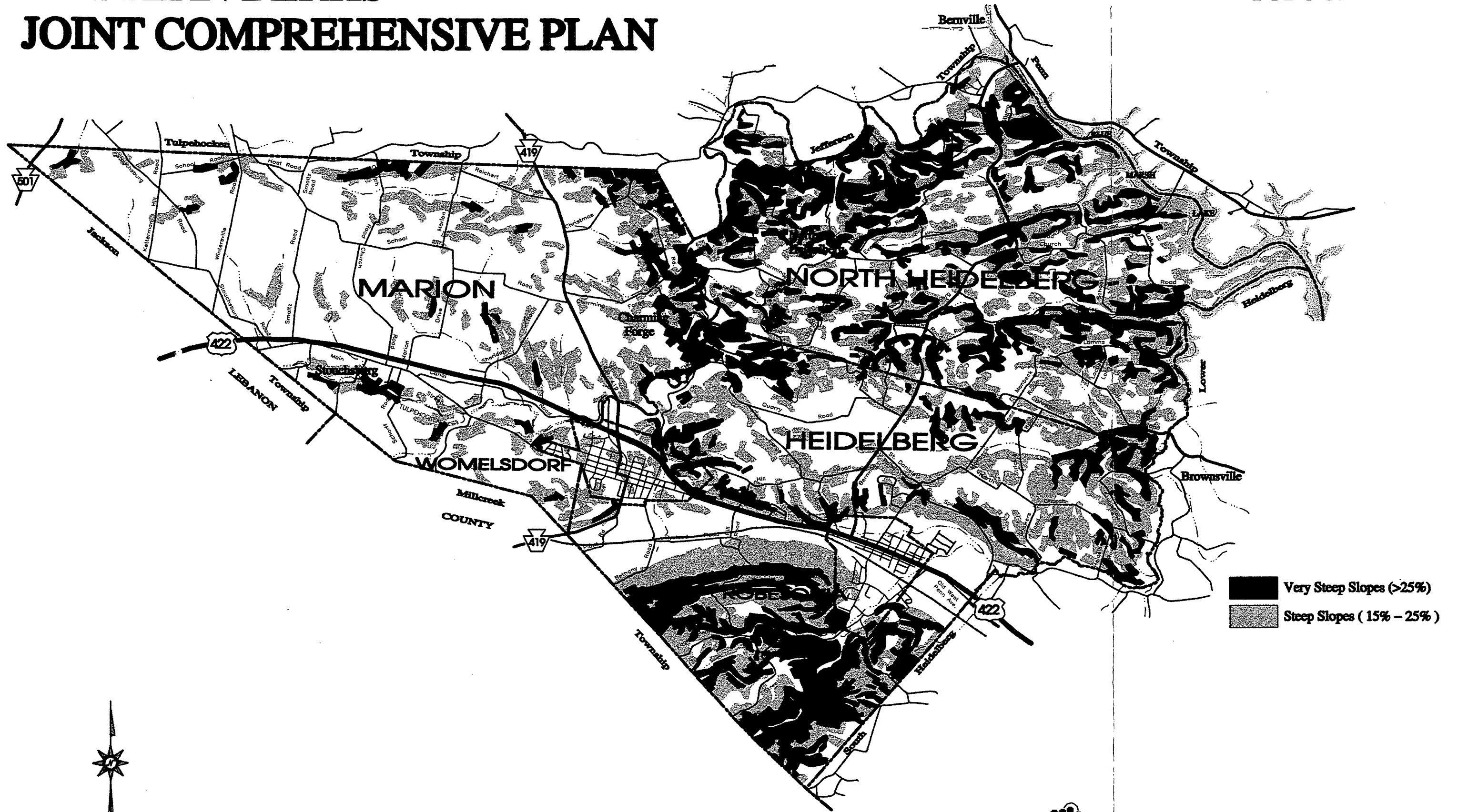
## Topography

The accompanying Topography map shows two categories of slopes within the Western Berks area: land between 15 and 25% grade (steep slopes) and land over 25% grade (very steep slopes). It is important to know where steep slopes are located because steep slopes are susceptible to erosion when soil and vegetation are disturbed. Steep slopes can add significantly to the cost of constructing and maintaining roads and buildings. Steep slopes also limit the placement of on-site sewage systems.

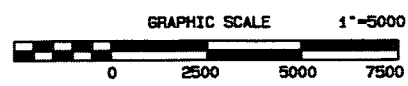
Most of Marion Township is a flat to gently rolling agricultural valley. Very steep slopes in Marion are concentrated along the Tulpehocken Creek. By contrast, most of North Heidelberg and much of Heidelberg Township is steep, particularly in that portion of Heidelberg south and west of Robesonia. Robesonia Borough contains only a very small steeply sloped area. Steep slopes are found in scattered locations in Womelsdorf along with some small areas of very steep slopes.

# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## TOPOGRAPHY



Very Steep Slopes (>25%)  
 Steep Slopes (15% - 25%)



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## Streams

Streams are valuable aquatic habitats that provide both active and passive recreation. The major stream in the Western Berks area is Tulpehocken Creek, which forms Marion Township's boundary with North Heidelberg Township and most of Marion's border with Heidelberg Township. North of Route 422, Spring Creek separates the study area from adjacent Lower Heidelberg Township and South Heidelberg Township.

The Western Berks area's other significant streams include Furnace Creek in Heidelberg Township and Robesonia Borough, Owl Creek, Mill Creek and Little Swatara Creek in Marion Township, and unnamed tributaries to Tulpehocken Creek and Spring Creek.

Pennsylvania's Water Quality Standards designate protection categories for streams and establish water quality criteria for each category that are used in regulating the discharge of effluent into streams. Cold Water Fisheries are streams that should be protected as habitat for cold water fish and other fauna and flora indigenous to cold water. High Quality-Cold Water Fisheries are Cold Water Fisheries with excellent water quality and other environmental attributes. Trout Stock Fisheries are streams that qualify for trout stocking by the State.

Within the Western Berks area, different segments of both the Tulpehocken Creek and the Spring Creek qualify as Cold Water Fisheries or Trout Stock Fisheries. The Mill Creek is considered a Trout Stock Fishery. A portion of the Furnace Creek is a Cold Water Fishery and another portion is a High Quality-Cold Water Fishery.

## Drainage Basins

Drainage basins are storm water catchment areas. Watershed boundaries for drainage basins are delineated by ridge lines. Drainage basins are logical service areas for sanitary sewer systems because lines that carry wastewater by gravity do not require pumping stations. For these reasons and others, drainage basins are important to consider in comprehensive planning.

Most of the Western Berks area drains into the Tulpehocken Creek either: a) directly, b) via unnamed tributaries or c) via Spring Creek. These waters then flow to the Schuylkill River and ultimately to the Delaware Bay in South Philadelphia. With the exception of one area, the balance of the Western Berks area also flows to the Schuylkill River - either by Owl Creek, Mill Creek or Furnace Creek. The Little Swatara Creek watershed in western Marion Township flows into the Susquehanna River and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay.

Pennsylvania Act 167 requires that comprehensive storm water management plans be prepared for each watershed in the state. The purpose is to protect surface water quality and aquatic habitat by supporting municipal regulations that control storm water runoff. Two Act 167 plans now under preparation affect the Western Berks area. The Tulpehocken Creek watershed extends into all five municipalities. The Act 167 plan for the Tulpehocken Creek watershed (also called the Blue Marsh Study) is expected to be completed in December 2000. It is viewed as a "prevention plan" in that

initial analysis has found relatively few water quality problems in the watershed due to storm water runoff.

An Act 167 plan is also underway for the Swatara Creek watershed which extends into the Western Berks area via the Little Swatara Creek drainage basin, which includes the northwestern corner of Marion Township. Preparation of this plan is being overseen by the Swatara Creek Watershed Association, which is headquartered in Lebanon, PA. The Swatara Creek watershed extends into Dauphin, Lebanon and Berks counties.

Other surface water conservation initiatives directly affecting the Western Berks area include the Blue Marsh Study, which is being funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and administered by the PA Department of Environmental Protection. A final draft of this plan, which is a strategy for maintaining and improving water quality in Blue Marsh was submitted for state review by the Berks County Conservancy in November, 1999. The Berks County Conservancy is also preparing an update of the Tulpehocken Creek Rivers Conservation Plan, which is being funded through the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Keystone grant program. Implementation grants for specific stream improvement projects are available through the Keystone Program because a Rivers Conservation Plan for Tulpehocken Creek is in place.

### **Floodplains**

100-year floodplains are areas that, on average, have a one in one hundred chance of flooding in a given year, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Besides providing natural habitat, floodplains carry flood waters and help moderate flood heights. Interfering with these natural functions can result in more severe flooding, costly property damage and loss of life. The accompanying Hydrology Map shows the 100-year floodplains associated with the major waterways in the Western Berks area.

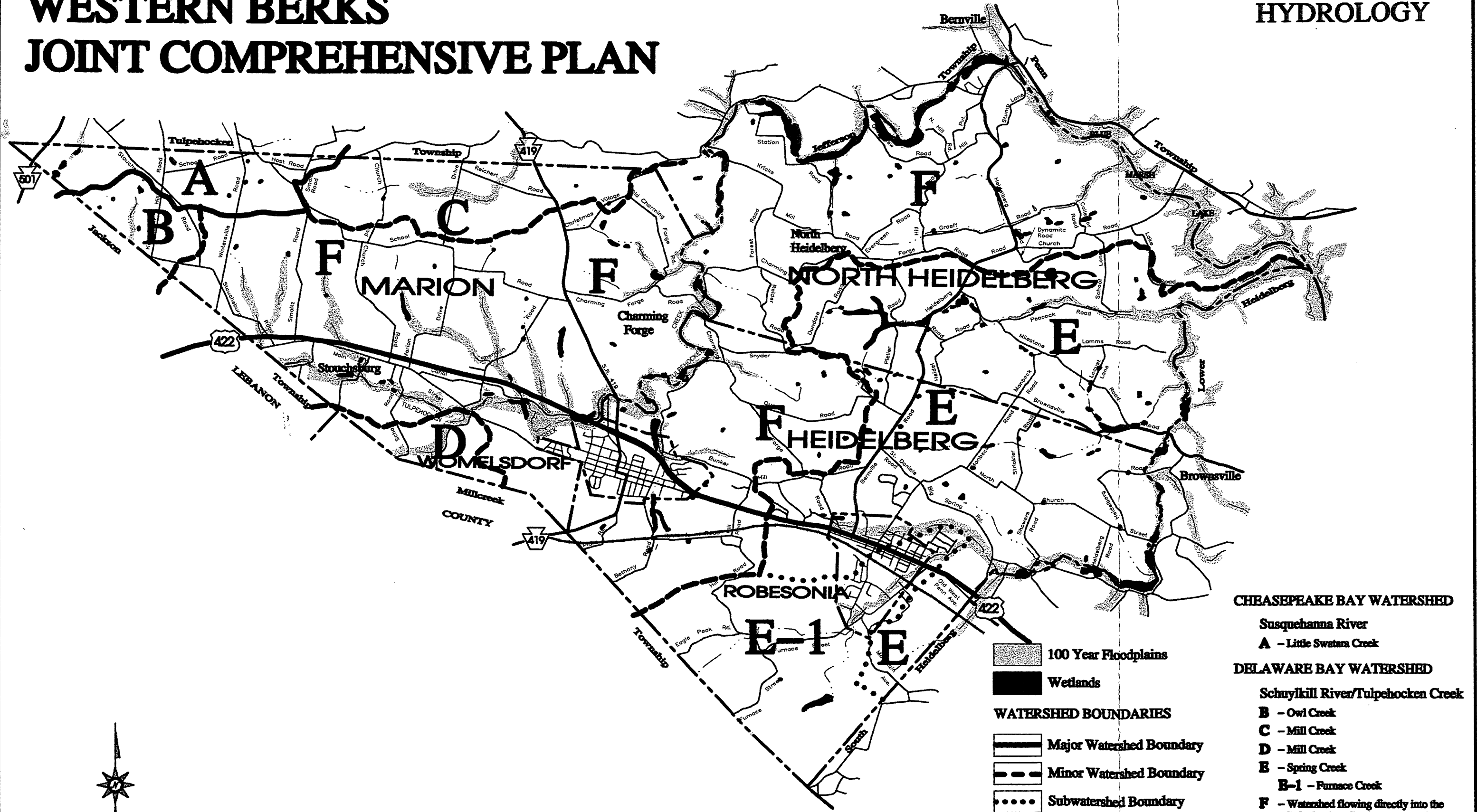
### **Wetlands**

Wetlands are areas that have vegetation and soil types characteristic of a permanently or frequently saturated environment, including swamps, marshes, bogs and similar environments. Wetlands are important groundwater recharge areas that support wildlife, fish and other aquatic life. Wetlands also reduce flooding by detaining storm water. Besides protecting against floods, slowing storm water discharge helps filter impurities that can contribute to surface water and groundwater pollution. National Wetland Inventory maps, upon which the accompanying map is based, show the approximate location of many prominent wetlands based on aerial photography. However, the National Wetlands Inventory does not show all wetlands that exist along stream corridors and other low lying areas. Hydric soil types can also indicate wetlands. A professionally prepared, site-specific wetlands delineation is the most accurate way of locating wetlands.



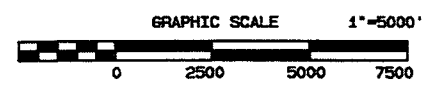
# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## HYDROLOGY



- CHEASEPEAKE BAY WATERSHED**  
Susquehanna River  
A - Little Swatara Creek
- DELAWARE BAY WATERSHED**  
Schuylkill River/Tulpehocken Creek  
B - Owl Creek  
C - Mill Creek  
D - Mill Creek  
E - Spring Creek  
E-1 - Furnace Creek  
F - Watershed flowing directly into the Tulpehocken Creek or unnamed tributaries of the Tulpehocken Creek.

- 100 Year Floodplains
- Wetlands
- WATERSHED BOUNDARIES**
- Major Watershed Boundary
- Minor Watershed Boundary
- Subwatershed Boundary



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### **Prime Agricultural Soils**

The U. S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has established soil capability classes based on each soil type's agricultural productivity. Capability classes range from Class I, soils with few limitations for farming to Class VIII, soils generally unsuitable for farming. Class I and Class II are considered prime agricultural soils and Class III soils are considered of Statewide importance for agriculture. When evaluating farmland soils for potential purchase of development rights, Berks County considers Class III and Class IV soils but assigns more value to Class I and Class II.

Prime agricultural soils are abundant in the Western Berks area, according to the Berks County Soil Survey. Marion Township has some Class I and some Class III but is mostly Class II soils. Class III and Class II soils respectively comprise most of Heidelberg Township north of the railroad. Class III soils are the most prevalent throughout North Heidelberg Township, although significant areas of Class II soils are also present.

### **Soil Suitability For On-Site Septic Systems**

Depth to bedrock, depth to groundwater and permeability are the primary factors in determining how well a soil type is suited for on-site septic systems. Septic systems in soils that percolate too rapidly can degrade groundwater because impurities are not sufficiently absorbed before they reach the water table. Conversely, soils that do not drain fast enough can cause the unhealthy surface ponding of wastewater. These soil characteristics are important to consider throughout the Western Berks area where most of each township relies on private wells and private septic systems rather than public water and sewer service.

According to the Berks County Soil Survey, much of the Western Berks area has severe limitations for on-site septic systems. Porous limestone geology is a problem throughout most of Marion. Steep slopes with only a thin layer of soil covering underlying bedrock make much of North Heidelberg and Heidelberg unsuited. More moderate limitations and slight limitations are scattered throughout with some concentration of these areas in the boroughs and along the Route 422 corridor.




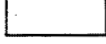
Despite its generally poor rating for on-site septic systems, most of the Western Berks area outside of Robesonia and Womelsdorf relies upon on-site systems for wastewater treatment. These systems range from traditional septic tanks to sand mound systems, among other methods. Although they are not without problems, sand mounds are preferable in areas with soils not well suited for on-site systems. Sand mound systems require wastewater to pass through an elevated mound of sand for additional filtration before the effluent passes into the septic tank.

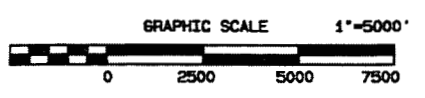
Primary treatment in a properly functioning on-lot system takes place in the septic tank where the heaviest matter (sludge) settles to the bottom and must be pumped periodically. The liquid matter exits the tank through pipes into a layer of gravel and then percolates through the soil where contaminants are largely neutralized.

# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## AGRICULTURAL SOILS



-  Class I
-  Class II
-  Class III
-  Class IV - VIII



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## Unique Natural Areas

In 1991, the Pennsylvania Science Office of the Nature Conservancy prepared the Berks County Natural Areas Inventory, a list and mapping of rare and endangered plants, animals and natural habitats in Berks County. The Natural Areas Inventory contains a) sites of local importance and b) sites of statewide significance as listed on the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index (PNDI).

A spring run community, which is in Heidelberg Township south of Robesonia, is the only site in the Western Berks area identified in the Natural Areas Inventory. This mature woodland is in a steep ravine along a spring-fed tributary to Furnace Creek. It is less than one acre in size but contains a diversity of sensitive plant species. The site is part of the protected Womelsdorf-Robesonía watershed property. However, soil erosion and runoff from logging and housing development at higher locations are potential threats. The Natural Areas Inventory report attributes Statewide Significance to the site and recommends that a buffer zone of vegetation be preserved around it to help protect the area's fragile biological diversity.

The most recent update to the Berks County Natural Areas Inventory identifies Host Cave in Marion and Tulpehocken Township as a habitat for several species of globally rare animal life. According to the Inventory, ... "Host Cave is a small cave with deep pools in its lower-most passages. The pools are sandy-bottomed, with some woody debris, and may be connected to the adjacent tributary of Tulpehocken Creek. The cave is also used as a hibernaculum for bats. Degradation of the water quality from surrounding agriculture is a potential threat."

## Woodlands

Woodlands are wildlife habitats that, if destroyed, take decades to replace. The root systems of trees and other vegetation stabilize the soil against erosion, particularly in steep areas. Woodlands are also a scenic resource that provide visual relief from the built environment.

Large concentrations of woodlands are scarce in much of Marion Township because so much of the Township is cleared for farming. There are scattered woodlands in other areas, but most of Marion's woodlands are along the Tulpehocken Creek. By contrast, woodlands exist throughout North Heidelberg Township, particularly in the municipality's extensive steep areas bordering the Tulpehocken Creek and Blue Marsh Lake. Heidelberg also has significant forested tracts along the Tulpehocken Creek. The Western Berks area's largest concentration of woodlands is located in Heidelberg Township in and around the preserved Watershed property south of Robesonía Borough. In this vicinity, almost all land south of the railroad tracks is wooded.





## EXISTING LAND USE

### Agricultural

Berks County is renowned for its fertile farmland and agricultural heritage. The Western Berks area is a major part of this tradition. Farming is the predominant land use in Heidelberg, Marion and North Heidelberg townships. Farming has historically been a key part of the local economy and remains so today. For example, 2.1% of Berks County's employed residents identified themselves as being employed in the Farming/Forestry/Fishing sector in the 1990 Census. The 1990 Census reported that 15.3% of Marion Township's employed residents worked in this sector. The equivalent percentages were 6.5% in Heidelberg Township and 4.4% in North Heidelberg, all significantly greater than the County overall.

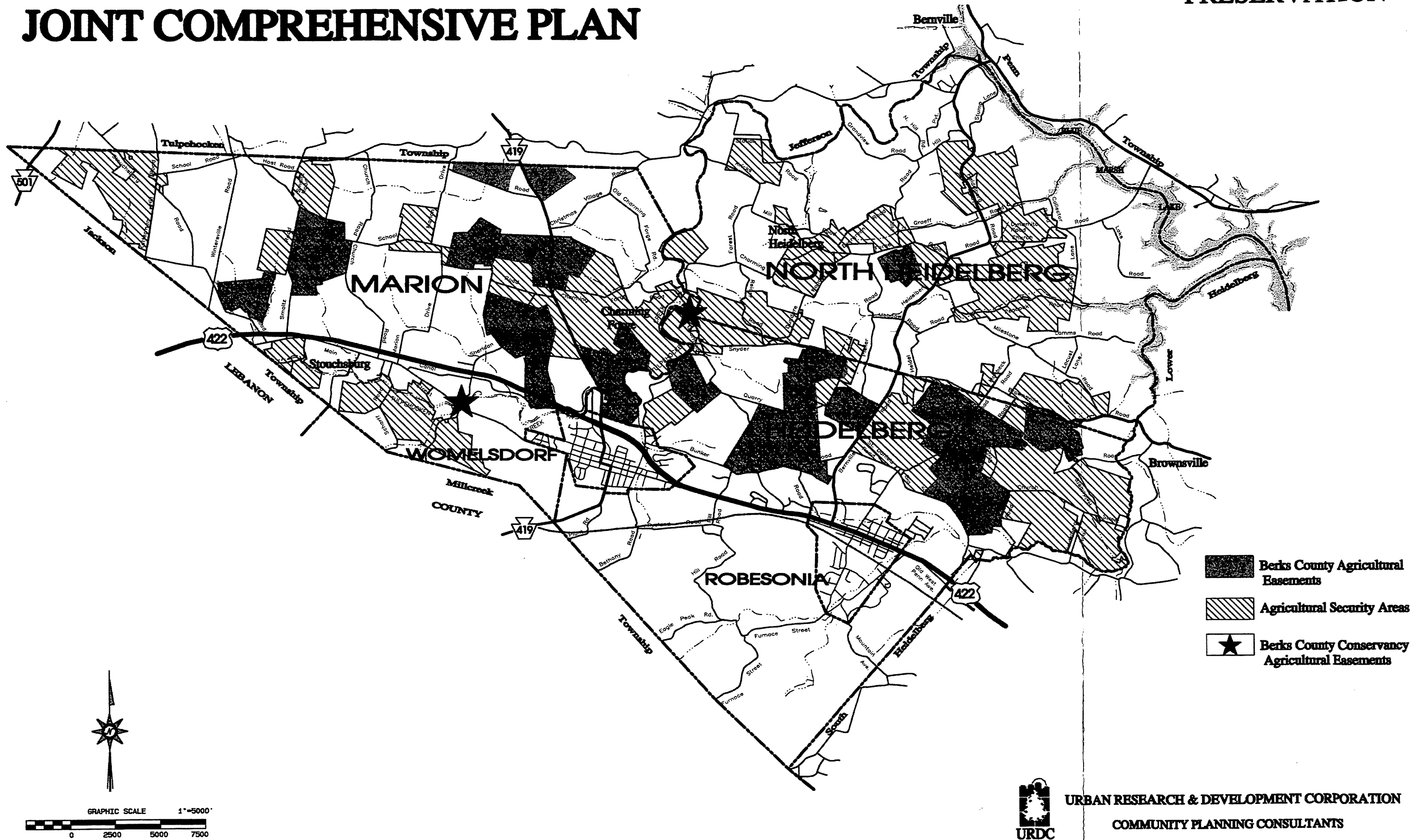
There is strong sentiment in the Western Berks area for preserving farmland and the farm economy. The accompanying Agricultural Preservation map shows properties for which agricultural easements have been sold to Berks County. According to the Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, agricultural easements have been sold for 1,596 acres in Marion Township, 1,497 acres in Heidelberg Township and 72 acres in North Heidelberg Township.




The map also shows properties that are part of Agricultural Security Areas under State Act 43 of 1981. Farms within Agricultural Security Districts are protected against certain regulations that constrain farming and are eligible to have Berks County purchase their development rights. Within Agricultural Security Areas, Marion Township has 3,983 acres, Heidelberg Township has 3,011 acres and North Heidelberg has 2,467 acres. Each of the three townships has also established an agricultural preservation zoning district where non-farm development is severely restricted by large lot agricultural zoning regulations.

The Berks County Conservancy owns agricultural conservation easements in two locations in the Western Berks area: 64-acre Worley Farm near the intersection of Sheridan Road and Main Street in Marion Township, and 205-acres in four parcels at Charming Forge, which straddles Heidelberg, North Heidelberg and Marion townships. The property at both locations is now being farmed. The terms of the easements at Charming Forge permit one house to be built on each of the four parcels.

# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION



-  Berks County Agricultural Easements
-  Agricultural Security Areas
-  Berks County Conservancy Agricultural Easements



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## **Residential**

Single-family detached homes account for almost all residential land uses in the three townships with the exception of the village of Stouchsburg. These homes include many historic farmsteads in the townships' agricultural areas and houses that have developed in unplanned fashion over time along the townships' roadways. Single-family housing also is popular in the two boroughs. But in Womelsdorf and Robesonia, attached homes, row homes and apartments are also prevalent. Newer residential subdivisions in the Western Berks area include Chapel Ridge in Heidelberg Township, Heidelberg Heights in North Heidelberg Township plus Country Ridge Estates, Westview and Summit View in Womelsdorf, among others.

## **Commercial**

North Heidelberg Township has very few commercial uses, only an auto garage, a ski area and a wood recycling establishment. In Marion Township, there is an auto dealer on Route 419 at the Tulpehocken Township boundary and a small cluster of retail uses on Route 422 opposite Stouchsburg.

Heidelberg Township's main commercial area is also along Route 422, between Womelsdorf and Robesonia. The main commercial intersection in the Western Berks area is at Route 422 and Route 419 in Womelsdorf Borough. Tulpehocken Village Shopping Center, the area's only planned, multi-tenant retail development is located here. A fast food restaurant, a hardware store and a gas station are situated opposite the shopping center. Womelsdorf Borough and Robesonia Borough each have a "Main Street" mixed use/commercial district on old Route 422 that features a variety of small retail and service establishments. In Womelsdorf, Third Street, which connects Route 422 with Old Route 422, also has some commercial uses.

## **Industrial**

There is a bulk foods producer at the western end of the planning area in Marion Township on Route 501. In North Heidelberg Township, there is a natural gas facility on Station Road. Other than these locations, most industrial uses in the Western Berks area are clustered along the Route 422/railroad corridor in and around Womelsdorf Borough and Robesonia Borough. Major industrial employers in this area include a tool packager/shipper and a cardboard products firm in Robesonia Borough; a wholesale distribution firm, a casket maker and a candy factory in Heidelberg Township; and a flag factory and boot manufacturer in Womelsdorf Borough.

## **Institutional**

Major institutional uses in the Western Berks County include the following:



Marion Township

- Marion Township Municipal Building
- North Marion Mennonite School
- Marion Township Fire Company

Heidelberg Township

- Heidelberg Township Municipal Building
- Bethany Children's Home
- Conrad Weiser High School
- Conrad Weiser Middle School
- Robesonia-Wernersville Sewage Treatment Plant
- Womelsdorf Borough Sewage Treatment Plant

North Heidelberg Township

- North Heidelberg Township Municipal Building

Robesonia Borough

- Robesonia Borough Municipal Building
- Robesonia Post Office
- Pioneer Hose Company
- Western Berks Ambulance

Womelsdorf Borough

- Womelsdorf Borough Municipal Building
- Veterans of Foreign Wars Post
- Womelsdorf Fire Company
- Womelsdorf Post Office
- Conrad Weiser West Elementary School
- Masonic Lodge

**Public Recreation/Open Space**

The following are the publicly-accessible parks and open spaces in the Western Berks area:

Marion Township

- Marion Township Municipal Playground
- Marion Township Recreation Area
- Marion Township Rod & Gun Club

Heidelberg Township

- Robesonia Fish & Game Association
- Conrad Weiser Homestead
- Robesonia Swim Association

North Heidelberg Township

- Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area

Robesonia Borough

- Robesonia Borough Recreation Park
- Triangle Park

Womelsdorf Borough

- Womelsdorf Community Park
- Mighty Mite Ballfield
- Womelsdorf Swim Association

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### Public Sewer Service

Most areas within Heidelberg Township, Marion Township and North Heidelberg Township are served by on-lot septic systems. The private system that serves Heidelberg Estates in North Heidelberg Township is an exception. The Borough of Womelsdorf is served by the Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant. In addition to providing service to Womelsdorf Borough, the Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant also serves five homes in Marion Township and the Bethany Children's Home in Heidelberg Township. Providing service to fifteen additional homes in Marion Township has also been discussed. The Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant is located north of the Borough in Heidelberg Township and discharges into Tulpehocken Creek. Currently, the treatment plant has maximum capacity of 300,000 gallons per day. A design is in progress to expand the Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant's capacity to 475,000 gallons per day; construction is anticipated to start within a year. If Tulpehocken Village expands as planned, Womelsdorf will also serve these new connections.

Marion Township conducted a brief feasibility study on providing public sewers to Stouchsburg and the Shady Cabins Area. There are two scenarios under which these vicinities could become connected to the Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant. The Womelsdorf Authority could provide the service directly to the new connections or the Authority could make treatment capacity available for Marion Township to allocate and administer. Alternatively, Marion Township could construct its own treatment facilities or connect to an existing treatment system other than Womelsdorf's.

The Borough of Robesonía is served by the Wernersville-Robesonía Municipal Authority Wastewater Treatment Plant. In addition to serving the boroughs of Wernersville and Robesonía, this treatment plant serves portions of Heidelberg Township, Lower Heidelberg Township and South Heidelberg Township. Currently there are 2,614 connections that serve approximately 8,601 people. The Wernersville-Robesonía Wastewater Treatment Facility is located in eastern Heidelberg Township, and discharges into Spring Creek. The Wernersville-Robesonía Treatment Plant has a maximum capacity of 1.4 million gallons per day. The Authority has no plans for immediate expansion of this facility which was built in 1968 and upgraded in 1990.

### Public Water Service

The Womelsdorf-Robesonía Joint Authority provides public water service in the boroughs of Womelsdorf and Robesonía. The Authority has a 70 million-gallon surface reservoir supplied by a 0.625 million gallon per day allocation from Gold Stream and Furnace Creek. There are two million gallon treated water storage tanks and a fully metered water distribution system. The Womelsdorf-Robesonía Joint Authority serves approximately 2,038 connections. In addition to serving Womelsdorf Borough, Robesonía Borough and Sheridan, portions of the adjacent townships are also served by the Joint Authority. However, the majority of residents in Heidelberg Township, North Heidelberg Township and Marion Townships rely upon private on-site wells. The Womelsdorf-Robesonía Joint Authority is currently planning to install a new well.

Marion Township has also studied the feasibility of providing public water in Stouchsburg and the Shady Cabins Area. The recommended option for providing public water to these areas is to request service from the Womelsdorf-Robesonia Joint Authority. However, at the time the feasibility study was prepared, the Womelsdorf-Robesonia Joint Authority was not planning to provide any additional service to any municipalities outside of Womelsdorf or Robesonia.

## Education

Heidelberg Township, Marion Township, North Heidelberg Township, Robesonia Borough and Womelsdorf Borough are each part of the Conrad Weiser Area School District, which also includes South Heidelberg Township and Wernersville Borough. The Conrad Weiser Area School District is currently constructing a new high school building in Heidelberg Township adjacent to the existing Conrad Weiser High School. When completed, the new school will serve grades 9 through 12. The new school will be named Conrad Weiser High School. Grades 5 through 8 will attend the old high school building, which will be renamed Conrad Weiser Middle School. Grades K through 4 will remain in the district's two elementary schools: Conrad Weiser West Elementary School in Womelsdorf Borough and Conrad Weiser East Elementary School in Wernersville Borough.

Table 15 shows that enrollment in the Conrad Weiser Area School District has increased from 2,069 in 1988 to 2,692 in 1998, a ten-year growth rate of 30%. Official State projections, as shown on Table 15, call for much slower growth in the coming years. However, these projections may underestimate local growth. As of the 1998-1999 school year, total enrollment in the Conrad Weiser Area School District had already equaled the State's year 2000 enrollment projections for the district.

Of the four Conrad Weiser Area School District facilities, the Conrad Weiser East Elementary School has the most significant enrollment growth. According to the district, this increase is largely due to the rate of residential development in South Heidelberg Township. The district currently predicts that its total enrollment will continue to grow steadily through 2006.

**TABLE 14**  
**TOTAL ENROLLMENT**  
**Conrad Weiser Area School District**  
**1988 - 2006**

	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	TWO-YEAR CHANGE
1988	2,069	-
1990	2,222	153
1992	2,339	117
1994	2,454	115
1996	2,618	164
1998	2,692	74
2000*	2,692	0
2002*	2,726	34
2004*	2,758	32
2006*	2,774	16

\* State Projection

**Source:** Conrad Weiser School District

North Marion School is the only private school in the Western Berks area. The following are the nearest colleges and universities to the Western Berks area:

Albright College - City of Reading  
 Alvernia College - City of Reading  
 Harrisburg Area Community College, Lebanon Campus - City of Lebanon  
 Lebanon Valley College - Annville Borough  
 Reading Area Community College - City of Reading  
 Penn State University, Berks Campus - Spring Township  
 Kutztown University - Kutztown Borough

### **Police Protection**

Heidelberg Township has a police department with a full-time police chief and the township anticipates hiring two part-time police officers. Police headquarters are located at the Heidelberg Township Municipal Building. Marion Township is also protected by its own police department, which is comprised of a full-time police chief and three part-time officers. Marion's police headquarters are located at the Marion Township Municipal Building in Stouchsburg. North

Heidelberg Township is patrolled by the Pennsylvania State Police. Womelsdorf Borough has its own police department, located at 203 West High Street, with a full-time police chief and three full-time officers. Womelsdorf is considering hiring additional part-time officers. The Borough of Robesonia is also patrolled by its own police department, which has a full-time chief, one full-time officer and five part-time officers.

### **Fire Protection**

Robesonia Borough, Womelsdorf Borough and Marion Township each has its own fire company. Pioneer Hose serves Robesonia Borough from its location at 32 West Penn Avenue in Robesonia. Womelsdorf Borough is served by the Womelsdorf Volunteer Fire Company located in the western portion of the borough. The Marion Fire Company, which is located along Main Street in Stouchsburg, serves Marion Township. Each of these fire companies provides primary protection in its own municipality. In addition to serving the Borough of Robesonia, Pioneer Hose also provides service to Heidelberg Township. In addition to servicing Womelsdorf, the Womelsdorf Volunteer Fire Company services a small portion of Heidelberg Township. Three fire companies provide fire protection to North Heidelberg Township. These include Pioneer Hose from Robesonia, Bernville Community Fire Company and Mt. Pleasant Fire Company. Mutual assistance agreements are in effect between these fire companies and fire companies from several neighboring municipalities to assist in fire emergencies.

### **Ambulance Service**

Western Berks Ambulance Association provides emergency medical service to Heidelberg Township, Marion Township, North Heidelberg Township, Womelsdorf Borough and Robesonia Borough. Western Berks Ambulance Association is the sole provider in Heidelberg Township and Robesonia Borough. In addition to Western Berks, Newmanstown Ambulance and Myerstown Ambulance also serve Marion Township. North Heidelberg Township is covered by Western Berks Ambulance Association and Bethel Community Ambulance. Additional service in Womelsdorf Borough is provided by Newmanstown Ambulance.

### **Library Service**

Womelsdorf Community Library services the Borough of Womelsdorf and Marion Township. The Robesonia Community Library provides service to Robesonia Borough, Heidelberg Township and North Heidelberg Township. Both libraries are open to anyone with a Berks County library card. Public school students in the Western Berks area also have access to Conrad Weiser Area School District libraries.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and Recreation refers to the recreation areas available to the residents of the Western Berks area. Recreation lands are categorized as Regional or Local depending on who they are designed to serve.

### Regional Recreation Areas

Regional recreation areas attract visitors from throughout Berks County and beyond. The focus of these areas is usually picnicking, boating, fishing, camping, hiking or hunting. They may also have areas set aside for environmental conservation. Regional recreation lands within a 25-mile radius of the Western Berks area are listed as follows.

#### Federal Lands

Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area (Berks County)

#### State Lands

French Creek State Park (Berks County)  
Locust Lake State Park (Schuylkill County)  
Memorial Lake State Park (Lebanon County)  
Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center (Berks County)  
Swatara State Park (Lebanon County)  
State Gamelands 43 (Berks County and Chester County)  
State Gamelands 46 (Lancaster County and Lebanon County)  
State Gamelands 52 (Berks County and Lancaster County)  
State Gamelands 80 (Berks County, Lebanon County and Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 106 (Berks County and Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 110 (Berks County and Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 145 (Lancaster County and Lebanon County)  
State Gamelands 160 (Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 182 (Berks County)  
State Gamelands 211 (Dauphin County, Lebanon County and Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 217 (Lehigh County, Schuylkill County and Carbon County)  
State Gamelands 220 (Lancaster County)  
State Gamelands 222 (Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 225 (Lebanon County)  
State Gamelands 229 (Schuylkill County)  
State Gamelands 246 (Dauphin County)  
State Gamelands 264 (Dauphin County and Schuylkill County)



State Gamelands 274 (Berks County)  
State Gamelands 280 (Berks County)  
State Gamelands 286 (Schuylkill County)

#### Berks County Lands

Camp Joy (Berks County)  
Kaercher Creek (Berks County)  
Tulpehocken Creek (Berks County)  
Youth Recreation Facility and Education Farm (Berks County)

#### Municipal Lands

Lake Ontelaunee (City of Reading)

#### Hiking Trails

Appalachian Trail  
Bartram Trail  
Conestoga Trail  
Horse Shoe Trail  
Pinnacle Side Trail  
Stony Creek Trail  
Thun Trail  
Union Canal Trail

#### Other Regional Parkland

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

### **Local Recreation Areas**

Local recreation areas are parks and other recreation-related properties designed for use by residents of one or two municipalities, unlike regional recreation which serve a much larger geographic area. Marion Township has two municipally-owned parks, the Marion Township Municipal Playground which contains basketball, field sports, tennis and picnic facilities, and the Marion Township Recreation Area which is a tot lot. Both Robesonia Borough and Womelsdorf each have three municipally-owned parks. In Robesonia, the Robesonia Borough Recreation Park has basketball, field sports, tennis, a tot lot, ice skating and picnicking, Triangle Park is open space for picnicking, fishing, and nature study. In Womelsdorf, the Womelsdorf Community Park has play equipment, picnicking and fishing, the Mighty Mite Ballfield features field sports, and the Borough Swimming Pool is the only publicly owned pool in Western Berks. Heidelberg Township's park is primarily soccer fields. North Heidelberg Township currently does not have any municipally-owned recreation facilities.

The Conrad Weiser High School and Middle School in Heidelberg Township and the Conrad Weiser West Elementary School in Womelsdorf each have a gym, softball fields, track, and basketball courts. The High School and Middle School also have tennis courts, soccer fields, football fields, baseball fields, field hockey fields, and a nature study/picnic area. In addition, the Elementary School

also has a playground and tot lot. School District activities have first priority on the use of each school's gym and sports fields. However they are available upon approval of a request for public use.

There is a variety of other public, semi-public and private recreation areas available for Western Berks residents including the following.

- Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area (a large water sports and open space recreational area in North Heidelberg Township)
- Conrad Weiser Homestead (historic site and open space in Heidelberg Township)
- Robesonia Fish & Game Association (a private non-profit fish and game club in Heidelberg Township)
- Marion Rod & Gun Club (a private non-profit fish and game club in Marion Township)
- Robesonia Swim Association (private non-profit swimming pool in Robesonia)
- Blue Marsh Ski Area (a privately owned ski area in North Heidelberg Township)

### **NRPA Guidelines**

NRPA, the National Recreation and Park Association, suggests that communities should have a minimum of 10.5 acres of active recreation land available for community use for every 1,000 persons. Active recreation land generally refers to land available for organized athletics and playground use. Together, the Western Berks area has an estimated 1996 population of 9,274 (1,599 for Heidelberg, 1,502 for Marion, 1,420 for North Heidelberg, 1,962 for Robesonia and 2,791 for Womelsdorf). Therefore, the five municipalities should have 97.4 acres of publicly accessible active recreation land, according to NRPA.

The Conrad Weiser High School and Middle School have 58.8 acres and the Conrad Weiser West Elementary School has 13.5 acres of active recreation land available. The Marion Township Municipal Playground Park is 4.0 acres and the Marion Township Recreation Area is 1 acre. Heidelberg Township owns a 2-acre recreation area adjacent to its township building. Robesonia Borough has 7.0 acres of recreational land and Womelsdorf Borough has 9.1 acres of recreational land. These facilities which are each used for active recreation, total 95.4 acres. As a rule of thumb, only 60% of the total school acreage is counted. NRPA suggests using this 60% adjustment to estimate the proportion of a school site actually available for recreation.

According to NRPA guidelines, the Western Berks area is only slightly deficient in active recreation land by 2.0 acres. NRPA guidelines suggest the Western Berks area should have 97.4 acres of active recreation land. As described above, 95.4 acres of active recreation land exists in the five municipalities. In addition, some active recreational area exists in the Blue Marsh Lake Area in terms of both water and land related activities. However, Blue Marsh Lake is not under the control of the local municipalities and therefore is not counted toward NRPA guidelines.

NRPA guidelines suggest the Western Berks area's recreation land acreage is sufficient for the current population and that additional active land will need to be provided for future population growth.

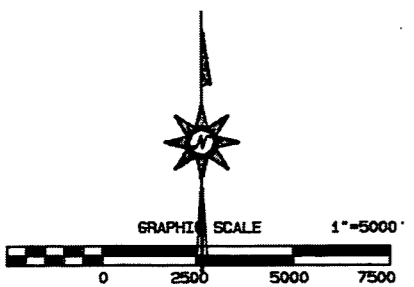
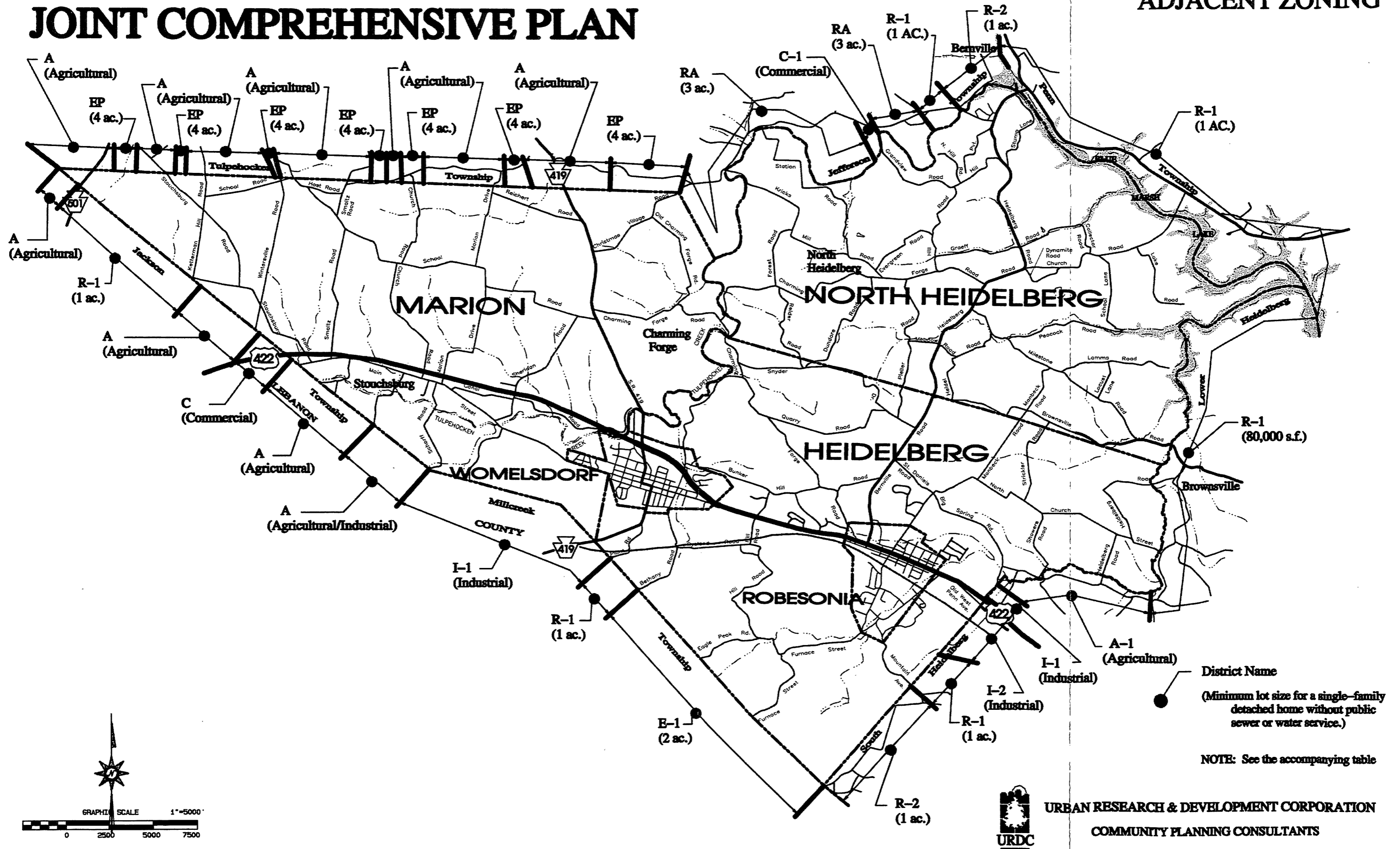
## LAND USE POLICIES IN THE REGION

### Adjacent Municipalities

Each of the Western Berks area municipalities is affected by what occurs along its borders with adjacent municipalities. Seven townships border the Western Berks area, including five in Berks County and two in Lebanon County. The following table and map show how the land adjacent to the Western Berks area is zoned in each of these eight townships. Most of the land adjacent to the Western Berks area is zoned for agriculture and low density single-family detached homes with a few exceptions. The Route 422 corridor is zoned for industrial use in South Heidelberg Township on the eastern end of the study area and zoned for commercial use in Jackson Township at the western end of the study area. In Jefferson Township, there is a very small commercial area bordering North Heidelberg Township. Millcreek Township has an industrial district bordering a portion of Marion Township between Womelsdorf Borough and the village of Stouchsburg.

# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## ADJACENT ZONING



**TABLE 15**  
**ZONING ADJACENT TO THE WESTERN BERKS AREA**  
**1999**

ADJACENT MUNICIPALITY	ADJACENT ZONING DISTRICTS	PRIMARY INTENDED USES/ MINIMUM LOT SIZE
South Heidelberg Township	I-2 - General Industrial	Various industrial uses on minimum 1-acre lots
	R-1 - Rural Conservation	Single-family detached (SFD) on minimum 1-acre lots.
	R-2 - Rural Residential	SFD on minimum 1-acre lots.
Lower Heidelberg Township	A-1 - Agricultural Preservation	Agriculture, SFD on minimum 1-acre lots
	R-1 - Rural Conservation	SFD on minimum 80,000 s.f. lots with on-lot sewage disposal and 1-acre lots with public or community sewage disposal. Agricultural uses on minimum 3-acre lots.
	I-1 - General Industrial	Various industrial uses
Penn Township	R-1 - Low Density Residential	Agriculture, SFD on minimum 1-acre lots
Jefferson Township	R-A - Rural Agricultural	SFD on minimum 3-acre lots.
	C-1 - Commercial	Commercial
	R-1 - Low Density Residential	SFD on minimum 20,000 s.f. lot with public water and public sewer; 1- acre with public water or public sewer and 1-acre with on-site water and on-site sewer.
	R-2 - Medium Density Residential	SFD on minimum 10,000 s.f. lot with public water and public sewer; 1-acre with on-site water and sewer and ½ acre with public sewer or public water.
Tulpehocken Township	A-P - Agricultural Preservation	Agriculture, SFD on minimum 1-acre lots.
	EP - Environmental Protection	All permitted uses require minimum 4-acre lots.
Jackson Township	A - Agricultural	Agriculture, SFD on minimum 1-acre lots.
	R-1 - Low Density Residential	SFD on minimum 10,000 s.f. lots with public water and public sewer; 15,000 s.f. lots with public sewer and on-lot water; 20,000 s.f. lots with public water and on-lot sewer and 1-acre lots with no public utilities.
	C - Commercial	Various commercial uses
Millcreek Township	A - Agricultural Industry	Agriculture, SFD on minimum 1 acre lots.
	I-1 - Heavy Industrial	Various industrial uses.
	R-1 - Residential Suburban	SFD on minimum 10,000 s.f. lots with public water and public sewer; 15,000 s.f. lots with public water or public sewer and 1-acre lots with no public utilities
	E-1 - Ecologically Sensitive	All permitted uses require minimum 2-acre lots.

## The Berks County Comprehensive Plan

This joint comprehensive plan is designed to be consistent with the goals of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan, which are reproduced below:

### Goals

- *To develop and adhere to a systematic, coordinated land use pattern which provides a variety of uses, recognizes land capacities, and respects natural features and environmental and physical factors.*
- *To preserve natural features and conserve environmental resources throughout Berks County, to protect and improve environmental quality, and to preserve open space in suitable locations and quantities.*
- *To provide, to every resident and future Berks County resident, the opportunity for affordable, safe and healthful housing with sufficient range of choice by type and location.*
- *To maintain and improve the economic base of Berks County and to provide maximum employment opportunities for all Berks County residents.*
- *To provide facilities and services to Berks County residents in the areas of health, protection, cultural enrichment, education, recreation and social services, commensurate with the needs of the population.*
- *To provide a multi-modal, balanced transportation system which provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, with minimum disruption to the environment, and with maximum conservation of resources.*
- *To provide the opportunity for increased citizen participation in the planning process to establish community values and reflect human concerns.*
- *To develop and maintain multi-municipal cooperation in meeting governmental responsibilities.*
- *To conserve energy and to effectively use renewable energy sources.*
- *To preserve and promote all community, cultural and aesthetic elements that identify Berks County as a special and unique place to live and work.*

### Land Use Objectives

- *Provide for a balance of growth and conservation.*
- *Maximize the preservation of ecologically sensitive areas, natural resources and agriculture.*
- *Discourage continued sprawl.*

- *Promote a consolidated development pattern in or adjacent to existing developed centers which have or will have adequate infrastructure.*
- *Revitalize existing urban areas and communities.*
- *Promote innovative design patterns and techniques of development including mixed use, neo-traditional village design, cluster and sliding scale provisions.*
- *Encourage intergovernmental planning.*

The Berks County Comprehensive Plan's future land use map recognizes existing development in the Western Berks area, the largest concentration of which is located along the Route 422 corridor. The County calls for future growth in the region to follow this same pattern with additional infill development being accommodated along the corridor and growth not directly along Route 422 concentrated in those portions of the townships located nearest to the boroughs. The Berks County Comprehensive Plan is, by necessity, more generalized than a plan for specific municipalities. However, the recommendations of this plan for the Western Berks area are intended to be consistent with the overall philosophy and direction of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Major Roads and Traffic

U.S. 422 is the central traffic artery of the Western Berks area. U.S. 422 connects the Western Berks area with the City of Reading to the east and the cities of Lebanon and Harrisburg to the west. Three additional roads that are major components of the area's circulation system include State Route 501, State Route 419 and Bernville Road (which is called Heidelberg Road in North Heidelberg Township). Route 501 and Route 419 each connect U.S. 422 with Interstate 78. Bernville Road (Heidelberg Road), which also intersects U.S.422, connects with State Route 183 near Bernville Borough. Northward from this point, Route 183 connects to U.S. 78.

The most recent Berks County Planning Commission traffic counts confirm that U.S. 422 is the major traffic carrier in the Western Berks area. According to these counts, the most heavily traveled portion of U.S. 422 in the Western Berks area is between Linden Street in Robesonia Borough and the Lower Heidelberg Township line (an average of 20,0271 vehicles daily). Just west of this segment, an average of 18,981 vehicles daily pass along U.S. 422 between Linden Street and Charming Forge Road. Traffic counts along U.S. 422 decrease as you move westward. An average of 16,587 vehicles daily were counted between Hill Road in Heidelberg Township and High Street at the Heidelberg Township/Womelsdorf Borough line. A total of 6,213 vehicles daily were counted at the Berks County/Lebanon County line in Marion Township.

Besides U.S. 422, High Street in Womelsdorf Borough is the most heavily traveled road in the Western Berks area (an average of 7,752 vehicles daily). Route 501 is next with 5,064, followed by Bernville Road (Heidelberg Road) with 3,802. Route 419 carries an average of 3,354 vehicles daily between U.S.422 and Charming Forge Road, and 3,497 from Charming Forge north.

### Roadway Classifications

The accompanying Roadway Classification map shows each road in the Western Berks area according to its use. The three major use categories are Arterials, Collectors and Local Roads.

#### Arterials

Arterials provide a rapid connection between population centers such as between Reading and Womelsdorf or between Robesonia and Bernville. Arterials in the Western Berks area include the following roads:



- U.S. 422
- State Route 501
- State Route 419\*
- State Route 183 (This road is adjacent to, but not within, the Western Berks area.)
- Bernville Road (Heidelberg Road)\*

\* PennDOT considers each of these two roads to be collectors. However, they function more as arterials in the Western Berks area.

### Collectors

Collectors are the most important of the roads that collect traffic from local areas and funnel it on to arterials. Collectors in the Western Berks area include the following:

- High Street
- Charming Forge Road
- Kozier Road
- Stouchsburg Road
- School Road
- Milestone Road
- Brownsville Road

### Local Roads

Local Roads provide direct access to local residential areas. All roads in the Western Berks area not designated as either Arterials or Collectors are Local Roads.

### **Roadway Concerns**

Due to the evolution of the existing road system from earlier farm roads and the local topography, many of the Western Berks area's roads meet at less than ninety degree intersections. This causes poor alignment and sometimes shortened sight distances. This condition is most prominent in the three townships where it is often compounded by steep slopes and wooded areas. Buildings constructed close to roads and sharp curves can also create poor sight distances and pose safety concerns, particularly in bad weather. Narrow roads and bridges, and roads that do not meet current municipal specifications are other examples of potential circulation hazards found in the study area.

Multiple access points from adjoining driveways, parking areas, private lanes and streets contribute to congestion and less- than- optimum ingress and egress patterns, particularly along U.S. 422. Potential safety problems associated with unrestricted access to this corridor are a growing concern. The proliferation of driveway curb cuts for individual businesses and residential areas will continue to create unsafe traffic movements unless better managed. Increasing traffic volumes and peak hour congestion along U.S. 422 compound these concerns.

In addition to U.S. 422, some examples of shortcomings in the area's roadway system include the following:

- The alignment where School Road and Charming Forge Road meet Route 419 in Marion Township
- The sharp curve along Heidelberg Road at Church Road in North Heidelberg Township
- The potential need for a traffic signal at Bernville Road and U.S. 422 in Robesonia Borough
- Unpaved roads and dead end roads into Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area in North Heidelberg Township

### **Public Transportation**

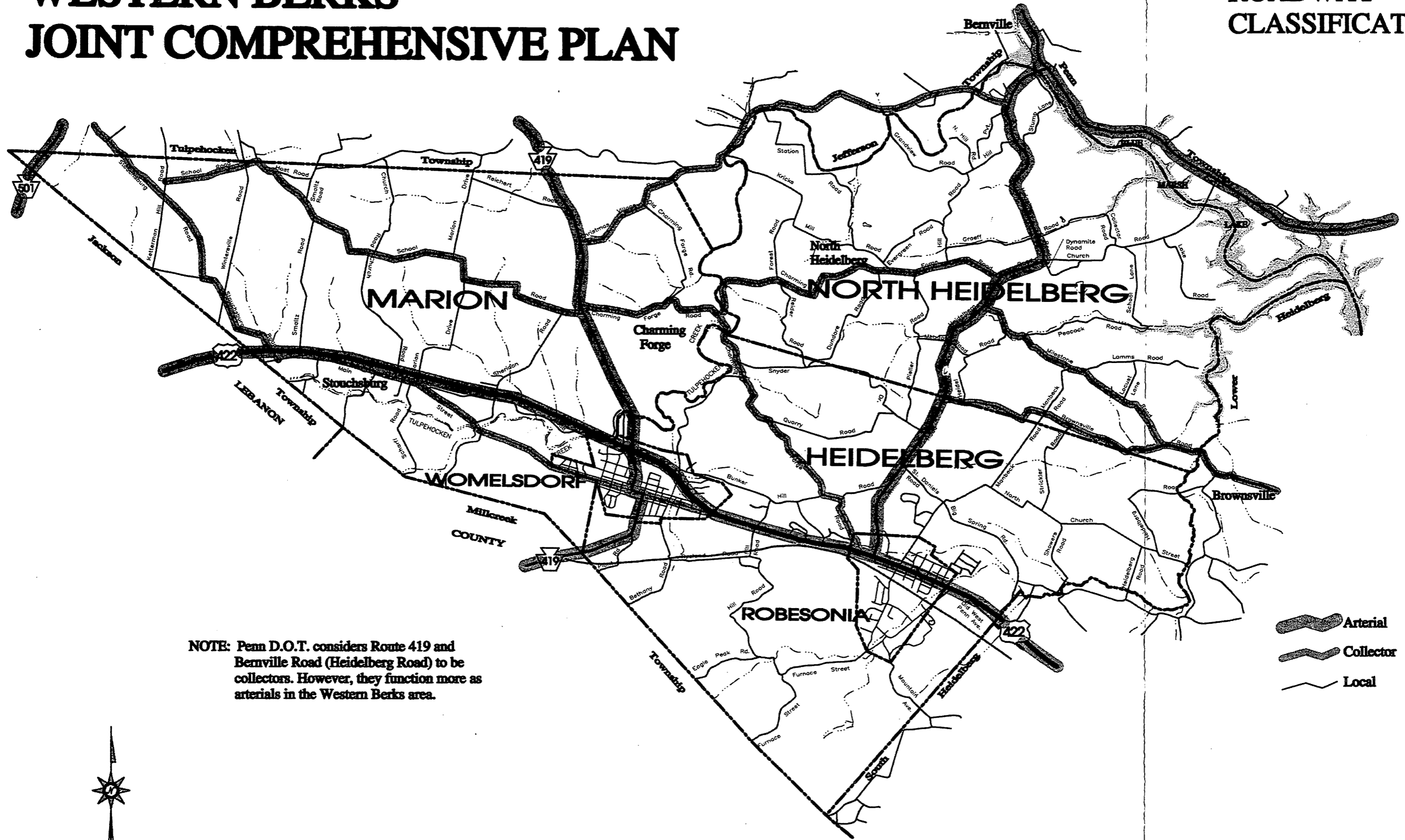
While no fixed bus routes serve the Western Berks area, the Berks Area Reading Transit Authority (BARTA) provides door to door van service to anyone in Berks County physically unable to use regular bus service. BARTA also has a "park and ride" lot on U.S. 422 in Womelsdorf that provides peak hour express service to Reading.

### **Alternative Transportation**




Alternatives to motorized transportation are limited within the Western Berks area. Within both Womelsdorf Borough and Robesonia Borough, a network of sidewalks exists along the main thoroughfare and adjoining streets. Gaps or missing links, poor conditions of certain segments and areas not accessible to the physically challenged hinder the maximum efficient use of these sidewalks by pedestrians but overall they are adequate. No formal pedestrian and bicycle trails currently exist in the Western Berks area. The 1994 Berks County Open Space and recreation plan calls for establishing a greenway along the Tulpehocken Creek from Blue Marsh southward through North Heidelberg Township, Heidelberg Township, Marion Township and Womelsdorf Borough. This is a proposed recreation trail but may have future potential as an alternative transportation corridor as well.

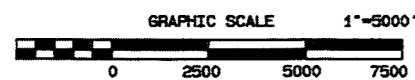
# WESTERN BERKS JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS



NOTE: Penn D.O.T. considers Route 419 and Bernville Road (Heidelberg Road) to be collectors. However, they function more as arterials in the Western Berks area.

-  Arterial
-  Collector
-  Local



URBAN RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION  
COMMUNITY PLANNING CONSULTANTS

## SUMMARY OF ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS

The Western Berks area's strengths and weaknesses are the basis for the following plan to guide the area's future growth and preservation. The plan attempts to capitalize on each municipality's assets and identify ways to overcome or mitigate concerns. The following summary of assets and concerns reflects the themes most frequently cited by the municipal officials, community leaders and other residents who provided input into this plan.

### Assets

- Quality of Life in the form of scenic countryside and small town appeal is a major attraction in the Western Berks area.
- A Strong Sense of History exists throughout the area, especially concerning the need to preserve historic architecture and the region's Pennsylvania German heritage.
- A Commitment to Conservation of the area's prime farmland and rural environment is a prevailing spirit among the area's public decision makers.
- Strong Agricultural Zoning in Marion Township, Heidelberg Township and North Heidelberg Township is the basis from which other conservation-oriented policies are being considered in this plan.
- U.S. 422 is a major highway through the area, with three convenient connections to I-78: Route 501, Route 419 and the Bernville(Heidelberg) Road.

### Constraints

- Residential Development Potential could in the future alter the rural character and landscape of the Western Berks area and increase demand for costly municipal services, such as schools and utilities.
- Development along U.S. 422 has generated ingress/egress concerns and increased the possibility of more extended strip roadside development in the region.
- Failing Septic Systems in selected areas are a health concern being addressed in the Western Berks area.
- Stronger Environmental Protection of steep slopes, woodlands, stream buffers and other natural features is needed in the Western Berks area.
- More Business Development particularly industrial development in appropriate locations in the boroughs, is needed to create jobs and enhance local tax revenues.

## THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This part of the comprehensive plan begins with the goals and objectives that describe how the five municipalities in the Western Berks area view the future of their region. Next, recommendations in each of the following subject areas are described:

- Future Land Use and Housing
- Environmental Conservation
- Agricultural Conservation
- Historic Preservation
- Community Services and Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**Land Use Goal:** Permit only selected, well planned growth, primarily in areas near existing development.

**Objectives:**

- a. Encourage residential developers to use neo-traditional neighborhood design and permanently preserve open space within their development tracts.
- b. Direct new homes towards existing residential areas to minimize sprawl.
- c. Encourage business development within existing downtowns and in industrially zoned areas.

**Housing Goal:** Continue providing opportunities for a variety of housing types and affordable homes.

**Objectives:**

- a. Provide for a variety of detached and attached housing types using environmentally sensitive layouts and designs.
- b. Concentrate housing in those areas most suitable from a physical perspective.
- c. Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of housing in and around the area's downtowns and other historic areas.
- d. Discourage high rates of residential development to avoid overwhelming local schools and other municipal services.

**Environmental Conservation Goal:** Maintain as much of the area's natural environment as possible, particularly fragile ecological regions.

**Objectives:**

- a. Direct growth away from areas with sensitive ecological resources.
- b. Strengthen zoning and subdivision regulations that conserve steep slopes, wooded areas, stream buffers and floodprone lands.
- c. Strive to maximize preservation of permanent natural areas within residential developments.
- d. Look for opportunities to initiate a linked network of greenways and open spaces.

**Agricultural Preservation Goal:** Maintain the vitality of the area's agriculture and agricultural lands.

**Objectives:**

- a. Preserve farming by continuing to strengthen and extend agricultural zoning, agricultural security areas, purchase of agricultural easements and preferential assessments.
- b. Minimize non-farm activities near agricultural areas to reduce the potential for conflicts with normal farming operations.
- c. Keep public water and sewer line extensions out of prime agricultural areas.
- d. Provide for a range of appropriate supplemental income opportunities in agricultural areas.

**Historic Preservation Goal:** Preserve and enhance the area's historic resources.

**Objectives:**

- a. Protect the character of the Village of Stouchsburg, the town centers in Robesonia and Womelsdorf and the area's other historic areas with appropriate zoning strategies.
- b. Encourage voluntary use of design guidelines to preserve historic architecture and village design patterns.
- c. Support the efforts of local and county historic preservation groups to continue identifying and protecting historic resources.

**Community Facilities and Services Goal:** Continue to provide adequate municipal services within available municipal budgets.

**Objectives:**

- a. Work with the Conrad Weiser School District to ensure adequate facilities exist to meet current and projected enrollments.
- b. Continue working to ensure appropriate solutions are devised for areas with a high concentration of failing septic systems.
- c. Look for more opportunities to cooperate with neighboring municipalities on police protection, road maintenance and other public works.

- d. Periodically review the adequacy of municipal contributions to private community service providers including fire and rescue groups and recreation organizations, among others.

**Transportation Goal:** To provide for the safe, efficient movement of people and goods on area roadways.

**Objectives:**

- a. Work with PennDOT and local developers to ensure local roads and intersections remain safe and able to accommodate current and projected traffic volumes.
- b. Encourage business developments to share controlled ingress and egress to adjacent major roads such as Route 422 and others.
- c. Promote future development of greenways and trails that will further walking, bicycling and other alternative transportation modes.

**Economic Development Goal:** To retain and attract responsible businesses in designated business areas.

**Objectives:**

- a. Provide for the adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized business properties.
- b. Make sure local ordinances and codes do not discourage responsible business from locating in designated business areas.
- c. Encourage mixed use development in downtown areas zoned for business to maintain the economic viability of commercial structures.

**PLAN INTERRELATIONSHIPS**

The comprehensive plan addresses the following major topics:

- Future Land Use and Housing
- Environmental Conservation
- Agricultural Preservation
- Historic Preservation
- Community Services and Facilities
- Transportation
- Economic Development

Each of these topics are interrelated. Planning and capital programming actions taken in any one of these areas are likely to affect one or more of the other areas. For instance, land use decisions often affect circulation patterns and community services, such as public utilities and recreation needs.

## TIMING

The timing of development in the Western Berks area will largely depend upon the private real estate market. This comprehensive plan addresses major development and conservation patterns for the next 10 to 15 years. After that time, the plan should be revised. Every three to five years, the comprehensive plan should be reviewed to determine if changes are needed. Major zoning changes in the five Western Berks area municipalities should be made only after assessing how the proposed changes conform with the spirit of this comprehensive plan.

## FUTURE LAND USE AND HOUSING

The Future Land Use and Housing section of the comprehensive plan describes the most appropriate types and densities of land uses that should be accommodated in the Western Berks area. Included is both a map and descriptive text which should be the rationale for future zoning changes. The Future Land Use and Housing section is based on the following principles:

- Agricultural areas should remain in farming.
- Growth should be steered away from steep slopes, woodlands and floodprone areas.
- Open space should be maximized within new developments.
- New development should be near existing concentrations of development and reflect traditional development patterns.
- Public water and sewer extensions should serve existing and planned growth, not encourage undesired growth.
- The area's agrarian heritage and historic areas must be preserved.

The Western Berks area is a leader in agricultural preservation. However, the Western Berks area is connected to other rapidly developing suburban areas via major commercial arteries. Land use planning is needed to avoid strip commercial growth and residential sprawl. The following future land use areas are recommended:

Agricultural Preservation - Expands the area's agricultural preservation area to include more land with existing farms, agricultural easements and/or prime agricultural soils.

Conservation Residential - Protects natural features and other undeveloped land by accommodating only very low density single-family development with significant open space in areas least suited for development due to woodlands and steep slopes.

Low Density Residential - Provides for denser single-family development than the Conservation Residential area but does not encourage any other housing types or include any public sewer service area.



Medium Density Residential - Provides for single-family and twin development within and adjacent to existing boroughs and villages. These areas are within or adjacent to areas now served by public sewers. Neo-traditional development patterns are encouraged.

Town Residential - Reflects existing traditional small town and village development patterns by providing for twins, townhouses and denser single-family home development. All of these areas are currently served by public sewers or recommended for future service.

Town Center - A pedestrian-friendly mixed use area for the full range of housing types, small offices, small service uses and selected, appropriate retail uses (excluding gas stations, fast food, etc.). Traditional setbacks and rhythm of buildings along the streetscape should be preserved and enhanced.

Highway Commercial - A general commercial area that accommodates planned retail centers, new office buildings and highway-oriented retail and service uses.

Industrial - Designed to accommodate future growth and/or expansion of industrial uses along primary transportation corridors.

Community Facilities - Refers to public/semi-public locations such as municipal buildings, churches, schools, fire companies, cemeteries, sewage treatment plants and the Bethany Children's Home.

Public Recreation/Open Space - Denotes parks and other recreation areas available to the public, including local municipal parks, watershed lands and Blue Marsh Lake.

**TABLE 16  
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING AREAS**

WESTERN BERKS AREA			
FUTURE LAND USE PLANNING AREA	MAJOR PERMITTED USES (In addition to agriculture)	MAXIMUM DENSITY/ MINIMUM LOT SIZE	PUBLIC SEWERS & WATER
Agricultural Preservation	Single-Family Homes	Large Lot Agricultural Zoning	No
Conservation Residential	Single-Family Homes	5-ac. lot averaging 2-ac. min.	No
Low Density Residential	Single-Family Homes	1-1½-ac. min. lot	No
Medium Density Residential	Single-Family Homes, Twins	2-4 units per acre with public sewer and water (Neo-traditional Development encouraged)	Yes
	<b>Note:</b> Maximum density without sewers should be 1 unit per acre.		
Town Residential	Single-Family Homes, Twins, Townhouses, Apartments	4-8 units per acre with public sewer and water ((Neo-Traditional Development encouraged)	Yes
	<b>Note:</b> Maximum density without sewers should be 1 unit per acre.		
Town Center	Single-Family Homes Twins, Townhouses Apartments Selected Retail (no drive- throughs, gas stations, convenience stores, car washes, etc.) Mixed-Use Structures Office	6-8 units per acre with sewer and water	Yes
	<b>Note:</b> Maximum density without sewers should be 1 unit per acre.		
Highway Commercial	Retail, Office, Planned Commercial Centers, Other Commercial	1 acre*	Yes
I - Industrial	Industrial	1 to 10 acres*	In Portions

\* Minimum lot size of ½ acre in Womelsdorf Borough

**Land Use Planning and Zoning Techniques**

The following four planning and zoning techniques, among others, will be particularly effective in helping to carry out this joint comprehensive plan:

- Large Lot Agricultural Zoning
- Lot Averaging
- Neo-Traditional Development
- Town Center Zoning

Each of these techniques is explained below. Table 16, Summary of Recommended Future Land Use Areas, identifies the specific techniques best suited for specific future land use areas in the two municipalities.

Effective Agricultural Zoning

Large lot agricultural zoning is a very effective way to preserve farmland and help maintain the local agricultural economy. It strictly minimizes the potential for farmland to be developed for anything but agriculture.

Marion, Heidelberg and North Heidelberg townships each have large lot agricultural zoning in place. Heidelberg Township requires that residential lots in the Agricultural Preservation zoning district be a minimum area of 50 acres. Minimum lot size in Marion Township's Agricultural Rural district is 40 acres. North Heidelberg Township requires minimum 40-acre lots in its Agricultural Preservation district. The three townships fully intend to continue this effective method of maintaining their agricultural environment.

An alternative to large lot agricultural zoning is sliding scale agricultural zoning where the number of residential lots permitted on a property is related to the size of the property but *not directly proportional* to it as in large lot agricultural zoning. The Berks County Comprehensive Plan includes the following example to illustrate the sliding scale concept:

<u>Size of Original Tract of Land</u>	<u>Maximum Number of Non-Farm Single-Family Dwellings</u>
0 - 19 acres	1
20 - 49 acres	2
50 - 99 acres	3
100 - 149 acres	4
150 - 199 acres	5
200 - 349 acres	6
>350 acres	7

The three townships should consider the relative merits of both large lot zoning and sliding scale zoning as they continue to refine their agricultural zoning regulations in the future.

Lot Averaging

Lot averaging is used to preserve open space within residential subdivisions. Like cluster zoning, lot averaging allows developers to build homes on somewhat smaller lots than might be permitted under traditional zoning. In exchange, the developer agrees to permanently preserve a significant portion of the tract in open space - e.g. 30-50%. However, lot averaging differs from clustering in two important ways:

1. Under lot averaging, lots within a subdivision *average* a certain minimum size rather than each lot having to be equal to, or larger than, that minimum size.
2. All permanent preserved open space needed to achieve the designated average is on *private* property, not part of any common open space. Common open space can become a

maintenance problem for homeowners associations and municipalities. Deed restrictions are used to prevent further subdivision of the privately held open space.

The flexibility of lot averaging helps developers "work with the land" to site homes on the suitable portions of a tract instead of on areas with sensitive natural features, such as steep slopes and woodlands. Much of the three townships in the Western Berks area is rural land where single-family homes are permitted. Single-family development in these areas should be governed by lot averaging or similar zoning.

### Neo-Traditional Development

Neo-traditional development is an alternative to modern residential subdivisions that are overly dependent on cars and foster suburban sprawl. The neo-traditional alternative brings back the best features of older style, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods. In neo-traditional neighborhoods, homes occupy smaller lots on streets with trees and sidewalks. Homes have front porches, garages are in the rear off an alley and housing types may vary in style and price. A grid street pattern is used instead of dead end cul-de-sacs to heighten the neighborhood's ties with the community and make commercial areas more accessible by foot. Neo-traditional neighborhoods would be very appropriate where future residential development is permitted along the outskirts of Robesonia Borough and Womelsdorf Borough, including in the adjacent townships.

### Town Center Zoning

Town Center zoning encourages mixed use development designed to maintain the vitality of small "Main Street" and village areas. Compact development, mixed uses and appropriate signs are encouraged instead of large front yard setbacks, wide lots and extensive parking requirements.

Town Center zoning allows selected, appropriate retail and service uses but does not permit highway-oriented businesses such as gas stations, drive-in restaurants, convenience stores and car washes. Town Center zoning should be encouraged in the downtown areas of Robesonia Borough and Womelsdorf Borough plus in the Village of Stouchsburg.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

Municipal officials and other local residents identify closely with the rural setting of the Western Berks area. The area's open lands, wooded hillsides, creek valleys and scenic country roads are assets worth protecting. As land is lost to extensive development, the character of an area and its way of life are threatened. The following policies will help ensure that future development will have a minimal impact on the natural environment of the Western Berks area.

- **Approve only development that respects the natural features of each site**

Land varies greatly in the amount of development it can physically support. Floodplains and very steep slopes should remain in open space. Other lands are suited for moderate or intense development. The following guidelines should be used when reviewing subdivision and land development applications.

**TABLE 17**  
**GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTING IMPORTANT NATURAL FEATURES**

NATURAL FEATURES (Type & Description)	POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IF NOT PROTECTED	STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTION
<p><b>Steep Slopes</b> - Steep slopes of 15% have 15 feet of vertical change for every 100 feet of horizontal distance. Very steep slopes of 25% rise vertically 25 feet for every 100 feet. Steep slopes are sometimes wooded and found along creeks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty of maintaining and snow-plowing steep roads.</li> <li>• Higher costs of buildings.</li> <li>• High rate of septic system failures.</li> <li>• Increased erosion and runoff.</li> <li>• Winter driving hazards from steep roads and driveways.</li> <li>• Disturbance of scenic areas.</li> <li>• Increased costs to extend public water and sewer lines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site houses on the most suitable land, while keeping steep slopes in open space.</li> <li>• Keep natural vegetation intact.</li> <li>• Strengthen municipal regulations that protect steep slopes.</li> <li>• Require larger lot sizes in steep areas.</li> <li>• Limit building on steep slopes of 15% to 25% and prohibit building on very steep slopes of 25% and above.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Groundwater</b> - Groundwater is stored underground after entering through the soil or seeping from creeks. Maintaining the quality of this water is important because both private wells and public water systems are dependent upon groundwater.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polluted groundwater.</li> <li>• Dry wells.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to control the percentage of lots covered by buildings and paving.</li> <li>• Ensure remaining septic systems are designed and operated properly.</li> <li>• Monitor underground storage tanks for leaks.</li> <li>• Avoid polluted storm water runoff.</li> <li>• Avoid high volume withdrawals of groundwater.</li> <li>• Identify areas most feasible for future public water and sewer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Floodplains</b> - Areas that are prone to flooding include both legally designated floodplains and land along drainage channels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flooding in other areas.</li> <li>• Loss of potential public recreation area.</li> <li>• Threats to important wildlife and bird habitats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prohibit construction of new structures within the 100-year floodway (which is the actual main flood channel) and along the adjacent 100-year flood-fringe. Prohibit construction within 50 to 100 feet of the centerline of a stream (depending on stream size).</li> <li>• Seek to preserve buffers of natural vegetation immediately adjacent to creeks and drainageways.</li> <li>• Seek to preserve more land along local streams and drainageways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wooded Areas</b> - Concentrated areas of mature tree growth are found throughout the region's steeply sloped lands noted above and in other scattered locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased surface temperatures.</li> <li>• Loss of important bird and wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• Loss of hunting areas.</li> <li>• Loss of air purification.</li> <li>• Increased erosion and runoff.</li> <li>• Loss of scenic resources.</li> <li>• Noise and incompatible development may become more noticeable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restrict cutting of trees during building to the building envelope and immediately adjacent areas.</li> <li>• Seek to preserve tree stands in public or private open space.</li> <li>• Seek replanting of trees that must be cut down.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shallow Depth to Bedrock</b> - Areas with shallow soils and bedrock close to the surface are frequently found in steeply sloped locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher construction costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid building in these areas.</li> </ul>

NATURAL FEATURES (Type & Description)	POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IF NOT PROTECTED	STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTION
<p><b>Waterways</b> - Protecting waterways from pollutants involves controlling direct discharges and maintaining vegetative stream buffers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of potential public recreation areas.</li> <li>• Threats to important bird, fish and wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• Increased erosion and flooding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent soil erosion to avoid sedimentation of creeks and drainageways.</li> <li>• Work with soil conservation authorities and farmers to keep animals out of streams.</li> <li>• Consider areas along creeks and drainageways for public greenways.</li> <li>• Minimize runoff of pesticides, grease and industrial wastes.</li> <li>• Minimize direct runoff from parking lots.</li> <li>• Require buildings and paving to be setback from creek banks and significant drainageways.</li> <li>• Control the peak rates of storm water runoff from development to avoid increased flooding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Natural Drainage Channels</b> - Smaller natural channels that carry storm water to local creeks during heavy storms exist throughout the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flooding.</li> <li>• Erosion of soil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve adequate width along channels in open space.</li> <li>• Prevent erosion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hydric Soils</b> - Hydric soils, often located in wetland areas, have a shallow depth to the seasonally high water table.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flooded basements.</li> <li>• Disturbance of natural drainage and groundwater recharge.</li> <li>• Poor foundation stability.</li> <li>• Failed on-lot septic systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to enforce local, state and federal wetland regulations.</li> <li>• Place on-lot septic systems and buildings outside these areas.</li> <li>• Waterproof basements of existing buildings.</li> <li>• Carefully design all facilities.</li> </ul>

- **Strengthen steep slope protection.**

While some of the five municipalities regulate some development on steep slopes, none has strict steep slope protection that extends community-wide. Each municipality in the Western Berks area should amend its zoning ordinance to:

1. Prohibit new structures on slopes above 25%.
2. Increase minimum lot size by 50% where principal buildings are proposed on slopes between 15% and 25%.

- **Establish wetland buffer zone.**

State and Federal regulations provide extensive protection for wetlands. No additional municipal zoning regulations exist among the townships and boroughs of the Western Berks area. Some municipalities prohibit paving or other ground disturbance within a 50-foot buffer of delineated wetlands. In addition, wetlands do not count towards the calculation of total lot size. Each of the Western Berks municipalities should consider adopting similar protective measures for wetlands.

- **Establish stream corridor buffer regulations.**

Floodplain zoning that exists in the Western Berks area is designed to limit property damage from flooding. However, floodplain ordinances typically regulate construction, not paving and other soil disturbances. Each municipality should adopt zoning amendments to prohibit construction, soil disturbance or removal of natural vegetation within 50 feet of all waterways except as part of crop farming. It is now widely recognized that streamside vegetation serves the following valuable functions:

1. Reduces water pollution from surface runoff.
2. Controls the volume of sediment that reaches streams.
3. Provides shade to help moderate water temperatures.
4. Protects wildlife habitats.

In addition to regulations that require the maintenance of existing vegetation, the planting of vegetative buffers along local waterways where none exist now should be encouraged. The County Conservation District and the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service are two sources of information on how to properly plant and maintain these buffers.

- **Where appropriate, encourage fencing that keeps livestock out of local waterways.**

Dirt and waste from livestock and stream banks eroded from constant trampling by animals contribute to stream pollution. Trout Unlimited, the Berks County Conservancy, the PA Game Commission and others have assisted farmers with the cost of establishing fencing to keep livestock out of local streams. The Penn State Cooperative Extension Service endorses stream side fencing provided it is planned and implemented on a case-by-case basis rather than mandated across the board by regulation. Specific site conditions, the size of the stream, the varying requirements of individual landowners, the ability to maintain the fencing, the need for permanent vs. portable fencing and other factors should all influence site by site decisions about where fencing is desirable and where it is not.

- **Encourage preparation of nutrient management plans and use of best management practices in farming.**

State law requires farmers with 2 or more animal units per acre to prepare nutrient management plans that describe how animal manure is to be safely collected, stored, distributed or otherwise disposed of. (An animal unit equals 1,000 lbs. of animal regardless of species.) Since this requirement went into effect in 1997, the Berks County Conservation District has received and reviewed 8 nutrient management plans from farmers in the Western Berks area. According to the District, more plans are due but not yet submitted. In addition to being out of compliance with State law, failure to submit a nutrient management plan can endanger bank financing for farm-related improvements.

Best management practices are conservation measures farmers can use voluntarily to help protect the natural environment. Some of these techniques relate to manure management. A sampling of others include contour farming to reduce soil erosion and stream fencing to protect stream banks and stream waters from animals.

Grants and loans are available to help prepare nutrient management plans and implement a range of best management practices. Municipal officials should work in coordination with conservation agencies to ensure farmers are fully aware of the need for such conservation practices.

- **Restrict tree cutting during construction.**

Very little protection for woodlands is now offered by Western Berks area municipalities. All five municipalities can save more trees by adopting zoning amendments that require developers to replant a tree each time a mature tree is cut down or severely damaged during construction. Tree cutting can also be minimized by restricting the cutting of trees during construction to those that are:

1. Within 25 feet of an approved structure.
2. Within 10 feet of a vehicular cartway.
3. Within 10 feet of an approved storm water detention basin, paved area, driveway or on-lot sewage system.
4. Within a utility right-of-way.
5. Dead or posing a clear danger to a structure, utility or public improvement.
6. An obstruction to vehicular site distance.

None of these regulations would apply to forestry operations.

- **Encourage developers to use neighborhood design standards.**

Western Berks area municipalities should encourage developers to use the following guidelines on how best to design and locate residential structures, adjacent open space and complementary landscaping. The guidelines are divided into four topics: site planning, architecture, landscape architecture and signage. All four sections should be used together when planning and reviewing new development proposals.

#### Site Planning

- Orient uses to minimize objectionable views, such as service areas and the backs of buildings, from roadways and from scenic overlooks,
- Match scale and character of buildings and other uses to the scale and character of the site and the surrounding environs,
- Maximize joint use driveways,
- Minimize impervious cover,
- Provide scenic overlooks whenever possible,
- Provide landscaping along the perimeter of parking areas,
- Place utilities underground,
- Minimize the grading by the use of retaining walls, building orientation and running with contours,
- Avoid placing buildings on cleared ridgelines to protect views, and
- Use curved driveways when developing in wooded areas to obscure the view of the house from the road.



Architecture

- Minimize the height of the proposed structure, especially on ridgelines and in very visible locations,
- Reduce the building mass by breaking up the building into smaller components,
- Use indigenous building materials, such as stone,
- Use compatible, earth tone colors that blend with the existing environment,
- Design structures to fit the topography rather than excessively grading the site, and
- Use pitched roof design features.

Landscape Architecture

- Minimize removal of existing trees, especially on ridgelines,
- Establish vegetative buffers adjacent to roadways,
- Screen objectionable views,
- Maximize parking lot landscaping, and
- Use indigenous plant materials.

Signage

- Use materials that are compatible with the proposed or existing buildings and landscape elements,
- Locate signs on the building in consistent sign bands,
- Group signs on one sign structure,
- Avoid bright colors and internally illuminated signs,
- Minimize temporary signs, and
- Use consistent typography on signs.

- **Encourage developers to use the following four steps towards better subdivision design.**

Although steep slopes, floodplains and wetlands are usually noted on the site plans, little consideration is sometimes given to other elements like a grand oak tree, a wildflower meadow or an old apple orchard, features that can be preserved to symbolize the rural character of an area. By conducting a more intensive analysis of the site, developers should be able to achieve adequate densities without sacrificing rural character.

The following four steps are a sequential approach towards more conservation-oriented design based on the recommendations of Mr. Randall Arendt of The Natural Lands Trust.

1. *Identify Primary and Secondary Conservation Areas* - First, identify primary conservation areas such as sensitive natural areas: steep slopes over 25%, 100-year floodplains, streams and their buffers, and habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species. Other conservation areas may include scenic views, locally important vegetation, unique geologic features and wet soils among other areas.
2. *Identify Locations for Development* - Next, locate potential development areas which include the remaining land left over after the primary and secondary conservation areas are identified. Carefully consider siting new homes with views of the open space areas. Reduce the lot sizes to accommodate for the number of homes that would have been originally provided under conventional development.

3. *Layout Roads and Trails* - Show a road alignment that would most efficiently access all new homes. Also consider developing trails that could link residents with each other and with the open space areas.
4. *Delineate Lot Lines* - The final step involves delineating the boundaries of each lot, a step often done first in traditional design.

## AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

Agriculture is a critical part of the landscape, economy, heritage and community identity of the Western Berks area. Strong agricultural zoning exists in the region, as described above. The following are additional recommendations on ways to preserve farmland and maintain the viability of the local agricultural economy.

- **Continue to participate in the sale of agricultural easements.**

Using County, state and federal funds, Berks County has preserved the development rights to over 12,000 acres of farmland since the Pennsylvania Farmland Preservation Program began in 1989. Governor Ridge has proposed, as part of his Growing Greener initiatives, that additional state funds be redirected for farmland preservation. The Berks County Commissioners recently issued a \$30 million bond that will allow the County to buy development rights to over 25,000 acres in the next five years - an estimated 50 to 60 farms annually. Act 138 of 1998 authorizes Pennsylvania municipalities to purchase agricultural easements either on their own or in combination with county and Commonwealth funding.

- **Expand agricultural security districts.**

Farmers join agricultural security areas established pursuant to Act 43 of 1981 for protection against certain nuisance complaints and to become eligible to have their development rights purchased. Land enrolled in agricultural security areas is extensive in the Western Berks area. (See the Agricultural Preservation map in the Background Reports section of this plan.) Heidelberg, Marion and North Heidelberg townships should continue to expand its participation as farmers must be enrolled in an agricultural security area before their development rights are eligible for purchase.

- **Do not extend public sewer service into prime agricultural areas.**

In desirable areas such as the Western Berks area, public sewer lines attract development. If public sewers are established in rural areas with failing septic systems, the new system should have only the capacity necessary to serve affected homes and help finance the system through reasonable user costs.

- **Ensure zoning regulations allow farmers sufficient opportunities to supplement their incomes.**

Western Berks area municipalities should ensure their municipal regulations permit farmers a variety of opportunities to earn supplemental income. Uses such as custom furniture construction, farm equipment repair, tool sharpening and others may be appropriate provided they are restricted to five non-resident employees. Corn mazes, pick your own pumpkins, horseback riding, bed & breakfast uses and roadside produce stands are other examples, provided regulations exist to limit the magnitude of the activity.

- **Increase local control of intensive animal feeding operations.**

Very intensive livestock operations that involve large numbers of animals and resemble industrial activities should be restricted to certain areas within the three township's agricultural zoning districts. These operations (which can be specifically defined in zoning) can generate animal wastes, odors and flies far in excess of what is typically tolerated in rural areas. The possibility of accidents involving liquid animal waste stored on-site is a threat to groundwater and local streams.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering additional regulations on these operations to protect water quality. Municipalities need similar actions to avoid potential land use problems. Special overlay zones within agricultural zoning districts, larger lot sizes, additional setbacks and approval only by special exception are among the regulations to consider.

- **Investigate the demand for transfer of development rights (TDR).**

Many counties in Maryland, such as Montgomery County, and a small number of eastern Pennsylvania municipalities have used transfer of development rights (TDR) to preserve farmland and environmentally sensitive areas. TDR involves the right to develop a certain number of additional homes beyond that permitted by the underlying zoning if development rights are purchased from a landowner in a "sending area", usually a farming or conservation area. TDR compensates landowners who sell some or all of their development rights to a landowner in a "receiving area", an area with sufficient water and sewer service to accommodate growth. TDR and any variation of TDR can be an extensive and time-consuming administrative responsibility. An understanding of the local real estate market and promotional effort to ensure local residents understand and support a TDR program are other prerequisites for success.

Under current PA law, (that is now being reconsidered by the State legislature), TDR is not permitted across municipal borders. Intermunicipal TDR would be ideal in the Western Berks area where conservation-oriented townships are located adjacent to densely developed boroughs with public water and sewer capacity. Under current law, the possibilities for TDR in the Western Berks area would be more limited because "receiving areas" would have to be delineated in each municipality considering TDR.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic preservation is important in the Western Berks area. Within the five study area municipalities, entries on the National Register of Historic Places include four historic districts, and several other properties, including an historic bridge. (See the Historical Origins section of the Background Reports). In addition, many historic resources that are not officially recognized statewide may have local significance. The following are ways to conserve the area's historic resources short of creating formal historic zoning districts, which usually require an historic architectural review board to approve most types of exterior changes.

- Ensure municipal zoning ordinances permit appropriate adaptive reuse of historic structures. Buildings no longer economically viable as homes can be preserved as bed and breakfast establishments, offices and a variety of other uses. Use of the Furnace Mansion in Robesonia by the Chit Chat agency is a local example.
- Identify a grassroots organization that may be interested in working with the Berks County Conservancy to seek formal recognition for more historic properties in the five municipalities.
- Promote the donation of historic facade easements (and associated tax advantages) to preserve key historic structures in the same way as agricultural easements have been sold.
- Expand local participation in the Pennsylvania Blue Markers Program. The Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission will fund Blue Markers for sites of statewide significance. Blue Markers for locally significant sites must be funded locally.
- Install historically appropriate welcome signs at key gateways to the two boroughs and the Village of Stouchsburg.
- Work with the Berks County Planning Commission, the Berks County Conservancy and/or others to prepare a pamphlet of design guidelines identifying the essential do's and don'ts of proper historic rehabilitation.
- Enact zoning and subdivision regulations that encourage developers of new homes to reflect the scale, proportions, spacing, setbacks and materials traditionally found in the Western Berks area.
- Reflect the historic qualities of the area in any future improvements to sidewalks, lighting and other public improvements in the boroughs or the Village of Stouchsburg.
- Strengthen sign regulations in the boroughs and in the Village of Stouchsburg to distinguish between signs permitted there and those permitted in the highway commercial area.
- In all five municipalities, prohibit internally illuminated free standing signs, review billboard regulations to ensure maximum size and setback standards are adequate, and establish specific regulations for portable signs.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation in the Western Berks area refers mainly to vehicular circulation since the area does not have regular bus or passenger rail service. The following recommendation focus on maintaining traffic safety and improving circulation. Ideas are also included on enhancing pedestrian and bicycle service.

**Streets and Highways**

- Work with PennDOT to periodically assess the need for a traffic signal at key intersections in the area, such as at U.S. 422 and Bernville Road. Although a signal may not be needed now, one may be desirable in the future in a specific location as traffic continues to increase.
- Investigate the possibility of Penn Township establishing a traffic signal at Bernville Road and Route 183, just north of the North Heidelberg/Penn Township municipal boundary.
- Work with Berks County and PennDOT to move up the priority of improvements planned for the "S" Bridge on Main Street in Marion Township.
- Prepare a multi-year program of road repavings and reconstructions instead of responding to these needs on a year-to-year basis.
- Allow narrower roads without curbing within certain low density areas to avoid over-design of roads and preserve rural character.
- Incorporate the following highway design guidelines, as contained in the Berks County Comprehensive Plan, into each municipality's subdivision and land development ordinance.

**TABLE 18  
HIGHWAY FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND RECOMMENDED DESIGN FEATURES**

Classification	General Provisions	Right-of-Way Width (Feet)	Cartway Width
Arterial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 35-55 MPH</li> <li>- Some access controls to and from adjacent development</li> <li>- Encourage use of reverse and side street frontage and parallel access roads</li> <li>- No parking</li> </ul>	80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 48-52 feet</li> <li>- 12' wide travel lanes with shoulders in rural area and curbing in urban areas</li> </ul>
Collector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 25-35 MPH</li> <li>- Some access controls to and from adjacent development</li> <li>- Parking permitted on one or both sides</li> </ul>	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 34-40 feet</li> <li>- 12' wide travel lanes with stabilized shoulders or curbing</li> <li>- 8' wide lanes provided for parking</li> </ul>
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 15-35 MPH</li> <li>- No access control to and from adjacent development</li> <li>- Parking permitted on one or both sides</li> </ul>	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 28-34 feet with stabilized shoulders or curbing</li> <li>- Cartway widths can be reduced based on interior traffic patterns</li> </ul>

NOTE: Speed limit recommendations are generalized guidelines. Existing conditions should be used to establish specific speed limits on specific roads.

- Designate the following roads in the five municipalities' subdivision and land development ordinances as shown below:

Arterials:

U.S. 422	PA Route 501
Bernville Road/Heidelberg Road (Bernville-Robbie Road)	PA Route 419

Collectors:

High Street	Charming Forge Road (all segments)
Koziar Road	Stouchsburg Road
School Road	Milestone Road
	Brownsville Road

Local Roads:

All Others

- Ensure the following design principles are reflected in each of the five municipalities' subdivision and land development ordinances. Then work with PennDOT to ensure these principles are enforced in PennDOT's review of driveway permit applications to access the arterials designated above.
  - Limit direct access where feasible by using common entrances to adjacent business properties rather than multiple curb cuts.
  - Control the size and location of signs to preserve vision triangles
  - Require additional setbacks and appropriate landscaping along the highway to reduce highway noise and distractions to motorists
  - Align driveways on the opposite sides of the highway wherever possible instead of allowing staggered access points within close proximity to each other.
- In addition to establishing a multi-year road repaving and reconstruction program as recommended above, the five municipalities should identify and address areas where storm water problems affect road safety. The need for speed limit signs on all roads should also be determined.

**Pedestrian and Bicycle Access**

- Design long range sidewalk and sidewalk replacement program in the two boroughs and the Village of Stouchsburg to encourage more walking and less use of automobiles.
- See recommendations for greenway development under the Parks and Recreation part of the following section on Community Services and Facilities.

## COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

In addition to municipal administration, the five Western Berks area municipalities each provide, or assist in providing, a variety of community services to their residents. Changing needs and rising costs affect the provision of all these services. The following recommendations are proposed to help coordinate the continued efficient delivery of emergency management (police, fire and rescue), public water and sewer service, education, and parks and recreation.

### Police, Fire and Rescue

- Continue to support the Western Berks area's four police departments (Heidelberg, Marion, Robesonia and Womelsdorf) and continue working with the Pennsylvania State Police, who patrol North Heidelberg Township.
- Periodically re-assess the desirability of establishing joint police services involving two or more Western Berks area municipalities.
- Maintain municipal contributions to the area's volunteer fire companies and ambulance associations as listed in the Background Reports section of this plan.

### Public Water and Sewer Service

- Periodically re-examine the need to expand capacity at the Wernersville-Robesonia Municipal Authority Wastewater Treatment Plant but only to serve: a) areas with failing on-lot septic systems and b) areas specifically designated for growth in this comprehensive plan and the joint comprehensive plan being prepared in Lower Heidelberg Township, South Heidelberg Township and Wernersville Borough.
- Ensure additional treatment capacity soon to be available at the Womelsdorf Sewage Treatment Plant will also be used to either address health concerns or provide new service to approved growth areas in accordance with this comprehensive plan.
- Finalize the on-going investigations into how best to provide cost-effective public water and public sewage treatment for the Village of Stouchsburg and the Shady Acres area in Marion Township.
- Continue to examine opportunities to regionalize water service by extending Womelsdorf-Robesonia Joint Authority water service in Heidelberg, Marion and North Heidelberg townships.

## Education

- Continue providing public input to the Conrad Weiser School District on projected growth trends and coordinate as needed with the school district to ensure a smooth transition into the new Conrad Weiser High School.

## Parks and Recreation

- Maintain use of the existing municipal parks as important outdoor athletic facilities serving the Western Berks area.
- Look for opportunities to add additional parkland acreage to address the per capita parkland deficit that, according to National Recreation and Park Association guidelines, will soon exist as the region continues to grow. This is described in the Parks and Recreation portion of the Background Reports.
- Continue existing arrangements with the Conrad Weiser School District for community use of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities at local schools.
- Work with Berks County, Berks County Conservancy, neighboring municipalities and local trail groups to plan for a greenway along the Tulpehocken Creek Corridor, which as described in the Berks County Open Space Plan, could connect Blue Marsh Lake with Womelsdorf Borough and possibly Lebanon County.
- In cooperation with Lower Heidelberg and South Heidelberg townships, investigate the feasibility of a greenway along Spring Creek that could connect to the Tulpehocken Greenway noted above and to the eastern portion of the Tulpehocken Greenway, which the Berks County Open Space Plan envisions along the Tulpehocken Creek between Blue Marsh Lake and the City of Reading.
- Promote the following techniques in addition to fee simple acquisition to establish rights of way for greenway corridors: conservation easements, access easements, stream setback regulations, donation, mandatory dedication of specific stream corridors through a zoning overlay. Recognize that establishing and maintaining regional greenways will require multiple stewards, including governmental, private and non-profit entities
- Ask Berks County to apply for State Keystone funding or allocate County Community Development Block Grant funds to initiate a greenways feasibility study in the region similar to Montgomery County's Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Recommended land use policies in this comprehensive plan are based on preserving the area's overall environment and quality of life. Within this context, local planning should support the area's economy and the growth of local business. New jobs and enhanced tax revenues from business development and farming are important ingredients in a healthy local economy. In addition to farming, a variety of industry and commerce is important for establishing and maintaining a strong job base within the region.

This Economic Development/Downtown Revitalization Plan addresses business development in the Western Berks area that could help revitalize the vitality and appearance of the town centers in Womelsdorf Borough, Robesonia Borough, and to a lesser extent, in the Village of Stouchsburg. The emphasis is on helping to create an improved setting for new business investment and the expansion of existing businesses in these areas and in industrial areas on both sides of Robesonia Borough, north of Womelsdorf Borough and along Route 501.

### Regional Business Development

- Encourage businesses which relate to agriculture and will help sustain the local agricultural economy.
- Work with regional economic development officials to improve marketing of vacant or underused buildings and land, particularly targeting users who desire rail service.
- Work with the Reading and Berks County Visitors Bureau to encourage more heritage-based tourism in the Western Berks Area.

### Town Center Revitalization

- Create Town Center Improvements Committees to oversee design and construction of the following physical improvements within the town centers of the two boroughs and the Village of Stouchsburg:
  - Plant street trees and other landscaping enhancements,
  - Replace inadequate sidewalks,
  - Place utility wires underground as feasible when doing other major work,
  - Add other streetscape elements such as planters, benches, trash receptacles, etc.,
  - Place "Welcome to" signs at major entrances
  - Amend municipal zoning ordinances to strengthen existing sign regulations.

This will build on the activities accomplished by Robesonia under the Route 422 Corridor Project, including new street signs and new gateway signs that welcome people to the Borough. The annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Association of Boroughs was hosted by Robesonia in 1999, an opportunity for the Borough to showcase its accomplishments and emphasize its needs.

- Use the following design guidelines to encourage the type of building improvements that will retain and enhance the architectural integrity:
  - Use construction materials, architectural details and paint colors that complement rather than conflict with, the predominant development patterns,
  - Avoid covering historic wood, brick or stone buildings with vinyl siding, aluminum siding or false fronts,
  - Minimize historically inappropriate alterations to building features such as rooflines, windows, columns, cornices and doorways, among others,
  - Emphasize the human scale in buildings by avoiding oversized, single-pane windows, large blank walls, flat invisible roofs and other features that do not relate to pedestrians and other building users, and
  - Use common building features such as awnings, other detailing and unity of color to tie together various building elements.
- Use the following do's and don'ts to distinguish creative design from unappealing development based on the use of signs, lighting, road access, parking, pedestrian circulation, utilities and other amenities.

***Signs***

- Locate signs wherever possible on buildings; avoid off-site billboards, portable signs and other freestanding signs,
- Situate any freestanding signs against a backdrop of vegetation or a building to soften their impact and avoid interrupting a distant view,
- Group signs on one structure in the case of a multi-tenant development,
- Use consistent typography or a design theme to link building signs in multi-tenant developments,
- Limit the number of signs on a building to one or two to avoid visual clutter,
- Avoid using bright colors and garish designs on signs,
- Choose externally lit signs instead of internally lit signs,
- Use white light on externally lit signs and obscure the source of the light with shrubbery and other vegetation,
- Use wooden signs rather than plastic signs where feasible to ensure the sign is compatible with the building upon which it is placed,
- Place all signs to avoid obscuring significant building features such as windows, cornices and other decorative elements, and
- Avoid signs that project above the roof of a building.

***Lighting***

- Use light standards or poles that are a maximum of 15 feet tall or shorter than surrounding tree heights to avoid casting shadows over trees and creating unsafe areas,
- Choose light poles and fixtures whose design, materials and colors are compatible with the surrounding areas, such as historically appropriate styles,

- Use shielded lights to ensure that illumination from overhead lights is directed sufficiently downward and does not shine on adjacent properties or roads, and
- Position lights so that no more than one-half foot candles of light exists at the point midway between adjacent light standards.

***Road Access and Parking***

- Establish shared entrances to roadside development sites instead of multiple curb cuts that permit several adjoining properties to each have their own direct road access,
- Locate parking areas to the side or behind buildings rather than in front,
- Use landscape buffering along the perimeter of parking areas to separate them from roadways and other parts of a site,
- Install landscape buffers within large parking lots to direct circulation and provide visual relief from large expanses of parking,
- Use planted medians to signify and narrow parking lot entrances rather than constructing wide, unlandscaped entrances, and
- Consider gravel or other pervious materials in parking lots rather than paved surfaces in rural settings to allow some recharge of groundwater.

***Pedestrian Circulation***

- Construct safe, functional sidewalks that are handicapped-accessible between buildings and adjacent parking areas,
- Link internal circulation paths with existing public sidewalks, and
- To allow wheelchair access, use hard surface materials for pedestrian circulation paths such as concrete, interlocking pavers, brick or asphalt instead of gravel or stepping stones.

***Utilities and Other Amenities***

- Bury utility lines underground wherever possible; place them behind buildings or in back of roadside vegetation where they cannot be buried,
- Locate delivery areas, service bays and outdoor storage at the rear or side of a building,
- Place trash dumpsters at the rear of a building or heavily screen them from view using brick walls or wood fencing,
- Position air conditioning units, satellite dishes and other building equipment at ground level to the rear of a site rather than on the roof of a building, and
- Construct fencing as low as possible, make it open instead of opaque and build it of wood, ornamental iron, brick or fieldstone rather than metal, plywood or concrete.

**Energy Conservation**

In each of the five Western Berks area municipalities, it is important to recognize the need to conserve energy and preserve non-renewable resources. The municipalities should encourage developers to utilize the following techniques:

- Site homes on an east-west axis to maximize solar access and minimize heating costs.
- Use land forms such as steep slopes to deflect winter winds.
- Site homes on south and southeast facing slopes, with large windows on southern exposures, to maximize solar heating.
- Orient unheated buildings (such as detached garages) to buffer heated buildings (such as homes) from winter winds.
- Use darker colors to absorb more radiant energy from the sun.
- Use summer awnings to shade windows.
- Favor deciduous trees over evergreens, especially on southern exposures, to provide more shade in summer and more sun in winter. Use evergreens adjacent to northern exposures and other areas where winter winds should be buffered.

These techniques respect the two basic principles of energy conservation: proper orientation to the sun and protection from the extremes of summer and winter weather. Municipal officials can save energy by monitoring municipal operations. The municipalities should investigate updating heating, ventilating, indoor lighting and any outdoor street lighting systems and building insulation to determine whether it would be cost-effective over the long-run by increasing energy efficiency. Drivers of municipal vehicles should be made aware of methods that can be used to reduce fuel consumption.

## ACTION PROGRAM

The Action Program includes a prioritized summary of this Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. Where applicable, a responsible party is identified in addition to the five municipalities' governing bodies to oversee the implementation of each recommendation. The Action Program also describes how recommendations can be implemented through regulatory ordinances, capital improvements programming and other actions by each municipality's planning commission and governing body.

**TABLE 19**  
**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**Western Berks Area Joint Comprehensive Plan**

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT-RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER-RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<b>FUTURE LAND USE AND HOUSING</b>				
1. Revise the five municipalities' zoning ordinances to reflect the future land use plan.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION</b>				
1. Approve only development that respects the natural features of each site.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
2. Strengthen steep slope protection zoning regulations.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
3. Establish wetland buffer zoning regulations.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
4. Establish stream corridor buffer zoning regulations.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
5. Where appropriate, encourage fencing that keeps livestock out of local waterways.	Ongoing			Governing Bodies
6. Encourage preparation of nutrient management plans and use of best management practices in farming.	Ongoing			Supervisors, Planning Commissions, Berks County Conservancy, Berks County Conservation District
7. Restrict tree cutting during construction through zoning regulations.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
8. Encourage developers to use neighborhood design standards in conjunction with cluster development.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
9. Encourage developers to use the following four steps towards better subdivision design: a. Identify Primary & Secondary Conservation Areas b. Identify Locations for Development c. Layout Roads and Trails d. Delineate Lot Lines	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
<b>AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION</b>				
1. Continue to participate in the sale of agricultural easements.	Ongoing			Landowners, Berks County
2. Expand agricultural security districts.	-	-	X	Supervisors

**ACTION PROGRAM**

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT-RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER-RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PARTY
3. Do not extend public sewer service into prime agricultural areas.	Ongoing			Municipal Water & Sewer Authorities
4. Ensure zoning regulations allow farmers sufficient opportunities to supplement their incomes.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
5. Increase local control of intensive animal feeding operations.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
6. Investigate the demand for transfer of development rights (TDR) in the Western Berks area.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions and Berks County Planning Commission
<b>HISTORIC PRESERVATION</b>				
1. Identify a grassroots organization interested in greater recognition of historic properties.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions
2. Promote the donation of historic facade easements (and associated tax advantages) to preserve key historic structures.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
3. Expand local participation in the PA Blue Markers Program.	-	X	-	Governing Bodies
4. Install historically appropriate welcome signs at key gateways.	-	X	-	Governing Bodies
5. Work with Berks County or others to prepare a design guidelines pamphlet.	-	X	-	Governing Bodies
6. Use zoning to encourage developers of new homes to reflect the scale, proportions, spacing, setbacks and traditional materials.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions
7. Reflect the historic qualities of the area in future public improvements.	-	-	X	Governing Bodies
8. Strengthen sign regulations in boroughs and village areas.	-	X	-	Governing Bodies
9. Use zoning to prohibit internally illuminated free-standing signs and review billboard regulations.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
<b>Streets and Highways</b>				
1. Work with PennDOT to periodically assess the need for traffic signals along U.S. 422.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions (except North Heidelberg)
2. Prepare a multi-year program of road repavings and reconstructions.	X	-	-	Governing Bodies
3. Allow narrower roads without curbing.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
4. Incorporate Berks County's highway design guidelines into local subdivision ordinances.		X		Planning Commissions
5. Designate the specified arterials and collectors in local subdivision ordinances.	X	-	-	Planning Commissions
6. Incorporate the specified design principles into local subdivision ordinances.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
7. Design sidewalk and sidewalk replacement program in the two boroughs and Stouchsburg.	-	X	-	Planning Commissions (Robesonia, Womelsdorf, Marion)

**ACTION PROGRAM**

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT-RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER-RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PARTY
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES</b>				
<b>Police, Fire and Rescue</b>				
1. Continue to support the Western Berks area's four police departments.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies
2. Periodically reassess the desirability of a joint police services.	-	-	X	Governing Bodies
3. Maintain municipal contributions to local fire and ambulance companies.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies
<b>Public Water and Sewer Service</b>				
1. Periodically re-examine the need for more capacity at the Wernersville-Robesonía sewage treatment plant.		Ongoing		Wernersville-Robesonía Municipal Authority
2. Ensure new sewer capacity at the Womelsdorf sewage treatment plant serves only problem areas and planned growth.		Ongoing		Womelsdorf Municipal Authority
3. Finalize investigation on how best to provide sewers to Stouchsburg and Shady Acres.	-	X	-	Marion Township
<b>Education</b>				
1. Continue providing input to the Conrad Weiser School District on projected growth trends, as requested.		Ongoing		Planning Commissions
<b>Parks and Recreation</b>				
1. Continue maintaining existing municipal parks.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies
2. Look for opportunities to add additional acres of parkland.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies
3. Continue community use of School District properties.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies
4. Establish a greenway segment along Tulpehocken Creek to connect Blue Marsh Lake with Womelsdorf and possibly Lebanon County.	-	-	X	Planning Commissions, Local Trail Groups, Berks County Conservancy, Adjacent Municipalities
5. Establish a greenway along Spring Creek to connect to the Tulpehocken Greenway.	-	-	X	Planning Commissions, Local Trail Groups, Berks County Conservancy, Adjacent Municipalities
6. Promote the techniques specified to establish rights-of-way for greenways.		Ongoing		Planning Commissions, Local Trail Groups, Berks County Conservancy, Adjacent Municipalities
7. Initiate a greenways feasibility study in the Western Berks area similar to Montgomery County's Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study.	X	-	-	Berks County Planning Commission
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION</b>				
<b>Regional Business Development</b>				
1. Encourage businesses that help sustain local agriculture.		Ongoing		Governing Bodies

RECOMMENDATION	IMMEDIATE (1 <sup>st</sup> Year)	SHORT-RANGE (2 <sup>nd</sup> through 4 <sup>th</sup> Year)	LONGER-RANGE (5 <sup>th</sup> Year and Beyond)	PRIMARY RESPONSIBLE PARTY
2. Work with regional economic development officials to improve marketing to potential rail users.	Ongoing			Governing Bodies, Planning Commissions
3. Work with the Reading and Berks County Visitors Bureau to encourage more heritage-based tourism.	Ongoing			Governing Bodies, Planning Commissions
<b>Town Center</b> 1. Create a Town Center Improvements Committee to oversee physical improvements in the two boroughs and Stouchsburg.	-	X	-	Governing Bodies (Robesonia, Womelsdorf, Marion)
2. Use the specified design guidelines to retain and enhance architectural integrity.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions
3. Follow the specified do's and don'ts to distinguish creative design from unappealing development.	Ongoing			Planning Commissions

**IMPLEMENTING THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The goals and recommendations in this plan should be reviewed and updated as necessary. This comprehensive plan contains recommendations for guiding future development and for preserving historic, natural and cultural resources. But, it is not a legislative document. There are three basic tools needed to help implement this plan: 1) the zoning ordinance, 2) the subdivision and land development ordinance, and 3) the capital improvement program.

**Zoning Regulations**

The zoning ordinance is a legal tool to regulate the use of land. Its regulations apply to: 1) the permitted use of land, 2) the height and bulk of structures, 3) the percentage of a lot that may be occupied by buildings and other impervious surfaces, 4) yard setbacks, 5) the density of development, and 6) the height and size of signs. The zoning ordinance has two parts—1) the zoning map which delineates zoning districts, and 2) the text which sets forth the regulations that apply in each district along with general information regarding administration of the ordinance.

Each Western Berks area municipality should revise its current zoning ordinance to more closely reflect this comprehensive plan. Each municipality should then ensure these ordinances remain current in light of changing municipal planning goals, prevailing development trends and state legal requirements.

**Subdivision and Land Development Regulations**

Subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDO) include regulations to control the layout of streets, the planning of lots, and the provision of utilities. The objectives of a subdivision and land development ordinance are to:

- coordinate street patterns;



- assure adequate utilities and other improvements are provided in a manner that will not pollute streams, wells and/or soils;
- reduce traffic congestion; and
- provide sound design standards as a guide to developers, the planning commission and other municipal officials.

Each Western Berks area municipality should update its SALDO to reflect this comprehensive plan and any new or updated zoning ordinance.

### **Capital Improvements Programming**

Capital improvements relate to streets, storm water systems, water distribution, sewage treatment and other major public facilities. These projects, which involve the expenditure of funds beyond those needed for normal operations and maintenance, should be prioritized in the form of a six-year capital improvements program. The program should be prepared by each municipality's planning commission and adopted by each municipality's governing body.

The capital improvements program should include a capital budget which identifies the highest priority projects recommended for funding in the next annual budget. Each municipality's planning commission should revise its capital improvements program and capital budget every year as projects are completed, new needs arise and priorities change. A capital improvements program has many benefits, including the following:

- It helps assure that projects are based on the ability to pay and on a schedule of priorities determined in advance.
- It helps assure capital improvements are viewed comprehensively.
- It promotes financial stability by scheduling projects at proper intervals.
- It facilitates proper allocation of community financial resources.

### **Planning Commission Role**

Each Western Berks area planning commission should assume a lead role in assuring that this comprehensive plan is implemented and updated as needed. Each planning commission should periodically review the plan and recommend any changes needed to reflect current conditions and priorities. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code also gives the planning commission other responsibilities. At the request of the governing body, the planning commission may:

- make recommendations to the governing body concerning the adoption or amendment of an official map;
- prepare and present a zoning ordinance to the governing body and make recommendations on proposed amendments to it;
- prepare, recommend and administer a municipality's subdivision and land development ordinance;
- prepare and present a building code and housing code to the governing body;

- submit a recommended capital improvements program to the governing body;
- promote public interest in, and understanding of, the comprehensive plan and planning;
- make recommendations to governmental, civic and private agencies and individuals as to the effectiveness of the proposals of such agencies and individuals;
- hold public hearings and meetings; and
- in the performance of its functions, enter upon lands to make examinations and land surveys with the consent of the owners.

### **Governing Body Role**

The Western Berks area's board of supervisors and borough councils should each play a vital role in implementing this comprehensive plan. The governing bodies have the final decision on any action that requires an ordinance or expenditure of funds within their respective municipalities. Each governing body should strive to maintain a relationship of trust and confidence with its planning commission. The governing body and the planning commission in each municipality should keep one another informed of important planning-related matters.

## FUNDING SOURCES

There are hundreds of funding sources available from federal government, state government, private organizations and foundations, for a variety of activities. The following list summarizes the most commonly used funding sources, including grants and loans, that can help municipalities in community development, economic development, recreation, housing, water and sewer, and stormwater management, among other areas.

**TABLE 20**  
**FUNDING SOURCES**

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Offers grants for a wide variety of activities, provided the applicant proves by survey or census that the project will benefit 51% low and moderate income persons or handicapped persons or eliminate "blighted" conditions in officially designated areas. For example, funds can be used for water and sewage improvements, storm drainage, handicapped accessibility, housing rehabilitation, parks and recreation, street and sidewalk improvements, code enforcement, community planning, and historic rehabilitation.	Berks County
Conservation Corps, PA.	Provides funding for work crews for community projects, such as trail improvements.	PA DCNR
Communities of Opportunity	Provides grants to municipalities, redevelopment authorities and housing authorities for community revitalization, economic development, and low-income housing development and rehabilitation.	PA DCED
Community Development Bank, PA.	Provides capital and capacity building grants to "Community Development Financial Institutions" (CDFIs). The CDFIs are then allowed to assist with small scale business expansions, new business starts, non-profit facilities and very small businesses.	PA DCED
Community Facilities Loan Program, Federal	Offers low-interest loans to construct, enlarge or improve essential community facilities for public use in rural areas and towns with population less than 50,000. Also offers guarantees of loans by private lenders.	U.S. Dept. of Ag. Rural Housing Service
Community Revitalization Program	Very broad grant program. Officially intended to promote community stability, increase tax bases and improve quality of life. Applications may be made by municipalities, authorities, economic development organizations and non-profit corporations. Public/non-profit/profit partnerships are encouraged. Generally can be used for infrastructure, community revitalization, building rehabilitation, demolition of blighted structures, public safety, and crime prevention.	PA DCED & Governor's Office
Customized Job Training	Provides grants to businesses (other than retail) to train new employees, and retrain and upgrade existing employees. Up to 100% of eligible costs may be paid for new job creations, and up to 70% for other eligible training.	PA DCED Businesses apply through a State-licensed Educ. Agency.

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Downtown Pennsylvania Program	Offers full-time management to organize and implement a Business District Authority, that provides financing for additional services in a commercial area. The Commercial Revitalization program funds physical improvement projects that are consistent with an action plan. Projects may include site improvements, facade renovations and adaptive reuse of downtown buildings. See also "Main Street Program" in this table.	PA DCED
Economic Development Administration Loan Guarantees	Guarantees business loans made through private lenders. Available for up to 80% of project cost. Primarily intended for manufacturers, but commercial businesses may qualify. A equity contribution is required by business. Must show job creation.	U.S. EDA Philadelphia Office
Economic Development Administration Public Works Grants	Offers grants to distressed municipalities to assist in attracting new industries and encourage business expansion. Projects typically involve water and sewage improvements primarily serving industries, industrial access roads, and business incubators. A 50% local match is typically required.	U.S. EDA Philadelphia Office
Economic Development Administration Economic Adjustment Grants	Provides grants to design and implement strategies to adjust to serious job losses to a local economy, such as natural disasters and defense spending reductions.	U.S. EDA Philadelphia Office
Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Program	Grants for a very limited number of pilot demonstration projects for cleanup of contaminated underused industrial sites.	U.S. EPA Philadelphia Office
Emergency Services Loan Program	Provides low-interest loans to fire and ambulance companies to acquire vehicles, or to renovate or acquire buildings to house vehicles.	PA Emergency Management Agency
Keystone Opportunity Zone	State program provides a range of benefits to locally-nominated, State-designated areas that are financially distressed. One major benefit involves greatly reduced local real estate taxes for an initial set of years.	PA DCED
Enterprise Zone Program, PA	Encourages investment in "enterprise zones" that are distressed areas designated by the State. The main benefits include: low-interest loan pools (mainly for building acquisition, construction, renovation and machinery), local technical assistance in connecting with financing and technical resources, and preferences in certain State grant and loan programs. A priority is placed upon assistance to industrial businesses. Grants are also available for the initial planning of proposed enterprise zones, and for program administration. See also "E.Z. Tax Credits" below. (This program is completely separate from the Federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program.)	PA DCED
Enterprise Zone Tax Credits	Provides State tax credits to businesses located within State-designated Enterprise Zones for new building construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings.	PA DCED

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Flood Control - Army Corps and NRCS Watershed Programs	Various types of projects to manage flooding. Typically, the Army Corps is involved in larger watersheds, while NRCS has primary responsibility for smaller watersheds.	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service
Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program	Provides 75% funding to relieve imminent hazards from flooding, such as voluntary buy-outs and demolitions of highly flood-prone properties.	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Flood Protection Program, PA	Offers design and construction of flood protection projects. The project must be deemed economically justifiable under the state capital budget process.	PA DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering
Historic Preservation Tax Credits	Offers Federal income tax credits for a percentage of the qualified capital costs to rehabilitate a certified historic buildings, provided the exterior is restored. The program is generally limited to income-producing properties.	National Park Service
Historic Preservation - Certified Local Government Grants	Provides modest-sized matching grants to provide technical assistance to municipalities that have official historic districts and meet other criteria to be "certified."	Federal, administered by PA Historical and Museum Commission
Historic Preservation Survey and Planning Grants	Matching grants for historic surveys, historic preservation planning and National Register nominations. Available to municipalities and non-profit organizations. Cannot be used for construction.	Federal, administered by PA Historical and Museum Commission
Heritage Parks Program	Provides grants up to 75% of costs for projects within State-designated "Heritage Parks" to preserve and interpret the significant contribution that certain areas made upon the industrial heritage of the state and nation. Funds may be used for four types of projects: Feasibility studies, a Management Action Plan, Special purpose studies, and Implementation projects. Projects are intended to conserve natural, historic and recreational resources relating to industrial heritage to stimulate regional tourism.	PA DCNR

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>General Description of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>
<p>Housing Programs - mainly including Federal HOME Program (Home Investment Partnerships Program)</p>	<p>Provides grants, low-interest loans and loan guarantees to for-profits and non-profits for the construction or rehabilitation of housing for low and/or moderate income persons. Most cities receive HOME funds that they then allocate among eligible applicants. Funds are also provided to local community-based housing development organizations to develop housing. Funds are also provided through private lenders to assist with down payment and closing costs for low income and disabled persons to purchase a home for their own occupancy. The HOPE Homeownership Program subsidizes home ownership of public housing, multi-family units and single family units. Funding can be used for rehab of owner-occupied and rental housing.</p> <p>Other Federally funded housing programs include: Emergency Shelter Grants, Supportive Housing for the Elderly (Section 202), Single Room Occupancy Housing Program, Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities, and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS.</p> <p>See also HOME Partnerships below.</p>	<p>PA Housing Finance Agency and PA DCED</p>
<p>Housing Closing Cost Assistance Program</p>	<p>Provides loans to income-eligible, first-time homebuyers for assistance with closing costs. Loans may not exceed 4% of the home's acquisition cost. The loans are at no interest and repayable when the subject home is resold. The home must be located in Berks County.</p>	<p>Berks County Community Development Office</p>
<p>HOME Investment Partnership</p>	<p>Provides grants for expanding the supply of housing for low-income persons, including new construction, acquisition and rehabilitation. Local governments may apply, which may be on behalf of public agencies or for-profit or non-profit developers. PHFA administers Federal HOME funds for financing 5 or more units. These projects are usually coordinated with Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits.</p>	<p>Federal HOME funds, administered by PA DCED and PA Housing Finance Agency</p>
<p>PA Industrial Development Authority Financing (PIDA)</p>	<p>Provides low interest loans for construction, renovation and site preparation of buildings for new employers. Primarily funds industrial projects.</p>	<p>PIDA and PA DCED</p>
<p>Industrial Sites Reuse Program, PA ("Brownfields")</p>	<p>Provides grants of up to 75% and low interest loans for assessment of environmental contamination and remediation work at former industrial sites. Available to private companies, non-profit economic development agencies or authorities that own the land. Mainly targeted towards cities. Financing is not available to the company that caused the contamination.</p>	<p>PA DCED in cooperation with PA DEP</p>
<p>Infrastructure Development Program, PA. (replaced BID Program)</p>	<p>Provides grants and low interest loans for public and private infrastructure improvements needed for a business to locate or expand at a specific site. Financing is also available for infrastructure to redevelop industrial sites that have been idle more than 6 months, such as acquisition and demolition. Primarily available for industries, research facilities, company headquarters and business park developments. A 2:1 private to public match is typically required. A commitment is required to create jobs as a condition of funding. Generally applicants must be municipalities or economic development organizations.</p>	<p>PA DCED</p>

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
TEA 21 Transportation Enhancements Program (Part of Federal Transportation Efficiency Act)	Provides grants of up to 80% for: facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, development of scenic or historic route programs, landscaping and other scenic beautification along highways, historic preservation, restoration of historic transportation facilities (such as canals), preservation of rail corridors (particularly for bicycle/walking routes), control and removal of outdoor advertising, archeological research, and mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff. All projects must have a direct relationship to transportation.	U.S. DOT funds administered by PennDOT
Intermunicipal Projects Grants	Promotes cooperation between neighboring municipalities so as to foster increased efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of municipal services at the local level.	PA DCED
Job Creation Tax Credits, PA	Provides State tax credits to businesses that commit to create new jobs in PA within the next 3 years. Must create 25 new jobs or 20% of the existing work force. The jobs must pay over a certain minimum income. The business must explain how it exhibits leadership in technological applications.	PA DCED
Keystone Historic Preservation Funds	Provides 50% matching grants to fund analysis, acquisition or rehabilitation of historic sites. The site must be on the National Register of Historic Places, or officially determined to be eligible for listing. The site must be accessible to the public after funding. The grants can be made to public agencies or non-profit organizations.	PA Historical and Museum Commission
Keystone Rec., Park & Cons. Program - Land Trust Grants	Grants to well-established non-profit land trusts and conservancies to plan for and acquire critical natural areas. Land that is acquired must be open to the public.	PA DCNR
Keystone Rec., Park & Cons. Program - Community Grants	Provides 50% matching grants to municipalities to fund: overall planning for park and recreation, master plans for individual parks, acquisition of parkland and nature preserves, countywide natural area inventories, and rehabilitation and improvements to public recreation areas. Grants up to \$20,000, without a local match, are available for material and design costs in small municipalities.	PA DCNR Regional Offices
Local Government Capital Projects Loan Program	Provides low interest loans to municipalities with populations of 12,000 or less for the purchase of equipment and the purchase, construction, renovation or rehabilitation of municipal facilities. Priorities are given to projects that are necessary for public health and safety or involve intergovernmental cooperation.	PA DCED
Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Federal	Offers Federal income tax credits to non-profit and for-profit developers of housing for low-income persons. Non-profits can then sell their credits to investors.	PA Housing Finance Agency
Main Street Program	In the downtowns of designated "Main Street Communities," provides initial planning grants and administrative grants over a 3 year period to pay a large share of the costs of a professional manager to coordinate downtown revitalization efforts. May receive matching grants for facade restoration and other design improvements. Usually limited to municipalities of 5,000 to 50,000 persons.	PA DCED

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>General Description of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency</b>
Machinery and Equipment Loan Fund	Provides low-interest loans to acquire or upgrade machinery and equipment and related engineering and installation for industrial, agricultural, processing and mining businesses. The business must agree to create or preserve jobs as a condition of the financing.	PA DCED
Minority Business Development Authority, PA	Provides low-interest loans for businesses owned and operated by minorities. Can generally be used for industrial, international trade, franchise, retail and commercial uses. Can be used for site acquisition, building construction and renovation, machinery and working capital.	PA Minority Business Development Authority & PA DCED
Municipalities Financial Recovery Act, PA	Provides technical advice and grants for special purposes (such as studies to improve service efficiency) within municipalities that have been officially designated as financially distressed. After application and designation, the municipality must follow a Financial Recovery Plan.	PA DCED
Neighborhood Assistance Tax Credit Program	Authorizes State corporate income tax credits to private companies to donate funds for services to low-income persons or impoverished neighborhoods. The services typically include neighborhood revitalization, job training, education, social programs to reduce welfare dependency or crime prevention. The tax credit usually equals 50 to 70% of the eligible donation. Partnerships are required between the business and a neighborhood organization.	PA DCED
National Recreational Trails Funding (Symms NRTA)	Provides grants for the acquisition and development of recreation trails (which may include trails for motorized vehicles). A 50% local match is required. Applications may be made by Federal, State or local government agencies or organizations.	Federal, administered by PA DCNR
On-Lot Septic System Program	Offers low-interest loans to limited income households to repair failing on-lot septic systems.	PennVest and PA Housing Finance Agency
Opportunity Grant Program (replaced Sunny Day Fund)	Offers grants to create or preserve very substantial numbers of jobs. May be used for job training, infrastructure, land and building improvements, machinery and equipment, working capital, or environmental assessment and cleanup.	Can only be applied for through the Governors Action Team
PEDFA Financing	Provides low-interest rate financing of business growth. Projects that can be funded with bonds that are exempt from Federal income tax have a lower interest rate than other types of projects. The lower rate financing is limited to activities such as site acquisition, building construction and rehabilitation and new equipment - for manufacturing and certain transportation and utility uses. The higher rate is available to a broader range of businesses and a much wider variety of expenditures.	PA Economic Financing Authority-- Applications are made through a local Industrial Development Corp. or Authority
PennCAP	Provides a guarantee of loans to businesses made by participating banks.	DCED-- Apply through a participating bank



Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
PENNVEST	Offers low interest loans for construction and improvement of drinking water and wastewater systems. Outright grants may be available for highly distressed communities. Mainly intended for public systems, but some private systems may be approved. Water projects are funded through the Drinking Water Revolving Loan Fund. Sewage projects are funded through the Clean Water Revolving Fund. In addition, PennVest is authorized to provide loans for projects to control existing stormwater problems, such as separating stormwater from sanitary sewage. The "Advance Funding Program" provides low-interest loans for feasibility studies and engineering of systems if the utility cannot fund such work itself.	PA Infrastructure Investment Authority and PA DEP Bureau of Water Supply Management-- Involves both U.S. EPA and State funds
PIDA - PA Industrial Development Authority (PIDA) Programs	Makes available low-interest financing to businesses and industrial development agencies to create or retain business jobs. Can be used for industrial, research, agricultural processing and major office uses. Can be used for site acquisition, building construction or renovation, multi-tenant spec buildings and industrial park development. A lower interest rate is available for advanced technology projects and in enterprise zones and areas of high unemployment.	PIDA and PA DCED Applications are typically made through a local Industrial Development Corp. or Authority
Nutrient Management Plan Development Incentive Program	Grants of \$4 per acre are available to farmers to cover up to 75% of the cost of preparing nutrient management plans. Low interest loans are also available through the State to assist in implementing nutrient management-related best management practices.	Berks County Conservation District
Rails to Trails, PA	Provides grants for feasibility studies, master site plans, acquisition and improvement of former railroad lines for recreation trails. A 50% local match is required. Open to municipalities, authorities and non-profits.	PA DCNR Field Offices
Rural Economic and Community Development Programs, U.S.	Federal programs available in rural areas: Business & Industrial Guaranteed Loan Program - Provides partial guarantees of loans by lenders for working capital, machinery, buildings, land and certain types of debt refinancing. Loans can be made to businesses, municipalities or non-profit organizations. Intermediary Relending Loans - provides very low-interest loans to non-profit organizations to reloan for businesses and community development projects. Rural Business Enterprise Grants (former Ind. Dev. Grants) - provides grants for acquisition of land and construction of buildings and utilities to facilitate development of small businesses. Home Ownership Loans - aid low- and moderate-income rural residents or buy, build or repair their dwelling. Rural Rental Housing Loans - assist individuals or organizations to build or rehab rental units for low-income and moderate-income residents in rural areas. Home Improvement and Repair Loans and Grants - assist very low-income rural homeowners to remove health and safety hazards in their homes or to improve handicap accessibility. Rural Housing Site Loans - assist in purchasing sites for housing development by private, public or non-profit organizations. Housing Preservation Grants - assist non-profits and public agencies with grant funds to assist low-income owner-occupants and owners of low-income apartments with repairing homes in rural areas.	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Development Administration (former Farmers Home Administration)

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Recycling Market Development Loan Fund	Provides low-interest loans to businesses to purchase recycling source-separating equipment.	PA DEP Bureau of Land Recycling and Waste Management
Recycling Grants (under Act 101 of 1988)	Grants for up to 90% of municipal costs to develop and implement recycling programs, such as the purchase of recycling bins and composting equipment. Grants are also available to counties for a recycling coordinator, waste management plans and pollution prevention education.	PA DEP Bureau of Land Recycling and Waste Management
Rivers Conservation Program, PA	Offers 50% grants to conserve and enhance river resources. Typically, funding is first provided for a conservation plan for a waterway. Then after the plan is approved, grants are possible to carry out the plan. Available to municipalities, authorities and non-profits.	PA DCNR
Rural Utilities Service Financing	Offers low-interest loans for drinking water and sewage projects for rural areas and small towns. The "Water and Water Disposal Loan Program" provides loans for water supply, wastewater disposal, solid waste disposal and stormwater management systems for rural areas and towns with a population less than 10,000 persons. Available to municipalities, authorities and non-profit corps. Grants up to 75% of project costs may be available for highly distressed areas. Also guarantee loans by private lenders. Also provides grants to non-profit organs. to provide technical assistance to rural communities or for a circuit rider to serve several rural water systems. Also offers emergency grants to communities that have experienced a significant decline in quantity or quality of drinking water.	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service
Shared Municipal Services	Provides modest-sized 50/50 matching grants to promote cooperation among municipalities, in order to increase the efficiency of public services. Two or more municipalities may apply, or a council of governments.	PA DCED
Small Business First	Provides low-interest loans for projects by businesses that generally have less than 100 employees. Generally, the funding can be used for site acquisition, building construction, machinery, working capital, environmental compliance, defense-cutback impacts, recycling, technology, export and computer activities. This is also one of the few sources of funding that can be used for restaurants, hotels and motels. The recipient must agree to create or preserve jobs.	PA DCED An application can be made through an "Area Loan Organization"
Small Business Incubator Program	Provides loans and grants for facilities in which a number of new businesses operate under one roof with affordable rents, sharing services and equipment and having equal access to a wide range of professional, technical, and financial programs.	PA DCED
SBA Financing	Offers low-interest financing for smaller businesses, including: - microloans and microenterprise grants - Section 7(a) Guaranteed Business Loans - Section 504 Loans to allow certified development organizations to make long-term loans for real estate and other fixed assets	U.S. Small Business Administration
Sewage Facility Planning Grants	Grants to pay up to 50% of the costs to prepare a new sewage facilities plan or update an existing plan, under State Act 537 of 1966.	PA DEP

Name of Program	General Description of Program	Administering Agency
Small Communities Planning Assistance Program (SCPAP)	Provides grants up to 100% of the costs to eligible municipalities to prepare comprehensive plans, development regulations and special strategies for development. Generally, 51% of the municipality's residents must be low or moderate income, according to the census or a survey. Limited to municipalities under 10,000 population.	Federal CDBG administered by PA DCED
Small Water System Regionalization Grants	Provides grants for feasibility studies concerning the merger of small drinking water systems.	PA DEP Bureau of Water Supply
Solid Waste Facility Programs	Programs provide grants for municipalities to review proposed solid waste facilities within their borders. Programs also provide funding for municipal inspectors of facilities and for host fees from operators.	PA DEP Bureau Land Recycling and Waste Management
State Planning Assistance Grant Program (SPAG)/World Class Communities	Assists local governments and counties to prepare comprehensive plans, downtown plans, special community development studies and development regulations. Typically provides 50% of the eligible costs. Is being supplemented with a new program called "World Class Communities".	PA DCED
Stormwater Management Grants (Under State Act 167 of 1978)	Grants for cooperative efforts at the watershed level among municipalities for stormwater planning and ordinances. Grants are typically made to counties, but may be made to municipalities.	PA DEP Bureau of Watershed Conservation
Stream Improvement Program	Provides design and construction assistance to eliminate imminent threats to flooding and streambank erosion.	PA DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering
Tire Pile Cleanup Grant	Grants to municipalities to provide reimbursement for costs of cleaning up large piles of used tires.	PA DEP Bureau of Land Recycling & Waste Management
Urban Forestry Grants	Provides grants for tree planting projects. Is also a Federal "America the Beautiful" grant program for tree planting.	PA DCNR
Water Supply Plan & Well-Head Protection Grants	Provides grants to counties to plan for water supplies at the county level and to implement programs to protect the wellheads of public wells.	PA DEP Bureau of Water Supply

Sources: Publications and internet sites of various agencies, in addition to Pennsylvanian magazine.

Abbreviations: DCED = PA. Dept. of Community and Economic Development  
HUD = U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development  
NRCS = U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service  
DCNR = PA. Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources  
DEP = PA. Dept. of Environmental Protection