

SUBURBAN BERKS WEST JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Sinking Spring Borough

Spring Township

West Reading Borough

Wyomissing Borough



September 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Berks County Planning Commission would like to acknowledge those members of the Study Committee who contributed to and oversaw the preparation of this Plan update:

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All maps and aerials presented within this Plan rely upon digital information of the Berks County Geographic Information System. While the accuracy of this information is believed to be very high, it should only be used for community planning purposes and cannot be relied upon for definitive site survey delineation.

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RESOLUTION # 2016-17

WHEREAS, the Borough of Sinking Spring in cooperation with (Spring Township, West Reading Borough, Sinking Spring Borough, the Wyomissing School District, and the Wilson School District), agrees to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan Program, and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Sinking Spring wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan Update project, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate for the amount of \$27,138.66 to update the current joint comprehensive plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, and


NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor of the Borough of Sinking Spring hereby authorizes inclusion of our municipality in a Joint Comprehensive Plan Update.

Presented this 3rd day of November, 2016

Motion by Lisa Gantner

Seconded by Brian Hoffa

Adopted this 3rd day of November, 2016


Chairman/President/Mayor

Attest: Elizabeth A. Engelman

**TOWNSHIP OF SPRING
BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
Resolution No. 2016-17**

WHEREAS, the Township of Spring, in cooperation with West Reading Borough, Sinking Spring Borough, Wyomissing Borough, Wyomissing School District and the Wilson School District, agrees to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan program, and

WHEREAS, the Township of Spring wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan update project, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate, in the amount of \$27,138.66, to update the current Joint Comprehensive Plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan update, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Spring hereby authorizes inclusion of the Township of Spring in a Joint Comprehensive Plan update.

ADOPTED this 14th day of November, 2016.

TOWNSHIP OF SPRING
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Barry W. Ulrich
(Vice) Chairman

Attest: Steph Rowan

RESOLUTION # 2016-11

WHEREAS, the Borough of West Reading **in cooperation with Spring Township, West Reading Borough, Sinking Spring Borough, Wyomissing Borough, the Wyomissing School District, and the Wilson School District**, agrees to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan Program, and

WHEREAS, the Borough of West Reading wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan Update project, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate for the amount of \$27,138.66 to update the current joint comprehensive plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor of the Borough of West Reading hereby authorizes inclusion of our municipality in a Joint Comprehensive Plan Update.

Presented this 15th day of November, 2016

Motion by Christopher Lincoln

Seconded by Kristin Kramer

Adopted this 15th day of November, 2016



Carl G. Garman, Council President

Attest: 

RESOLUTION # _____

WHEREAS, the Borough of Wyomissing **in cooperation with (Spring Township, Borough West Reading, Borough of Sinking Spring and the Wyomissing School District)**, are agreeing to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan Program, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate for the amount of \$27,138.66 to update the current joint comprehensive plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, and

WHEREAS, the Wilson School District wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan Update project, at no cost or fees to the district, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the President of the Wilson School District hereby authorizes inclusion of our school district in a Joint Comprehensive Plan Update.

Presented this 21st day of Nov, 2016

Motion by Robert Metzgar

Seconded by Dr Steve Chmielewski

Adopted this 21st day of NOV, 2016



Chairman/President/Mayor

Attest: 

RESOLUTION # 2016-18

WHEREAS, the Borough of Wyomissing **in cooperation with (Spring Township, West Reading Borough, Sinking Spring Borough, the Wyomissing School District, and the Wilson School District)**, agrees to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan Program, and

WHEREAS, the Borough of Wyomissing wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan Update project, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate for the amount of \$27,138.66 to update the current joint comprehensive plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, and

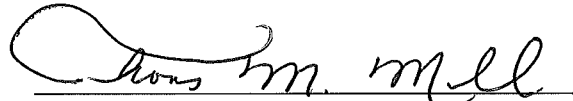
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the President of Borough Council of the Borough of Wyomissing hereby authorizes inclusion of our municipality in a Joint Comprehensive Plan Update.

Presented this 8th day of November, 2016

Motion by Jane Woodward

Seconded by Michael Frazier

Adopted this 8th day of Nov, 2016



Thomas M. Moll, Council President
Borough of Wyomissing

Attest: Martha L. Hozey
Martha L. Hozey
Borough Secretary

RESOLUTION # 11-21-16-01

WHEREAS, the Wyomissing Area School District **in cooperation with (Spring Township, West Reading Borough, Sinking Spring Borough, Wyomissing Borough, and the Wilson School District)**, agrees to participate in the Berks County Joint Comprehensive Plan Program, and

WHEREAS, the Wyomissing Area School District wishes to be included in said Joint Comprehensive Plan Update project, and

WHEREAS, the County of Berks supplied a cost estimate for the amount of \$27,138.66 to update the current joint comprehensive plan. The four municipalities each agree to pay equal portions of the aforementioned cost associated with this Joint Comprehensive Plan Update, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors of the Wyomissing Area School District hereby authorizes inclusion of our District in a Joint Comprehensive Plan Update.

Presented this 21ST day of Nov, 2016

Motion by Scott Painter

Seconded by Marcia Zvolkovski

Adopted this 21ST day of Nov, 2016

Sandra Reese

Board (Vice) President

Attest: Meeta Boy

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INTRODUCTION

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to establish overall policies for the development and conservation of the Suburban Berks West Region over the next 15 years. The Region includes Spring Township and the Boroughs of Sinking Spring, West Reading and Wyomissing. Public education in the region is served by the Wilson and Wyomissing Area School Districts. This Plan is not by itself a regulation, but is intended to provide the policy direction for changes to the municipalities' development regulations.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the following major parts:

- The Overall Vision and Goals of the Plan
- The Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation Plan
- The Land Use and Housing Plan
- The Community Facilities and Services Plan
- The Economic Development Plan
- The Plan to Conserve Energy
- The Transportation Plan
- The Historic Preservation Plan
- Putting this Plan into Action

How Was this Plan Developed?

This Plan was originally prepared in 2003 by a Regional Comprehensive Plan Committee consisting of elected and appointed officials and other citizens from each of the municipalities. In addition, representatives were appointed from the School Districts. The Plan policies were developed at monthly workshop meetings that were open to the public.

Approximately 15 years passed since the adoption of the 2003 Plan. Since then, many things have changed in the region. For instance, the 2003 plan included the Borough of West Lawn, which has since merged into Spring Township, and new demographic, economic and housing information has been made available. After 15 years it is a good time to assess the current joint comprehensive plan and amend it to make it compatible with the issues and conditions that are impacting the municipalities today. Because of this the municipalities decided to pursue an update to their multi-municipal comprehensive plan.

The first step in the process was the identification of major issues and concerns that needed to be addressed. The next step was an analysis and mapping of existing conditions and trends. The mapping started with computerized information provided by Berks County. A survey was sent out to a sample of residents of the region to gauge their thoughts on the community.

An "overall vision" was prepared and a set of goals were written to provide overall direction for the Plan. Then, a series of alternatives were considered to guide development in different areas of the Region. The Land Use Plan was then prepared, followed by recommendations concerning Community Facilities, Transportation, Economic Development, Historic Preservation and Natural Features. Public meetings were then held. After making revisions to respond to public input, the Plan is being considered for adoption by the elected officials of each municipality.

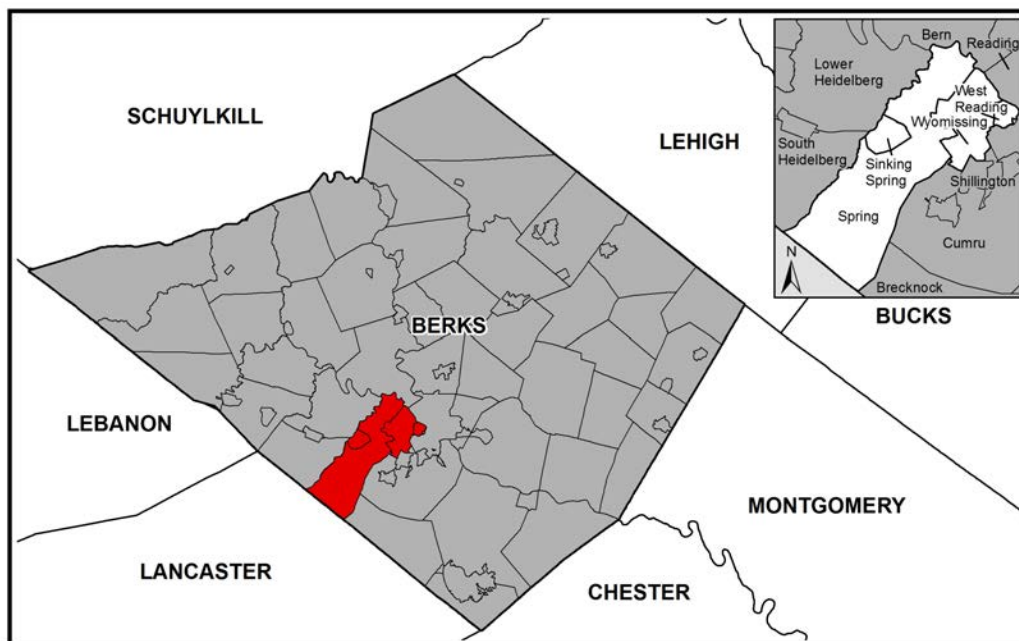
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Regional Location

The Suburban Berks West Area is located in southwestern Berks County. The region is bordered by the City of Reading to the east and Lancaster County to the southwest. U.S. 422/Penn Avenue connects the region with Reading to the east and Lebanon to the west. U.S. 222 connects the region with Allentown to the north and Lancaster to the south. Interstate 78 to the north is accessible from Routes 183 and 61. The Pennsylvania Turnpike is accessible to the south via Route 222.

The Suburban Berks West area is primarily affected by growth in the Reading area and the accessibility to the Route 222 and 422 expressways.

Growth pressures from outside of Berks County are affecting the region from several directions. From the east, suburbanization is spreading along the Route 422 and Pennsylvania Turnpike corridors from Montgomery and Chester Counties. From the northeast, major employment growth in western Lehigh Valley along the I-78, Route 222 and Route 100 corridors has increased the demand for residential growth in the vicinity. Development is also moving northward along Route 222 from Lancaster County and the interchange with the Pennsylvania Turnpike.



THE VISION AND GOALS OF THIS PLAN

The Overall Vision of this Plan

As we look to the future, the best features of older development in the region will have been preserved and extended into new development.

Penn Avenue will continue to serve as an active business corridor for the region, including the centers of Sinking Spring, Wyomissing and West Reading. Attractive streetscape and road improvements will make the corridor more pedestrian friendly and vehicle circulation more efficient.

Historic buildings will be preserved and many will be restored in a sensitive manner, with appropriate new uses. Older neighborhoods will remain strong and stable, with a high percentage of homes being owner-occupied.



Vanity Fair

New business development will occur in ways that fit into the character of the community. This will include reuse of older buildings and sites and construction of newer commercial buildings along Penn Avenue that is similar in character to adjacent older buildings.

Large areas will continue to be farmed, particularly in the southern part of Spring Township. Substantial areas of woodlands will be preserved, providing attractive visual relief between developments.

The creek valleys will be preserved, some in public greenways and trails, building upon the parks along the Wyomissing, Tulpehocken and Cacoosing Creeks. Plentiful high-quality groundwater supplies will remain available, with large amounts of stormwater recharging into the ground. The creeks will also have high water quality, with the benefit of careful erosion controls. Conservation easements will have ensured the permanent preservation of large areas of open land.

Most new development will be served with public water and sewage service that will minimize the total amount of land that is consumed. Substantial areas of open space will have been preserved within most new development, particularly through clustering in the southern part of Spring Township. "Cookie-cutter" subdivisions sprawling across the rural landscape will have been avoided.

Unightly and inefficient "strip" commercial development of new commercial businesses with individual driveways along long stretches of major roads will have been avoided. Extensive landscaping will add to the attractiveness of new development.

Traffic will have increased but will be carefully managed, with improvements to smooth traffic along major corridors and existing choke points. As traffic is better managed along major roads, there will be less incentive for vehicles to travel on residential streets. Coordinated driveways and interconnected parking lots will be provided between adjacent businesses. Wider shoulders will be provided on roads to increase safety and promote bicycling and walking.

Signs will be of modest size and height. Lighting will be controlled to avoid nuisances to neighbors and motorists.

A wide variety of recreation opportunities will be available and the Wilson and Wyomissing School Districts and Penn State-Berks will continue to be known for high quality education.

Chapter 2 - The Vision and Goals of This Plan

Direction: The Major Goals of This Plan

The following goals provide overall direction for this Plan. The recommendations work to carry out these goals. More on these goals can be found in the corresponding chapter of the plan.

Overall Goal: Continually strive to make the region an even greater place in which to live, work, learn, visit, shop and play, with a strong sense of community, scenic preserved open spaces, an attractive historic character, a vibrant economy, and an excellent quality of life.

Natural Features and Agricultural Conservation

- Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the Tulpehocken, Cacoosing and Wyomissing Creeks, other creek valleys, wetlands and steeply sloped woodlands.
- Seek to maintain agricultural activities in large portions of Spring Township.
- Protect the amounts and quality of groundwater and creek waters.
- Protect natural resources and regional open space from utilities.

Energy Conservation

- Encourage modes of transportation, patterns of land uses and designs of sites and other actions that conserve energy.

Community Facilities and Services

- Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner, including addressing needs for future growth.
- Provide central water and sewage services in the most cost-efficient manner, with regular investments to provide reliable services.
- Improve parks and playgrounds to meet a wide variety of recreational needs.
- Complete a system of bicycle and pedestrian trails to provide vital links between existing parks and recreational opportunities.
- Emphasize full coordination of municipal and emergency services across municipal borders.

Historic Preservation

- Protect and preserve the most important historical structures
- Encourage appropriate reuse and historic rehabilitation of older buildings, as well as encouraging new construction that is consistent with historic surroundings.

Economic Development

- Focus on providing high quality, fundamental public services.
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements.
- Encourage more coordination between the municipal economic development committees.
- Encourage regulatory alignment/consistency in all municipalities.
- Boost the diversification of the local economy.
- Support the creation and growth of local businesses.
- Attract and cultivate a skilled workforce.
- Consider developing and sponsoring a summer jobs program for high school students in the Wyomissing and Wilson school districts.

Chapter 2 - The Vision and Goals of This Plan

- Consider an “Eds and Meds” focus on proactively planning for the expansion of health care and higher education facilities and attract the services and providers that complement the hospital and the university.
- Make sure ordinances address industry trends and the needs of retail businesses and retail development.
- Emphasize tourism that is built upon the area’s heritage, arts and culture, and recreational assets.

Transportation

- Continued efforts should be made to vote or petition legislators for the benefit of transportation issues within the region and communicate unified requests for improvements to the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).
- Pursue preliminary technical evaluation of identified priorities and share recommendations with the appropriate municipalities and agencies.
- Collaborate on a regular basis to focus limited funding on the most effective solutions and to maximize the potential for cost sharing and savings.
- Review municipal ordinances for parking standards and amend as necessary to ensure parking requirements are both appropriate and flexible.
- The municipalities should consider a joint parking study that identifies present and future needs and proposes short and long-term solutions.
- Each municipality should implement low-cost safety improvements where such measures provide an immediate impact on safety.
- The municipalities should ensure future development does not create detrimental access issues, increase congestion, or create safety problems.
- Consider more specific access management strategies for growth areas and designated roadways or corridors.
- Communicate with the operators of commercial and industrial facilities regarding issues with regular truck movements and designated routes.
- Coordinate with Norfolk Southern to maximize the utility of the rail line in spurring appropriate economic development within the planning area, including coordination of land use planning, in conjunction with the rail line.
- Consider the development of a regional trail/pedestrian/bicycle plan that provides guidance for an interconnected system of pedestrian improvements between the municipalities.
- Ensure municipal subdivision and land development ordinances contain requirements for sidewalks in appropriate locations.
- Encourage the addition of sidewalks within the planning area especially where there are missing links or where sidewalks would facilitate appropriate connections to existing or future neighborhoods and destinations (such as schools, parks, recreation facilities, major job generators, or shopping centers).
- Communicate with SCTA\BARTA regarding future bus routes, shuttles, and other transit opportunities.

Land Uses and Housing

- Provide for orderly patterns of development that provide compatibility between land uses, particularly to protect the livability of existing residential areas.
- Seek to extend the best features of older development into newer development.
- Maintain an attractive rural character in southern Spring Township. Use the “Open Space Development” process to cluster development on the most suitable portions of a tract, in order to permanently preserve important natural features and open spaces.

Chapter 2 - The Vision and Goals of This Plan

- Direct most development to locations that can be efficiently served by public water and sewage services, in order to minimize the total amount of land that is consumed by development and to direct most housing away from agricultural areas.
- Direct new commercial uses to selected locations that allow for safe and efficient traffic access, as opposed to long strip commercial development along major highways with individual driveways.
- Strengthen older commercial areas, particularly along Penn Avenue, and reuse or redevelop older industrial sites.
- Promote pedestrian-friendly “human scale” development that is not overly dense and that includes substantial landscaping.
- Strengthen residential neighborhoods, with an emphasis on encouraging home-ownership, rehabilitating older buildings, and avoiding incompatible development.
- Continue to further improve the visual attractiveness of the region, with an emphasis upon the most highly visible corridors, and with an emphasis upon street trees, landscaping and preserved creek valleys.
- Stress a strong diversified economy that generates stability, sufficient tax revenues and wide employment opportunities. Take full advantage of Penn State - Berks, the Reading Hospital, the Reading Museum and the many other strong institutions in the region.
- Encourage appropriate reuse and historic rehabilitation of older buildings, as well as encouraging new construction that is consistent with historic surroundings.
- Make sure that obligations are met under State law to provide opportunities for all types of housing and all legitimate types of land uses.

Putting this Plan into Action

- Update municipal development regulations to carry out this Plan, and periodically update the Plan and regulations as needed.
- Continually work to put this Plan into action - through a program of updated planning and many short-term actions within a long-range perspective.
- Promote substantial citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and encouraging volunteer efforts to improve the community.
- Maximize communications, coordination and cooperative efforts between the municipalities, the school districts, adjacent municipalities, the County and other agencies and organizations.

The Survey

As part of the process of updating this joint comprehensive plan a community survey was prepared to gauge the public’s perception of the planning region and to inquire about possible future planning initiatives in the municipalities. The ten question digital survey was distributed to households via a link on each municipality’s quarterly newsletter as well as advertised using social media and municipal websites. The survey was available throughout the month of November 2017. During this timeframe the planning committee received 397 responses. The following are the main takeaways from the community survey:

- Overall, people in the joint planning region are satisfied with the quality of life in their municipality.
- Roughly 73 percent of respondents indicated that traffic congestion and transportation is the top issue facing the region. Too many vacant commercial buildings (45%) and high taxes (37%) came in at two and three respectively.

Chapter 2 - The Vision and Goals of This Plan

- 46 percent of respondents felt strongly that the region needs to attract new business development to generate additional tax revenue to reduce the tax burden upon residents. At the same time, the same amount (46%) thought it is important to preserve farmland in the rural parts of the region.
- 32 percent of respondents think that road/street repair and economic development/job creation should be the highest priorities for municipalities when spending municipal tax dollars.
- The majority of respondents (78%) believe that beautification projects such as streetscapes or road corridor improvements benefit the region by attracting new businesses to the area.
- More than three quarters of the respondents indicated that they use the recreational opportunities available to them in the community.

DEMOGRAPHICS PROFILE

Population

As of 2015, the Suburban Berks West planning area is home to 46,023 residents. Since 2000, the area’s population grew 16% or by nearly 6,400 residents, exceeding both county and state figures. The area added the majority of these new residents between 2000 and 2010.

Since 2010, population growth has significantly decreased which is consistent with slow population growth in both Berks County and Pennsylvania. Between 2010 and 2015, the area added only 223 new residents.

Spring Township is the area’s largest municipality with over 27,000 residents. It added the most residents of the four municipalities. Sinking Spring Borough had the highest percentage of population increase, seeing a 53% increase in population between 2000 and 2015. West Reading Borough is stable – with a small amount of population growth between 2000 and 2010 and some minor population loss between 2010 and 2015. Wyomissing Borough’s population declined over 6% since 2000.

Population									
Municipality	2000	2010	2015	2000-2010 # Change	2000-2010 % Change	2010-2015 # Change	2010-2015 % Change	2000-2015 # Change	2000-2015 % Change
Sinking Spring Borough	2,639	4,008	4,042	1,369	51.9%	34	0.8%	1,403	53.2%
Spring Township	21,805	27,119	27,315	5,314	24.4%	196	0.7%	5,510	25.3%
West Reading Borough	4,049	4,212	4,191	163	4.0%	-21	-0.5%	142	3.5%
Wyomissing Borough	11,155	10,461	10,475	-694	-6.2%	14	0.1%	-680	-6.1%
Suburban Berks West Area	39,648	45,800	46,023	6,152	15.5%	223	0.5%	6,375	16.1%
Berks County	373,638	411,905	413,016	38,267	10.2%	1,111	0.3%	39,378	10.5%
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	12,702,379	12,758,729	421,325	3.4%	56,350	0.4%	477,675	3.9%

Source: U.S. Census 2000 and 2010 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Note: The population statistic for Wyomissing Borough in 2000 includes the populations of Wyomissing and Wyomissing Hills.

Population Projections

Population projections can help the area plan efficiently for future land use and community service needs. The area is expected to add nearly 5,000 residents by 2040, with nearly 3,000 in Spring Township. While population growth in the boroughs will be marginal, they are not projected to lose population. This is a positive trend in comparison to the majority of boroughs in the state.

Population Projections										
Municipality	2010 Base	2020	2030	2040	2010-2020 # Change	2010-2030 # Change	2010-2040 # Change	2010-2020 % Change	2010-2030 % Change	2010-2040 % Change
Sinking Spring Borough	4,008	4,134	4,281	4,434	126	273	426	3.1%	6.8%	10.6%
Spring Township	27,119	28,044	29,046	30,085	925	1,927	2,966	3.4%	7.1%	10.9%
West Reading Borough	4,212	4,352	4,507	4,668	140	295	456	3.3%	7.0%	10.8%
Wyomissing Borough	10,461	10,811	11,198	11,598	350	737	1,137	3.3%	7.0%	10.9%
Suburban Berks West Area	45,800	47,341	49,032	50,785	1,541	3,232	4,985	3.4%	7.1%	10.9%
Berks County	411,905	425,447	440,656	456,409	13,542	28,751	44,504	3.3%	7.0%	10.8%

Source: United States Bureau of Census, 2010 Census; Berks County Planning Commission 2016 Estimates

Population Density

The United States Census Bureau defines places “urban” as territory that has a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile. By this definition, the area overall - and all municipalities in the planning area - are urban. West Reading Borough has the highest population density in the planning area.

Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing

Population Density				
Municipality	Size (Sq.Mi.)	2015	Density	Urban
Sinking Spring Borough	1.25	4,042	3,233.6	Yes
Spring Township	18.53	27,315	1,474.1	Yes
West Reading Borough	0.59	4,191	7,103.4	Yes
Wyomissing Borough	4.55	10,475	2,302.2	Yes
Suburban Berks West Area	24.92	46,023	1,846.8	Yes
Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey; Berks County Planning Commission				

School Enrollment

Two school districts serve the planning area. The Wilson School District is a PIAA Class AAAAAA district that serves Sinking Spring Borough, Spring Township and part of Wyomissing Borough. It has five (5) elementary schools, two (2) middle schools, and one (1) high school. As of 2015, the district has over 6,100 students. Between 2011 and 2015, the district's student population grew 4.5%.

The Wyomissing School District is a PIAA Class AAA district that serves West Reading Borough and part of Wyomissing Borough. It has two (2) elementary schools and one (1) junior/senior high school. As of 2015, the district has nearly 2,000 students. Between 2011 and 2015, the district's student population grew 3.6%.

School District Enrollment by Building - 2011-2015							
Wilson School District Building Name	2011*	2012	2013	2014	2015	# Change 2011-2015	% Change 2011-2015
Whitfield Elementary	604	505	497	462	479	(125)	-20.7%
Cornwall Terrace Elementary	544	513	498	554	610	66	12.1%
Spring Ridge Elementary	433	528	515	511	491	58	13.4%
Shiloh Hills Elementary	352	546	583	574	563	211	59.9%
Green Valley Elementary	367	553	545	535	585	218	59.4%
Wilson West Middle	751	720	738	781	782	31	4.1%
Wilson Southern Middle	639	671	663	658	663	24	3.8%
Wilson - Lower House	678	663	683	737	694	16	2.4%
Wilson - Upper House	1,185	1,177	1,182	1,190	1,238	53	4.5%
Total	5,553	5,876	5,904	6,002	6,105	552	9.9%
Wyomissing School District Building Name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	# Change 2011-2015	% Change 2011-2015
West Reading Elementary	304	312	296	303	285	-19	-6.3%
Wyomissing Hills Elementary	910	932	944	947	966	56	6.2%
Wyomissing Area Junior/Senior	664	667	647	657	694	30	4.5%
Total	1,878	1,911	1,887	1,907	1,945	67	3.6%
* The 2011 totals for Wilson School District include the now closed Lincoln Park Elementary and West Wyomissing elementary schools.							
* The Wilson School District first purchased student slots at River Rock Academy in 2013.							

Households

Reflecting the general trend toward smaller families and the increasing prevalence of single parent (or even single person) households, the average size of households in the district are generally smaller than both county and state averages. Only Spring Township at 2.63 people per household and 3.03 people per family exceeds the county and state averages.

Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing

Wyomissing Borough, in terms of demography, is the oldest community in the planning area and that is reflected in the chart below. It has the least amount of households with people under the age of 18 and the most with people over the age of 65. Sinking Spring and West Reading have the most families with children. West Reading has a sizeable number of residents who live alone.

Households & Families								
Municipality	Households	Population	PPH	Municipality	Average Family Size	Percent With People Under 18	Percent With People Over 65	Percent Living Alone
Sinking Spring Borough	1,581	4,042	2.56	Sinking Spring Borough	2.55	38.0	8.1	27.6
Spring Township	10,403	27,315	2.63	Spring Township	3.03	31.2	11.0	25.0
West Reading Borough	1,640	4,191	2.56	West Reading Borough	2.28	35.7	11.2	38.4
Wyomissing Borough	4,324	10,475	2.42	Wyomissing Borough	2.38	23.7	20.1	30.3
Berks County	153,307	413,016	2.69	Berks County	2.60	32.9	10.8	24.7
Pennsylvania	4,940,581	12,758,729	2.58	Pennsylvania	3.10	29.1	11.9	29.6

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey; Berks County Planning Commission

Age

Age distribution is an important indicator of future population dynamics. For example, a large concentration of children could mean a coming boom of young children or a high concentration of baby boomers may suggest out-migration as people in that demographic move elsewhere after retirement. Sinking Spring is the “youngest” community in the planning area with a median age of 34.9. Wyomissing is the oldest, with a median age of 46.6. Both Spring Township and Wyomissing exceed the county and state median age.

Age Composition						
Age Group	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
Under 5 years	8.5	5.9	5.5	5.4	6.0	5.6
5 to 9 years	6.2	5.9	7.7	3.8	6.3	5.9
10 to 14 years	8.1	6.8	6.3	6.0	6.8	6.1
15 to 19 years	7.8	6.9	5.2	6.9	7.4	6.8
20 to 24 years	4.4	5.6	4.9	5.9	6.8	6.9
25 to 29 years	6.0	5.4	8.0	5.1	5.8	6.4
30 to 34 years	9.3	6.4	6.6	5.7	5.7	6.0
35 to 39 years	6.8	5.7	7.8	5.5	5.6	5.8
40 to 44 years	9.1	6.1	7.9	4.4	6.8	6.4
45 to 49 years	5.6	6.4	5.9	5.0	7.4	7.1
50 to 54 years	7.3	7.3	4.7	7.8	7.6	7.6
55 to 59 years	6.9	7.7	5.3	6.3	6.8	7.2
60 to 64 years	3.3	6.7	5.0	6.6	5.9	6.2
65 to 69 years	1.6	4.2	4.4	6.7	4.6	4.8
70 to 74 years	4.2	4.3	3.1	4.8	3.3	3.5
75 to 79 years	1.7	2.9	4.0	4.6	2.7	2.8
80 to 84 years	2.4	3.0	2.5	3.7	2.3	2.4
85 years +	0.9	3.0	5.0	5.8	2.2	2.5
Median Age	34.9	41.0	38.5	46.6	39.7	40.4

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

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Below, we compile the above age data into three specific groups. They are:

Under 10: This group represents young children. Communities with high numbers in this category may see future demand for education and recreation services.

25-64: This age group represents the working age adults. This age group will generally consist of core taxpayers in their prime earning years that generate and spend income on goods and services.

65+: This group represents largely retired adults. Communities with high numbers in this category may reflect a growing number of residents and taxpayers on fixed incomes with growing demand for healthcare and social assistance services.

Comparison of Major Age Groups Between Municipalities, County and State						
Age Group	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
Under 10	14.7	11.8	13.2	9.2	12.3	11.5
25-64	54.3	51.7	51.2	46.4	51.6	52.7
65+	10.8	17.4	19.0	25.6	15.1	16.0

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

- Three out of the four communities have either a similar or a larger percentage of “Under 10” residents than the county and state. Only Wyomissing has less.
- Three out of the four communities also have either a similar or larger percentage of working age (25-64) residents than the county and state. Again, only Wyomissing has less.
- Three out of the four communities also have either a similar or a larger percentage of residents age 65 and above. Only West Reading has less.

Mobility

Nearly 90% of all households in the planning area were living in their same house or apartment as the year before. This low mobility rate is indicative of stable communities.

Percentage of households that lived in the same house/apartment one year prior - 2015			
Geography	Stayed	Total	Percent That Stayed
Sinking Spring	3,517	3,787	92.9%
Spring	23,544	27,028	87.1%
West Reading	3,360	4,148	81.0%
Wyomissing	9,114	10,379	87.8%
Suburban Berks West Area	39,535	45,342	87.2%
Berks County	357,591	409,313	87.4%
United States	266,202,835	312,784,059	85.1%

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Educational Attainment

Compared to Berks County and the state, the planning area is well educated, in that in each community, over 20% of residents age 25 and up hold a bachelor’s degree or higher and all four communities have more residents with college degrees when compared to the county and state. In Wyomissing alone, over half the residents have a college degree or more. Across the board, the proportion of residents in the communities that have not graduated high school continues to fall and as of 2015 with the exception of West Reading, below county

Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing

and state levels. This indicates that the local labor market is increasingly qualified relative to basic education standards.

Educational Attainment of the Resident Population (25 and Older)						
Level	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
Less than 9th Grade	1.3	1.8	6.8	1.3	5.9	3.6
High School, No Diploma	4.3	4.2	5.8	2.8	9.6	7.4
High School Graduate	31.3	34.7	39.6	22.0	38.7	36.8
Some college, no degree	18.6	13.7	20.6	14.8	15.6	16.4
Associate's degree	12.7	10.5	6.5	7.1	7.5	7.7
Bachelor's degree	22.8	23.2	15.1	24.5	14.8	17.1
Graduate or Professional degree	9.1	11.9	5.5	27.5	7.9	11.0

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Race

In all four communities, most of the residents are white. West Reading has the largest black and Hispanic populations. Spring Township has the largest Asian population.

Racial Composition - Percent of Resident Population						
Race	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
White	77.7	83.3	68.7	88.4	75.4	78.5
Black	6.7	2.9	9.5	2.0	4.1	10.5
Hispanic or Latino	12.2	9.5	20.5	6.0	17.6	6.1
American Indian	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Asian	1.9	2.8	0.5	2.2	1.3	2.9
Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Some Other Race	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.2
Two or More Races	1.0	1.0	0.2	1.5	1.3	1.6

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Poverty

In 2015, Berks County has the highest overall poverty rate of the surrounding six (6) counties and presently exceeds the state poverty rate. The poverty rate in the planning area is much lower and below both the county and state averages. Highest overall poverty is in Sinking Spring and the lowest in Wyomissing. Sinking Spring has the highest rates of family, "single mother" and elderly poverty.

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Poverty Composition of the Resident Population in 2015				
Municipality	Overall Poverty Level	Families	FHNHP	Elderly
Sinking Spring	10.0	9.3	26.8	6.3
Spring	5.7	3.6	13.2	1.3
West Reading	8.4	9.2	16.0	1.9
Wyomissing	5.2	2.3	14.1	0.0
Berks County	14.2	10.4	35.4	7.0
Pennsylvania	13.5	9.3	29.1	8.3

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey
 FHNHP: Female Household with family, no husband present
 Elderly: Residents that are 65 years of age and over

Free/Reduced Lunch Enrollment by School/School District

Another indicator of poverty is examining enrollment in the free/reduced lunch program at school. Children from families with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level, and children in families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and children in families receiving food stamp benefits are eligible for free lunches. Children in families whose income is between 130% and 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price lunches.

Percent Free/Reduced Lunch Enrollment by School Building: 2015						
Wilson School District Building Name	Enrollment	Free Eligible	Reduced Eligible	% Free Enrollment	% Reduced Enrollment	% Free / Reduced Enrollment
Whitfield Elementary	479	114	16	23.8%	3.3%	27.1%
Cornwall Terrace Elementary	610	162	27	26.6%	4.4%	31.0%
Spring Ridge Elementary	491	140	29	28.5%	5.9%	34.4%
Shiloh Hills Elementary	563	138	16	24.5%	2.8%	27.4%
Green Valley Elementary	585	101	18	17.3%	3.1%	20.3%
Wilson West Middle	782	173	36	22.1%	4.6%	26.7%
Wilson Southern Middle	663	199	28	30.0%	4.2%	34.2%
Wilson - Lower House	694	153	30	22.0%	4.3%	26.4%
Wilson - Upper House	1238	286	43	23.1%	3.5%	26.6%
Total	6,105	1,466	243	24.0%	4.0%	28.0%
Wyomissing School District Building Name	Enrollment	Free Eligible	Reduced Eligible	% Free Enrollment	% Reduced Enrollment	% Free / Reduced Enrollment
West Reading Elementary	285	90	5	31.6%	1.8%	33.3%
Wyomissing Hills Elementary	694	203	17	29.3%	2.4%	31.7%
Wyomissing Area Junior/Senior	966	286	33	29.6%	3.4%	33.0%
Total	1,945	579	55	29.8%	2.8%	32.6%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education - Division of Food and Nutrition, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), 2015 data

Overall, in 2015, the Wyomissing and Wilson school districts rank 9th and 14th respectively out of all county school districts in students enrolled in the program. While the district enrollment numbers are favorable compared to the overall county and state, it is important to note the share increase in enrollments in each district since 2009. This rising trend could signal challenges ahead.

Percent Free/Reduced Lunch Enrollment by School District: 2009 and 2015			
School District	2009	2015	% Change
I-Lead Charter School	**	100.0	**
Reading School District	89.6	100.0	11.6%
Antietam School District	36.1	51.6	42.9%
Muhlenberg School District	36.6	51.5	40.7%
Hamburg Area School District	29.8	41.7	39.9%
Tulpehocken Area School District	32	38.8	21.3%
Governor Mifflin School District	23.9	37.6	57.3%
Berks Career and Technology Center	21.8	37.5	72.0%
Wyomissing Area School District	22.6	32.6	44.2%
Conrad Weiser Area School District	26.3	30.7	16.7%
Upper Perkiomen Area School District	22.1	30.6	38.5%
Brandywine Heights Area School District	16.5	30.0	81.8%
Schuylkill Valley School District	20.3	28.8	41.9%
Wilson School District	19.6	28.0	42.9%
Twin Valley School District	20.4	27.8	36.3%
Daniel Boone Area School District	15.3	27.0	76.5%
Fleetwood Area School District	17.5	25.9	48.0%
Boyertown Area School District	15.8	25.8	63.3%
Kutztown Area School District	20	25.4	27.0%
Oley Valley School District	18.2	24.8	36.3%
Exeter Township School District	17.8	14.6	-18.0%
Berks County Average	21.1	38.6	83.0%
Pennsylvania Average	38.8	50.4	29.9%

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education - Division of Food and Nutrition, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), 2009 and 2015 data

Veterans

The area has nearly 3,400 veterans of the nearly 30,000 in Berks County - with the majority serving during the Vietnam War era. West Reading has the most veterans from recent conflicts while Wyomissing has the highest concentration of World War II veterans.

Veteran Composition - Percent of Veterans Residing in Municipality					
Period of Service	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks
Gulf War (9/2001 or later) veterans	0.0	8.2	16.0	5.8	7.4
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001) veterans	20.4	11.0	25.4	6.5	11.6
Vietnam era veterans	32.0	30.5	22.6	27.6	33.7
Korean War veterans	13.1	19.3	8.0	25.9	14.4
World War II veterans	8.7	10.8	8.0	14.1	9.3
Total Veterans	275	1,864	287	937	29,256

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing

HOUSING PROFILE

The four communities in the planning area have a stable housing stock with very low vacancy rates. Vacancy rates are an important indicator of supply and demand. A low rate of vacant-for-sale units can show a positive correlation of lack of supply and high demand.

The type of housing each community provides differs, however. In Sinking Spring, the housing stock is diverse as the majority of units are single detached and duplex units. In Spring Township, the majority of homes are detached units. In West Reading, the majority of units are duplexes. In Wyomissing, there is a mix of detached, duplex and apartment units. The planning area has few mobile homes.

Profile of Housing Characteristics - 2015								
Type	Sinking Spring		Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Units	1,663		11,048		1,731		4,594	
Occupied housing units	1,581	95.1%	10,403	94.2%	1,640	94.7%	4,324	94.1%
Vacant housing units	82	4.9%	645	5.8%	91	5.3%	270	5.9%
1-unit, detached	699	42.0%	6,934	62.8%	90	5.2%	2,529	55.1%
1-unit, attached	604	36.3%	2,411	21.8%	1,199	69.3%	756	16.5%
2 units	66	4.0%	300	2.7%	155	9.0%	40	0.9%
3 or 4 units	81	4.9%	246	2.2%	55	3.2%	60	1.3%
5 to 9 units	70	4.2%	311	2.8%	98	5.7%	153	3.3%
10 to 19 units	97	5.8%	456	4.1%	23	1.3%	269	5.9%
20 or more units	46	2.8%	367	3.3%	111	6.4%	758	16.5%
Mobile home	0	0.0%	23	0.2%	0	0.0%	29	0.6%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Sinking Spring saw a significant period of construction activity in the 2000 decade. In Spring Township, housing construction has been spread across several decades. In West Reading, there has been little to know new housing construction since the 1980s. In Wyomissing, housing construction has been spread across decades, with an uptick in the 1980s. All four communities have seen little in housing construction growth since 2010.

Year of Housing Construction								
Type	Sinking Spring		Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Built 2010 to 2013	0	0.0%	95	0.9%	0	0.0%	42	0.9%
Built 2000 to 2009	472	28.4%	1,289	11.7%	0	0.0%	407	8.9%
Built 1990 to 1999	143	8.6%	2,127	19.3%	6	0.3%	396	8.6%
Built 1980 to 1989	32	1.9%	1,325	12.0%	57	3.3%	989	21.5%
Built 1970 to 1979	85	5.1%	1,344	12.2%	41	2.4%	458	10.0%
Built 1960 to 1969	190	11.4%	1,577	14.3%	112	6.5%	535	11.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	234	14.1%	1,514	13.7%	288	16.6%	654	14.2%
Built 1940 to 1949	91	5.5%	423	3.8%	213	12.3%	239	5.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	416	25.0%	1,183	10.7%	1,014	58.6%	874	19.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Housing Values

The planning area's housing stock comes in at a variety of affordability levels. The median value of homes in the communities varies. The median value of homes in Spring Township and Wyomissing Borough exceeds the county median value (\$168,200).

Values of Housing Units								
Type	Sinking Spring		Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	38	2.3%	344	3.1%	167	9.6%	87	1.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	196	11.8%	1699	15.4%	603	34.8%	484	10.5%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	439	26.4%	2,446	22.1%	95	5.5%	729	15.9%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	188	11.3%	2,415	21.9%	62	3.6%	771	16.8%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	78	4.7%	781	7.1%	3	0.2%	649	14.1%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	25	1.5%	83	0.8%	0	0.0%	193	4.2%
\$1,000,000 or more	0	0.0%	21	0.2%	14	0.8%	74	1.6%
Median (dollars)	\$176,900		\$184,100		\$119,900		\$217,200	

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Spring, West Reading and Wyomissing have seen increases in housing median values since 2009. Comparatively low home purchase prices represent a selling point to would-be buyers in the area and could attract young families to the area. However, rising valuation is desirable from a municipal perspective in maintaining a viable and sustainable tax base.

Median Housing Values Between 2009 and 2015				
Municipality	2009	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Sinking Spring	182,800	176,900	(5,900)	-3.2%
Spring	176,900	184,100	7,200	4.1%
West Reading	106,400	119,900	13,500	12.7%
Wyomissing	191,800	217,200	25,400	13.2%
Berks County	170,400	168,200	(2,200)	-1.3%

Source: U.S. Census 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Owner Profile

The relationship between tenure (owner or renter occupancy) and vacancy rates typically corresponds with the availability of and demand for housing. Owner-occupied homes are often regarded to be a more desirable land use because they retain a higher resale value and are generally more likely to be well maintained than the rental units.

In all four communities, the majority of units are owner occupied and greatly exceed the County's number of owner occupied units (71%). Spring Township has the most overall units. Most residents moved to their communities in the 2000 decade.

Chapter 3 - Demographics and Housing

Owner Profile								
Type	Sinking Spring		Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Units	1,663		11,048		1,731		4,594	
Owner-occupied	991	59.6%	7,962	72.1%	957	55.3%	3,063	66.7%
Renter-occupied	590	35.5%	2,441	22.1%	683	39.5%	1,261	27.4%
Moved in 2015 or later	25	1.5%	118	1.1%	8	0.5%	98	2.1%
Moved in 2010 to 2014	370	22.2%	2,236	20.2%	500	28.9%	1,168	25.4%
Moved in 2000 to 2009	792	47.6%	3,963	35.9%	648	37.4%	1,425	31.0%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	198	11.9%	2,079	18.8%	194	11.2%	705	15.3%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	50	3.0%	976	8.8%	58	3.4%	417	9.1%
Moved in 1979 or earlier	146	8.8%	1,031	9.3%	232	13.4%	511	11.1%

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

The chart below shows the change in owner and renter units between 2005-2009 and 2011-2015. West Reading and Wyomissing have seen significant changes. West Reading has had sizeable gains in both owner and renter units. Wyomissing has seen a decline homeownership and a rise in renters.

Change in Owner/Renter Profile Between 2009 and 2015				
Type	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing
	% Change	% Change	% Change	% Change
Owner-occupied	1.5%	1.3%	8.9%	-10.3%
Renter-occupied	2.9%	2.2%	9.5%	4.5%

Source: U.S. Census 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Shown below are the monthly costs of mortgages and rents in the communities. With the exception of West Reading, the monthly median mortgage exceeds the county average and all four communities have monthly median rents above the county average.

Median Monthly Mortgages and Rents in 2015 in Dollars		
Municipality	Mortgage	Rent
Sinking Spring	1,483	1,028
Spring	1,497	1,025
West Reading	1,164	861
Wyomissing	1,858	1,180
Berks County	1,477	851

Source: U.S. Census 2011-2015 American Community Survey

NATURAL FEATURES AND AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Overview of the Natural Features of the Region

Steep Slopes

The Suburban Berks West planning region contains areas of both steep and very steep slopes: 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 all 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 Spring Township is flat to gently rolling agricultural areas. Steep and very steep slopes are concentrated in the south and south-central areas of the Township. There are a few steep slopes along the Tulpehocken Creek in the north, as well as just south of Paper Mill Road. Sinking Spring Borough has a steep and very steep slope concentration in the northwestern area of the borough north of U.S. 422. The Borough of Wyomissing has many very steep slopes along the area just north of U.S. 422 and a few steep slopes occurring sporadically throughout the borough, especially along the Tulpehocken Creek and Schuylkill River corridors. West Reading has some very steep slopes along the Schuylkill River.

Rivers and Streams

Rivers and streams are valuable aquatic habitats that provide both active and passive recreation as well as drinking water sources. The major river in the Suburban Berks West area is the Schuylkill River, which flows south and is on the eastern border of West Reading Borough and separates the City of Reading from the region. Another major waterway is the Tulpehocken Creek, which forms the border of northern Spring Township and northern Wyomissing Borough before joining the Schuylkill River.

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. Warm Water Fisheries are streams that should be protected as habitat for warm water fish and other fauna and flora indigenous to warm water. Trout Stock Fisheries are streams that qualify for trout stocking by the State.



Tulpehocken Creek in Wyomissing

Within the region, the Schuylkill River is considered a Cold Water Fishery. Portions of the Tulpehocken Creek qualify as Cold Water Fisheries as well as Trout Stock Fisheries. The Cacoosing Creek is one of a few tributaries to the Tulpehocken Creek, and qualifies as a Warm Water Fishery and Trout Stock Fishery at various sections. Wyomissing Creek is considered a Cold Water Fishery. Little Muddy Creek, part of the Susquehanna River Basin, qualifies as a Warm Water Fishery and a Trout Stock Fishery.

On the Natural Resources map, Figure 1, the Wyomissing Creek is shown as a High Quality stream. This additional designation means the creek needs additional water quality protection. Part of the required protection is addressed in what is called the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer permit (MS4). This permit program through the Department of Environmental Protection requires that individual municipalities must implement a stormwater program through six Minimum Control Measures such as education and outreach which must protect the quality of its local water bodies from being degraded via the MS4. Specifically, the Wyomissing Creek being designated as High Quality requires additional requirements such as a Pollution Reduction plan meaning a diet of the amount of sediment and nutrients the creek takes on in a given year and which must be reduced by 10% in the five year permit cycle.

Chapter 4 - Natural Features and Agricultural Preservation Plan

Watersheds

A watershed is defined as, the land that water flows across or under, on its way to a stream, river or lake. Within each watershed, all water runs to the lowest point be that a stream, river or lake. On its way, water travels over several types of surfaces such as farm fields, forests, suburban lawns and city streets, or it seeps into the soil and travels as groundwater through aquifers. Various factors lead to the destruction of our community's waterways, including runoff from agriculture, stormwater, removal of vegetation, and misuse of pesticides and fertilizer

The watersheds within the Suburban Berks West planning area are shown on the Natural Resources map Figure 1. Spring Township alone has four different watershed boundaries within its borders. They include the Schuylkill River watershed, Tulpehocken Creek watershed and the Conestoga River Watershed and the Cocalico creek watershed. The boroughs in the planning region are either within the Tulpehocken Creek or Schuylkill river watersheds.

Watersheds are a valued natural resource which should be protected for such reasons as clean water for drinking sources, recreation purposes and habitat for various flora and fauna species.

Flood-Prone Areas

As shown on the Natural Resources map, Figure 1, the 1% floodplain areas are those 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 possibly the loss of life. The 0.2% floodplain is an area that is expected to be covered by water once every 500 years according to FEMA.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas that have vegetation and soil characteristics 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.

Wetland areas are depicted on the Natural Resources map, Figure 1. Spring Township has sporadic areas of wetlands in the southern portion of the Township. West Reading has a large stretch of wetlands along its northeastern border with the Schuylkill River.

Prime Agricultural Soils

The U.S. Natural Resources (formerly "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.

Wyomissing borough has a corridor of Class I-IV soils in the southcentral portion of the borough along the Wyomissing creek corridor. Spring Township is majority prime agricultural soils in the southern portion of the township as well as along its southern and northern borders with Sinking Spring borough.

The protection of the soils most suitable for agricultural activities within Spring Township are more ideal than farming activities in the suburban/urban boroughs of the planning region.

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

Chapter 4 - Natural Features and Agricultural Preservation Plan

that do not drain fast enough can cause the unhealthy surface ponding of wastewater. These soil characteristics are important to consider throughout the Suburban Berks West area where many people rely on private wells and private septic systems rather than public water and sewer service.

Natural Heritage 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. In 2014, the Berks County Planning Commission had the inventory updated through the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. PNHP collects and stores location and baseline ecological information about rare plants, rare animals, unique plant communities, significant habitats, and geologic features in Pennsylvania. The information and maps presented in the inventory provides a useful guide for planning residential or commercial developments, recreational parks or trails, for conserving natural areas, and for setting priorities for the preservation of the most vulnerable habitats.

A Natural Heritage Area (NHA) is an area containing one or more plant or animal species of concern at state or federal levels, exemplary natural communities, or exceptional native biological diversity. NHAs include both the immediate habitat and surrounding lands important in the support of these elements. They are mapped according to their sensitivity to human activities, with designations of Core Habitat and Supporting Landscape areas. The sensitivity of each designation varies significantly according to the particular plant, animal or natural community habitat that the area represents and is discussed in detail in each NHAs Site Description. **Core Habitats** are defined as areas representing critical habitat that cannot absorb significant levels of activity without substantial negative impacts to elements of concern.

Supporting Landscape are defined as areas directly connected to Core Habitats that maintain vital ecological processes and/or secondary habitat that may be able to withstand some lower level of activity without substantial negative impacts to elements of concern.

There are several core habitats which exist in the planning region. In Spring Township there are three core habitats. One is located in the northern corner of the Township while the other two are in the southeast corner. Wyomissing Borough has a linear core habitat along its western border with Spring Township. These Natural Heritage Areas are depicted on the Natural Resources map, Figure 1. These maps do not pinpoint the exact location of the species of concern but rather represent a conservation zone that is critical to the preservation of the site (core habitat), and a zone of potential impacts within the site's watershed (supporting landscape) where applicable.

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 provides visual relief from the built environment. Woodlands are the largest riparian buffers for the local water resources. Groundwater and surface water benefits that woodlands provide include cooling of water, saturation of pollutants which would otherwise be carried to the waterways. Spring Township holds the majority of woodlands for the planning region and they are located in the southern portion of the township.

Sinkholes and Subsidize

Much of the central and northern parts of this Region have limestone-based geology. These lands are vulnerable to sinkholes and other types of subsidize that can damage streets, buildings and utility lines. The following section discusses measures that should be considered to address these hazards.

Chapter 4 - Natural Features and Agricultural Preservation Plan

Conservation Plan

Land in the region varies in its suitability for different intensities of development. Some areas, such as flood-prone creek valleys and wetlands, are not suitable for any development. Other areas are only suitable for very low-density development and some areas are appropriate for high-density development.

Open space can be preserved in public, semi-public or private ownership. It is important to preserve open space to:

- recharge groundwater supplies,
- protect the quality of creeks and the groundwater,
- provide an important visual relief between developments,
- preserve areas of scenic beauty, including scenic views,
- avoid development on lands that are prone to erosion or are otherwise not physically suitable for development,
- provide land for recreation, and
- preserve habitats and cover for birds, fish and wildlife.

GOAL: Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the Tulpehocken, Cacoosing and Wyomissing Creeks, other creek valleys, wetlands and steeply sloped woodlands.

This region was a Statewide leader in preserving its creek valleys in attractive parkland - particularly along the Wyomissing and Tulpehocken Creeks. It is essential to maintain vegetation along streams to protect the water quality and fishing habitats. Where this vegetation does not exist, property-owners should be encouraged to plant along the creek beds so that they may help the individual municipalities of the region fulfill requirements of the municipal separate storm sewer permit.

As part of new developments in wooded areas, developers should be required to designate areas of trees that will be removed or preserved. Then suitable measures should be put into place to protect the trees from damage during construction. This should include temporary fencing underneath the canopy of the trees. It is not only important to protect the tree trunks from damage by construction equipment and vehicles, but also to avoid the compaction of soil that can permanently harm the root systems of the trees.

Control development on steeply sloped lands.

Most steeply sloped lands are along the creek valleys and in the southern part of Spring Township. A 15 percent slope would have a rise of 15 feet for every 100 feet of horizontal distance. Moderately steeply sloped lands (15 to 25 percent) are generally only suitable for low density development. Very steep lands (over 25 percent) are generally not suitable for any development. It is important to limit development on steep slopes to avoid the following: erosion problems, excessive stormwater runoff, overly steep roads and driveways, excessive costs to construct and maintain roads and utilities, and destruction of scenic natural resources.

Zoning regulations should control development on steeply sloped lands. For example, if a new principal building would be proposed on steep slopes, large lot sizes could be required.

Carefully manage wooded areas and avoid clear-cutting.

The woodlands in the region add character to the landscape, help preserve the water quality of creeks and provide important wildlife habitats. Trees also are important to providing clean air and control erosion caused by stormwater runoff. Forestry must be allowed under State law. However, clear-cutting of woods should be prohibited, proper erosion controls should be in place for any large-scale tree-cutting, and other appropriate forest management practices should be used.

In development plans, developers should be required to show that they have minimized the removal of stabilized mature trees as part of their project. Great care should be used during construction to minimize the number

Chapter 4 - Natural Features and Agricultural Preservation Plan

of trees that are removed. Trees can add substantial value to a residential lot. As previously stated, during construction, temporary protection fences should be placed around trees to prevent the compaction of root systems by equipment and to prevent damage to tree trunks.

GOAL: Seek to maintain agricultural activities in large portions of Spring Township.

As seen on the Protected Lands map, Figure 3, most of the protected agricultural land is within Spring Township. Most of the farmland is broken up by woods, steep slopes and residential use areas. However, it is still important to encourage farmers to continue to farm. New homes should be located as far from intensive farming operations as is practical. If a portion of a farm is developed, the homes should be located where they will have the least impact upon the farming operations.

Most types of livestock and poultry operations should continue to be allowed in rural areas of the region.

Encourage the Designation of Additional Areas as Agricultural Security Areas.

Portions of Spring Township have been designated as “Agricultural Security Areas” as shown on the Protected Lands map, Figure 3. A farmer voluntarily asks the Township Board of Supervisors to include their land as a Security Area. A Security Area does not result in any additional regulations upon a private property owner, nor upon private development. Once designated within a Security Area, the landowner may, if they wish, ask to have their land be considered by the County for preservation under an Agricultural Easement Program (as described below). Moreover, a Security Area provides a farmer with extra protection against nuisance lawsuits, municipal regulations of agriculture and government condemnation.

Seek agricultural easements to preserve farmland.

The most effective method to permanently preserve farmland is through purchasing the “development rights” of the land. This program uses funds from the State and the County to pay property owners to preserve their land. Property owners voluntarily apply to the County for consideration. The farms are then ranked according to a set of standards, such as the quality of the soils for crops and the proximity to other farms that have been preserved. If selected, the landowner is paid the difference between the market value of the land and the value as farmland. A permanent “Conservation Easement” is then placed on the land that permanently prevents its use for non-agricultural uses. The land remains privately owned and can be sold to another farmer.

Permit a Range of Farm-Based Businesses.

Many farmers cannot earn a full-time living on their farm work. Instead, many farmers need supplemental jobs. To encourage the continuation of farming, the Township’s Zoning Ordinance should offer reasonable flexibility to farmers on larger tracts to have small businesses. These businesses could include small engine repair, sharpening services, wood crafting, farm equipment repair, sale of seeds and fertilizers and similar activities. The number of employees and the sizes of the businesses should be limited to prevent it from becoming a major commercial business. These activities can also be useful to encourage the repair and reuse of old barns.

GOAL: Protect the amounts and quality of groundwater and creek waters.

As part of new development, proper measures should be used to protect water quality, avoid soil erosion and promote the recharge of stormwater runoff into the ground. These types of measures are known as “Best Management Practices (BMPs).” A variety of different methods to accomplish these goals are described in the manual entitled “Best Management Practices for Developing Areas in Pennsylvania” and the “Tulpehocken Creek Stormwater Management Plan.” The ACT 167 stormwater management plans of the planning region should be revised to continue to fulfill protection requirements of these valuable resources but also to be compliant with the requirements of the NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) Permit through the Department of Environmental Protection.

Most new developments are required to submit plans to show how they will avoid soil from eroding and causing sediment in creeks. However, it is equally important to make sure that these proposed measures are actually

Chapter 4 - Natural Features and Agricultural Preservation Plan

put correctly into place, and are repaired as needed after storms. In addition, the individual municipality should continue to maintain and inspect these facilities so that compliance with the MS4 permit is fulfilled.

Carefully Control Large-Scale Withdrawals of Groundwater and Spring Water.

The individual municipalities within the region should have regulations that require careful review and approval of large withdrawals of groundwater and water from springs. The applicant should be required to provide professional hydrological studies showing that the withdrawals will not harm the water supplies of neighboring homes and farms, particularly during drought conditions. This concern particularly involves water bottling operations that remove large volumes of water out of the area. If a large water withdrawal is proposed, it should be accompanied by permanent preservation of substantial amounts of surrounding land to allow sufficient groundwater recharge. The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) is the authority which reviews such withdrawal permits. Continued coordination with the DRBC should be pursued by the planning region.

Maximize groundwater recharge.

The total percentage of a lot that is covered by buildings and paving should be limited to make sure that there are areas available for absorption of stormwater. For parking areas that are not used on a daily basis, alternative surfaces and materials should be considered that encourage groundwater recharge.

Ordinance provisions should be reviewed to make sure that they do not unintentionally increase the amount of land covered by paving. For example, sidewalks should only be required where they are needed. Front yard setbacks should be modest so that long driveways are not needed. Where cul-de-sac streets are used, a landscaped island should be considered in the middle of the cul-de-sac. Excessive amounts of parking should be avoided. Where there is a question about the amount of parking that may be needed, a developer can be allowed to reserve land for parking that would only be paved if the municipality determines it is actually needed after the use has been in operation. Adjacent businesses should be encouraged to share parking, which can reduce the total amount that is needed.

The municipalities within the region should consider participating with the Berks County Source Water protection program to continue the education of the importance of our water resources. The recharge of groundwater and surface water and the protection of that recharge are a necessity to the regional water suppliers.

Carefully design development in limestone areas to avoid sinkholes.

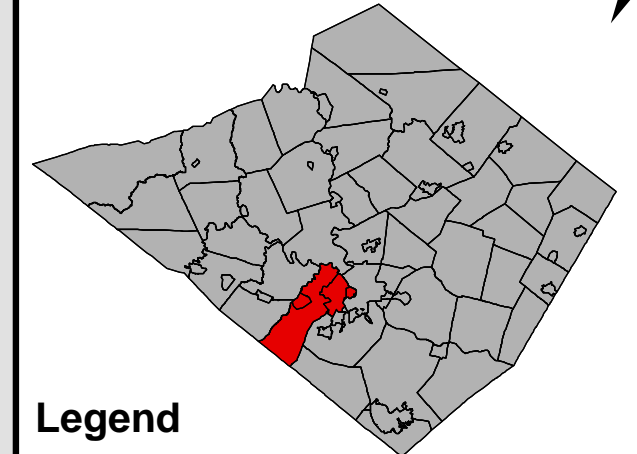
Much of the region includes limestone-based (or “carbonate” or “karst”) geology that is prone to sinkholes. Stormwater runoff has a major role in the creation of sinkholes and other subsidence. To avoid sinkholes, it is essential to carefully design stormwater facilities and to use great care near isolated low spots in the ground, which are known as topical depressions. Also, water line breaks can also result in very severe sinkholes.

In limestone areas, detention basins should be required to have a clay or synthetic liner. Where development is proposed near a sinkhole, the sinkhole should be required to be remediated. This often involves excavating the area and filling it with concrete or other approved material. Sinkholes should be repaired as soon as possible before they expand in an uncontrolled manner. Stormwater should not be directed towards a sinkhole that has not been re-mediated.
















GOAL: Protection of natural resources and regional open space from utilities

The increase of natural gas use within the nation has put pressure on local municipalities which host existing pipeline systems. The municipalities within the Suburban Berks West planning region should have a consistent approach on addressing expanding pipeline utilities and how to protect and preserve the natural features of the region.

Natural Resources



Legend

-  Schuylkill Watershed*
-  Tulpehocken Creek Watershed*
-  Cocalico Creek Watershed**
-  Conestoga River Watershed**
-  Subwatersheds
-  1% Floodplain
-  0.2% Floodplain
-  Wetlands
-  Natural Heritage Area- Core Habitat
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  High Quality Streams
-  US Route
-  State Route
-  Railroads
-  Municipal

* Drains to Delaware River
** Drains to Susquehanna River

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, FEMA, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

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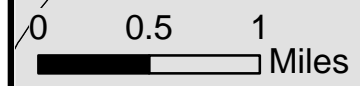
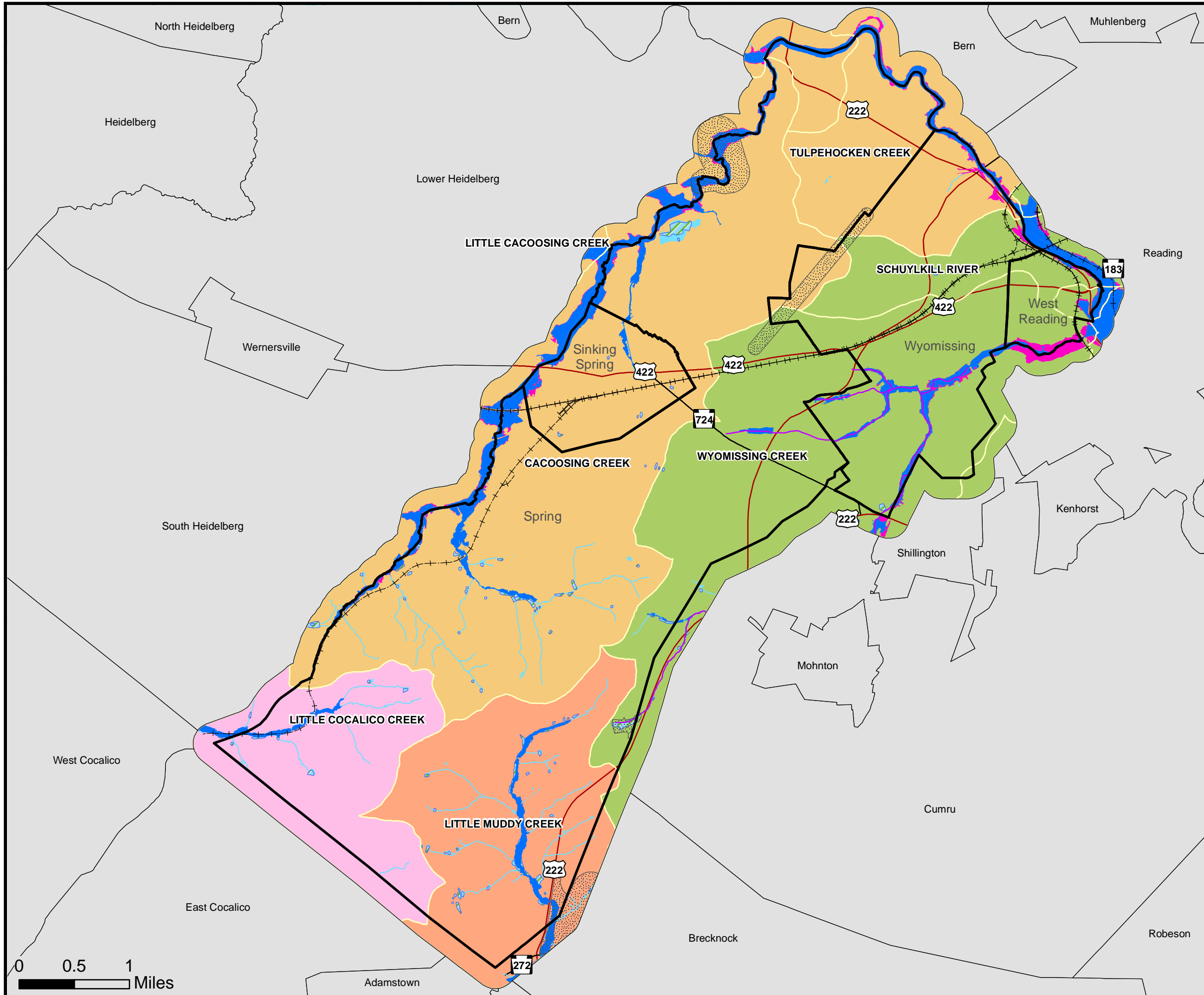
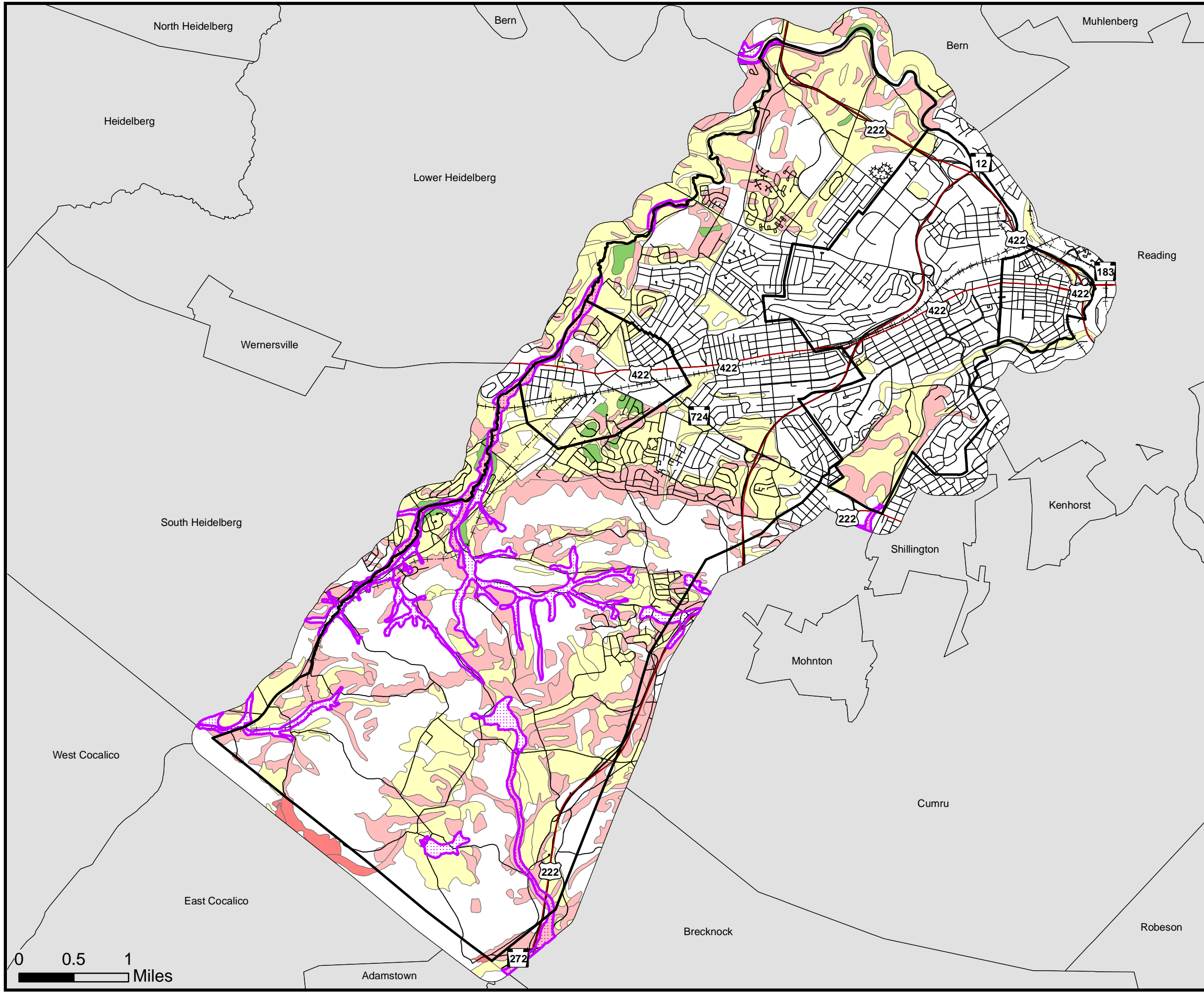
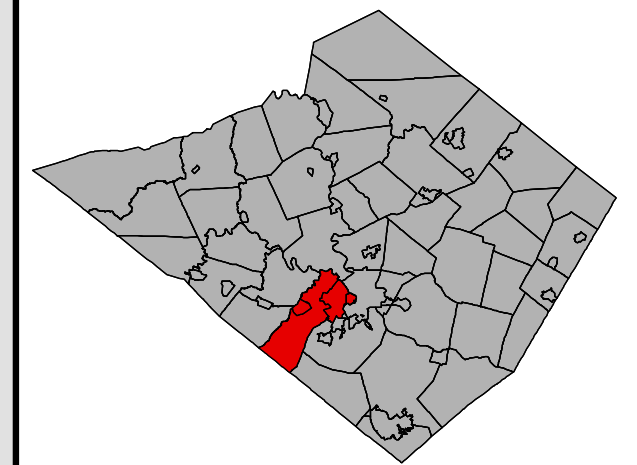












FIGURE 2

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update: September 2018

Soils

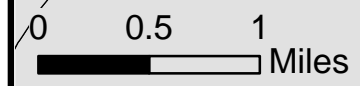


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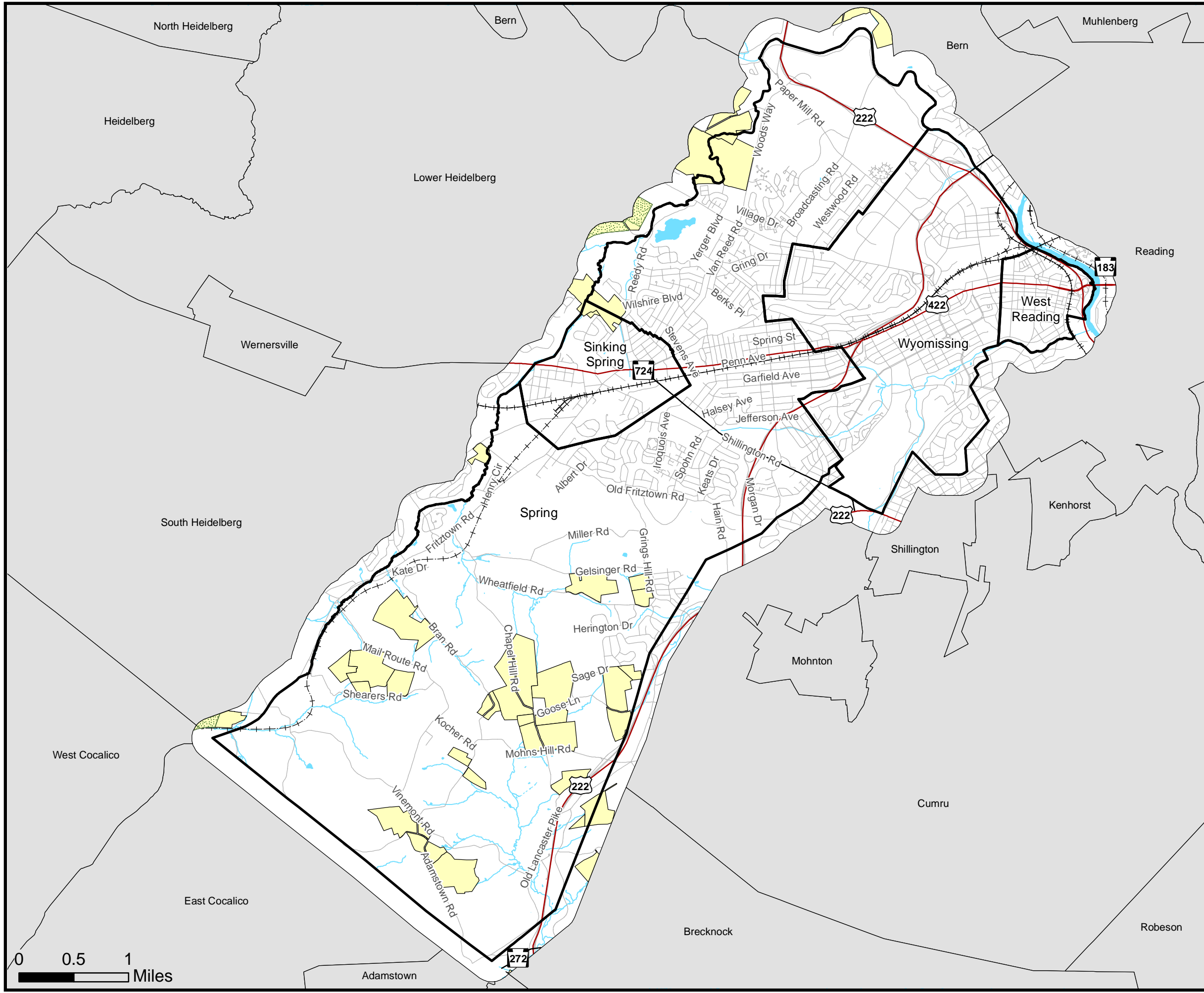
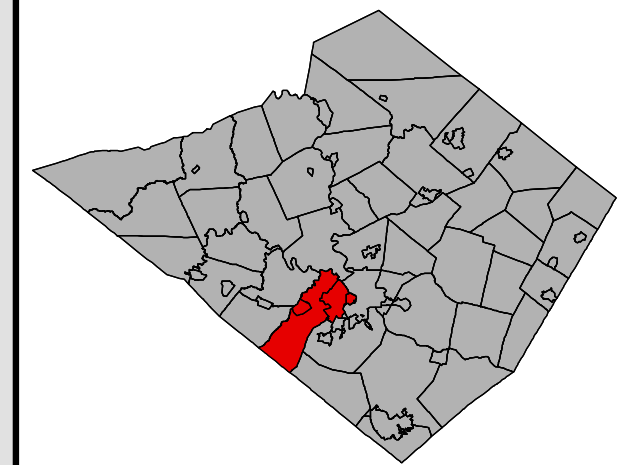
-  Class 1 Soil
-  Class 2 Soil
-  Class 3 Soil
-  Class 4-8 Soil
-  Poorly Drained Soils
-  Roads
-  US Route
-  State Route
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, USDA NRCS

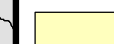





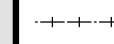
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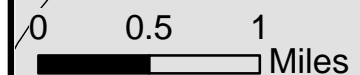
Protected Land



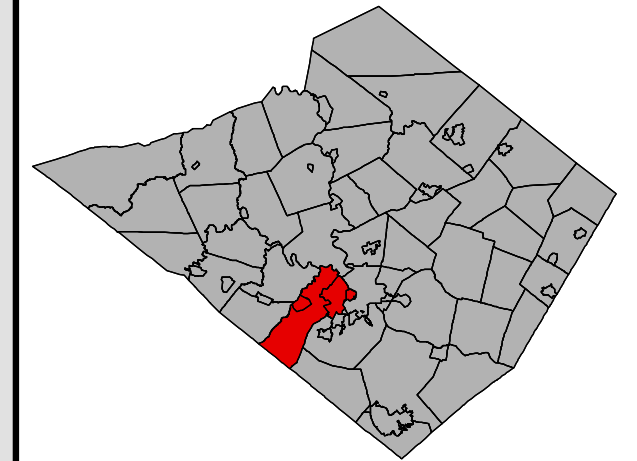
Legend

-  Agricultural Security Area
-  Berks County Agricultural Conservation Easement
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  US Route
-  State Route
-  Roads
-  Railroads










Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES
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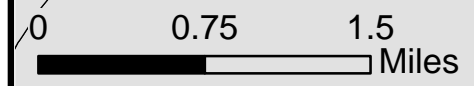
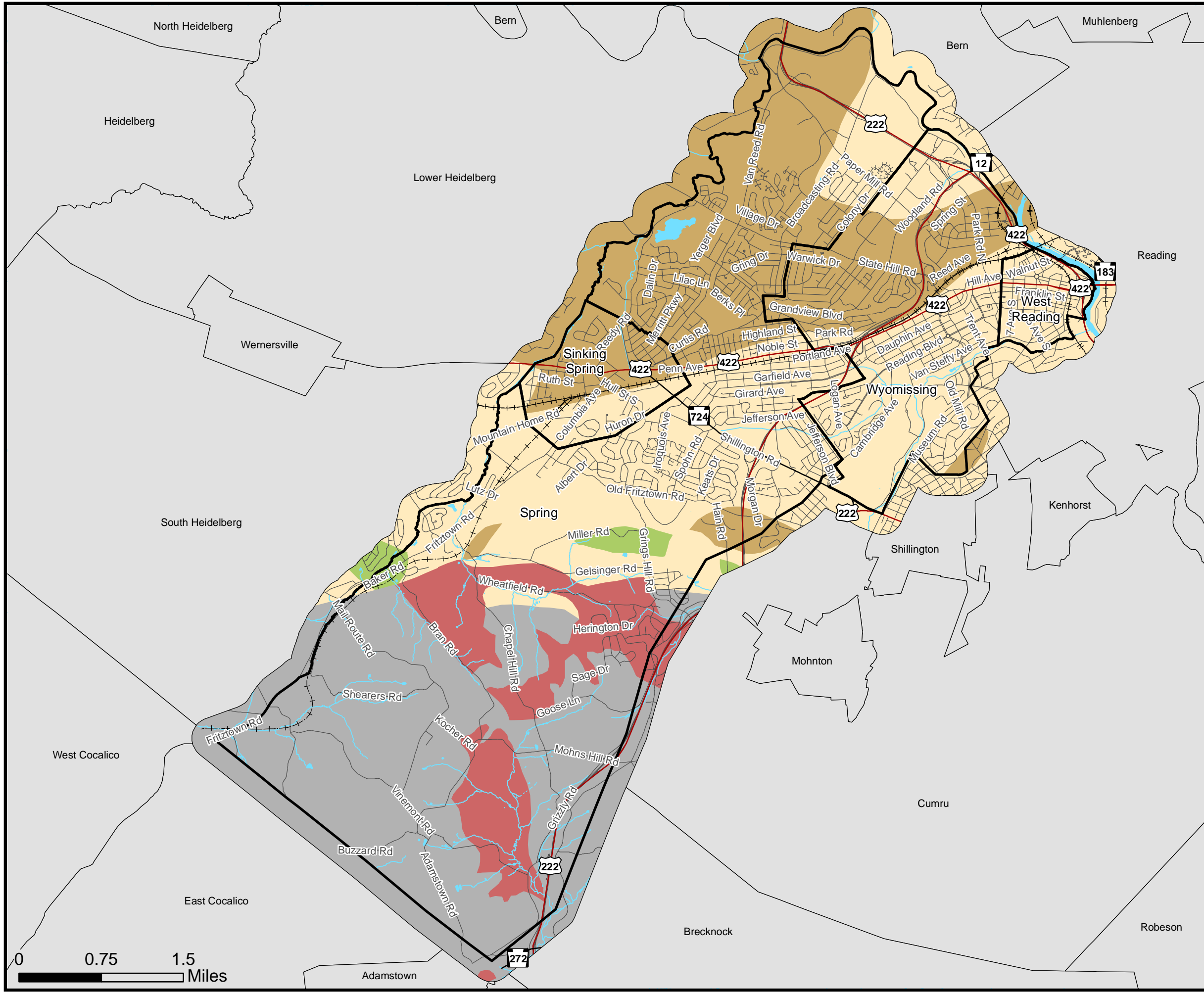
Geology



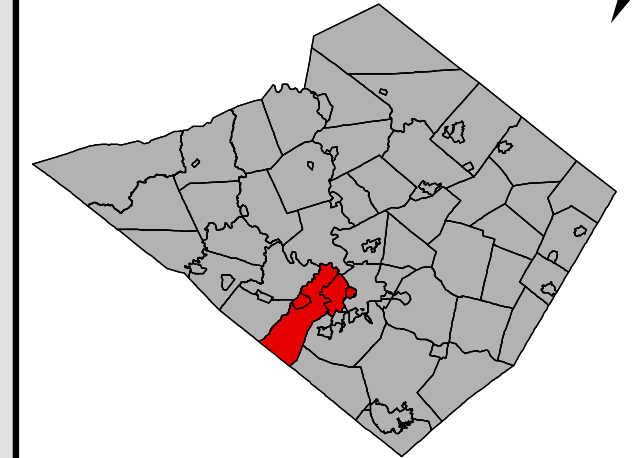
Geologic Period

-  Precambrian
-  Cambrian
-  Ordovician
-  Triassic
-  Jurassic
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  Roads
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries











Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, USDA NRCS
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MS4 Areas



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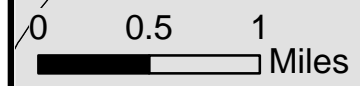
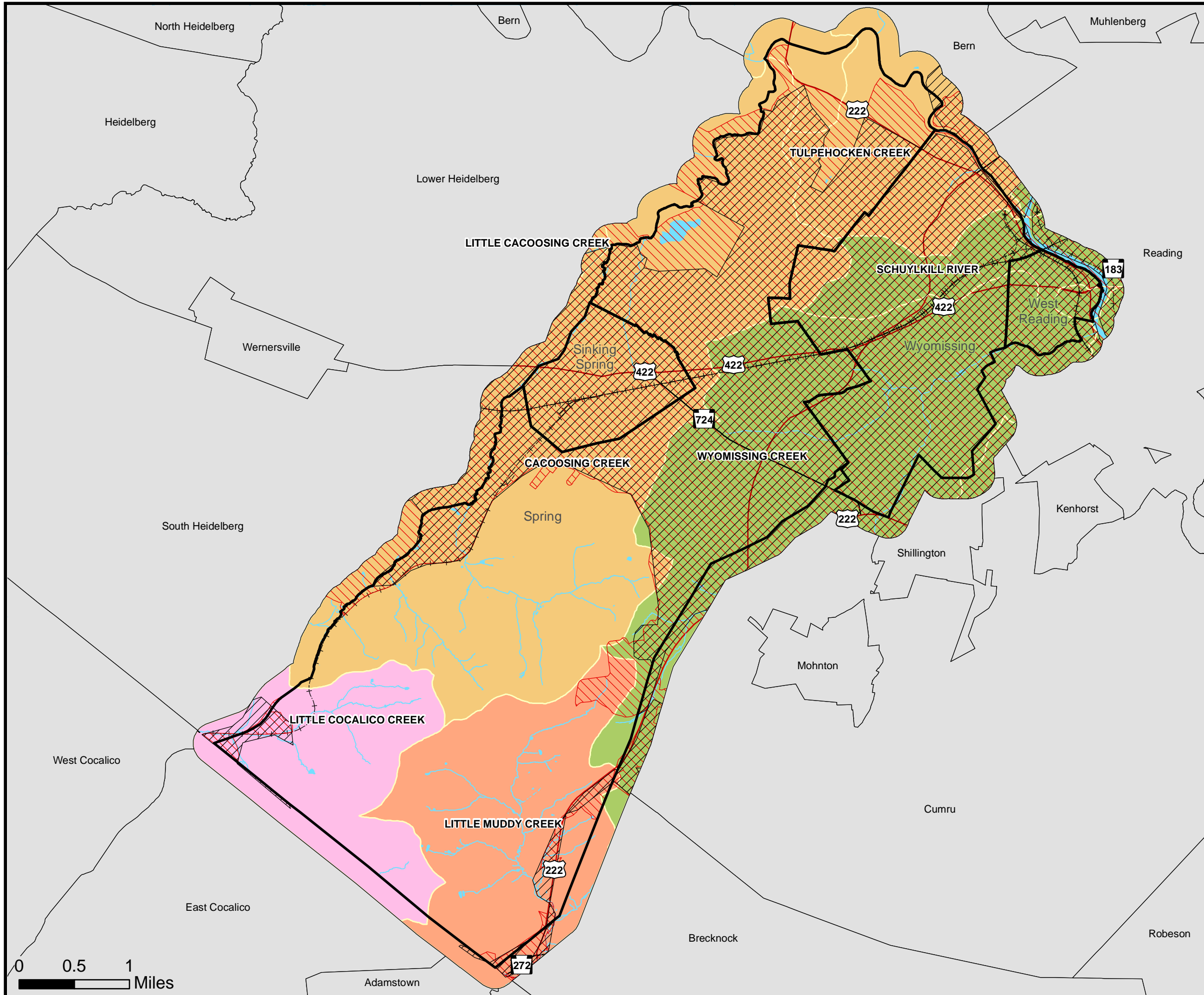
-  Urbanized Area 2000
-  Urbanized Area 2010
-  Schuylkill Watershed*
-  Tulpehocken Creek Watershed*
-  Cocalico Creek Watershed**
-  Conestoga River Watershed**
-  Subwatersheds
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  US Route
-  State Route
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries

* Drains to Delaware River
** Drains to Susquehanna River

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, U.S. Census Bureau

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THE PLAN TO CONSERVE ENERGY

GOAL: Encourage Modes of Transportation, Patterns of Land Uses and Designs of Sites and other Actions that Conserve Energy.

The increasing costs of energy, concerns about air pollution and the desire to reduce American dependence on foreign fuel sources generates the need for energy conservation. Energy costs are also a major part of the municipalities' annual expenses, including to heat buildings, light streets and operate vehicles.

The municipal officials should conduct a study of ways to reduce energy consumption in each municipally-owned building. Improvements should be carried out that are shown to be cost-effective over the long run. Any new building should be designed to minimize its energy consumption, including making use of passive solar technology and making maximum use of natural light.

The municipalities should also evaluate current street lighting and other outdoor lighting to determine the possibilities of using more energy-efficient methods. New street lights should only be installed where there is a clear need. In some cases, reflective devices can be used to identify hazards to motorists at a much lower cost than operating and maintaining a street light.

The municipalities should also promote land use patterns that are energy-efficient. This includes encouraging opportunities for close-to-home shopping, employment and recreation. Bicycling and walking opportunities should be emphasized, as well as expanded public transit service to reduce dependence on individual motor vehicles.

Carpooling should be promoted, particularly through the provision of park and ride lots. There are currently no park and ride lots in the municipalities, however federal funding is available for PennDOT to develop new park and ride lots. The municipalities should look into working with other carpooling resources such as Commuter Services of Pennsylvania. The Borough of West Reading is currently a Community Partner with this organization to help provide commute option assistance to their organizations, interested parties and residents within the Borough.

The zoning ordinance should continue to provide opportunities for attached housing. Attached housing (such as townhouses) typically require substantially less energy for heat than single family detached houses, because they are less exposed on the sides to the elements. The municipalities' Construction Code and accompanying State regulations already establishes minimum insulation requirements for new homes. The zoning ordinance should also allow windmills and height modifications if needed for wind or solar energy devices. The municipalities' development regulations should also promote site layouts that allow homes to be clustered on the most appropriate portions of a tract based on existing landforms, slopes and orientation.

Public Awareness and Education

Municipal officials should work toward making residents, property owners, builders and developers more aware of the need for energy conservation in the region. The following techniques are examples of what can be used to educate the public about the need for and value of energy conservation:

- Continue to encourage the use of bicycles and walking.
- Provide information on energy conservation and water conservation methods, including through a municipal newsletter, municipal website and social media. This should emphasize simple and low-cost ways of conserving energy.



West Reading Borough Hall

Chapter 5 - The Plan to Conserve Energy

GOAL: Protection of natural resources and regional open space from utilities

The increase of natural gas use within the nation has put pressure on local municipalities which host existing pipeline systems. The municipalities within the Suburban Berks West planning region should have a consistent approach on addressing expanding pipeline utilities and how to protect and preserve the natural features of the region.

- Encourage lower-income residents to take advantage of Federal and State grant programs to weatherize their homes to reduce home heating costs.

What Can Developers and Builders Do?

Developers and builders should be encouraged by the municipal staff and officials during the review process to build better buildings through design and construction. Promoting the construction of LEED certified buildings in the municipalities should be encouraged. LEED is a green building rating system used throughout the world and stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. LEED certified buildings can have many positive benefits, including saving energy and costing less to operate. LEED projects are categorized based on how many points are earned across categories such as energy use and air quality. These rating levels are: Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum.

Examples of LEED Buildings

- RPA Engineering Spring Ridge Building – Spring Township – Certified
- Kohl's – Spring Township – Silver Certification
- Holleran Residence – Spring Township – Gold Certification
- PSU Berks Classroom Lab Building – Spring Township – Gold Certification

Developers and builders should be encouraged by municipal staff and officials during the review process to use the following principles and objectives which utilize the natural elements such as the sun, wind, landforms and vegetation to support heating and cooling systems.

Considering Natural Elements to Conserve Energy

- In addition to capturing the sun's rays through solar panels to provide electricity, the sun should be considered when orienting and designing new buildings. By orienting a new building on an east-west axis within 20 degrees of south, solar access is maximized. This also minimizes overheating in the Summer months. When designing a new building, considerations should be taken when considering something as simple as the roof color. Using lighter colors or reflective materials can reduce cooling costs in the summer and should be considered to increase comfort for buildings or spaces that are not air conditioned, such as garages and covered or indoor patios. Another basic building design that should be encouraged is overhangs. When installing the proper length overhang, the sun's rays can be blocked from hitting a majority of the building and windows during the Summer, but allowed during the Winter.
- The wind can be used not only to generate electricity through the use of windmills and turbines to lower heating and cooling costs, but should also be considered when positioning new buildings. New homes and businesses may have outbuildings associated with them such as garages, sheds, barns and storage buildings that are not heated or cooled. These unheated buildings should be placed upwind from the home or heated building in the direction of the prevailing wind, which is primarily to the west and northwest in Pennsylvania. These buildings serve as a windbreak to protect the heated building from winter winds. This same concept can be used by itself or in combination with other natural elements such as landforms and vegetation to create windbreaks that effectively lower heating and cooling costs.
- Landforms such as large hills and mountains to the west and northwest of buildings can act as a windbreak as discussed above to lower heating and cooling costs. Even smaller sloping close to a building can

deflect winter winds when building on the southern and southeastern facing slopes. Buildings can also be constructed into hillsides providing natural insulation.

- Vegetation can be utilized in multiple ways to lower heating and cooling costs, which should be considered when landscaping around new and existing buildings. When creating a windbreak using vegetation, evergreen trees such as Colorado blue spruce, Douglas fir, Hemlock, and White pine are best for our area within Pennsylvania. Deciduous trees are best planted to the east and west of buildings to provide shade during the Summer, but still allow sunshine to hit and warm the building during the Winter when the branches are bare. The planting of shade trees should also be considered over air conditioning units, patios, driveways and roadways. Vegetation can also provide added insulation through the installation of a green roof. Green roofs are ideal on flat or shallow pit roofs to manage storm water or provide a rooftop open space, but the added benefit of reducing heating and cooling costs makes this vegetation something to be considered when constructing new buildings.

Planning for Solar Access and Shading

The term “solar access,” refers to the availability of sunlight during the period of the day and year when the sun’s energy can be most usefully employed by solar energy collection systems. Solar access consists of two basic principles:

- proper orientation to the sun, and
- freedom from shading by obstructions.

A general southern exposure is essential for solar systems to be effective, but the ideal orientation will vary according to the nature of the solar application and micro climatic conditions. An exposure within the range of 20 degrees east to 20 degrees west of south is generally acceptable for most solar applications.

This implies orienting streets in a general east-west direction. In areas already platted in a manner detrimental to solar utilization, building additions, infill developments and redevelopments should be permitted to be solar-oriented.

The term “solar skyspace,” refers to the space which must be free of obstructions to protect a given area from shading. Protection of the solar skyspace need not be absolute for solar energy systems to be effective. But land use controls should protect that portion of the solar skyspace necessary for the economical operation of solar energy systems without unreasonably burdening adjacent landowners.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Community facilities include parks, fire stations, municipal buildings, public schools and similar facilities. Community services include police and fire protection, sewage and water services and municipal government.

GOAL: Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner, including addressing needs for future growth.

Education

Spring Township and Sinking Spring Borough and are part of the Wilson School District, which also includes Lower Heidelberg Township. The Wilson School District serves just over 6,000 students. West Reading Borough and Wyomissing Borough are part of the Wyomissing Area School District. The Wyomissing Area School District serves just over 1,900 students.

The Wyomissing School District recently renovated and expanded the High School tennis courts and the existing indoor pool. The football field received a new fence and the field hockey field was upgraded to artificial turf. The Wyomissing Hills Elementary Center recently had its HVAC system renovated. Growths in enrollment at the Wyomissing School District are much more modest than at Wilson, particularly because little undeveloped residential land remains in the Wyomissing School District.



West Reading High School

Enrollments are growing in several areas of the Wilson School District. Green Valley Elementary, Spring Ridge and Shiloh Hills had 4 classrooms per facility added in 2015. Wilson School District also recently upgraded and increased the size of the Swimming Pool. In addition to that, the Wilson School District stadium received artificial turf.

Higher Education

A campus of Pennsylvania State University, known as Penn State Berks, is located on 258 acres in northern Spring Township. A substantial portion of the College's landholdings are undeveloped. Since its addition of dormitories in 1990, Penn State Berks has been both a commuter and residential campus. The Berks campus offers both bachelors and associate degrees programs. In many cases, students transfer to other Penn State campuses after the first two years at the Berks Campus. As of 2017, approximately 2,900 students were enrolled at the campus. Housing is available for approximately 800 resident students as a result of new construction. The Reading Area Community College is located in the city of Reading, across the Schuylkill River from West Reading. Other area colleges include Albright College, Alvernia University and Kutztown University.

Library Service

The Wyomissing Public Library is located on Reading Boulevard. There are small libraries that exist on Penn Avenue in Sinking Spring and on Woodside Avenue in Spring Township. There is a branch of the Berks County library system located on Commerce Drive in Spring Township. The largest public library in the County is in Downtown Reading.

GOAL: Provide central water and sewage services in the most cost-efficient manner, with regular investments to provide reliable services.

Public Water Service

The former Wyomissing Hills Borough, Sinking Spring, and most of the developed areas of Spring Township are

Chapter 6 - Community Facilities and Services Plan

served by the Pennsylvania American Water Company. The Pennsylvania American water system is mainly dependent upon wells as its water source. Shillington sells water to customers in adjacent portions of Spring Township.

West Reading and Wyomissing are served by the Western Berks Water Authority. Each municipality maintains its own water lines.

Sanitary Sewage Service

Sewage from Wyomissing Hills, Wyomissing and West Reading is conveyed through borough-maintained lines to the Joint Municipal Authority of Wyomissing Valley sewage treatment plant. The plant is located along the Wyomissing Creek.

Sinking Spring Borough operates its own treatment plant along the Cacoosing Creek that serves the Borough and adjacent areas. Spring Township's Sewage Authority operates a second treatment plant along the Cacoosing Creek that serves most other developed parts of the Township. A portion of Spring Township is connected into lines that link to Reading's sewage treatment plant.

On-Lot Sewage Disposal Systems

Most properties in southern Spring Township rely upon on-lot septic systems. Public education is important to make sure that residents know how to properly take care of on-lot septic systems. Many residents have moved from suburban areas where they had public sewers. Of most importance, property-owners need to understand the need to have their septic systems pumped regularly (typically at least once every three years). If a system is not pumped regularly, the drain field eventually will need to be replaced. Where problems have become severe in other municipalities, they have established ordinances requiring that property-owners show proof that they have had their system pumped at least once every three years.

Recycling

The four municipalities in this region all participate in curbside pick-up of recyclable materials through private contractors. Berks County provides several recycling drop off locations throughout the County.

Parks and Recreation

GOAL: Improve parks and playgrounds to meet a wide variety of recreational needs.

The majority of the Region is well-served by existing parks that are well-distributed. The Region's park system includes an appropriate variety of facilities, including playgrounds in denser areas, athletic fields, passive natural areas along creeks and other areas. Continued efforts are needed to rehabilitate older recreation areas, particularly to make sure they meet modern safety standards.

It generally is most efficient and most convenient to concentrate most new athletic facilities for organized sports in one major park near a school. This is exhibited by the presence of the Shiloh Hills Community Park that Spring Township has developed adjacent to the Shiloh Hills Elementary School. The park includes a mix of active and passive recreation, including athletic facilities, trails and picnic areas.

Wherever practical, new developments should be required to include pedestrian connections with nearby parks, residential developments and existing trails. This particularly includes pedestrian and bicycle connections in new development in the southeastern part of Spring that can link with the trails at the new Shiloh Hills Park. In new business developments, stone or asphalt paths are valuable to provide a place for employees to walk over their lunch-time.

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 Suburban Berks area are listed as follows.

Federal Lands

Blue Marsh Lake National Recreation Area (Berks County)

State Lands

French Creek State Park (Berks County)

Nolde Forest State Environmental Education Center (Cumru Township)

State Games Lands stretching along the Blue Mountain and around Blue Marsh Lake

Berks County Lands

Camp Joy

Tulpehocken Creek County Park System

Youth Recreation Facility and Education Farm

Reading Water Authority Lands

Lake Ontelaunee

Hiking Trails

Bartram Trail (north of region along Schuylkill River)

Horse Shoe Trail (south of region in Lancaster County)

Thun Trail (east of region, running parallel to Schuylkill River)

Union Canal Trail (west of region, along Tulpehocken Creek)

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.

Spring Township has an extensive park system which includes 260 acres of both active and passive recreation land. The park system is comprised of one mini-park, two special use parks, eight neighborhood parks, three community parks and two trail systems. The parks offer picnic pavilions; softball, soccer and multi-use fields; volleyball, tennis and basketball courts; play equipment; open green space; wooded areas and typical park amenities such as park benches and restroom facilities. The Werner Farm Trail system is an accessible paved trail along the outskirts of the Werner Farm Development. The Oaks Trail system is a loop nature trail through a forested area that begins and ends at a small wetland area. The newest addition to the park system, Shiloh Hills Park, hosts 3.5 miles of trails and an Environmental Education Center with a wildlife observation area and night sky viewing area.

Chapter 6 - Community Facilities and Services Plan

Sinking Spring Borough municipal playground includes opportunities for basketball, tennis, volleyball, various field sports and a tot-lot.

The West Reading Borough municipal playground has a tot-lot playground area as well as basketball and tennis courts. There are areas for various field sports and picnicking and a swimming area.

Wyomissing Borough has three municipal parks including Berkshire Heights Playground, Happy Hollow Playground and Wyomissing Park. Wyomissing Community Playground offers many outdoor activity opportunities including basketball and tennis courts. There is also biking and hiking trails available, as well as areas for field sports and activities. Berkshire Heights Playground and Happy Hollow Playground offer tot-lot and playground areas and opportunities for field sports and activities. In the Wyomissing Hills portion of Wyomissing, there also is a playground and a community park, Wyomissing Hills Park. Both locations have a to-lot/playground, basketball courts and areas for field sports. Wyomissing Hills Park also has a picnic area.

The Wilson School District facilities are used extensively by various groups based within the District boundaries and surrounding areas. All school activities take precedence over other groups. The groups using the facilities can change from time to time depending on the time of year.

The Wilson Senior High School has baseball fields, a football stadium and practice field, softball fields, tennis courts, soccer fields, a gymnasium, outdoor basketball and a 1/4-mile track.

Wilson School District Central Junior High School has a gymnasium, indoor pool, weight room, baseball and field hockey fields.

Southern Junior High School/Cornwall Terrace Elementary School has a gymnasium, fields for baseball, softball, soccer and football as well as tennis courts, a 1/4-mile track and various play equipment.

Lincoln Park Elementary, West Wyomissing Elementary and Whitfield Elementary all have various fields and play equipment and indoor, all-purpose rooms.

GOAL: Complete a system of bicycle and pedestrian trails to provide vital links between existing parks and recreational opportunities.

The latest Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan adopted by the Reading MPO in 2010 is a policy-based plan that built on the prior 2002 Plan. The 2002 Plan recommended a system of on-road and off-road bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout Berks, including this region. The spine of the local system would revolve around the Cacoosing Creek with connections to local parks and, ultimately, the County's trail system along the Tulpehocken Creek.

Efforts are underway to improve pedestrian and bicycle access between West Reading and Center City Reading. An old railroad bridge across the river has been opened to bicyclists and pedestrians. This connection is beneficial not only for recreation, but also for persons commuting to work on foot or on bicycles. A long regional trail system is planned along the entire length of the Schuylkill River, which could interconnect with this river crossing. This includes an interconnection with the Thun Trail, which passes parallel to Route 422 and the Schuylkill River east of West Reading. This trail system should also be connected to the trail system that exists through the borough parks along the Wyomissing Creek.

Bicycle and pedestrian access between West Reading and the City is made via the old railroad bridge across the Schuylkill River near the Reading Area Community College (RACC). Currently owned by the County, the 'RACC Bridge' provides off-road recreational and commuting opportunities between these two communities, and provides a direct link to the Thun Trail, a portion of the larger Schuylkill River Trail, and also the Wyomissing Creek Trail System. Eventually, however, that bridge could potentially be removed as part of the planned reconstruction of the U.S. 422 (West Shore) Bypass. Revised connections are being designed as part of the preliminary engineering process at both the Penn Street/Penn Avenue and the Lancaster Avenue/Bingaman Street interchanges.

Chapter 6 - Community Facilities and Services Plan

In addition to serving local residents, trails can be valuable in attracting tourists to the region, particularly considering the dramatic increase in the popularity of mountain biking.

NRPA Guidelines

NRPA, the National Recreation and Park Association, suggests that most communities have 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. In the past, the NRPA has specifically named an acreage per 1000 persons. Most recently, it was 10.6 acres per 1000 persons. However, in recent years, they have gotten away from this as it is now the notion that different types of communities have different needs. As these needs vary, acreages vary as well.

Emergency Services

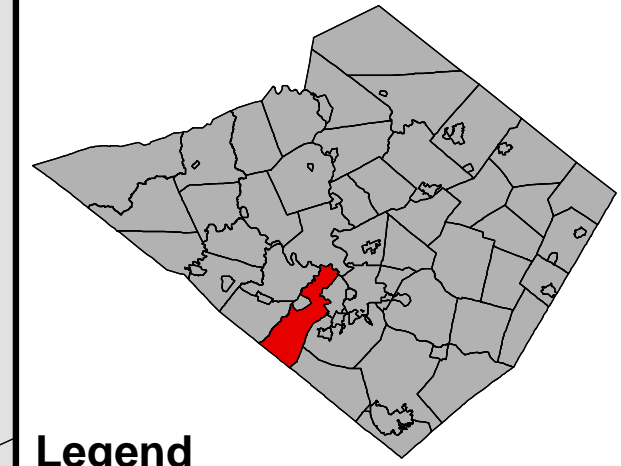
GOAL: Emphasize full coordination of municipal and emergency services across municipal borders.

Through an intergovernmental agreement executed in 2015, Spring Township and Wyomissing Borough merged the management of their fire departments. Both municipalities continue to operate their own fire stations and employ their own full-time fire department staffs, while sharing a fire chief and fire marshal.

Continued efforts are needed to make sure that fire, police and emergency medical services are fully coordinated across municipal borders. This is exhibited by the merger of the fire companies in Spring Township into one well equipped and staffed facility. It may be desirable to consider other jointures of operations, such as a joint police force between Spring Township and Sinking Spring. As described in the "Putting this Plan Into Action" section, shared police services make it much more cost-efficient to provide 24 hour coverage than if each municipality having its own police department.

It is essential that the emergency service providers continue to train together, and coordinate the provision of the specialized vehicles and equipment, police dogs and similar needs.

Spring Township Community Facilities and Recreation



Legend

- State Recreation Land
- County Recreation Land
- Municipal Recreation Land
- Non-Profit Recreation Land
- Private Recreation Land
- School Recreation Land
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

* Includes sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups:
 Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local
 historical societies.

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County
 Mapping, Berks DES, Spring Township

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Community Facilities

- Hospital
- Libraries
- Municipal
- Municipal and Police
- Police Station
- Fire Station
- Fire and EMS Station
- EMS Station
- Senior Citizen Facilities
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Higher Education Schools

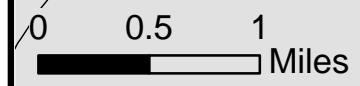
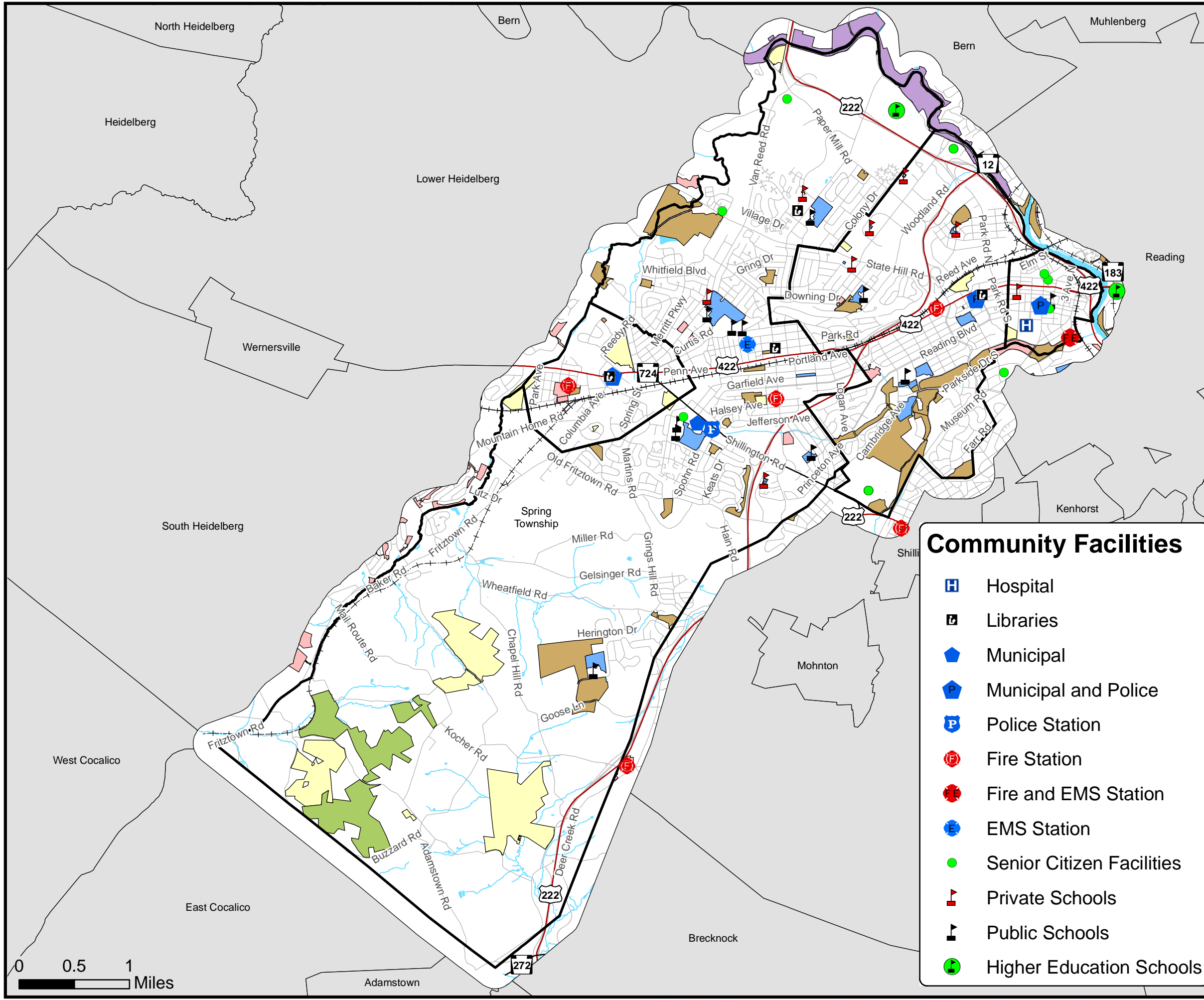
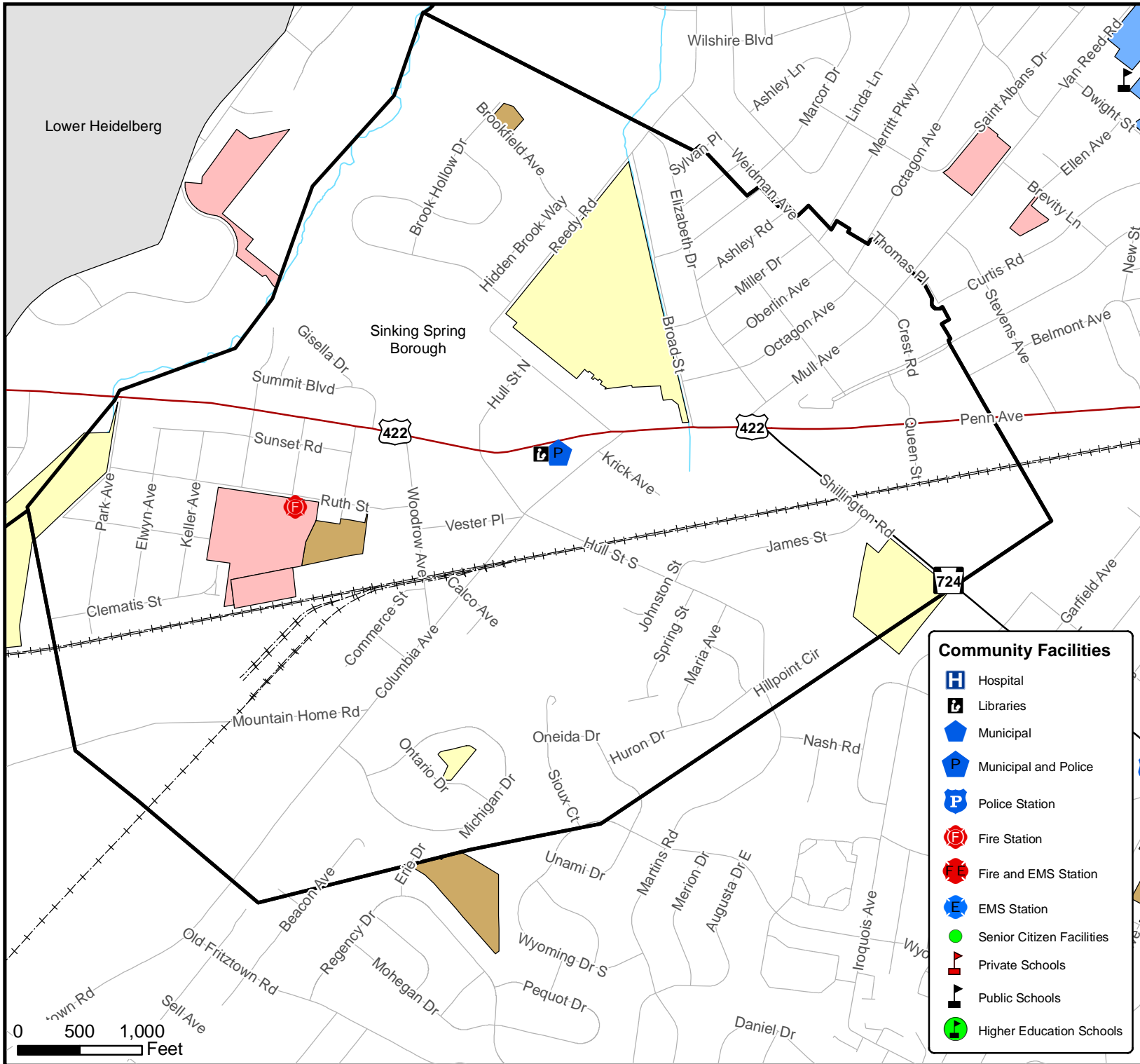
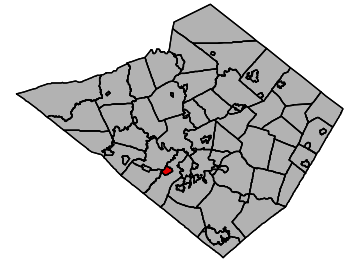


FIGURE 7

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Community Facilities and Recreation



Legend

- State Recreation Land
- County Recreation Land
- Municipal Recreation Land
- Non-Profit Recreation Land
- Private Recreation Land
- School Recreation Land
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Community Facilities

- H Hospital
- L Libraries
- M Municipal
- P Municipal and Police
- P Police Station
- F Fire Station
- F Fire and EMS Station
- E EMS Station
- S Senior Citizen Facilities
- P Private Schools
- P Public Schools
- H Higher Education Schools

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, Spring Township

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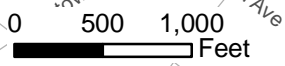
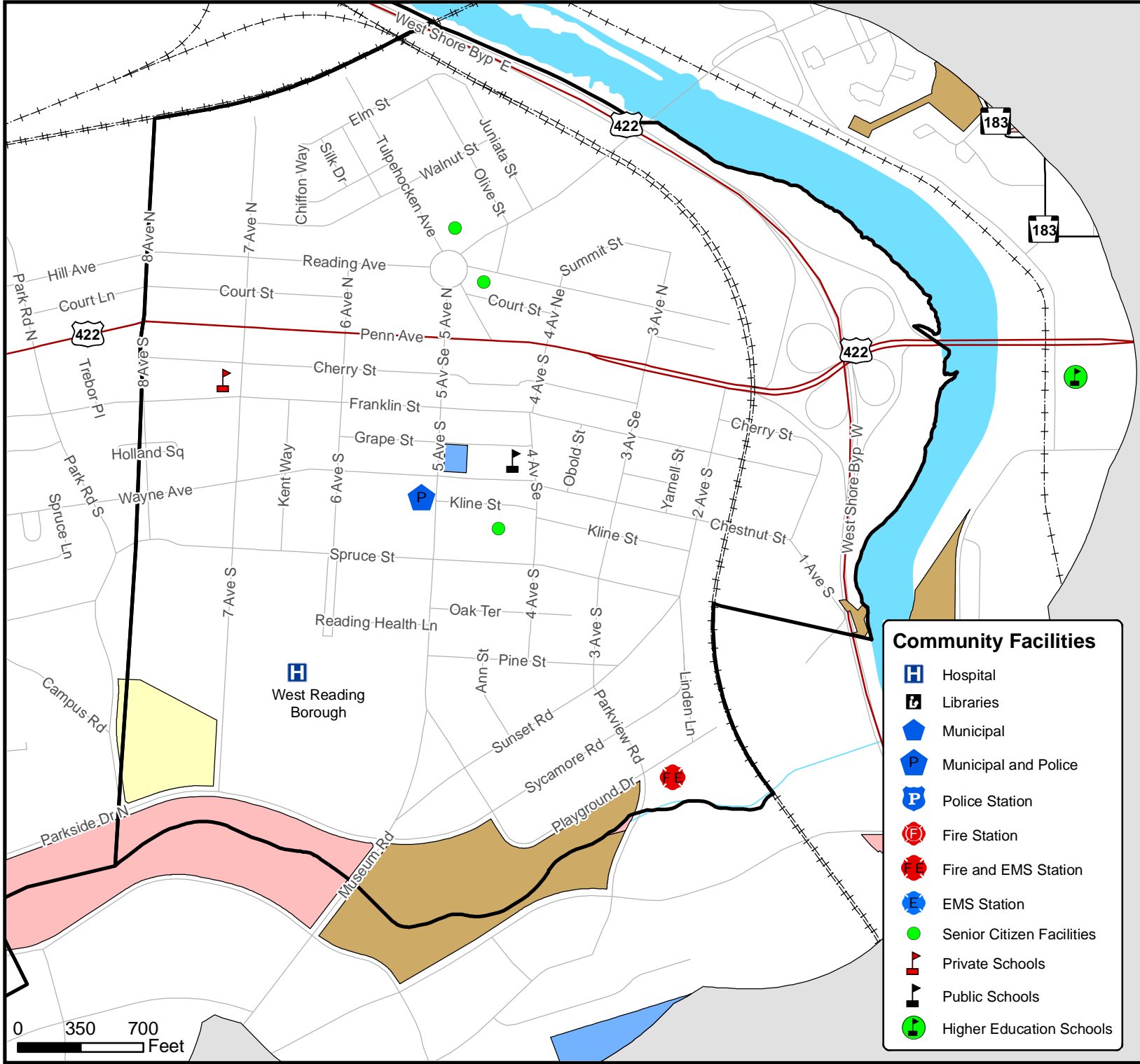
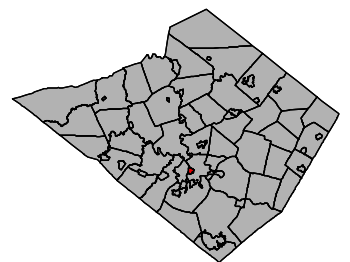


FIGURE 8

Sinking Spring, Spring,
West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
September 2018

West Reading Borough Community Facilities and Recreation

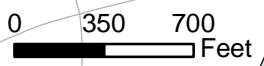


Legend

- State Recreation Land
- County Recreation Land
- Municipal Recreation Land
- Non-Profit Recreation Land
- Private Recreation Land
- School Recreation Land
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Community Facilities

- H Hospital
- L Libraries
- M Municipal
- P Municipal and Police
- P Police Station
- F Fire Station
- F/E Fire and EMS Station
- E EMS Station
- Senior Citizen Facilities
- T Private Schools
- S Public Schools
- U Higher Education Schools



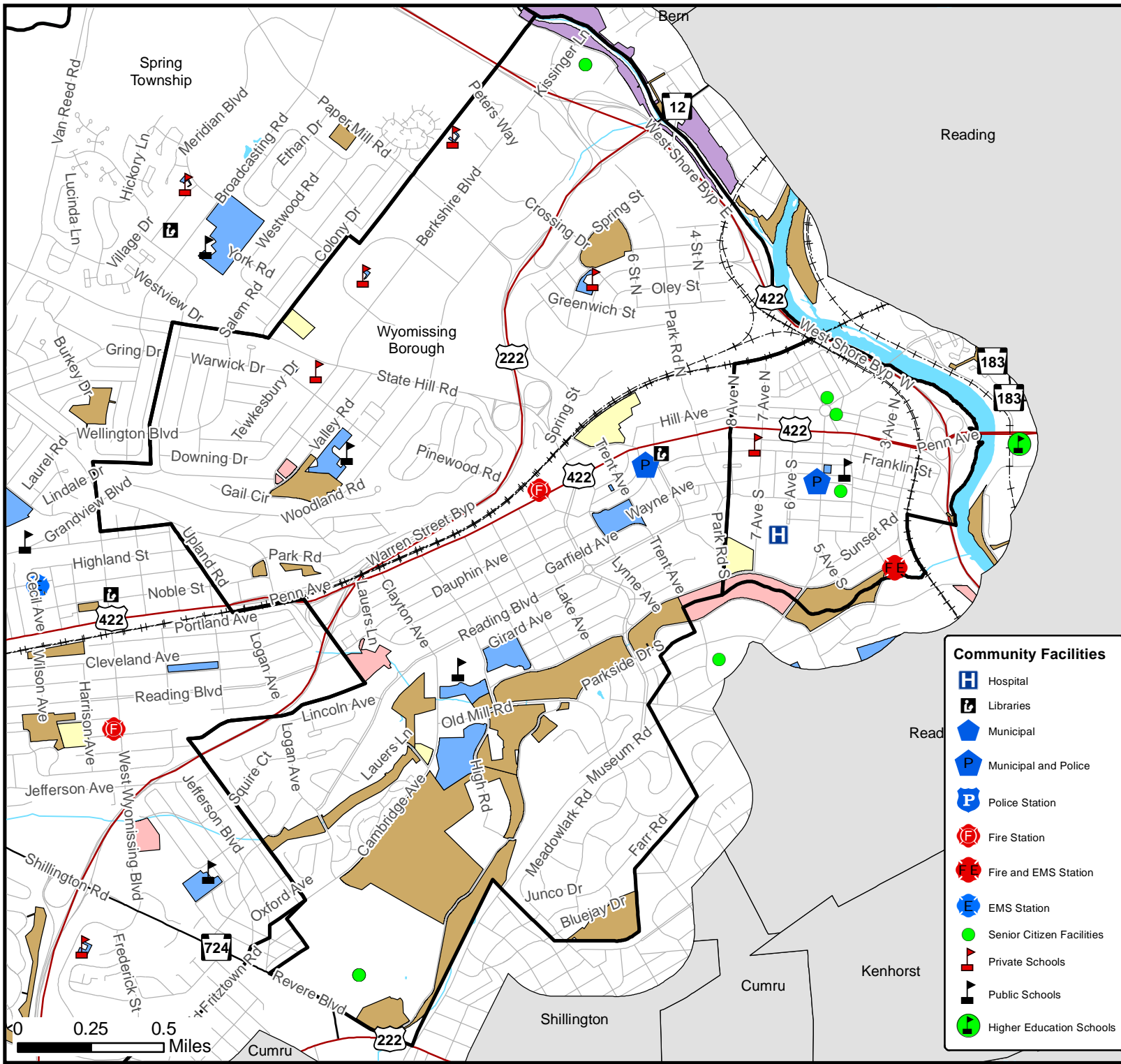
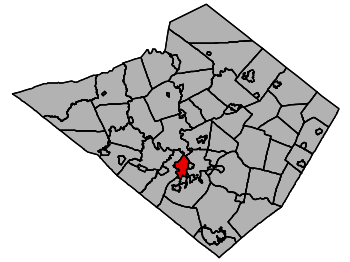
Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County
Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES
Published by the Berks County Planning Commission
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FIGURE 9

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Community Facilities and Recreation



Legend

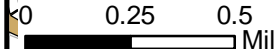
- State Recreation Land
- County Recreation Land
- Municipal Recreation Land
- Non-Profit Recreation Land
- Private Recreation Land
- School Recreation Land
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Community Facilities

- Hospital
- Libraries
- Municipal
- Municipal and Police
- Police Station
- Fire Station
- Fire and EMS Station
- EMS Station
- Senior Citizen Facilities
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Higher Education Schools

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, Spring Township

Published by the Berks County Planning Commission BAB 10/18



HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the region's history. The Historic Resources section includes a map of Historic Resources that remain in the region.

The following summary of the history of the region is primarily based upon a publication entitled "History of the Township of Spring - 125th Anniversary."

The Lenni-Lenape or Delaware Indians were the earliest known inhabitants of Berks County. Many of the current place names in the area are derived from their early Delaware Indian names and pronunciations. These include: Cacoosing meaning place of owls, Tulpehocken meaning land of turtles, and Wyomissing meaning place of long fish.

Some of the earliest settlers in the Suburban Berks area were the Welsh, migrating from Chester County. Their lands were mainly in the areas of the Wyomissing and Cacoosing Creeks. The Welsh established religious institutions, a grist mill and factories, but their main occupation was agriculture with some tracts of land containing upwards of 20,000 acres. Large numbers of German settlers also arrived in the 1700's contributing to the basic character of this section of Berks County.

Much of the early industry in the area involved mills along creeks. The most important industry in the Township of Spring, and one of the most successful in the County, was the Van Reed Paper Mills located near the mouth of the Cacoosing Creek.

Five boroughs were formed from the original borders of Spring Township: Sinking Spring, Wyomissing, West Lawn, West Reading and Wyomissing Hills.

Wyomissing was the first town to become a borough in Spring Township. The town was named after the stream that flows near the dividing line between Cumru and Spring Townships. Wyomissing became an early suburb of Reading. Wyomissing was a well-planned community laid out with attractive boulevards and preserved creek valleys by Henry Janssen and Ferdinand Thun, the founders of the Wyomissing Industries. Wyomissing Industries grew to include the Textile Machine Works, Narrow Fabric Corporation and the Berkshire Knitting Mills. Some of the buildings were eventually occupied by the Vanity Fair Corporation and the VF Outlets. Much of its growth was bolstered by the Lebanon Valley Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad that ran through region, as well as industry linked to the railroad. Another early industry of Wyomissing was the Montello Brick Works.

Sinking Spring borough derives its name from the spring of water that is located toward the eastern end of town, which is the same spring that provided Spring Township's name. The town included a number of schools, including an old Octagon School and a two story brick consolidated school. The high school had to be rebuilt after a fire in 1921, although a portion of the original building was salvaged and incorporated into the new structure.

In the early 1900s there was a relatively large amount of industry in Sinking Spring. This included two hosiery mills, a foundry, two cigar factories and an electric light plant to name a few. The borough also marked the junction of the Reading & Columbia and Lebanon Valley Railroads.

West Reading Borough, like the other area municipalities, had a large number of industrial activities early in its history. These included many brick yards, a hat factory, a carriage works and a flour mill. The Belt Line Railroad,



Radar Property/Walter Russell Property in Spring Township

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

which passed through the eastern section, was constructed in 1902 to bypass Reading and avoid rail congestion.

West Lawn Borough was dissolved in 2006 to become part of Spring Township. The ground where it was situated was originally purchased from Indians by German settlers with clothing, materials, tools, tobacco, rum, money, guns and ammunition. The original small community that began to develop was known as Intervilla. West Lawn was originally laid out on the beautiful green fields along Penn Avenue, which helped determine its name.

Wyomissing Hills Borough was founded as a primarily residential borough, and merged into Wyomissing Borough as a result of a referendum in 2001.

Tools for Historic Preservation

Consider zoning provisions to help preserve the most important historic buildings.

Some form of zoning provisions should be considered by each municipality to protect important historic buildings. Historic preservation provisions can now be included in a zoning ordinance under the authority of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Sections 603(b), 603 (c), 603(g), 604(1) and 605(2) of the MPC provide authority to protect historic buildings through zoning.

Unlike a separate historic district ordinance created under the Pennsylvania Historic District Act, these historic zoning provisions are not intended to regulate all exterior changes to buildings and all new construction. Instead, this Plan recommends consideration of historic zoning provisions that regulate demolition, demolition by neglect, adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of historic properties. The greatest emphasis should be placed along the Penn Avenue corridor, which includes the largest concentrations of historic buildings and present the highly visible “face” of much of the region.

The zoning ordinance could state that demolition of a historic building would only be allowed if the applicant proved that the building could not be economically reused or that the demolition is necessary to allow a project of special public importance (such as an intersection improvement needed to improve public safety). This prohibition on demolition would only apply to buildings listed as the most significant.

As well, the zoning ordinance could address demolition by neglect of historic structures and properties. This would prevent homeowners from allowing the historical building to deteriorate ‘naturally’ when upkeep becomes a hardship or too costly.

An alternative to requiring zoning approval of demolition would be to simply require a delay of up to 90 days from the time a person applied for a demolition permit until it could be approved. This delay would only apply to a list of important historic buildings. This delay is intended to provide time for interested persons to convince a property owner that there are alternatives for demolition. For example, a new buyer might be found who would be willing to restore the building, or the owner might be persuaded to incorporate the building into their plans for the property.

An exception to demolition regulations should be provided where the municipal building inspector certifies that a building needs to be demolished because of an imminent public safety hazard.

Provide zoning incentives to encourage rehabilitation of historic buildings.

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

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

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

Increased public interest in historic buildings can help spur interest in persons buying and rehabilitating historic properties. Berks Nature and the Historical Society of Berks County are the lead historic organizations in the County.

Efforts should be considered to have additional buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on the Register does not by itself involve any additional regulations upon a private property owner. It does offer public recognition of the importance of a building, and can provide limited Federal income tax benefits as part of a major historic rehabilitation of an investment property. Listing on the National Register provides protection against actions involving Federal or State funds in ways that would adversely affect the building.

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

It is important to make property-owners aware of appropriate ways that old buildings can be modernized or rehabilitated in ways that retain their historic appearance as viewed from a road.

Under programs using Federal funds or Federal income tax benefits, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation need to be followed. Such standards are intended to take into consideration economic and technical feasibility. These standards are as follows:

1. *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
2. *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.*
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that*

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and the environment.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

The following additional standards should be considered when rehabilitating historic buildings. The changes should consider the design, arrangement, texture and material of the building and in relation to nearby historic buildings.

1. The proportional relationship between the width and the height of the front of the building.
2. The proportional relationship between the width and height of the windows.
3. The maintenance of a rhythm of solid wall areas and windows and doors.
4. The maintenance of any rhythm of building masses to spaces between them, if such rhythm exists along a street.
5. The continuation of setbacks from a road that are similar to adjacent historic buildings.
6. The maintenance of a rhythm of entrances and building projections and roof lines.
7. The use of materials (such as brick, stone and older styles of siding), that is similar in appearance to authentic materials of surrounding buildings.
8. The continuation of rough or smooth textures.
9. The maintenance and continuation of architectural details, such as cornices, lintels, arches, railings, shutters, iron work and chimneys.
10. The use of compatible roof shapes and lines.
11. The use of appropriate fences and walls.
12. The maintenance of barn walls in wood, preferably painted red, white or other historic colors.
13. Views of outdoor storage from streets and residential properties should be minimized.

Historic Resources

The cultural heritage of the Suburban Berks West Region is evident in the many older individual buildings, structures, and sites throughout the Region. Local officials and residents recognize the value of conservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and adaptive reuse of these historic features as a means of providing a glimpse into the Region's important past. Additionally, historic preservation can provide educational opportunities regarding historic life and architectural styles. Well maintained historic sites and areas can create a sense of unique identity and stimulate civic pride, economic vitality and tourism opportunities.

To identify the Region's specific historic sites, the Berks County Planning Commission Historic Resources Inventory was used. This inventory includes Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), Meiser, Berks Nature, and other resource data. The inventory includes 215 different sites and 18 different districts that have been identified as important from a local, State and National perspective. The Region has 26 National Register Eligible historic resources.

The following identifies those sites in the Berks County Historic Resources database with their respective name, municipality, data source, and National Register status:

List of Historic Resources

(See numbers on Historic Resources Maps)

Sinking Spring

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5156	809 Penn Ave	PHMC	Ineligible
5157	814 Columbia Ave.	PHMC	Ineligible
5158	Arthur Moberly Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5159	Beidler Estate; John Baer Home	PHMC	Undetermined
5160	Donald Leiby Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5161	Earl & Emily Leiby Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5162	Evans Hall	PHMC	Undetermined
5163	Fred & Milda Fegley Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5164	General Store; Post Office	Meiser	Unknown
5165	Henry & Mary Brubaker Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5166	Janice Lincoln Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5167	Krick Home	PHMC	Undetermined
5168	Krick's Roller Mill	PHMC	Undetermined
5169	Martha Weidman Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5171	Mull Mansion; Charter Oaks Academy; Bean Funeral Home	PHMC	Undetermined
5172	Oliver G. Cannon Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5173	Paul & Dorothy Roth Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5174	Pearl Stoudt Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5175	Railroad Freight House Site	Meiser	Unknown
5176	Railroad House Hotel	Meiser	Unknown
5177	Railroad Station Site	Meiser	Unknown
5178	Sinking Spring Bank	PHMC	Ineligible
5179	Sinking Spring Freight Station	Meiser	Unknown
5180	Sinking Spring High School	BCPC	Unknown
5181	Sinking Spring Passenger Station	Meiser	Unknown
5182	Sinking Spring Site	Meiser	Unknown
5183	St John's Lutheran Church	BCPC	Unknown
5184	St Johns Reformed Church	Meiser	Unknown
5185	Thomas C. Reinhart Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5186	Tollhouse Site	Meiser	Unknown
5187	Van Reed Hotel	PHMC	Undetermined
5279	Village of Sinking Spring; Sinking Spring Borough	Meiser	Unknown

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

Spring Township

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
2435	Reedy Road Bridge #1	PHMC	Eligible
2436	Reedy Road Bridge #2	PHMC	Ineligible
5225	2214 McKinley Ave.; Irwin Sweigart Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5226	2224 McKinley Ave.; Calvin A. Remp Jr. Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5227	Adamstown / Mohnsville Trolley	Meiser	Unknown
5228	Artz Schoolhouse	Meiser	Unknown
5229	Berks County Antique Center	PHMC	Ineligible
5230	Beverly Hills Tavern	PHMC	Eligible
5231	Camp Meeting Grounds	Meiser	Unknown
5232	Carol Hauseman Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5234	James M. Delp Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5235	Deppen / Shirk Farm	PHMC	Ineligible
5236	Robert Ernst Property; Spring Goose Farm	PHMC	Ineligible
5238	Farmhouse	PHMC	Ineligible
5239	Flickinger's Gristmill	Meiser	Unknown
5241	Fritztown Store / Post Office	Meiser	Unknown
5242	George Bagenstose Property / Wertz Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5243	George Eckenroads Blacksmith Shop	Meiser	Unknown
5244	George Gaul Farmstead	PHMC	Undetermined
5246	Betty J. Gerhart Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5247	Gittlemans American House Hotel	Meiser	Unknown
5248	Gring House	PHMC	Ineligible
5249	Gring's Mill	PHMC	Undetermined
5250	Henry Fisher Home 1843	BCPC	Unknown
5251	Henry Ruth Farmstead; Willow Spring	PHMC	Undetermined
5253	Indiandale Camp	BCPC	Unknown
5255	James Krick Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5257	James Oswald Property	BCPC	Unknown
5260	John Lutz & Sons Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5261	John Lutz & Sons Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5262	John Van Reed House - Tulpehocken Farms Property	PHMC	Eligible
5264	Kricktown Store; Kricktown Restaurant	Meiser	Unknown
5265	Labe Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5266	Lancaster Pike Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
5267	Leshner Property	PHMC	Eligible
5269	Melvin Lutz Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5270	Mary Van Reed House - Tulpehocken Farm Property	PHMC	Eligible
5271	Mill Dam Site	BCPC	Unknown

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5272	Mill Dam Site	BCPC	Unknown
5273	Mohn's Evangelical Church	Meiser	Unknown
5274	Olive Leaf Chapel	Meiser	Unknown
5275	Pennsylvania State University Property	PHMC	Eligible
5277	Breneman Tract	PHMC	Ineligible
5278	Ruth Farm	PHMC	Eligible
5280	Village of Snyderdale	PHMC	Undetermined
5283	Spring Twp Dahl Property	BCPC	Unknown
5284	Tulpehocken Farms Property; Dairy	PHMC	Undetermined
5285	Tulpehocken Farms Property; Speicher	PHMC	Undetermined
5286	Tulpehocken Farms Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5287	Tulpehocken Farms Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5288	Tulpehocken Farms Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5289	Tulpehocken Farms Property; Janssen	PHMC	Eligible
5290	Tulpehocken Farms Property; Rowe	PHMC	Undetermined
5297	Van Reed Mill; Weidman Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5298	Van Reed Paper Mill	PHMC	Eligible
5299	Radar Property; Walter Russell Property	PHMC	Eligible
5300	Walter Russell Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5301	Penn State University - Gring Mansion; Wetzel Estate	PHMC	Eligible
5302	William Hain Tavern	Meiser	Unknown
5303	Zerr Farm	PHMC	Ineligible
5709	Evangelical Lutheran Church Of The Advent	PHMC	Undetermined
5713	Steffy Farmhouse	PHMC	Undetermined
5714	West Lawn Borough Hall	PHMC	Eligible
5715	West Lawn United Methodist Church	PHMC	Undetermined
6755	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
6757	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
6758	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
6759	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
6760	Gerber Barn	PHMC	Ineligible
6844	Walter Russell Property	PHMC	Undetermined
6984	Kendrick House	PHMC	Undetermined

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

West Reading

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
4230	Museum Road Bridge	PHMC	Undetermined
4293	Pennsylvania Railroad - Penn Street - Schuylkill River Bridge	BCPC	Unknown
4750	Us 422 (Penn St) Over Schuylkill River & Conrail	PHMC	Eligible
5716	Alexander's Hat Factory	PHMC	Undetermined
5717	Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church	PHMC	Undetermined
5718	Buttonwood Street Bridge	PHMC	Undetermined
5718	Buttonwood Street Bridge	PHMC	Undetermined
5720	Edward Spahler Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5722	Holland Square	PHMC	Undetermined
5723	Joseph Ferri & Walter Good Properties	PHMC	Undetermined
5724	Kulaga Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5725	Narrow Fabric Company	PHMC	Undetermined
5726	Penn Ave Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5727	Penn Avenue Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5729	Reading Belt Line - Buttonwood Street Bridge	BCPC	Unknown
5731	Reading Hospital	PHMC	Undetermined
5732	Sacred Heart Parish School	PHMC	Undetermined
5734	Salon's Department Store	PHMC	Ineligible
5736	St James Reformed Church	PHMC	Undetermined
5737	St James Reformed Church	PHMC	Undetermined
5738	Stunzi Sons Silk Co. Inc	PHMC	Undetermined
5739	West Reading Borough Hall	PHMC	Eligible
5740	West Reading Fire Hall	PHMC	Undetermined
5741	West Reading Garage	PHMC	Undetermined
5742	West Reading High School	PHMC	Eligible
5743	West Reading Playground	PHMC	Undetermined
5744	West Reading Post Office / Store	Meiser	Unknown
6794	West Reading Elementary School	PHMC	Ineligible

Wyomissing

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
3663	Georgian Hall; George Lerch House	PHMC	Undetermined
5779	Atonement Lutheran Church	PHMC	Undetermined
5780	Auman Mansion	PHMC	Undetermined
5781	Bausman Evangelical & Reformed Church	PHMC	Undetermined
5782	Beidler Farmhouse	PHMC	Undetermined
5783	Berks County Property	PHMC	Undetermined

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5784	Berkshire Country Club	PHMC	Undetermined
5785	Bruce D. Lanning Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5787	Carl Garr Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5788	Carl Lauer Mansion	PHMC	Undetermined
5789	Charles Muhlenberg House	PHMC	Undetermined
5790	Christ House	PHMC	Undetermined
5791	Christopher Gibney Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5792	Clary House	PHMC	Undetermined
5793	Conrail Railroad Bridge	PHMC	Undetermined
5794	David & Gloria Erb Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5795	David Keiser House	PHMC	Undetermined
5796	Dr. John Levengood Home	PHMC	Undetermined
5797	Dr. William Glosser Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5798	Edward Werner House	PHMC	Undetermined
5799	Evans Mill Complex	PHMC	Eligible
5800	Farr's Nursery	PHMC	Undetermined
5801	Ferdinand Thun Mansion	PHMC	Eligible
5802	Fountain Park	PHMC	Undetermined
5803	Geiger Residence	PHMC	Undetermined
5804	George & Isabel Reichert Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5805	George Felix House	PHMC	Undetermined
5807	Goodman House	PHMC	Undetermined
5808	Harry Koller House	PHMC	Undetermined
5809	Harvey & Anna Gring Property	PHMC	Ineligible
5810	Heizmann House	PHMC	Undetermined
5811	Henry Janssen Mansion	PHMC	Undetermined
5812	Huyett Farmhouse	PHMC	Undetermined
5813	Iris Club	PHMC	Undetermined
5814	J. Hill Farmstead	PHMC	Undetermined
5815	James & Ann Houck Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5816	Jerome P. Lamanna Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5817	John & Barbara Romanski Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5818	John Schmucker Homestead	PHMC	Undetermined
5819	John Withers House	PHMC	Ineligible
5820	Joshua Huyett House	PHMC	Undetermined
5821	Kalback Farm	PHMC	Undetermined
5822	Kissinger Home	PHMC	Undetermined
5823	Kissinger Union Church	PHMC	Unknown
5824	Kissinger Union Church District	PHMC	Eligible

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5825	Kissinger's School	Meiser	Unknown
5826	Lauer's Farm	PHMC	Eligible
5827	Leon Ehrlich Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5828	Lynn M. Thiel Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5829	Marshall House; Stoltzfus House	PHMC	Eligible
5830	Meinig Mansion	PHMC	Undetermined
5831	Moyer Farmhouse	PHMC	Undetermined
5832	Muhlenberg House	PHMC	Undetermined
5833	Neil Culp Jr. Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5838	Pennybacker Farm	PHMC	Undetermined
5839	People's Trust Company	PHMC	Undetermined
5840	Pomerooy House	PHMC	Undetermined
5841	Quereau Van Dyke Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5842	Robert S. Zechman Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5843	Roper House	PHMC	Undetermined
5844	Ruth's Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
5845	Ruth's House	PHMC	Undetermined
5846	Samuel Fry Property	PHMC	Eligible
5847	Samuel Hill Farm	PHMC	Undetermined
5848	Schlegel Mansion	PHMC	Undetermined
5849	Sharman Farmhouse	PHMC	Undetermined
5850	Spring House	PHMC	Undetermined
5851	Stetler Building	PHMC	Undetermined
5852	Thomas & Gail Frymoyer Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5853	Thun House	PHMC	Undetermined
5858	William Yocum Property	PHMC	Undetermined
5859	Wyomissing Borough Hall	PHMC	Undetermined
5860	Wyomissing Fire Co.	PHMC	Undetermined
5861	Wyomissing High School	PHMC	Eligible
5862	Wyomissing Hills Elementary School	PHMC	Undetermined
5863	Wyomissing Hills Mausoleum	PHMC	Undetermined
5864	Wyomissing Hotel	PHMC	Undetermined
5865	Wyomissing Industries	PHMC	Undetermined
5866	Wyomissing Public Library	PHMC	Eligible
5867	Wyomissing Public School	PHMC	Undetermined
5896	John Rigg Dickinson House	BCPC	Unknown
6805	Bridge	PHMC	Eligible
6806	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible
6822	Bridge	PHMC	Ineligible

List of Historic Districts

(See numbers on Historic Resources Maps)

Sinking Spring

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5170D	Miller Farm	PHMC	Ineligible
6305D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Undetermined
6392D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Eligible

Spring

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
1288D	Lower Tulpehocken Creek Historic District	PHMC	Eligible
5258D	Janssen Historic District	PHMC	Eligible
5710D	Penn Avenue Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5711D	Penn Avenue Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5712D	Spring Street Row	PHMC	Undetermined
6305D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Undetermined
6392D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Eligible

West Reading

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
5719D	Chestnut Street Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5721D	Franklin Street Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5735D	Second Avenue Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5746D	Wyomissing Industries	PHMC	Undetermined
6305D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Undetermined
6330D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad: Reading Beltline Railroad	PHMC	Ineligible
6392D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Eligible

Wyomissing

Resource ID	Historic Name	Source	National Register Status*
1288D	Lower Tulpehocken Creek Historic District	PHMC	Eligible
5834D	North Wyomissing Boulevard	PHMC	Ineligible
5835D	Park Road Row	PHMC	Undetermined
5836D	Park Road Row Properties	PHMC	Undetermined
5837D	Penn Avenue Row Properties	PHMC	Undetermined
5854D	Trebor Place	PHMC	Undetermined
6305D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Undetermined
6330D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad: Reading Beltline Railroad	PHMC	Ineligible
6392D	Philadelphia and Reading Railroad	PHMC	Eligible

Chapter 7 - Historic Preservation Plan

* National Register Status Defined

Listed: Historical site/district is listed on the National Register.

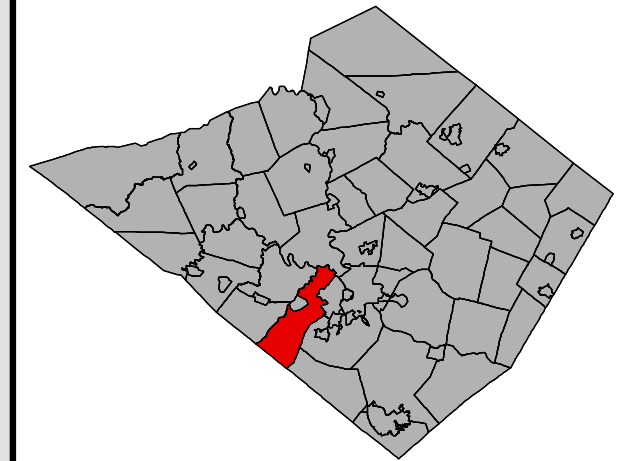
Eligible: Historical site/district is considered eligible according to the PA State Historic Preservation Office.

Ineligible: Historical site/district is considered not eligible according to PA State Historic Preservation Office.

Undetermined: The PA State Historic Preservation Office has record of the historical site/district, but it has never been evaluated to determine if the site/district is eligible, ineligible or listed.

Unknown: This is not a national register status. This status signifies a historical site/district identified by George Meiser, IX or surveys returned to the Berks County Planning Commission that are not identified in the National Register database or by the PA State Historic Preservation Office, but are still historically significant to Berks County.

Historic Resources Spring Township



Legend

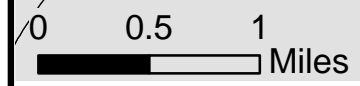
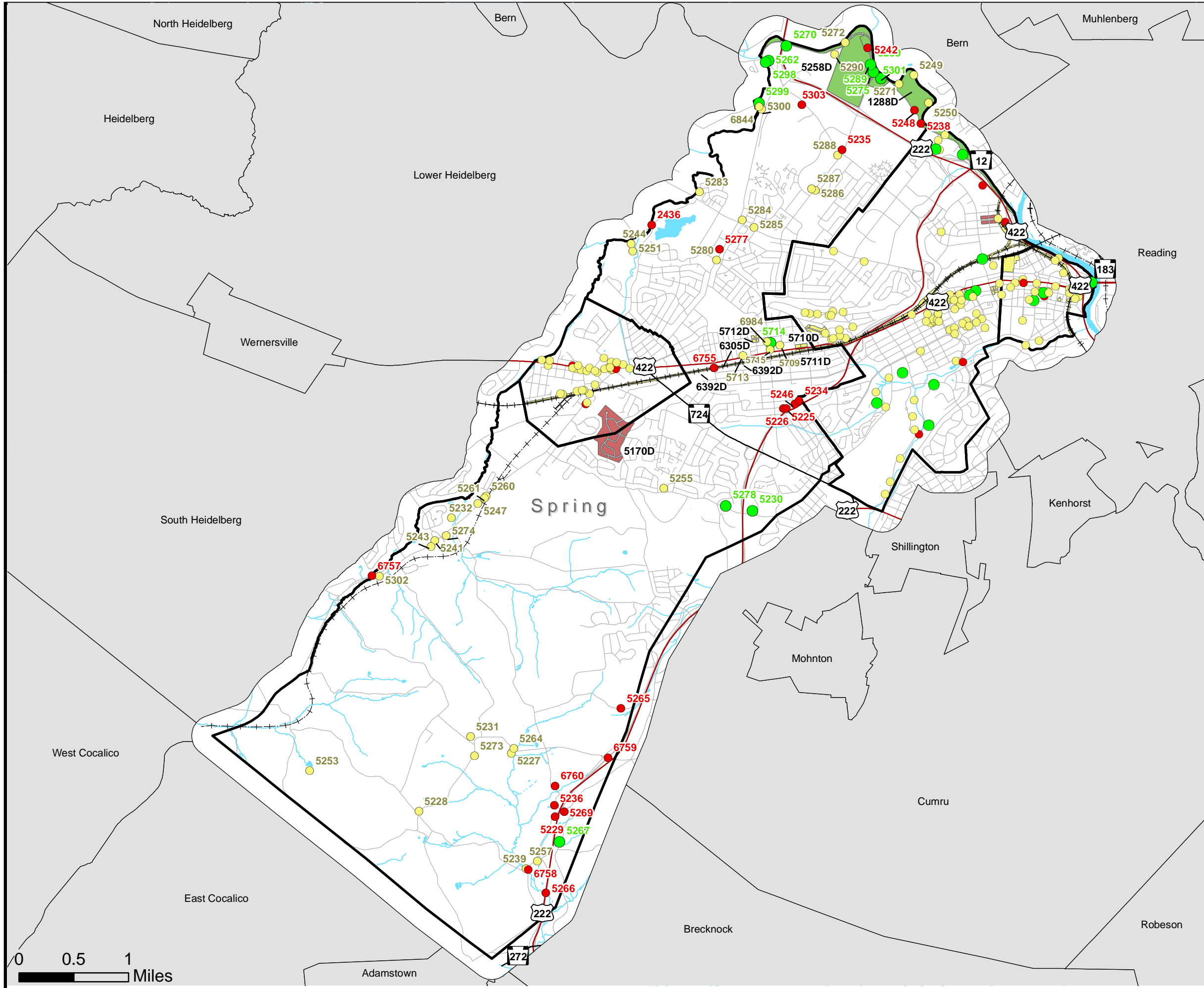
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- National Register Ineligible
- Other Historic Sites*
- National Register Eligible Districts
- National Register Ineligible Districts
- Other Historic Districts*
- ~ Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- + -+ -+ -+ Railroads

* Includes national registered status of undetermined or unknown sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups: Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local historical societies.

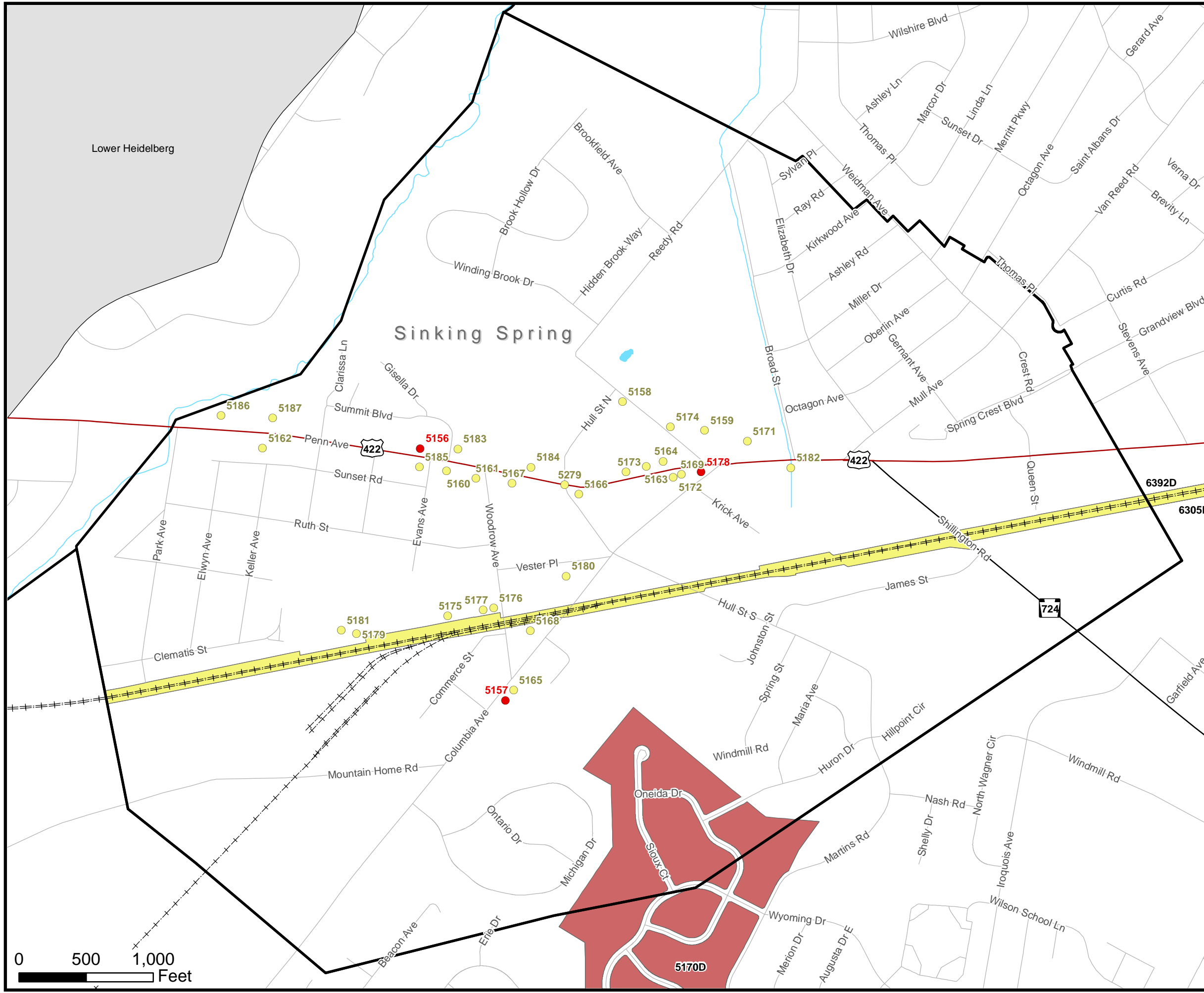
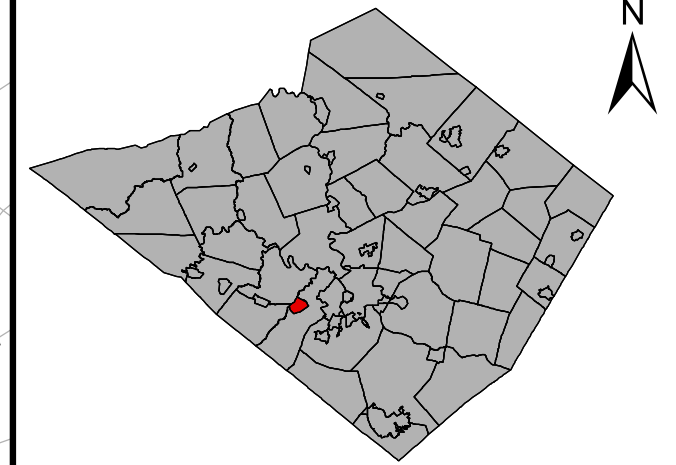
Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

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Historic Resources Sinking Spring Borough



Legend

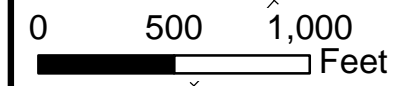
- National Register Eligible
- National Register Ineligible
- Other Historic Sites*
- National Register Eligible Districts
- National Register Ineligible Districts
- Other Historic Districts*
- ~ Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- + -+ -+ -+ Railroads

* Includes national registered status of undetermined or unknown sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups: Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local historical societies.

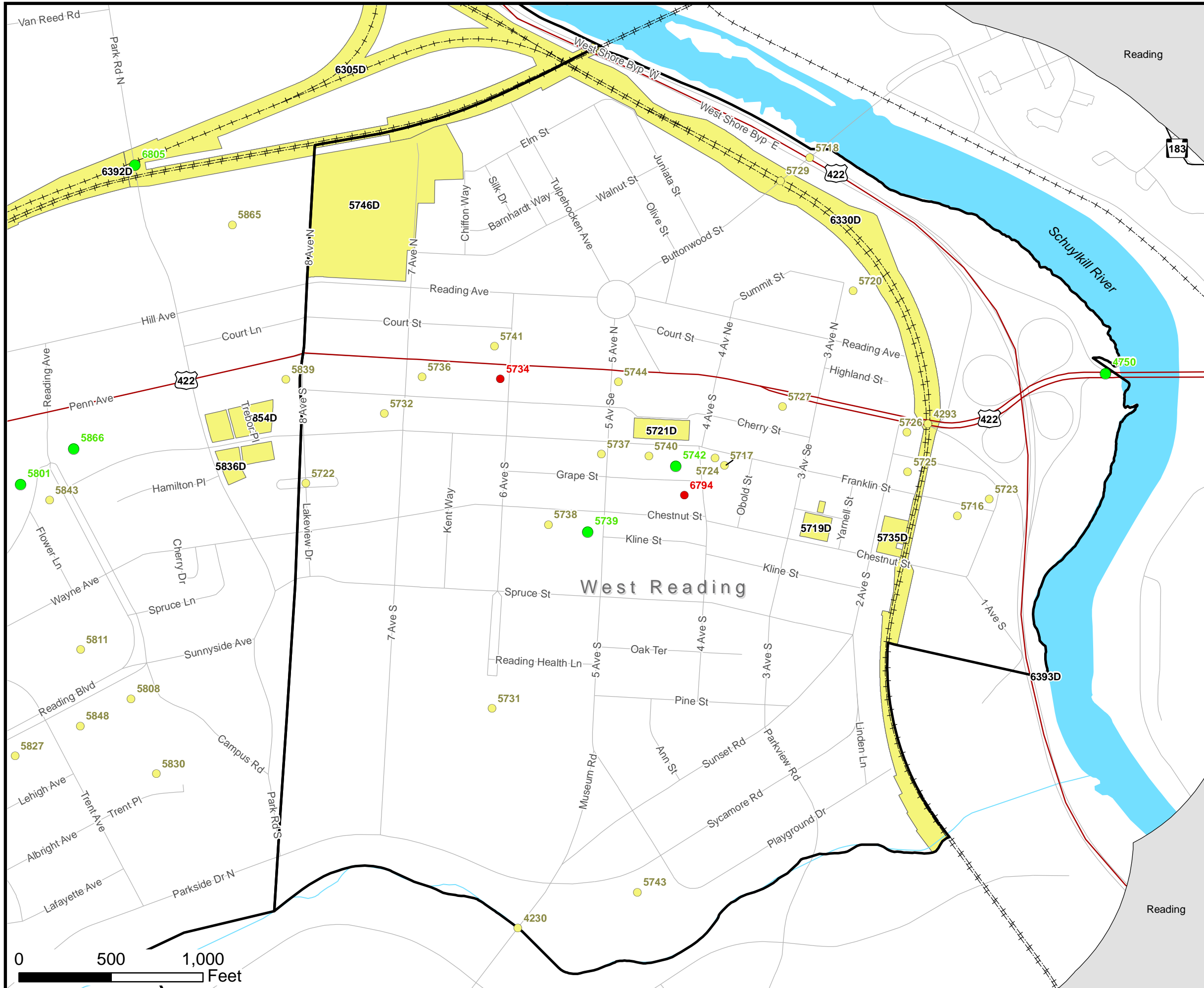
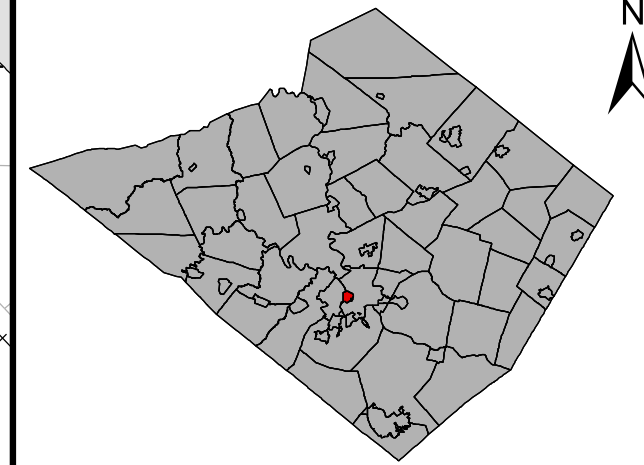
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Historic Resources West Reading Borough



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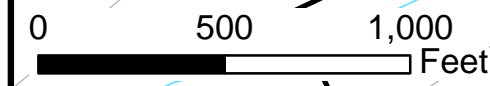
- National Register Eligible
- National Register Ineligible
- Other Historic Sites*
- National Register Eligible Districts
- National Register Ineligible Districts
- Other Historic Districts*
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads

* Includes national registered status of undetermined or unknown sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups: Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local historical societies.

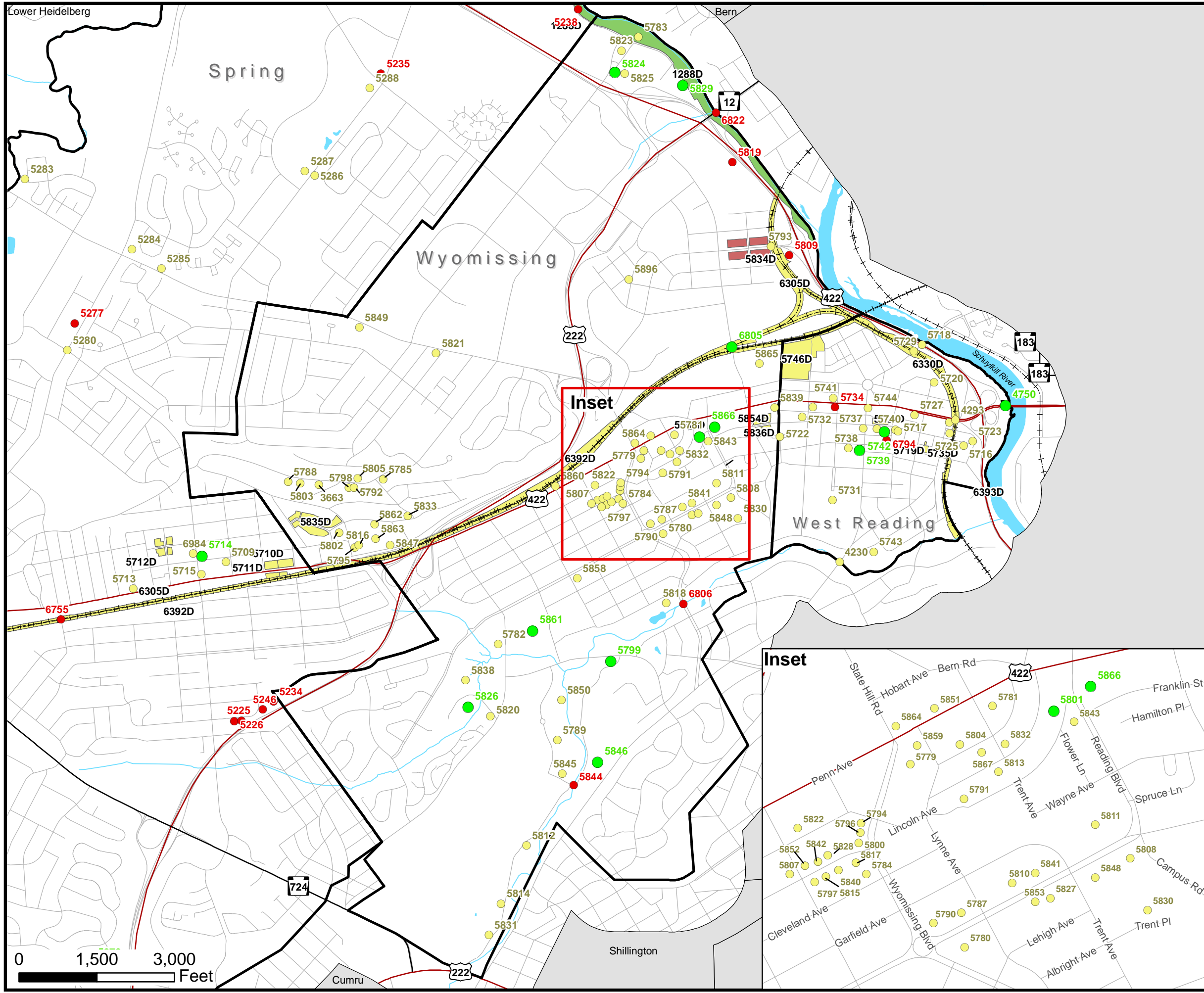
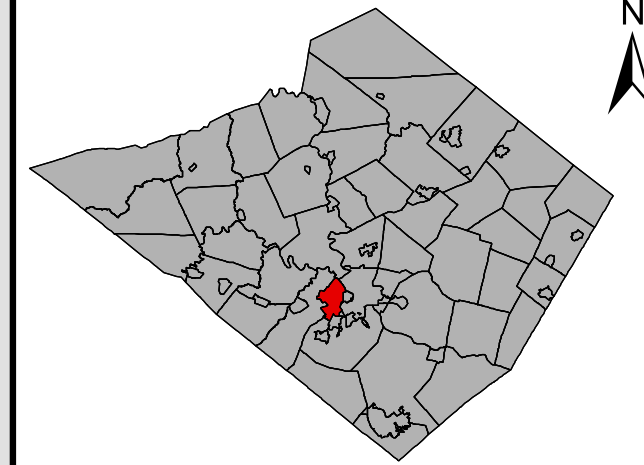
Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

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Historic Resources Wyomissing Borough



Legend

- National Register Eligible
- National Register Ineligible
- Other Historic Sites*
- National Register Eligible Districts
- National Register Ineligible Districts
- Other Historic Districts*
- ~ Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- - - - Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

* Includes national registered status of undetermined or unknown sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups: Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local historical societies.

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

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BAB 10/18



ECONOMY

The communities in the planning area serve as a regional hub for economic activity in Berks County. Currently, the area's economy has been heavily weighted towards health care, retail, professional services and manufacturing. The County's second largest employer, the Reading Hospital, is located here, along with two of the largest shopping centers in the County, the Berkshire Mall, and Broadcasting Square. The campus of Penn State Berks, with an enrollment of approximately 2,800 students, is located in Spring Township. Penn Avenue, which interchanges with U.S. Routes 422 and 222, connects three borough downtowns.



Reading Hospital

Diversifying the economic base to help offset potential fluctuations in the retail and manufacturing sectors, growing the healthcare sector, and attracting new industries that offer the higher paying jobs have been key initiatives of regional and local economic development organizations in recent years.

Economic activity in the planning region is located in three major areas:

Penn Avenue Corridor – The Region's Main Street

Effectively serving as the "Main Street" for West Reading, Sinking Spring, and Wyomissing, Penn Avenue offers a variety of unique retail and cultural venues, along with professional offices and housing. Penn Avenue plays a pivotal role in the regional economy. Its continued redevelopment and investment will be the largest and most important single contribution that the planning area can make for a prosperous market-driven economy. It is the economic center of the planning region, with the largest and most diversified set of economic and cultural functions and a large concentration of employment, including the second largest employer in the County, the Reading Hospital.

In West Reading, Penn Avenue is a major county destination spot for retail shops and restaurants. It serves as the primary access to the main 36-acre Reading Hospital campus. The Hospital completed a \$354 million expansion in 2016. Visitors to the Reading Public Museum also use Penn Avenue. The Museum features over 300,000 pieces of artwork and artifacts, the Neag planetarium and a 25-acre arboretum. In Wyomissing, redevelopment has reshaped and will continue to reshape the corridor. The redevelopment of the Textile Machine Works buildings in 2003 created The Works, a large indoor entertainment and recreation facility that serves as a major destination. The redevelopment of the Vanity Fair outlet property into a mixed-use campus of offices, retail, and restaurants will redefine the intersection of Penn Avenue and Park Road. In Sinking Spring, Penn Avenue has a variety of shops and restaurants. The Borough, in conjunction with the BOSS 2020 organization, is proceeding with an ambitious plan to redevelop their downtown area through robust transportation improvements and a tax incremental financing district.

The Penn Avenue corridor has been studied many times over the years. *The Initiative for a Competitive Greater Reading* (ICGR) in 2003 proposed Penn Avenue from the City to Wyomissing as the region's "retail, tourism, and entertainment hub." The latest study of the area was completed in 2007. The plan titled *Penn Corridor Development Plan*, prepared by the Berks County Economic Partnership, Sasaki Architects, PC and the Brookings Institution, examined Penn Avenue in the City of Reading, West Reading and Wyomissing, identifying weaknesses and strengths of the corridor and exploring infill development, streetscape and catalyst project opportunities.

Chapter 8 - Economic Development Plan

State Hill Road

State Hill Road serves as a major business corridor in Wyomissing Borough and Spring Township and has a full interchange with U.S. Route 422. It extends from Penn Avenue in Wyomissing to Van Reed Road in the Township and provides primary access to north/south commercial corridors on Woodland and Broadcasting roads. Seeing robust development in the 1980s and 1990s, it serves major retail destinations such as the Berkshire Mall (910,000 square feet, opening in 1970) in Wyomissing and Berkshire Square (323,000 square feet, opening in 1991) in the Township. The corridor also features numerous professional and medical offices, restaurants, and apartment complexes. This corridor also has several parcels available for redevelopment or future development.

Paper Mill Road Corridor (Van Reed Road to Broadcasting Road)

This section of Paper Mill Road has been developed intensively over the last twenty years with a mixture of Class A office buildings, stores, and restaurants and is poised for additional development. The largest developments include the Reading Health Rehabilitation Hospital that opened in 2006 and features a 50-bed skilled nursing unit and a 62-bed inpatient rehabilitation unit, Broadcasting Square, a 613,630 square foot shopping center that opened in 2001, and the current headquarters for UGI Energy Services on Meridian Boulevard. UGI Energy Services is proposed to relocate to a new facility at the corner of Park Road and Penn Avenue in 2018.

This corridor will see additional development as the 104-acre parcel at the corner of Paper Mill and Broadcasting roads is currently for sale, served by public water and sewer utilities, and is zoned for commercial and business uses.

The Berks County Economy

The four municipalities in the planning area are part of the nearly \$16 billion dollar Berks County economy which, by output in dollars, ranks seventh out of the 18 metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania. The county's manufacturing and professional business services are the largest sector contributors to GDP. Overall, service producing industries account for 61% of total County GDP, goods producing industries, 29%, trade 13%, government 11%.

As of 2016, the County has a labor force of 214,132 people, of which 203,394 (or 95%) are currently employed and 10,738 (or 5%) are unemployed. The County has a labor participation rate of 64.8%, higher than the state level of 63.8%. (This means that out those who are 16-64 years of age in the County, nearly 65% are actively working or seeking work and 35% are not employed nor seeking employment.)

Change in Real GDP by PA Metro Area Between 2001 and 2015 (millions of chained 2009 dollars)				
Ranked by GDP Output in 2015				
Metropolitan Area	2001 \$	2015 \$	# Change	% Change
Philadelphia	303,035	368,210	65,175	21.5%
Pittsburgh	109,442	130,205	20,763	19.0%
Allentown/Bethlehem/Easton	29,496	33,393	3,897	13.2%
Harrisburg/Carlisle	27,001	30,422	3,421	12.7%
Lancaster	19,061	23,286	4,225	22.2%
Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton	19,136	20,961	1,825	9.5%
Reading	13,920	15,803	1,883	13.5%
York/Hanover	13,445	15,429	1,984	14.8%
Erie	9,660	9,708	48	0.5%
State College	5,287	7,346	2,059	38.9%
East Stroudsburg	4,536	5,041	505	11.1%
Altoona	4,116	4,521	405	9.8%
Williamsport	3,798	4,487	689	18.1%
Chambersburg/Waynesboro	3,416	4,484	1,068	31.3%
Lebanon	3,390	4,111	721	21.3%
Johnstown	4,009	3,746	-263	-6.6%
Bloomsburg/Berwick	2,877	3,487	610	21.2%
Gettysburg	2,328	2,699	371	15.9%
Pennsylvania	522,191	644,947	122,756	23.5%

Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

Note: The use of chained dollars adjusts real dollar amounts for inflation over time so that numbers from different years can be compared.

INCOMES

Household median incomes in the planning area differ substantially between the municipalities. The boroughs of Sinking Spring and West Reading have lower median household incomes than both the county and state averages, and both saw declines in the median income between 2009 and 2015. Spring Township and Wyomissing Borough are on the opposite sides of the spectrum, with the township and borough having median household incomes that grew between 2009 and 2015, and exceed the county and state levels.

Median Household Incomes (Inflation Adjusted)			
Municipality	2009	2015	% Change
Sinking Spring	\$57,264	\$52,200	-8.8%
Spring	\$63,777	\$68,025	6.7%
West Reading	\$44,250	\$41,978	-5.1%
Wyomissing	\$64,673	\$73,199	13.2%
Berks County	\$58,795	\$55,798	-5.1%
Pennsylvania	\$54,007	\$53,115	-1.7%

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

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Household Income Distribution

In all four municipalities, the majority of households have a household income from \$35,000 to \$74,999, which is on par with county and state levels. Of note, however, is that the four municipalities do have larger concentrations of higher household incomes than the state in several of the “upper” income bands and Wyomissing has a noteworthy number of households that make over \$200,000 a year.

Household Income Distribution						
Income Group	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
Less than \$10,000	2.5	3.3	5.6	3.2	6.0	7.0
\$10,000 to \$14,999	5.1	2.1	6.5	1.8	4.9	5.4
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8.5	8.8	11	9.5	10.5	10.8
\$25,000 to \$34,999	10.4	8.9	13.2	8.2	10.0	10.4
\$35,000 to \$49,999	17.6	12.2	21.5	11.5	13.5	13.6
\$50,000 to \$74,999	20.2	20.2	17	17.4	19.8	18.4
\$75,000 to \$99,999	12	16.3	16.3	13.8	13.6	12.5
\$100,000 to \$149,999	16.1	16.2	9	14.6	13.7	12.9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	4.2	7.9	0	8.2	4.6	4.7
\$200,000 or more	3.4	4.1	0	11.8	3.4	4.4
Median Income	\$52,200	\$68,025	\$41,978	\$73,199	\$55,798	\$53,115

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Sources of Household Income

The majority of households in the planning area generate income by wage and salary earnings from employment. However, there are some noteworthy differences between the municipalities. In Wyomissing, the higher numbers of households reporting income from social security and retirement shows an older, retiring population as regular payments from social security, pensions and retirement savings are an important income source for older individuals.

Households in Sinking Spring and West Reading report income from transfer payments such as cash/public assistance (Sinking Spring, especially) and food stamps. While both boroughs are below county and state levels in regards to income generated by transfer payments, it suggests that there are households in the boroughs having difficulty making ends meet.

Household Income Sources						
Income Group	Sinking Spring	Spring	West Reading	Wyomissing	Berks	PA
Earnings	81.3	76.4	78.4	69.7	77.1	75.4
Social Security	28.8	31.3	31.8	43.9	32.6	33.2
Retirement	17.5	20.6	15.2	32.5	19.8	20.2
Supplemental Security	1.5	2.2	2.6	2.2	5.7	5.9
Cash/Public Assistance	4.6	1.1	0.8	1.1	3.5	3.5
Food Stamps/SNAP	10.6	4.2	9.0	2.6	13.6	12.5

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

EMPLOYMENT

Sinking Spring has the highest percentage of residents participating in the labor force but also has the highest unemployment in the planning area. Wyomissing has the lowest percentage of residents in the labor force but has the lowest unemployment in the area.

Employment Composition of People Age 16+			
Municipality	In Labor Force	Em- ployed	Unem- ployed
Sinking Spring	71.7	63.8	7.9
Spring	65.6	61.3	4.3
West Reading	65.3	57.4	7.9
Wyomissing	63.2	58.4	4.8
Berks County	65.8	56.8	9.0
Pennsylvania	62.8	54.9	7.9

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

In each of the municipalities, the unemployment level for teenage workers (ages 16-19) and college age workers (20-24) is very high and can skew the numbers. If we remove those age groups from the analysis, the age bands with the highest unemployment in each municipality are shown below:

Municipality	Age Band	Unemployment Rate %
Sinking Spring	60-64	31.2
Spring	25-29	6.0
West Reading	50-59	38.5
Wyomissing	25-29	7.5

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Resident Employment Profile

Shown below is data on the age of the workforce in each municipality and the types of industries that residents, 16 and older, are employed in. Most residents in the planning area are employed in the healthcare and social assistance industry.

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Resident Employer Profile - Workers 16 and Older - 2014										
Type	Sinking Spring		Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing		Berks County	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Resident Workers	2,040		13,182		2,036		5,073		194,993	
Age 29 or younger	458	22.5%	2,721	20.6%	530	26.0%	991	19.5%	43,013	22.1%
Age 30 to 54	1,198	58.7%	7,122	54.0%	1,167	57.3%	2,791	55.0%	105,523	54.1%
Age 55 or older	384	18.8%	3,339	25.3%	339	16.7%	1,291	25.4%	46,457	23.8%
More than \$3,333 per month (\$40,000 +)	898	44.0%	6,321	48.0%	801	39.3%	2,535	50.0%	85,354	43.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	27	1.3%	71	0.5%	6	0.3%	25	0.5%	2,370	1.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	4	0.2%	10	0.1%	3	0.1%	5	0.1%	359	0.2%
Utilities	12	0.6%	64	0.5%	4	0.2%	30	0.6%	1,113	0.6%
Construction	70	3.4%	460	3.5%	61	3.0%	183	3.6%	8,559	4.4%
Manufacturing	291	14.3%	1,907	14.5%	307	15.1%	610	12.0%	33,837	17.4%
Wholesale Trade	86	4.2%	559	4.2%	61	3.0%	197	3.9%	8,684	4.5%
Retail Trade	186	9.1%	1,397	10.6%	207	10.2%	527	10.4%	21,436	11.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	60	2.9%	426	3.2%	48	2.4%	153	3.0%	7,421	3.8%
Information	21	1.0%	156	1.2%	30	1.5%	69	1.4%	2,248	1.2%
Finance and Insurance	83	4.1%	526	4.0%	55	2.7%	206	4.1%	6,809	3.5%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13	0.6%	147	1.1%	17	0.8%	53	1.0%	1,972	1.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	105	5.1%	736	5.6%	87	4.3%	314	6.2%	9,780	5.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	74	3.6%	448	3.4%	58	2.8%	161	3.2%	5,585	2.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management	150	7.4%	766	5.8%	155	7.6%	310	6.1%	11,712	6.0%
Educational Services	177	8.7%	1,320	10.0%	158	7.8%	474	9.3%	16,200	8.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	379	18.6%	2,389	18.1%	431	21.2%	1,026	20.2%	30,344	15.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	30	1.5%	127	1.0%	19	0.9%	69	1.4%	2,176	1.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	143	7.0%	823	6.2%	171	8.4%	335	6.6%	13,011	6.7%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	73	3.6%	388	2.9%	74	3.6%	171	3.4%	5,829	3.0%
Public Administration	56	2.7%	462	3.5%	84	4.1%	155	3.1%	5,548	2.8%

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Mean Hours Worked at a Job

Residents in the planning area work a nearly 40-hour week on average. Declines in hours worked could be due to retirements, underemployment or unemployment. Full time employment is defined as working 35 hours or more per week. Residents in Sinking Spring and West Reading saw small declines in the hours worked at their jobs between 2009 and 2015 while residents in Spring and Wyomissing saw small increases.

Mean Usual Hours Worked				
Municipality	2009	2015	Difference	% Change
Sinking Spring	40	38.9	-1.1	-2.8%
Spring	37.6	37.8	0.2	0.5%
West Reading	39.8	37	-2.8	-7.0%
Wyomissing	39	39.4	0.4	1.0%
Berks County	38.8	38.1	-0.7	-1.8%
Pennsylvania	38.6	38.1	-0.5	-1.3%

Source: U.S. Census, 2005-2009 and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Commute Times

Most residents in the planning area work close to home, with over 60% of residents in each municipality having a commute of less than 10 miles to work.

Percent of Resident Workers Commute to Work In Miles				
Municipality	Less than 10	10 to 24	25 to 50	50 +
Sinking Spring	65.2	13.5	12.8	8.5
Spring	62.5	13.5	14.7	9.3
West Reading	63.9	10.5	16.3	9.3
Wyomissing	62.4	9.3	18.4	10.0
Berks County	49.3	23.9	17.0	9.8

Source: U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Employment Inflow and Outflow

Nearly 32,000 people come into the planning area to work while over 20,000 leave the planning area for employment, making the area a net importer of labor. A little over 2,000 people both live and work in the planning area.

This contrasts with Berks County as a whole, which has more residents leave to work than those from surrounding counties come into Berks County for employment.

Worker Flow in 2014				
Municipality	In to Work	Staying to Work	Out to Work	Difference
Sinking Spring	2,339	114	1,926	413
Spring	10,289	1,269	11,913	-1,624
West Reading	4,153	148	1,888	2,265
Wyomissing	15,022	649	4,424	10,598
Suburban Berks Planning Area	31,803	2,180	20,151	11,652
Berks County	63,536	111,542	83,541	-20,005

Source: U.S. Census LEHD, 2014

Top Industries in the Planning Area

Sinking Spring has over 2,400 jobs inside the borough with almost 40% of those jobs in manufacturing businesses. Alcon Research, a manufacturer of surgical equipment and devices, is located in the Borough. In comparison to its partners in the planning area, the concentration of those manufacturing jobs is unique.

Distribution of All Jobs in the Municipality	
Sinking Spring	
Total Jobs	2,453
Industry	% of Total Jobs
Manufacturing	39.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	23.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	10.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	5.3%
Retail Trade	4.9%
All Others	17.4%

Source: U.S. Census LEHD, 2014

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In Spring Township, the nearly 11,600 jobs are more diversified with retail and health care jobs each accounting for 15% of employment, professional services with 13%, and nearly 57% of all the other jobs in various industries. Spring Township has a concentration of retail centers and office parks. The Reading Rehabilitation Hospital is also located in the Township.

Distribution of All Jobs in the Municipality	
Spring	
Total Jobs	11,558
Industry	% of Total Jobs
Retail Trade	15.6
Health Care and Social Assistance	15.0
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13.0
Educational Services	10.8
Finance and Insurance	10.3
Accommodation and Food Services	9.2
Construction	5.1
All Others	21.0

Source: U.S. Census LEHD, 2014

In West Reading, where the primary campus of Reading Hospital is located, 33% of the 4,300 jobs are in the health care sector.

Distribution of All Jobs in the Municipality	
West Reading	
Total Jobs	4,301
Industry	% of Total Jobs
Health Care and Social Assistance	33.3%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	21.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	10.3%
Manufacturing	9.5%
Retail Trade	6.9%
All Others	18.8%

Source: U.S. Census LEHD, 2014

The 15,700 jobs in Wyomissing have diversification similar to Spring Township. Nearly 21% of the jobs are in health care, followed by retail. Wyomissing has retail centers, including the Berkshire Mall and Vanity Fair outlet, along with the Reading Hospital and many medical offices.

Distribution of All Jobs in the Municipality	
Wyomissing	
Total Jobs	15,671
Industry	% of Total Jobs
Health Care and Social Assistance	20.6%
Retail Trade	17.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	16.9%
Accommodation and Food Services	11.7%
Finance and Insurance	8.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5.9%
All Others	19.1%

Source: U.S. Census LEHD, 2014

Top Employers in Berks County

Listed below are the top 25 employers in Berks County as of 2016. Employers on this list that are located inside the planning area include:

- Reading Hospital, the second largest employer in the County with 6,673 positions;
- Wilson School District, the 17th largest employer in the County with 1,033 positions;
- UGI Energy Services, the 23rd largest employer in the County with 794 positions;
- Alcon Research, the 25th largest employer in the County with 766 positions.

Top 25 Employers in Berks County - 2009 to 2016 and Net Change in Employment				
Ranked by Number of Employees in 2016				
Company	Industry Type	2009 Employees	2016 Employees	Change
East Penn Manufacturing Company	Manufacturing	5,348	7,145	1,797
Reading Hospital	Health Care and Social Assistance	6,839	6,673	-166
Berks County	Government	2,500	2,400	-100
Carpenter Technology Corporation	Manufacturing	1,917	2,305	388
Reading School District	Education	2,637	2,000	-637
Boscov's Inc.	Retail	1,400	1,750	350
Pennsylvania government	Government	1,775	1,720	-55
Penske Truck Company, LP	Rental and Leasing	1,200	1,683	483
St. Joseph's Regional Health Network	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,514	1,623	109
Redner's Warehouse Markets	Retail	1,415	1,361	-54
Supportive Concepts for Families	Health Care and Social Assistance	*	1,274	*
Giant Food Stores	Retail	914	1,244	330
Wal-Mart Stores	Retail	1,783	1,213	-570
Morgan Truck Body, LLC	Manufacturing	*	1,200	*
Berks County IU	Education	1,241	1,190	-51
Santander Bank NA	Finance	1,000	1,100	100
Wilson School District	Education	1,195	1,033	-162
Kutztown University	Education	1,146	980	-166
Ashley Furniture Industries, Inc.	Retail	726	958	232
FirstEnergy Corp.	Utilities	986	921	-65
U.S. Government	Government	1,150	900	-250
IWCO Direct	Professional Services	*	826	*
UGI Energy Services, Inc.	Utilities	*	794	*
Boyertown Area School District	Education	1,066	789	-277
Alcon Research, Ltd.	Professional Services	*	766	*

Source: Reading Eagle, Berks County Planning Commission
 The * denotes a company that was unranked in 2009.

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In addition to the employers listed above, other noteworthy employers in the planning area include:

R.M. Palmer Candy Company, located in West Reading, with 550 positions;

CNA Group, located in Spring Township, with 403 positions;

Penn State Berks Campus, located in Spring Township, with 308 positions;

The Loomis Company, located in Wyomissing, with 230 positions;

Herbein + Company, located in Spring Township, with 110 positions;

TAX BASES

From the perspective of municipal administration, the tax base drives the ability to invest in amenities and provide quality professional services that your residents expect. From a resident's perspective, tax burden influences where people buy homes, whether they reinvest in property and where they develop businesses. The ability to raise revenue to provide infrastructure and services is affected by the tax base. The existing and future real estate of the municipality provides opportunities and constraints for maintaining and attracting homeowners, businesses, and jobs. Overall, the key to economic stability or growth is to optimize the tax base by making every acre of land as productive as it can be without compromising community wants and needs or the natural/environmental resources in the community.

The Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) provides the information on the Berks County and the municipal tax bases that will be discussed below. STEB's primary role is to determine, on an annual basis, the total market value of taxable property in all 67 counties and 2,562 municipalities. This data is primarily used in the disbursement of school funds to the state's 501 school districts.

Berks County Planning Commission staff uses this STEB data to analyze tax base trends. Annually collected for every county, it allows us to analyze multi-year trends at both the municipal and county levels. We wanted to see if the municipal tax bases genuinely expanded between 2006 and 2015, so we adjusted all dollar figures to constant dollars, accounting for inflation. We do this because over time, inflation gives a false picture of monetary growth. We also have broken out the municipal tax base into eight several categories. The 2006 year is a good year for analysis, as it is pre-recession.

In all four municipalities, the market value of the tax base increased while the assessed value of the base decreased. There are three primary factors, combined, that drive this incongruence. One, Berks County has not reassessed since 1994. The longer the period between reassessments generally means less of the "market" value of the base will be collected over time. Secondly, any number of successful reassessment appeals further decreases that assessed tax base. Thirdly, when property values decline, the tax base upon which the tax is levied shrinks. Property values declined substantially in Berks County due to the 2007-2009 recession and have been slow to rebound to the 2006 levels.

Sinking Spring

In 2006, the borough was collecting taxes on a little over 100% of the market value of its tax base. However, by 2015, this has declined to 78%. The borough saw declines in the commercial and industrial sectors of the base.

Market Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Sinking Spring	225,541,394	271,387,211	45,845,817	20.3%
Assessed Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Sinking Spring	227,574,698	212,061,600	-15,513,098	-6.8%
Tax Collection on Market Value of Tax Base				
Municipality	2006	2015	% Change	
Sinking Spring	100.9%	78.1%	-22.6%	

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

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The borough's tax base saw the most growth in residential development, as there were declines in the number of empty lots, industrial and commercial properties.

Percentage Breakdown of County Tax Base by Category						
2006	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Sinking Spring	63.6	3.0	12.0	21.0	0.3	0.0
2015	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Sinking Spring	69.2	0.2	10.7	19.7	0.3	0.0
Change	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Sinking Spring	5.6	-2.8	-1.3	-1.3	0.0	0.0

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

Spring Township

The Township was collecting taxes on nearly the entirety of the market value of its tax base in 2006. However, by 2015, this has declined to 78%. The township saw a significant decline in the value of the residential sector of the base between 2006 and 2015.

Market Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Spring	1,693,275,948	2,021,643,900	328,367,952	19.4%
Assessed Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Spring	1,682,517,547	1,573,902,600	-108,614,947	-6.5%
Tax Collection on Market Value of Tax Base				
Municipality	2006	2015	% Change	
Spring	99.4%	77.9%	-21.6%	

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

The 2006 and 2015 township tax bases are nearly identical. Residential units make up nearly ¾ of the township's tax base.

Percentage Breakdown of County Tax Base by Category						
2006	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Spring	73.9	1.4	0.8	22.5	1.2	0.2
2015	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Spring	74.0	0.3	0.6	23.7	1.2	0.1
Change	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Spring	0.1	-1.1	-0.2	1.2	0.0	-0.1

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

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West Reading

In West Reading, the borough was collecting taxes on 103.4% of the tax base in 2006. Much like their neighboring municipalities, it declined to 81.3% by 2015. The borough saw major declines in their residential and commercial values.

Market Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
West Reading	195,896,551	208,001,230	12,104,679	6.2%
Assessed Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
West Reading	202,552,241	169,143,500	-33,408,741	-16.5%
Tax Collection on Market Value of Tax Base				
Municipality	2006	2015	% Change	
West Reading	103.4%	81.3%	-21.4%	

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

The borough saw an increase in the commercial sector of the base, a small decline in the residential sector and a sizeable decline in the industrial sector.

Percentage Breakdown of County Tax Base by Category						
2006	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
West Reading	51.9	0.1	2.8	45.3	0.0	0.0
2015	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
West Reading	51.4	0.3	1.3	47.0	0.0	0.0
Change	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
West Reading	-0.5	0.2	-1.5	1.7	0.0	0.0

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

Wyomissing

In 2006, the borough was collecting taxes on a little over 100% of the market value of the base. By 2015, this declined to 82%. Declines in residential and commercial values contributed significantly to the decrease in the assessed value.

Market Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Wyomissing	1,188,997,858	1,242,863,949	53,866,091	4.5%
Assessed Value of Tax Base - 2006 and 2015				
Municipality	2006	2015	\$ Change	% Change
Wyomissing	1,214,350,183	1,015,649,100	-198,701,083	-16.4%
Tax Collection on Market Value of Tax Base				
Municipality	2006	2015	% Change	
Wyomissing	102.1%	81.7%	-20.0%	

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

The tax base overall has been steady. The borough is served by two school districts and the base is very different between the two. The part of Wyomissing in the Wilson School District is dominated by commercial properties. The part of the borough served by the Wyomissing School District is heavily residential.

Percentage Breakdown of County Tax Base by Category						
2006	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Wyomissing (Wilson)	15.2	0.1	1.7	82.7	0.0	0.3
Wyomissing (Wyomissing)	82.1	0.3	2.1	15.5	0.0	0.0
2015	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Wyomissing (Wilson)	15.8	0.1	2.1	82.1	0.0	0.0
Wyomissing (Wyomissing)	81.5	0.2	0.9	17.4	0.0	0.0
Change	Residential	Lots	Industrial	Commercial	Agriculture	Land
Wyomissing (Wilson)	0.6	0.0	0.4	-0.6	0.0	-0.3
Wyomissing (Wyomissing)	-0.6	-0.1	-1.2	1.9	0.0	0.0

Source: Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board Land Use and Market Value Reports: 2006 and 2015

TAXES

Components of Real Estate Taxes

The chart on the following page illustrates the change in taxes by components from 2006 to current tax rates. The Wilson School District tax saw the most change in number of mills. The Spring Township municipal real estate tax saw the largest percent increase. Wyomissing has the lowest municipal real estate tax in the planning area; West Reading the highest.

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Components of Real Estate Tax Mills - Comparison				
Unit	2006	2016-2017	# Change	% Change
Berks County Tax	6.94	7.37	0.44	6.3%
Wilson School District Tax	17.59	24.95	7.36	41.8%
Wyomissing School District Tax	23.84	30.07	6.23	26.1%
Sinking Spring	3.19	7.99	4.80	150.5%
Spring	1.50	4.01	2.51	167.3%
West Reading	4.25	8.10	3.85	90.6%
Wyomissing	2.23	3.90	1.67	74.9%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission, Berks County Assessment Office

The chart below shows the entire millage (municipal, school district, county) combined. Between 2006 and present, Sinking Spring has seen the most change for millage. Presently, the Borough of Wyomissing has the lowest amount of millage. West Reading has the highest amount.

Total Tax Millage Comparison (SD, Municipal and County Together)				
Unit	2006	2016-2017	# Change	% Change
Sinking Spring	27.72	40.31	12.60	45.5%
Spring	26.03	36.33	10.31	39.6%
West Reading	35.03	45.54	10.52	30.0%
Wyomissing (Wilson SD)	26.76	36.22	9.47	35.4%
Wyomissing (Wyomissing SD)	33.01	41.34	8.34	25.3%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission, Berks County Assessment Office

Impact of Real Estate Taxes in the Planning Area

For the purpose of our analysis below, we assume each municipality has a house with a 2016 fair market value of \$100,000 with no homestead exemption applied. A fixed value allows us to look solely at the tax burden in the area. Sinking Spring homeowners have seen the most increase in real estate taxes since 2006. Wyomissing residents have seen the smallest increase in real estate taxes. Residents in West Reading have the highest tax burden (highest amount of millage) while residents who live in the section of Wyomissing Borough that is in the Wilson School District, have the lowest burden.

Tax Bill on a \$100,000 Market Value House in 2006 and 2016-2017					
Sinking Spring	Total	Assessed Value	Tax Bill	OVERALL	
2006	27.72	\$75,187	\$2,084	\$ Change	% Change
2016-2017	40.31	\$74,074	\$2,986	\$902	43.3%
Spring	Total	Assessed Value	Tax Bill	OVERALL	
2006	26.03	\$75,187	\$1,957	\$ Change	% Change
2016-2017	36.33	\$74,074	\$2,691	\$734	37.5%
West Reading	Total	Assessed Value	Tax Bill	OVERALL	
2006	35.03	\$75,187	\$2,634	\$ Change	% Change
2016-2017	45.54	\$74,074	\$3,373	\$740	28.1%
Wyomissing (Wilson)	Total	Assessed Value	Tax Bill	OVERALL	
2006	26.76	\$75,187	\$2,012	\$ Change	% Change
2016-2017	36.22	\$74,074	\$2,683	\$671	33.3%
Wyomissing (Wyomissing)	Total	Assessed Value	Tax Bill	OVERALL	
2006	33.01	\$75,187	\$2,482	\$ Change	% Change
2016-2017	41.34	\$74,074	\$3,062	\$580	23.4%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

Looking at tax burden, with all Berks County municipalities having the same exact \$100,000 house, you can see in the first column that West Reading has the sixth highest amount of taxes in Berks County while Wyomissing (Wilson) has the lowest.

However, if the tax rate was applied to the assessed value based on real median housing values, the numbers change substantially. West Reading’s tax bill is the 11th lowest. This is due to the low median housing values in the Borough. Consequentially, due to the high median housing values in Wyomissing, the section of the borough that is in the Wyomissing School District pays the 6th highest amount of taxes behind District, Lower Heidelberg, Rockland, Amity and Pike townships.

In the case of West Reading, a high amount of millage is being applied to low median housing values (4th lowest in the County).

In Wyomissing: A low amount of millage is being applied to high median housing values (13th highest in the County).

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Ranking of the 2017 Tax Bill in the Planning Area Versus All Other Berks County Municipalities		
Municipality	Same \$100,000 House	Median House Value
Sinking Spring	25th	31st
Spring	53rd	43rd
West Reading	6th	63rd
Wyomissing (Wilson)	54th	17th
Wyomissing (Wyomissing)	17th	6th

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

Tax Exempt Parcels

There are 366 parcels in the planning area are entirely or partially exempt from paying school, municipal and county property taxes, according to Berks County assessment data. The majority of these properties are religious and government buildings and state owned parkland. The most valuable exempt privately owned property is the Reading Hospital property in West Reading with a value of nearly \$129 million.

The largest exempt property is the 315-acre portion of Pennsylvania State Game Lands (SGL #274) on Vinemont Road in Spring Township. Spring Township has the most tax exempt parcels – 189.

Top Ten Tax-Exempt Parcels by Value in the Planning Area - 2017			
Owner	Address	Municipality	Value in \$
Reading Hospital	6th Avenue	West Reading	128,255,700
Penn State University	Tulpehocken Road	Spring	44,724,200
Reading Hospital	Paper Mill Road	Spring	43,474,700
Wilson School District	Grandview Boulevard	Spring	14,210,300
Wilson School District	Iroquois Avenue	Spring	13,510,700
Glad Tidings Assembly of God	Snyder Road	Spring	9,630,300
Wilson School District	Broadcasting Road	Spring	7,479,500
Wyomissing School District	Evans Avenue	Wyomissing	7,176,600
Wilson School District	Sage Drive	Spring	6,215,000
Wyomissing School District	Woodland Road	Wyomissing	4,881,000

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

Top Ten Tax-Exempt Parcels by Size in the Planning Area - 2017				
Owner	Address	Municipality	Size in Acres	Value in \$
PA State Game Commission	Vinemont Road	Spring	315	1,104,400
Penn State University	Tulpehocken Road	Spring	210	44,724,200
Spring Township	State Hill Road	Spring	73	357,400
Wyomissing Borough	Cambridge Avenue	Wyomissing	53	159,500
Sinking Spring Borough	Reedy Road	Spring	51	1,640,200
Denver Borough Authority	Buzzard Road	Spring	49	213,400
Wyomissing Borough	Evans Avenue	Wyomissing	47	920,600
Spring Township	Goose Lane	Spring	47	162,700
Wilson School District	Grandview Boulevard	Spring	44	14,210,300
Spring Township	Sage Lane	Spring	40	425,800

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

Local Economic Development Organizations

Perhaps the local economy's greatest asset, however, is the engaged, well-informed, and well-organized residents that volunteer in organizations that advance its continued development and viability.

Sinking Spring Revitalization Program

The BOSS (Borough of Sinking Spring) 2020 Revitalization Committee was formed in 2008 to develop a revitalization plan for the Borough's central business district in and around Penn Avenue that aimed to correct misaligned downtown intersections to improve congestion, vehicular and pedestrian connectivity, and access undeveloped land to provide opportunities for market-driven development. These projects are discussed in more detail in the transportation section.

West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation

The Borough has had a Main Street program since 1997 that focuses on Penn Avenue and it added the Elm Street Program in 2005 that focuses on the residential neighborhoods around Penn Avenue. The Elm Street program has been recognized as one of the best in the state, winning awards in 2016 and 2017. In 2012, both programs were brought under the auspices of the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation. In addition to the administration of grants and operations for the above programs, the Foundation organizes and sponsors the West Reading Farmers Market and many community events and public art displays.

West Reading Borough Economic Development Committee

The West Reading Economic Development Committee is an informal committee formed to monitor the state of vacant commercial properties along West reading's portion of the Penn Avenue corridor. The committee works in conjunction with the Berks County Redevelopment Authority's Blighted Property Review Committee to address borough blight by choosing properties that may be eligible for blight designation and then future remediation.

Wyomissing Borough Economic Development Committee

The Borough's Economic Development Committee, created in 2008 is comprised of members of Borough Council, staff and Borough residents. The Committee organizes the annual Meet and Greet breakfasts that bring business owners together.

Economic Development Goals

Consider changing the goal from “development” to prosperity.

The planning area's prosperity is influenced by the quality of the area as a place to live, the public education system, availability of capital, and the condition of both the natural (parks, open space, environmentally sensitive areas) and built environments. The planning area should not evaluate success nor be satisfied solely on single metrics such as the number of jobs created or how “nice” a building or area looks. The municipalities should make investments and attract private investment and enterprise that improves the area's ability to weather economic changes (e.g. ecommerce and its effect on bricks and mortar retail, rise in healthcare demand) and downturns and improves prosperity for developers, business owners, and residents alike.

Focus on providing high quality, fundamental public services.

The area's infrastructure assets are valuable and represent generations of investment. They also require maintenance, repair, and attention. Sidewalks, streets, bridges, stormwater management systems, parks and open space, and water and sewer systems ensure that business and residents can move around the area, drink clean water, and have reliable sewer service. Having an intentional investment strategy to maintain and improve these systems will continue to make the planning area an attractive location to invest, reside, and reduce the expensive consequences of deferred maintenance.

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Prioritize infrastructure improvements.

Identify the infrastructure improvements needed to attract and support the growth of industries and businesses the planning area wants to have, and prioritize the completion of these improvements. Consider joint capital improvements planning to increase awareness and visibility of infrastructure needs.

Encourage more coordination between the municipal economic development committees.

The planning area is competing with the remainder of Berks County and 66 other counties and thousands of municipalities in the state. The area will need to look beyond the provincial boundaries of their individual municipality and consider the local economy as a regional issue. The planning region's economic development committees, organizations and both school districts should consider meeting together on a routine basis to discuss issues that affect all the municipalities. These organizations should contemplate whether there is value in creating a broadened, current, and comprehensive *Penn Street Corridor Plan* that includes at minimum, all four municipalities in the planning region, and if preferred, the City of Reading. Since State Hill Road connects to Penn Avenue, this corridor could be included in the plan as well.

The regional effort will evaluate present and future needs for public investment, and areas such as redevelopment, access management, and parking on Penn Avenue and adjacent neighborhoods. Due to the collaboration across municipal lines, the individual streetscape and transportation projects that come out of that analysis will be more visible and attractive for other private and public funding opportunities and there is greater likelihood that zoning at municipal boundaries will be compatible.

Encourage regulatory alignment in all municipalities.

The planning area should strive to keep their planning and permitting processes current and streamlined, eliminating excessive or obsolete requirements, with fee structures for planning services and permitting that recover no more than the actual costs to conduct such programs and reviews.

Municipalities should monitor county, state, and national trends and maintain timely and modern zoning regulations that foster investment and redevelopment of sites in the area.

Boost the diversification of the local economy.

Encourage the development, redevelopment, and reinvestment in an array of retail, service, office, and other employment uses in all mixed residential/commercial, commercial and industrial land use areas as shown on the Future Land Use Plan. Support small business such home occupations and limited, neighborhood-serving commercial and employment uses in the (residential land use categories).

Support the creation and growth of local businesses.

Support the creation of local businesses by promoting a positive business environment by reducing the municipal barriers to opening businesses, leveraging existing programs, providing information and business resources through coordinated websites, and exploring and advertising potential incentives financial tools and resources to assist in new business establishment.

Attract and cultivate a skilled workforce.

Cultivate and attract a skilled workforce by providing access to attainable and high quality housing options, supporting vibrant, well-maintained neighborhoods and amenities, and ensuring high quality schools for families. Support the growth of businesses that employ people with advanced skills and degrees.

Consider developing and sponsoring a summer jobs program for high school students in the Wyomissing and Wilson school districts.

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The municipalities, in partnership with the school districts, non-profit organizations, and/or private-sector employers, would create and sponsor a multi-week program that would offer high school age students a paid, positive employment experience. The program would be an effort to decrease the unemployment rate of this age group, increase their income, teach the value and importance of a paycheck, help develop skills and networks to improve their labor market prospects, and offering constructive activities to promote positive behavior.

Consider an “Eds and Meds” focus on proactively planning for the expansion of health care and higher education facilities and attract the services and providers that complement the hospital and the university.

Attract additional services and providers that are not currently present or are under-represented in the region or that compliment a large regional hospital and the university. Identify strategies to enhance and expand the medical services offered in the region and plan for the expansion of existing health care services and facilities already present in the planning area. The presence of the hospital and the Penn State campus in the planning area makes area residents more likely to earn college degrees and remain in the area to work. In addition, students who come to the area from elsewhere are more likely to remain in the area to work after completing their degrees.

Given the importance of the retail sector in the community, the municipalities should make sure its ordinances address industry trends and the needs of retail businesses and retail development.

Successful retail establishments rely on environments that are adaptable, flexible, and creative enough to keep up with the latest trends, new concepts and shifting market demand. The region has a strong history in redeveloping properties for new uses. Going forward, the planning region may want to explore zoning and land development regulations that would permit non-retail uses and mixed-use development on the Berkshire Mall property and other older retail locations.

Tools for Economic Development

There are various tools and programs available to municipalities who want to strengthen, promote, retain and/or incentivize economic development in their respective jurisdictions. The following is a list of common programs, some of which are administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) (www.newpa.com), for municipalities to use to implement economic development initiatives:

Keystone Innovation Zone Tax Credit Program (KIZ) – This program provides tax credits to early-stage technology-oriented businesses and entrepreneurs operating in a Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ); companies without a tax liability may sell tax credits to companies with tax liabilities for cash. Funding provides tax credits for companies that have been in operation less than 8 (eight) years, whose gross revenues have increased over the previous year, are located in a KIZ Zone, and fall under the industry sector focus.

Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) – The program provides state and local tax abatement to businesses and residents locating in one of the 12 designated zones. Businesses, property owners and residents located in a KOZ are eligible to receive significant state and local tax benefits. Projects in KOZs are given priority consideration for assistance under various community and economic building initiatives. Pennsylvania businesses relocating to a KOZ must either: increase their full-time employment by 20 percent within the first full year of operation, or make a 10 percent capital investment in the KOZ property based on their prior year’s gross revenues. Eligibility for benefits is based upon annual certification. In order to receive benefits, any entity applying must be compliant with all local and state taxes and building and zoning codes.

Keystone Special Development Zone (KSDZ) – The KSDZ program was established for the purpose of providing incentives to for-profit businesses that locate and operate in designated geographic zones. Pennsylvania continues to have a surplus of abandoned, deteriorated commercial and industrial sites in need of revitalization. The KSDZ program is an incentive-based tax credit program to foster redevelopment of these former industrial and commercial sites. To be eligible, sites must be located within a Special Industrial Area as of July 11, 2011, for which the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has executed a Special Industrial

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Area Consent Order and Agreement. Businesses that provide job-creating economic development opportunities in these sites through the expansion of existing operations or the relocation of operations to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania may be eligible for tax credits under this program.

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) – LERTA allows local taxing authorities to exempt new construction and improvements to a commercial, industrial, and/or business property if such property is located in a deteriorated area. In order for a LERTA to apply to a property, each taxing authority (County, Municipal and School District) must, by ordinance or resolution, exempt from real estate property taxes, the assessed value of the improvements to deteriorated properties and the assessed value of new construction within the designated deteriorated areas.

Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) – The Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) is created to help local governments efficiently and effectively plan and implement a variety of services, improvements, and soundly manage development. The program provides funding for three groups of activities – shared service, community planning, and floodplain management. The program is administered by the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services (GCLGS) (www.newpa.com/local-government/) in the DCED.

Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVEST) – The program provides low-interest loans for design, engineering and construction costs associated with publicly and privately owned drinking water distribution and treatment facilities, stormwater conveyance and wastewater collection, conveyance, treatment facilities and Brownfield site remediation.

Tax Increment Financing Guarantee Program (TIF) – This program promotes and stimulates the general economic welfare of various regions and communities in the commonwealth and assists in the development, redevelopment and revitalization of Brownfield and Greenfield sites in accordance with the TIF Act. The program provides credit enhancement for TIF projects to improve market access and lower capital costs through the use of guarantees to issuers of bonds or other debt. Funds are used for infrastructure and environmental projects for industrial enterprises and retail establishments, infrastructure, environmental and building projects for manufacturers, hospitals, or convention centers, utilization of abandoned or underutilized industrial, commercial, military, previously mined institutional sites or buildings; or undeveloped sites planned and zoned for development in accordance with an existing comprehensive municipal plan.

Berks County Economic Development Land Suitability Tool – Created by the Berks County Planning Commission in conjunction with the Ride to Prosperity Sites and Infrastructure Committee, this interactive web map tool is intended to guide users to the most suitable areas in Berks County for commercial and industrial uses. The heat map shows land with suitability ranges 3 through 6, with a range of 6 being the most suitable.

These are just a sample of some commonly used programs for facilitating economic development within communities. More information can be found on Pennsylvania grants and resources at PA DCED’s website at www.newpa.com.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A key aspect of transportation planning is effective coordination between the different government agencies responsible for maintaining the various parts of the transportation infrastructure. In the planning area, these include the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS), the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Berks County, and the planning area municipalities.

As part of the process of preparing this transportation chapter, the RATS FFY 2017-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was reviewed and considered. This section of the plan will focus on the local transportation infrastructure. Details on the PennDOT owned infrastructure can be found in the RATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the LRTP.



Penn and 6th Avenue in West Reading

RATS is the regional transportation planning organization for the Reading, Pennsylvania metropolitan area. The Reading Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) covers all of Berks County. Working with PennDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), RATS facilitates and is responsible for prioritizing approximately \$80 million annually to advance transportation improvement projects throughout the county. PennDOT, South Central Transportation Authority (SCTA), and the 72 municipalities in the County are responsible for project implementation.

ROADS

As shown below the municipalities in the planning area have nearly 170 miles of roads and streets to maintain. The streets and roads owned by the municipalities are part of the Pennsylvania State Liquid Fuels Programs that provides state payments to the municipalities for road maintenance and reconstruction based on population and miles of roads meeting PennDOT specifications. However, the Liquid Fuels funds comprise only a small part of the municipal maintenance budgets and do not cover the cost of long-term maintenance and reconstruction.

Shown below is a comparison of the liquid fuels allocations in 2012 and 2017. The amount of money allocated to each municipality increased and overall, LFF increased 33%. Streets and roads owned and maintained by both municipalities are in good condition. The municipalities will focus on continued maintenance, including resurfacing, and monitor the need to correct specific drainage problems and add shoulders based on available funding. Paving projects are scheduled annually based on street/road condition and available funding.

Net Liquid Fuels Allocations Comparison by Municipality 2012 & 2017						
2012 (inf. Adj.)			2017			
Municipality	Miles	Dollars	Municipality	Miles	Dollars	% Increase
Sinking Spring	9.91	\$78,673	Sinking Spring	9.91	\$105,255	33.8%
Spring	98.39	\$606,951	Spring	99.58	\$814,413	34.2%
West Reading	10.6	\$82,725	West Reading	10.6	\$110,744	33.9%
Wyomissing	50.89	\$265,443	Wyomissing	50.89	\$353,654	33.2%
TOTAL	169.79	\$1,033,792	TOTAL	170.98	\$1,384,066	33.9%

Source: PennDOT Bureau of Municipal Services MLF Allocations Report, 2012 & 2017

Figures 14 through 17 show the federal functional classifications assigned to roads in the area. The functional classification of a roadway may change over time based on changing traffic conditions. Classification of a road is based on an analysis of the volume of traffic using the facility, the type of trip provided, the length of trip, and the speed of the trip.

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Arterials provide the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control. These roads are typically classified as principal arterials (sub-grouped by Interstate, Freeway/ Expressway, and other principal arterials) and minor arterials. Examples of roads of this type in the area include Routes 222 and 422 and 422 Business (Penn Avenue).

Collectors provide a lower level of service at a slower speed. They provide service for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials. Collectors are classified as major collectors and minor collectors. These roads provide access to individual properties and serve short distance, low speed trips. Examples include Mountain Home Road and Woodrow Avenue in Sinking Spring Borough, Reading Avenue/Hill Avenue in West Reading Borough, Reading and Grandview Boulevards, Cambridge Avenue, and part of Woodland Road in Wyomissing Borough, and Old Fritztown and Wheatfield Roads in Spring Township.

Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is the total number of vehicles traveling on a road on an average day. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes provide an overview of the traffic flow in the municipalities for planning purposes. An important point to remember is that AADT does not reflect daily and seasonal traffic volumes that can far exceed AADT. The proportionate increase in daily and seasonal counts can be significant. PennDOT conducts traffic counts on state roads, and the counts provide the means to assess the overall traffic conditions in the area. Figures 14 through 17 illustrate 2014 AADT on area roadways. The heaviest traveled roads are the arterials in the area, namely the Warren Street Bypass, the West Shore Bypass, Penn Avenue and Shillington Road/State Route 724.

Roadway surfaces in the area are mostly comprised of paved surface roadways. Of the paved surface roadways, pavements are either asphalt or concrete. PennDOT assesses pavement surface conditions using a variety of metrics that include International Roughness Index (IRI). IRI measures pavement roughness in terms of the number of inches per mile that a laser, mounted in a specialized van, jumps as it is driven along highway – the lower the IRI, the smoother the ride. Since PennDOT uses IRI in its pavement condition performance measures, Figures 18 through 21 show the condition of pavement on state roads in the area.

Bridges

The topography and hydrology of the area provide ample recreational activities and commercial activities, but also create a transportation challenge to move people and freight over them in Berks County. Overall, the bridges in the planning area are in good shape. In 2017, there are 69 bridges in the area, with the majority (51 bridges) owned and maintained by PennDOT. The entities responsible for the other 18 bridges are described below. These bridges are those that require inspections – state bridges longer than eight feet and local bridges longer than 20 feet. Figures 18 through 21 show the approximate location of bridges in the area.

Ownership of Non-PennDOT Bridges in the Planning Area	
Owner	# of Bridges
Berks County	4
Spring Township	4
Spring/Lower Heidelberg townships	3
West Reading Borough	2
Wyomissing Borough	2
Private Owner	1
Spring/South Heidelberg townships	1
Spring/Norfolk Southern Railroad	1
Total	18

Source: PennDOT

As the area's bridges continue to age and deteriorate, it is sometimes necessary to close bridges unexpectedly due to problems revealed during routine inspections. Bridges closed to traffic are those structures deemed

unsafe to carry any type of traffic. As of 2017, there are two closed bridges in the planning region – the historic Wertz’s Covered Bridge (open to pedestrian traffic only) and a privately owned bridge on Reedy Road.

Load posting a bridge is required by the National Bridge Inspection Standards when a bridge is not capable of safely carrying a legal load. If a bridge is deemed deficient, officials will post a maximum load for the bridge. Bridges may be posted for other load-capacity restrictions including speed and number of vehicles permitted on the bridge. There are four (4) load-posted bridges in the area.

Structurally deficient bridges are characterized by deteriorated conditions of the major components of a bridge. This may include cracked concrete, the bridge deck, the support structure, or the entire bridge itself. A “structurally deficient” (SD) designation does not imply that a bridge is unsafe. However, such bridges typically require significant maintenance to remain in service and will eventually require major rehabilitation or replacement to address the underlying deficiency. There are eight (8) such bridges in the area.

A functionally obsolete bridge does not meet current design standards. Examples include a bridge that is too narrow, has inadequate under-clearances, has insufficient load-carrying capacity, is poorly aligned with the roadway, or can no longer adequately service today’s traffic. Functionally obsolete does not mean the bridge is unsafe or necessarily structurally deficient. It means that the bridge is showing its age and should be upgraded or replaced to improve its function. The area has 17 such bridges in the planning area, most owned by PennDOT.

The table below shows the bridges of most concern in the planning area because Berks County or municipalities own them and they are either functionally obsolete or structurally deficient as of September 2017.

Bridges of Local Concern								
Bridge	Location	Built	Reconstructed	Municipality	Length	Deck Width	Bridge Area	Issue
Wyomissing Boulevard	South of Parkside Drive North	1931	-	Berks County	50	100	5,000	Structurally Deficient
Wertz’s Covered Bridge	Tulpehocken Road	1869	1985	Berks County	200	17	3,400	Functionally Obsolete
Dwight Street	North of Cleveland Avenue	1932	-	Spring Township/Norfolk Southern	137	49	6,713	Structurally Deficient
Paper Mill Road	West of Route 222	1968	-	Spring/Lower Heidelberg townships	55	43	2,365	Structurally Deficient
Prendergast Road	West of Van Reed Road	1989	-	Spring Township	22	24	528	Functionally Obsolete
Parkview Road	Third Avenue Extension	1961	-	West Reading Borough	117	54	6,318	Structurally Deficient

Source: PennDOT

CONGESTED CORRIDORS

Traffic congestion results in loss of time, increased fuel consumption, decreased air quality, and hindrance to economic development. The individual, social, economic, and environmental impacts and costs due to transportation congestion go well beyond the less efficient movement of people and goods. Economic development and quality of life improve when areas of traffic congestion are corrected.

RATS developed a Congestion Management Process (CMP) in May 2016 that included an examination of the 38 most congested corridors in the County. These corridors were ranked using both a Travel Time Index (TTI) and the Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT) in that corridor. Please note that these rankings are not a definitive account of congestion along the network or a representation of prioritizing one corridor over another for improvements. Rather, it is an introduction to useful data and highlights the bottlenecks and most congested segments in the planning area. Figures 22 through 24 show the area’s congested corridors. The rankings shown on the maps represent where the corridor is ranked countywide. Given that a significant amount of job centers, retail and traffic generators are in the planning area as detailed in the Economy section of this plan, there are a significant number of congested corridors. As discussed in future projects, PennDOT is exploring

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improvements at the #1 ranked congested corridor in the planning area and several other corridors shown below have proposed or planned improvements.

Most Congested Corridors Ranked by Travel Time and Daily Traffic in the Suburban Berks Planning Area				
County Rank	SBJCP Rank	Corridor	Peak TTI	Max AADT
2	1	U.S. 222 Business (U.S. 222 Merge to U.S. 422 West Shore Bypass)	4.42	22,310
3	2	U.S. 422 Business (U.S. 222 Merge to U.S. 422 Interchange)	3.61	23,473
4	3	U.S. 422 Business (Penn Street Bridge to U.S. 422 Merge)	3.36	21,904
7	4	PA 724 (Sinking Spring to U.S. 222 Business)	2.38	14,301
8	5	U.S. 422 (Lebanon County to U.S. 222 Merge)	2.27	21,347
13	6	SR 3023 (State Hill Road)	1.96	20,801
15	7	U.S. 222 (U.S. 422 Merge to U.S. 222 Business Merge)	1.92	74,847
22	8	SR 3021 (Paper Mill Road)	1.60	18,002
25	9	SR 3055 (Van Reed Road)	1.57	12,307
29	10	U.S. 422 (West Shore Bypass)	1.44	78,134
30	11	PA 12 (Warren Street Bypass)	1.44	59,132
38	12	U.S. 222 (Lancaster County to U.S. 422 Merge)	1.03	44,135

Source: 2016 Reading Area Transportation Study Congestion Management Process

Parking

Penn Avenue is the “downtown” for commerce and day-to-day activities in the planning area. In Penn Avenue, especially in West Reading and Wyomissing is home to many offices, retail stores, restaurants, and numerous community events coupled with residential land uses. In short, the planning region has this downtown with a great need for parking on a daily basis that experiences heavy demand on occasions. This demand sparks the question — is there a need for a new parking facility/structure? For years, both boroughs have managed parking demand with traditional strategies, including time limits, enforcement, and signage. However, as the growth and prosperity of Penn Avenue has advanced rapidly in recent years, the parking pressures on Penn Avenue are growing. Ultimately, parking can influence economic prosperity. The boroughs have the ability to enhance and support its businesses, retail activity, restaurant diversity, and residential property values by managing parking demand and supply.

At a minimum, the boroughs of West Reading and Wyomissing should consider a Penn Avenue Parking Study to provide a comprehensive and accurate view of parking activity and issues in the corridor. This report would focus on accommodating future growth and parking in a fiscally responsible manner.

Walking and Biking

Walking is an enjoyable and low-cost form of transportation. The pedestrian infrastructure in the planning area, consisting largely of sidewalks, crossing treatments, and shared-use paths and trails, is a fundamental part of its transportation system, connecting people not only to destinations, but also to other transportation modes such as transit and driving.

In January 2007, Spring Township adopted the “Township of Spring Greenways and Trails Plan” which has and will continue to guide the development of greenways and trails throughout the Township and the surrounding communities. The Township has already identified and marked three (3) trail systems which connect ten (10) parks, six (6) school facilities, three (3) municipal facilities and two (2) libraries. One of the trails crosses into Wyomissing Borough and connects to the Penn State Berks Campus and Berks County’s Gring’s Mill Recreation Area. This connection allows trail users access to the Union Canal Towpath Trail which leads to the extensive

trail system at Blue Marsh Lake. The Township continues to plan for easement acquisitions as they may become available in the southern region of the Township where rural roads are not as conducive for pedestrian traffic.

The boroughs have a well-connected grid street pattern that allows for good pedestrian connections. Outside the boroughs, in Spring Township, the road network has a more irregular pattern with small residential streets feeding into larger arterials, which are typically high speed and high traffic volume corridors. There are areas with curvilinear and cul-de-sac style development that do not provide connections to neighboring streets. A number of Spring Township's older neighborhoods lack sidewalks, as they were built to reflect a more rural feel. In some areas, where traffic volumes and speeds are low, the lack of formal pedestrian facilities does not reduce the ability to walk. In fact, some neighborhood residents prefer having streets without sidewalk facilities.

The municipalities should recognize that demand for walkable neighborhoods is increasing and it is changing where people want to live and what they are looking for when purchasing a home. People of all ages are recognizing the benefits of living in a place where they can walk to nearby shops, recreation, restaurants and public transportation. The benefits are many – convenience, reduced time spent driving and the health benefit of building walking into your day. But more than that, being walkable may be a major factor in the community being economically competitive.

In recent years local realtors have been experiencing more and more interest from potential homebuyers on the walkability of the neighborhoods they are interested in. Because of this many realtor websites and multiple listing services include this information. One useful tool in determining the walkability of a particular neighborhood can be found at: www.walkscore.com. This website uses a proprietary algorithm to calculate walkability scores on a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being the best score. To put it into perspective, a walkability score of 70 – 89 is considered “very walkable” and a score of 90 – 100 is considered “a walker’s paradise.”

As one would assume, the walkability score for West Reading Borough is quite high at 88 because of all of the entertainment, restaurants and shopping located within the Borough. When calculated for the other municipalities it's harder to determine a score. This is because the score bases its calculation on a specific address entered into the system, so depending on where in the township or borough that address is located the score could be rather high or low. Although there are some limitations, this is a useful tool to determine how pedestrian friendly a community is and potentially use it to come up with ways to improve walkability when considered with other projects or plans.

The area has a rather robust trail system. While each municipality may not have their own identified trails, residents are able to easily access a trail network located in a neighboring community. An example of which would be the Wyomissing trail network that is interwoven throughout their park system. This network provides recreational opportunities for residents of both the Borough and surrounding areas. Although the majority of this trail system is located with the Borough of Wyomissing it provides connectivity to regional trail systems like the Schuylkill River Trail and the County's Union Canal Trail. Figures 25 through 28 show the location of trails throughout the region as well as areas of the municipalities that have sidewalks.

Transit

Public transportation forms a key component of the Berks County transportation system. Public transportation is provided by both non-profit and profit organizations, supplying fixed route, and demand response services.

The principal provider of public transportation services in Berks County is the South Central Regional Transit Authority (SCTA). This authority oversees two divisions: the Berks Area Regional Transit Authority (BARTA) that serves Berks County and the Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) that serves Lancaster County.

The BARTA fixed route services 32 Berks County municipalities and carries approximately 3.1 million passengers annually. Operating six days a week, with a fleet of 57 buses, it services 30 bus shelters and more than 1,000 bus stops on 21 routes over 1.6 million route miles. According to BARTA, 42% of those trips are work related, followed by 23% for shopping and 14% for personal business. The majority of riders (64%) are between 18-44 years of age, and most are female (58%) and most do not have a valid driver's license (68%).

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There are several active bus routes in the planning area as highlighted below. Route 16 that serves Broadcasting Square had the second highest ridership in 2016 and saw a nearly 7% increase in ridership on the route from 2015-2016. Route 15 that serves the Berkshire Mall had the 4th highest ridership overall but saw a 3% decrease between 2015-2016.

BARTA Fixed Ridership In Numbers of Annual Riders by Route				
Route	2014-2015	2015-2016	# Change	% Change
Route 1 - Temple	470,604	451,671	-18,933	-4.0%
Route 16 - Broadcasting Square	321,153	342,105	20,952	6.5%
Route 4 - 10th & 11th Street	354,891	322,144	-32,747	-9.2%
Route 15 - Berkshire Mall	236,105	228,848	-7,257	-3.1%
Route 14 - Wernersville	230,105	219,363	-10,742	-4.7%
Route 18 - Schuylkill Avenue	198,907	194,871	-4,036	-2.0%
Route 8 - Reiffton/Birdsboro	132,566	140,659	8,093	6.1%
Route 10 - Brookline	149,860	131,251	-18,609	-12.4%
Route 19 - Riverside/Cotton St.	142,825	125,865	-16,960	-11.9%
Route 3 - Kutztown Road	128,591	122,396	-6,195	-4.8%
Route 17 - Glenside	120,905	110,916	-9,989	-8.3%
Route 11 - Mohnton Via Shillington	109,517	107,307	-2,210	-2.0%
Route 5 - Albright College	88,522	84,983	-3,539	-4.0%
Route 7 - Pennside	89,995	80,814	-9,181	-10.2%
Route 20 - Hamburg	93,407	80,375	-13,032	-14.0%
Route 12 - Lincoln Park Via Reading Hospital	64,354	60,383	-3,971	-6.2%
Route 9 - Grill Via Kenhorst	52,090	50,159	-1,931	-3.7%
Route 22 - East Penn	24,703	26,174	1,471	6.0%
Route 2 - Fairgrounds Square	5,967	5,072	-895	-15.0%
Route 21 - Morgantown	5,632	4,707	-925	-16.4%
Route 6- Crosstown	10,125	849	-9,276	-91.6%
Route 23- Vanity Fair	*	449	449	100.0%
Total Ridership	3,030,824	2,891,361	-139,463	-4.6%

Source: South Central Transit Authority (SCTA)

Future Major Road and Bridge Projects

The Reconstruction of the West Shore Bypass - MPMS #63192 and 78814

The US 422 West Shore Bypass constitutes the most significant maintenance need facing the planning region and Berks County. The project extends through the City of Reading, West Reading Borough, Wyomissing Borough, Cumru Township, and Exeter Township in Berks County. The road currently carries traffic ranging from 46,000 vehicles per day on the eastern side to nearly 80,000 vehicles per day on the western end. This highway serves as the principal arterial through the urban area and provides the primary regional access to the City of Reading. This highway was originally constructed in 1964 and there are some sections of original pavement while others have seen some overlay. Safety and capacity issues exist at the interchanges at North Wyomissing Boulevard, Penn Street/Penn Avenue, Lancaster Avenue, and I-176. The section also contains seven (7) bridges in need of significant repairs or replacement. Five (5) of these are currently designated as Structurally Deficient.

The study phase was completed and identified over \$650 million in improvements required to bring the corridor

up to current design standards and to accommodate future traffic growth. Initial phases of this program are included for a design that is more detailed in the near term for the segment extending from SR 12 to just east of I-176 with the actual reconstruction of this five (5) mile section scheduled to begin in 2022. The final section extending east to Perkiomen Avenue remains a candidate project at this time.

Phases 2-4 of the Sinking Spring Revitalization Plan

The development of the Spring Market Center on Penn Avenue completed Phase One of the project in 2010. The Borough is currently working on Phase Two of the project that realigns the intersection of Penn, Columbia and Cacoosing avenues to relieve traffic congestion and facilitate better truck movements to and from the Sunoco Logistics tank farm on Columbia Avenue. Phase Three constructs a new street parallel and south of Penn Avenue from Columbia Avenue east to the Phase 4 project that brings Shillington Road (724) west to create a realigned intersection of Shillington Road (Route 724), Penn and Mull avenues.

Widening and Alignment of State Hill Road

Currently an unfunded candidate project in the RATS FFY 2017-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, this project would widen State Hill Road in Wyomissing and Spring Township from Woodland Drive to Colony Drive. The width of State Hill Road varies significantly in this particular segment. This project is under consideration for addition to the 2019 RATS Transportation Improvement Program.

Safety Improvements for the Route 222 ramp to Route 422 East

Due to several serious crashes in this corridor due to traffic stacking in the thru lanes, PennDOT has engaged an engineer to evaluate safety improvements on Route 222 south of the Broadcasting Road interchange. General concepts include a new, dedicated stacking lane for traffic exiting 222 onto the ramp to Route 422 and signage to alert motorists of stopped traffic ahead.

Intersection Improvements at Van Reed Road and Dwight Street

This proposed project would add a left turn lane on Van Reed Road to better accommodate school traffic.

Safety

Maintaining a safe transportation system is essential to sustaining and enhancing the quality of life for Berks County residents. Deaths and injuries resulting from traffic crashes are a public health concern and impact local communities with medical costs, lost wages, insurance costs, taxes, police, fire, and emergency medical services, legal and court costs, and property damage.

As part of its safety program, PennDOT collects traffic crash data for the entire state and reports data at the state, county, and municipal level. For the purposes of this plan, county crash data for Berks County was analyzed. Motor vehicle crashes generally involve multiple contributing factors that may be related to drivers, the roadway, or the vehicle(s) involved, thus making transportation safety a multidisciplinary concern.

Berks County has a significant amount of crashes – 4,902 in 2016 alone - ranking seventh in the state in the number of overall crashes and ninth in the number of fatal crashes that year. Shown below is the County’s crash trend from 2012-2016.

Berks County Crashes by Type Between 2012 and 2016								
Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total	# Change	% Change
Fatal	50	42	33	39	35	199	-15	-30.0%
Injury	2,204	2,094	1,994	2,115	2,067	10,474	-137	-6.2%
Property Damage Only	2,489	2,458	2,592	2,678	2,800	13,017	311	12.5%
Total	4,743	4,594	4,619	4,832	4,902	13,956	159	3.4%

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

Chapter 9 - Transportation Plan

Over the last five years, there have been over 3,200 crashes in the planning area, with the majority occurring on state roads. Most crashes are Property Damage Only (PDO), where no injuries or fatalities result. With the exception of Sinking Spring, each municipality saw a Year-Over-Year increase in the number of crashes.

Vehicle Crashes in the Planning Area - 2012-2016				
Year	Fatal	Injury	PDO	Total
2012	1	259	344	604
2013	3	262	378	643
2014	4	238	385	627
2015	0	265	406	671
2016	2	284	412	698
Total	10	1,308	1,925	3,243

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

Crashes by Municipality - 2012-2016									
Sinking Spring					Spring Township				
Year	Fatal	Injury	PDO	Total	Year	Fatal	Injury	PDO	Total
2012	0	21	36	57	2012	0	117	158	275
2013	0	21	26	47	2013	1	106	184	291
2014	1	9	37	47	2014	1	91	188	280
2015	0	14	38	52	2015	0	123	163	286
2016	0	12	25	37	2016	2	130	161	293
Total	1	77	162	240	Total	4	567	854	1,425
West Reading					Wyomissing				
Year	Fatal	Injury	PDO	Total	Year	Fatal	Injury	PDO	Total
2012	0	30	24	54	2012	1	91	126	218
2013	1	36	43	80	2013	1	99	125	225
2014	0	53	38	91	2014	2	85	122	209
2015	0	45	65	110	2015	0	83	140	223
2016	0	52	49	101	2016	0	90	177	267
Total	1	216	219	436	Total	4	448	690	1,142

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

DRIVING BEHAVIORS

Unsafe driving behavior plays a significant role in crashes in Berks County. Aggressive driving and speeding are major factors, with distracted driving a growing and significant contributor to crashes. Of note, crashes because of distracted driving in Berks County began to rise with the mass adoption of smartphones in the early-mid 2000s. Listed below are the top driving behaviors that contribute to crashes in the planning area.

Crashes where Aggressive Driving Contributed - 2012-2016						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	10	7	7	2	2	28
Spring	23	36	23	15	28	125
West Reading	4	12	10	10	9	45
Wyomissing	38	39	44	20	33	174
Total	75	94	84	47	72	372
Alcohol Related Crashes - 2012-2016						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	4	6	7	6	5	28
Spring	31	25	22	25	38	141
West Reading	6	6	9	7	6	34
Wyomissing	8	16	12	16	14	66
Total	49	53	50	54	63	269
Crashes where Distracted Driving Contributed - 2012-2016						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	19	11	13	14	10	67
Spring	78	80	85	89	72	404
West Reading	8	17	18	24	23	90
Wyomissing	37	43	41	47	49	217
Total	142	151	157	174	154	778
Crashes where Speeding Contributed - 2012-2016						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	1	1	2	1	0	5
Spring	8	8	5	6	12	39
West Reading	0	5	3	1	3	12
Wyomissing	9	13	5	10	18	55
Total	18	27	15	18	33	111
Crashes where Tailgating Contributed - 2012-2016						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	1	2	2	3	1	9
Spring	17	7	16	13	13	66
West Reading	7	9	10	10	14	50
Wyomissing	15	31	20	23	23	112
Total	40	49	48	49	51	237

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

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AT-RISK DRIVERS

At-risk drivers include older drivers (65+) and young drivers (16-17). Older drivers are in crashes at a higher rate than young drivers are in the area. The rise of elderly drivers on the road coupled with their higher crash rates suggests that safety programming targeted towards the elderly driver is needed.

Crashes by At-Risk Drivers (Age 16)						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	1	0	0	1	0	2
Spring	11	10	0	8	7	36
West Reading	0	0	0	1	0	1
Wyomissing	3	2	0	3	3	11
Total	15	12	0	13	10	50
Crashes by At-Risk Drivers (Age 65-74)						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	10	5	4	12	3	34
Spring	23	29	23	41	35	151
West Reading	4	9	13	11	13	50
Wyomissing	28	24	31	29	46	158
Total	65	67	71	93	97	393
Crashes by At-Risk Drivers (75+)						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	4	4	3	5	3	19
Spring	18	23	21	16	20	98
West Reading	2	5	6	4	4	21
Wyomissing	25	25	21	15	26	112
Total	49	57	51	40	53	250

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

VULNERABLE ROAD USERS (VRUs)

Vulnerable road users are those that are using the road without a vehicle surrounding them for protection. Most commonly, these are pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists in Berks County. Of the three types of VRUs, pedestrians have been involved in the most crashes in the planning area.

Crashes Involving Pedestrians						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	1	1	1	1	1	5
Spring	5	3	4	4	4	20
West Reading	8	3	7	9	7	34
Wyomissing	1	5	5	2	5	18
Total	15	12	17	16	17	77
Crashes Involving Bicycles						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spring	3	1	2	1	1	8
West Reading	0	2	2	1	2	7
Wyomissing	2	4	0	2	0	8
Total	5	7	4	4	3	23
Crashes Involving Motorcycles						
Municipality	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Sinking Spring	0	1	0	2	0	3
Spring	4	8	5	6	2	25
West Reading	2	0	1	3	4	10
Wyomissing	1	6	4	5	2	18
Total	7	15	10	16	8	56

Source: PennDOT, Pennsylvania Crash Facts and Statistics

WHERE CRASHES OCCUR

Figure 30 shows where crashes have occurred in the last three years (2014-2016.) As expected, the majority of crashes that happen in the region occur on the most heavily travelled roadways. There were six crashes in the planning area that involved a fatality. While any accident involving a fatality is something you want to try to eliminate, from looking at the data there is no one location that has a higher frequency of fatal crashes over another.

FREIGHT

Trucks move a great majority of freight (in terms of both tonnage and value) within and through Berks County, illustrating the importance of the county’s highway network. From Berks County, business can reach more than 35% of the United States population and 50% of Canadian customers within a one-day drive. While the bridges and local roads in the planning area are important in the movement of freight, some are strategically more important than others, namely Routes 222 and 422. These state roads carry substantial amounts of freight from the local generators and connect the area with the Berks county market.

The Norfolk Southern (NS) and East Penn (ESPN) railroads operate in the planning area. The Norfolk Southern Harrisburg and Reading lines run through the planning area with a junction of those two lines near Wyomissing behind “The Works” entertainment facility. The NS trains can notably be seen crossing through Sinking Spring as it travels east through Wyomissing and West Reading. The East Penn Railroad operates their Lancaster Northern line in and around Sinking Spring and it interconnects with the Norfolk Southern Harrisburg line in Reading.

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Intermodal Connector

The intermodal connectors of the National Highway System (NHS) are the first and last miles of roadway used by truckers to travel between the national highway system and identified ports, terminals, and hubs. These portions of public roads have a minimum average of 100 trucks entering and exiting such facility per day. The planning area has such a connector. The PA10L Intermodal Connector, located in Sinking Spring, is 1.4 miles long and connects the tank farm in the Borough with Route 422. The route of the connector is east on Mountain Home Road (SR 3012) to Columbia Avenue (SR 3016) or Woodrow Road, proceeding north to US Route 422.

Road-Rail Crossings

A railroad at-grade crossing is an intersection where a roadway crosses railroad tracks at the same level (grade). At-grade crossings can also have significant impacts on the transportation network. The “gate-down delay” creates delays caused when passing trains block the crossing. In addition, grade crossings can reduce road capacity. The uneven surfaces at grade crossings require vehicles to cross at lower speeds, and passing trains can preclude coordinating nearby traffic signals as they pass through that area.

There are 342 rail/road intersections in Berks County, 210 of which are at-grade crossings. The Sinking Spring area has 24 rail crossings (19 at grade) serving Norfolk Southern (NS) and the East Penn Railroad (ESPN). West Reading has 8 crossings (1 at grade) all serving Norfolk Southern and Wyomissing has 7 crossings (no at-grade) all serving Norfolk Southern. The annual average daily trips (AADT) on roadways with at-grade crossings in Berks County are typically below 5,000 vehicles in Berks County. However, in the planning area, the crossings at Vinemont Road (8,933 vehicle AADT), Fritztown Road (7,351 vehicle AADT), Montello Road (6,934 vehicle AADT) and Columbia Avenue (5,808 vehicle AADT) exceed that threshold.

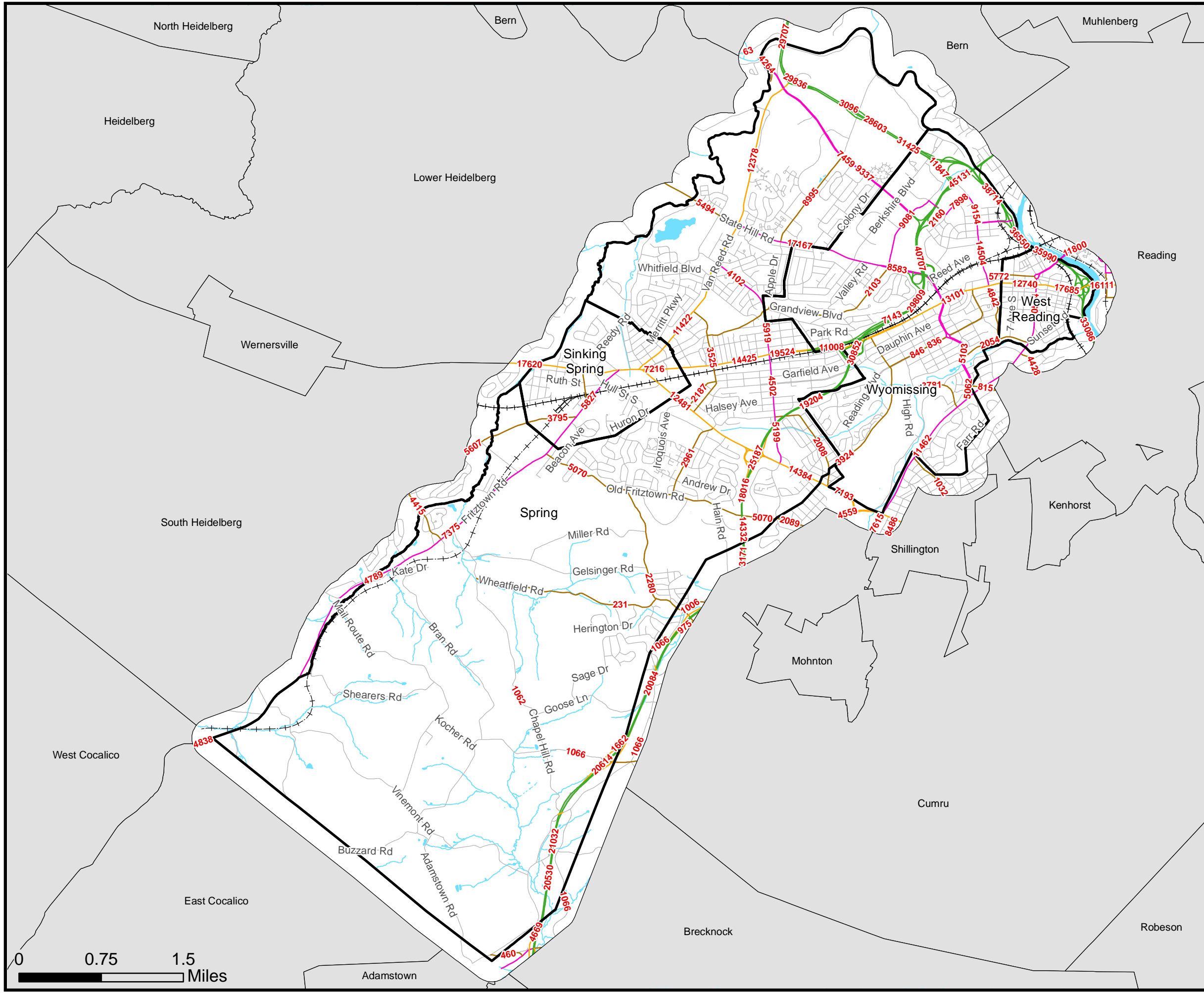
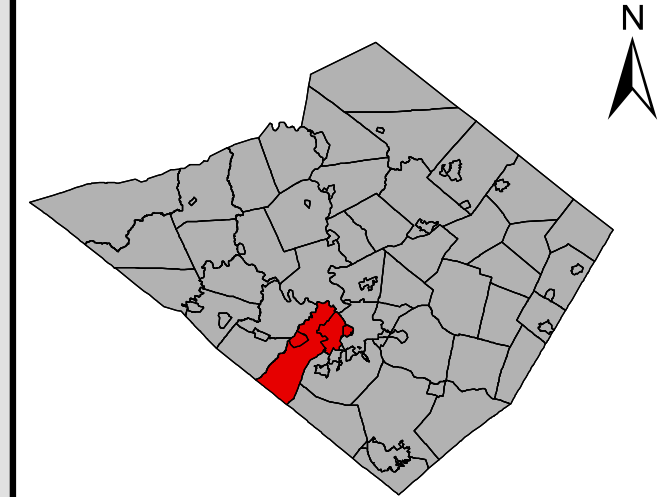
Berks County Road/Rail Crossings with > 5,000 ADT			
Railroad	Municipality	Street	2016 AADT
Norfolk Southern	Reading	11th Street	16,413
Norfolk Southern	Cumru	Route 724	11,026
East Penn Railroad	Boyertown	Philadelphia Ave.	10,345
East Penn Railroad	Sinking Spring	Vinemont Rd.	8,933
Reading/Blue Mountain	Shoemakersville	Route 61	8,930
Norfolk Southern	Reading	Kutztown Road	8,611
Norfolk Southern	Reading	Franklin Street	7,885
Reading/Blue Mountain	Leesport	Lee Street	7,522
Reading/Blue Mountain	Leesport	Wall Street	7,522
East Penn Railroad	Sinking Spring	Fritztown Road	7,351
East Penn Railroad	Sinking Spring	Montello Road	6,934
Norfolk Southern	Blandon	Main Street	6,595
Norfolk Southern	Reading	Rockland Street	6,153
Norfolk Southern	Sinking Spring	Columbia Ave.	5,808
Norfolk Southern	Reading	7th/Chestnut Sts.	5,661
Norfolk Southern	Amity	Main Street	5,333
Norfolk Southern	Douglass	West High Street	5,094
Norfolk Southern	Douglass	Ben Franklin Hwy.	5,083
Norfolk Southern	Lyons	Kemp Street	5,002

Source: Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Safety Analysis

GOALS

- The municipalities in the planning region should have a “united voice” to vote or petition legislators for the benefit of transportation issues within the Region and communicate unified requests for improvements to RATS through the TIP and LRTP.
- The municipalities should pursue preliminary technical evaluation of identified priorities and share recommendations with the appropriate municipalities and agencies. The analysis may determine that a project is not feasible before cost is incurred.
- The municipalities should collaborate on a regional basis to focus limited funding on the most effective solutions and to maximize the potential for cost sharing and savings.
- Review municipal ordinances for parking standards and amend as necessary to ensure parking requirements are both appropriate and flexible.
- The municipalities should consider a joint parking study that identifies present and future needs and proposes short and long-term solutions.
- Each municipality should implement low-cost safety improvements where such measures provide an immediate impact on safety.
- The municipalities should ensure future development does not create detrimental access issues, increase congestion, or create safety problems.
- Consider more specific access management strategies for growth areas and designated roadways or corridors.
- Communicate with the operators of commercial and industrial facilities regarding issues with regular truck movements and designated routes.
- Coordinate with Norfolk Southern to maximize the utility of the rail line in spurring appropriate economic development within the planning area, including coordination of land use planning, in conjunction with the rail line.
- Consider the development of a regional trail/pedestrian/bicycle plan that provides guidance for an interconnected system of pedestrian improvements between the municipalities.
- Ensure municipal subdivision and land development ordinances contain requirements for sidewalks in appropriate locations.
- Encourage the addition of sidewalks within the planning area especially where there are missing links or where sidewalks would facilitate appropriate connections to existing or future neighborhoods and destinations (such as schools, parks, recreation facilities, major job generators, or shopping centers).
- Communicate with SCTA\BARTA regarding future bus routes, shuttles, and other transit opportunities.

Functional Classification



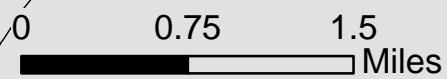
Legend

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial- Freeways and Expressways
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Traffic Volumes
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, PennDOT

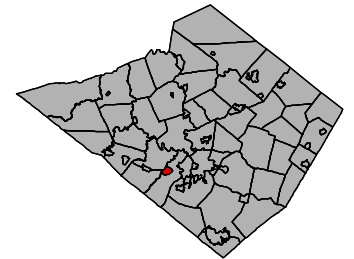
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BAB 10/18



Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Functional Classification



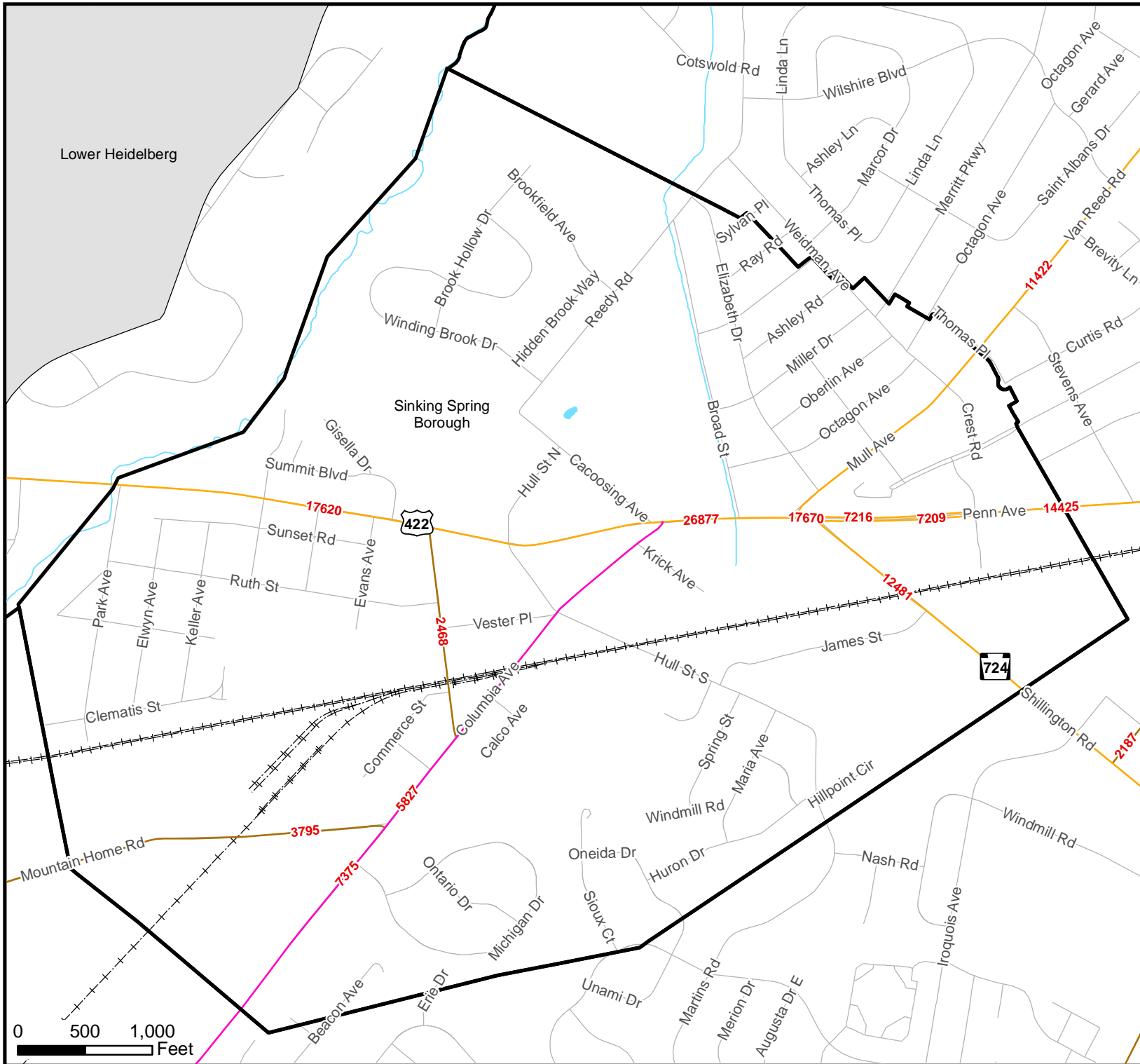
Legend

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial- Freeways and Expressways
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Traffic Volumes
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT

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BAB 10/18



Lower Heidelberg

Sinking Spring Borough

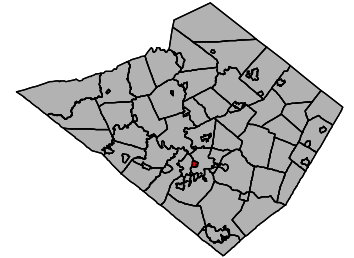
422

724

0 500 1,000 Feet

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

West Reading Borough Functional Classification



Legend

- Interstate
- Principal Arterial- Freeways and Expressways
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- 412- Traffic Volumes
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT

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BAB 10/18

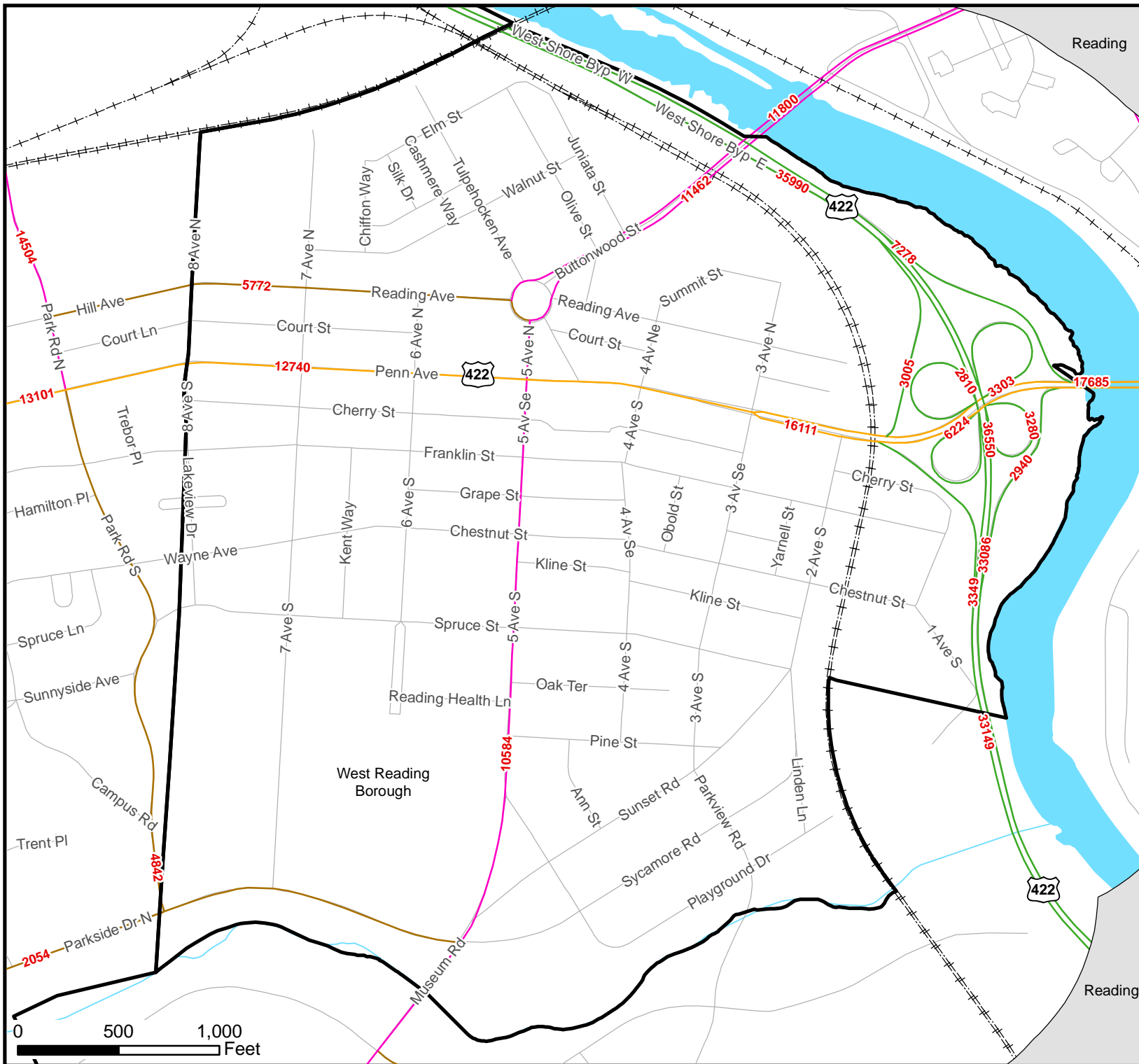
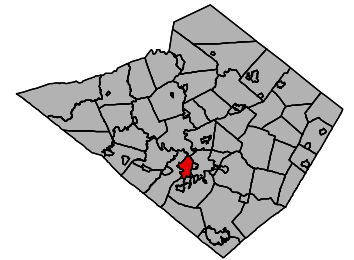


FIGURE 17

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Functional Classification



Legend

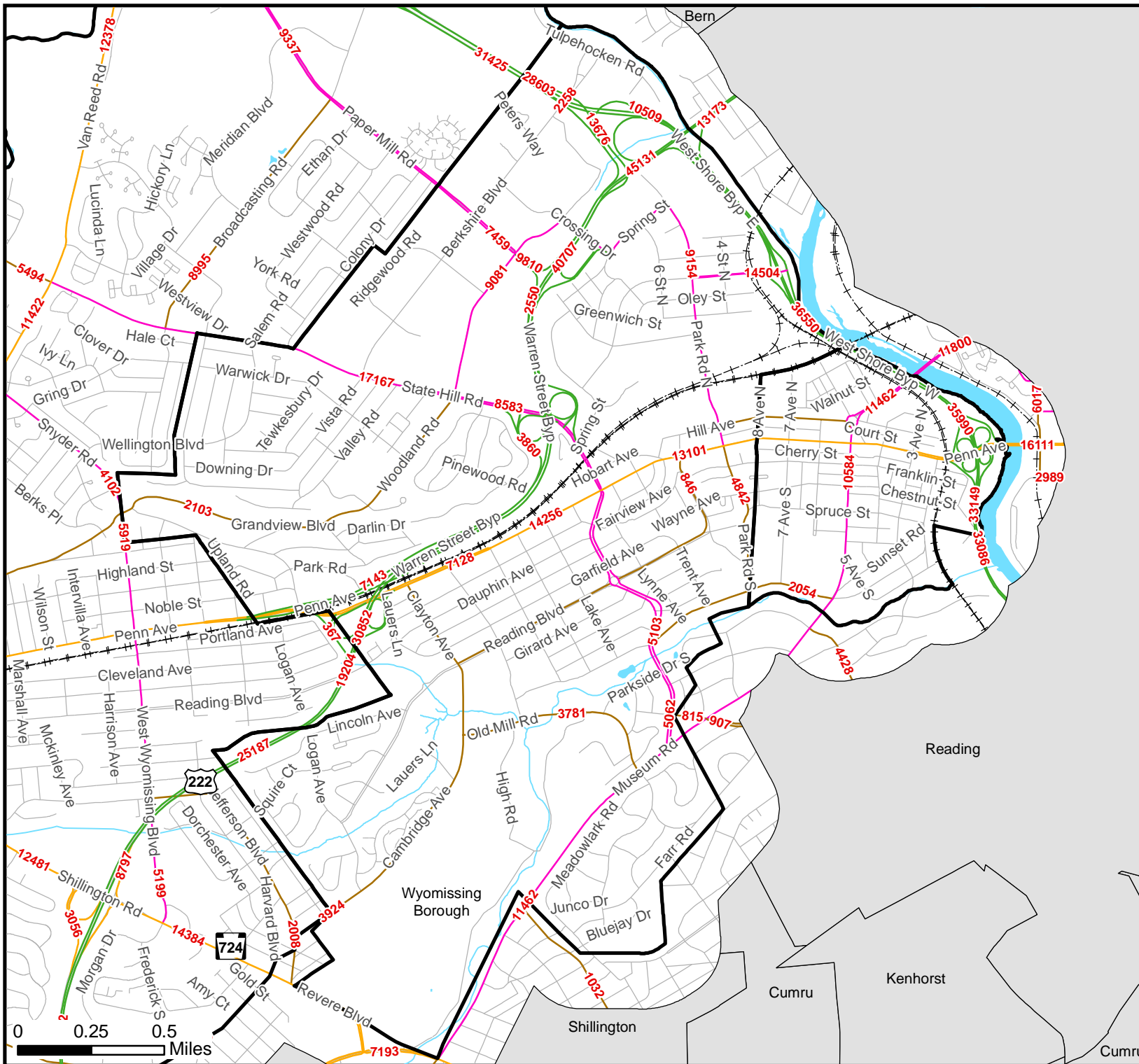
- Interstate
- Principal Arterial- Freeways and Expressways
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Traffic Volumes
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT

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BAB 10/18

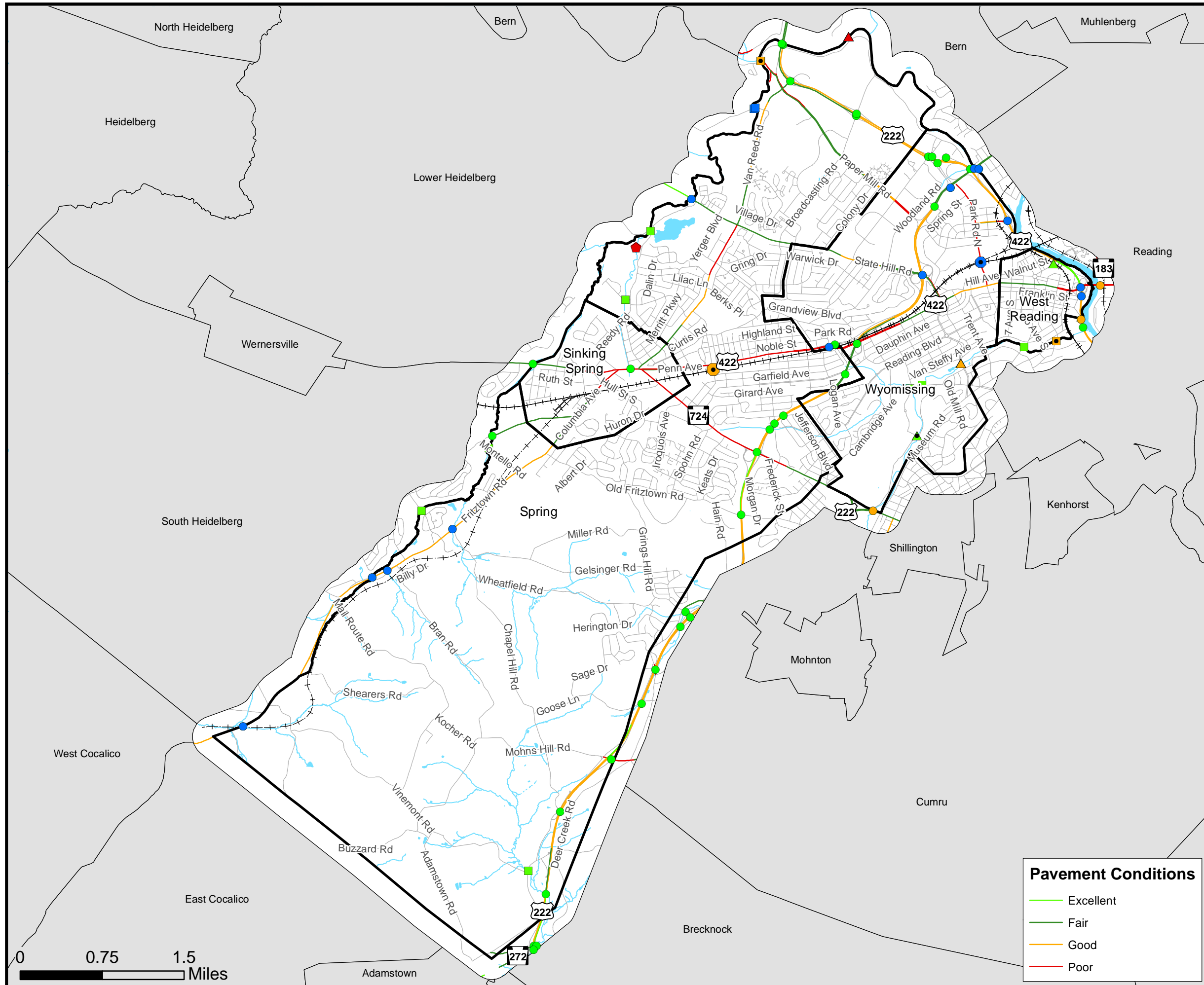
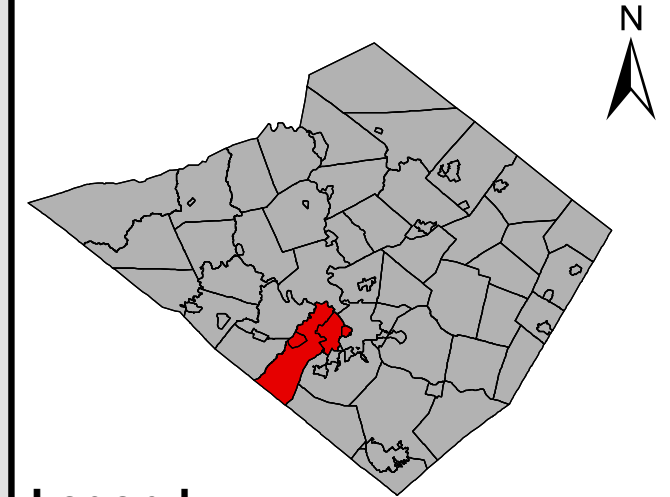


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Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update: September 2018

Bridge and Pavement Condition

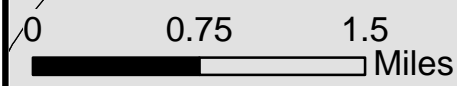


Legend

- State-Owned Bridges
- △ County-Owned Bridges
- Municipal-Owned Bridges
- ◇ Privately-Owned Bridges
- ⬡ Railroad-Owned Bridges
- Posted Bridges
- Red: Closed Bridges
- Orange: Structurally Deficient Bridges
- Blue: Functionally Obsolete Bridges
- Green: No Restrictions
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Pavement Conditions

- Green line: Excellent
- Light Green line: Fair
- Orange line: Good
- Red line: Poor

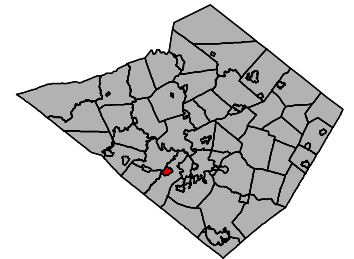


Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, PennDOT September 13, 2017 and July 18, 2017
Published by the Berks County Planning Commission



Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Bridge and Pavement Condition

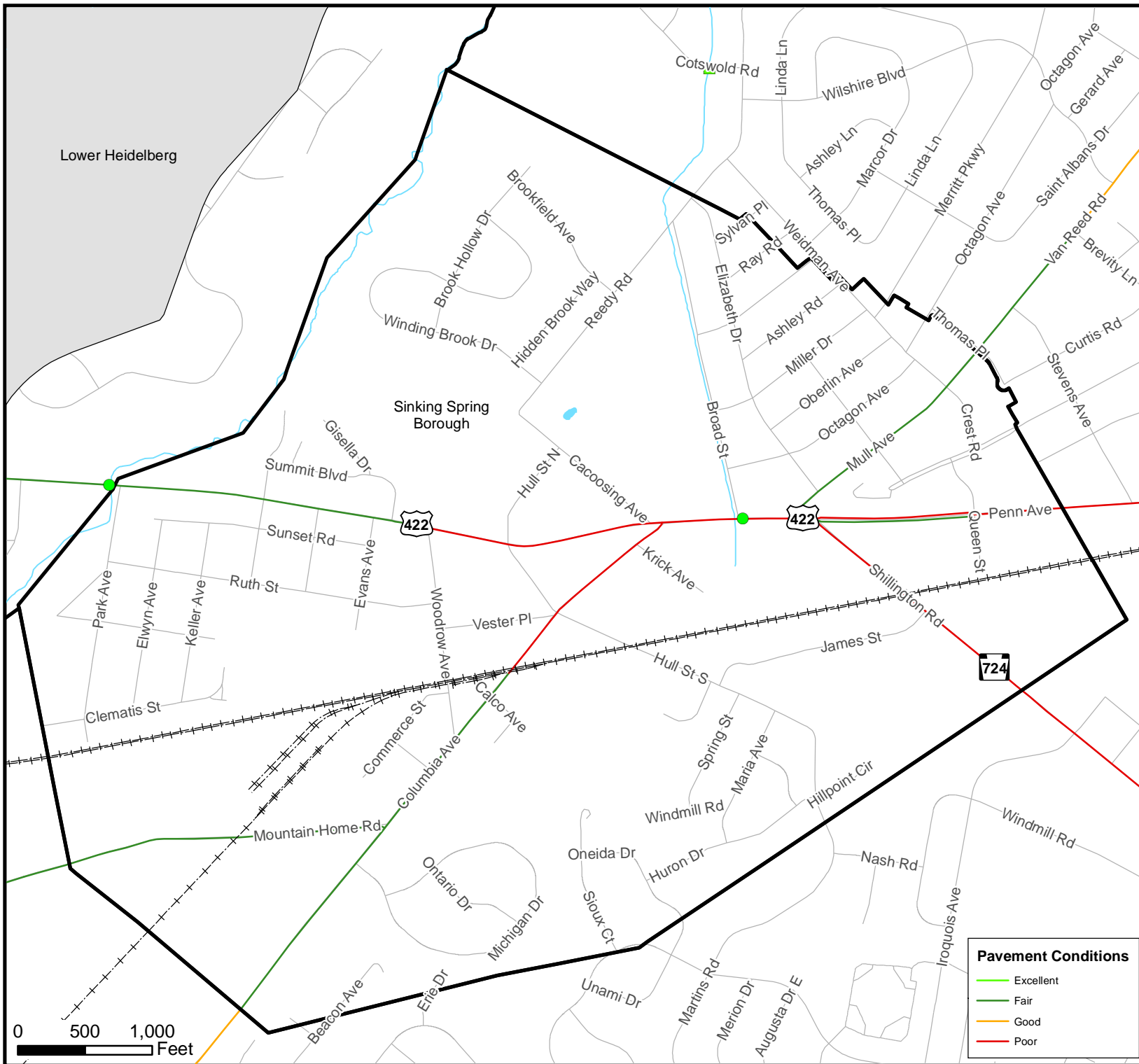


Legend

- State-Owned Bridges
- △ County-Owned Bridges
- Municipal-Owned Bridges
- ◇ Privately-Owned Bridges
- ⬡ Railroad-Owned Bridges
- Posted Bridges
- Red: Closed Bridges
- Orange: Structurally Deficient Bridges
- Blue: Functionally Obsolete Bridges
- Green: No Restrictions
- Stream and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Pavement Conditions

- Green line: Excellent
- Light Green line: Fair
- Orange line: Good
- Red line: Poor



Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT September 13, 2017 and July 18, 2017

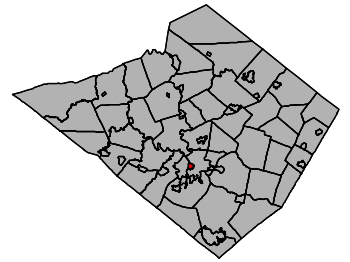
Published by the Berks County Planning Commission BAB 10/18



FIGURE 20

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomingissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

West Reading Borough Bridge and Pavement Condition

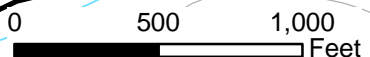
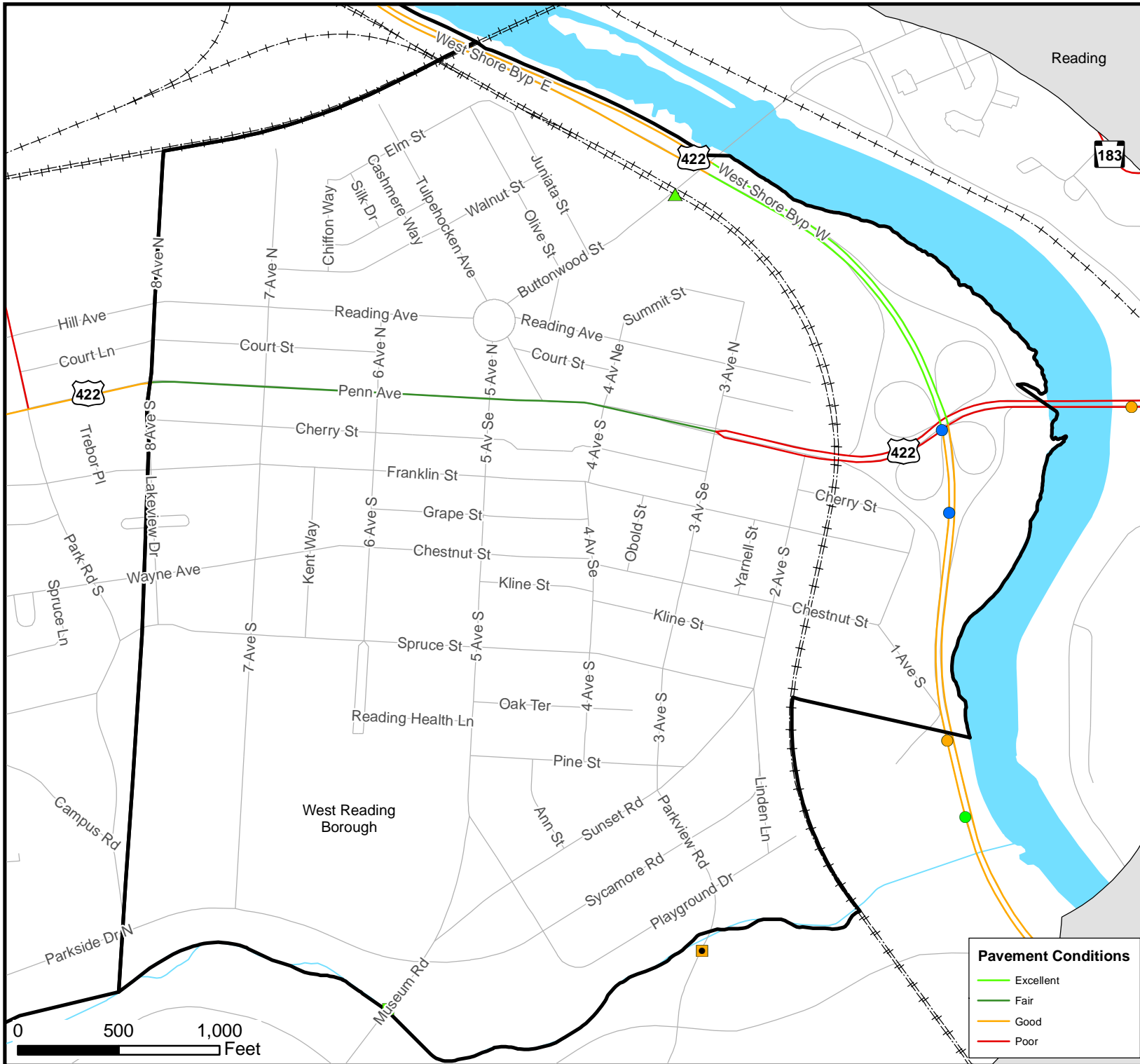


Legend

- State-Owned Bridges
- County-Owned Bridges
- Municipal-Owned Bridges
- Privately-Owned Bridges
- Railroad-Owned Bridges
- Posted Bridges
- Red: Closed Bridges
- Orange: Structurally Deficient Bridges
- Blue: Functionally Obsolete Bridges
- Green: No Restrictions
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Pavement Conditions

- Excellent
- Fair
- Good
- Poor



Source data:
 Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT
 September 13, 2017 and July 18, 2017

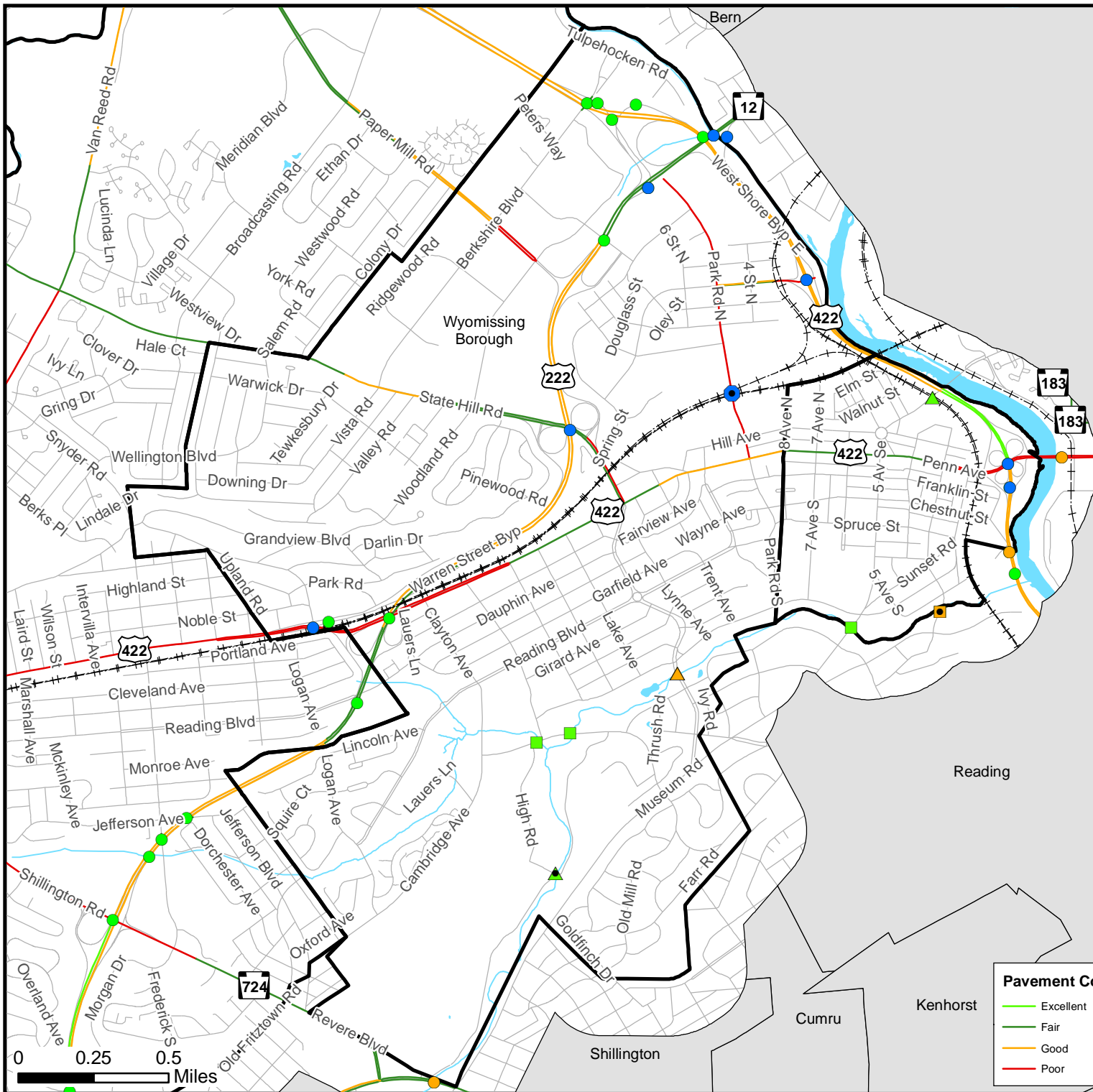
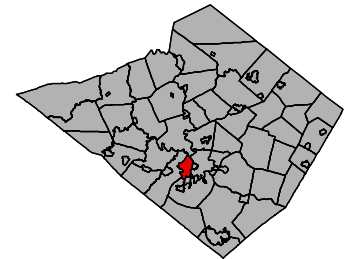
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FIGURE 21

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Bridge and Pavement Condition

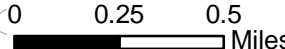


Legend

- State-Owned Bridges
- △ County-Owned Bridges
- Municipal-Owned Bridges
- ◇ Privately-Owned Bridges
- ⬡ Railroad-Owned Bridges
- Posted Bridges
- Red: Closed Bridges
- Orange: Structurally Deficient Bridges
- Blue: Functionally Obsolete Bridges
- Green: No Restrictions
- Stream and Water Bodies
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Pavement Conditions

- Green: Excellent
- Yellow: Fair
- Orange: Good
- Red: Poor



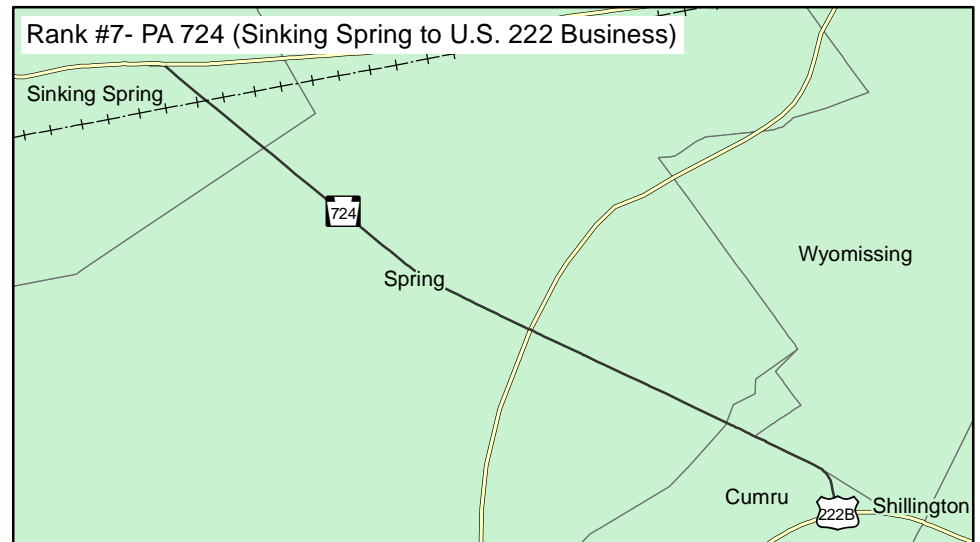
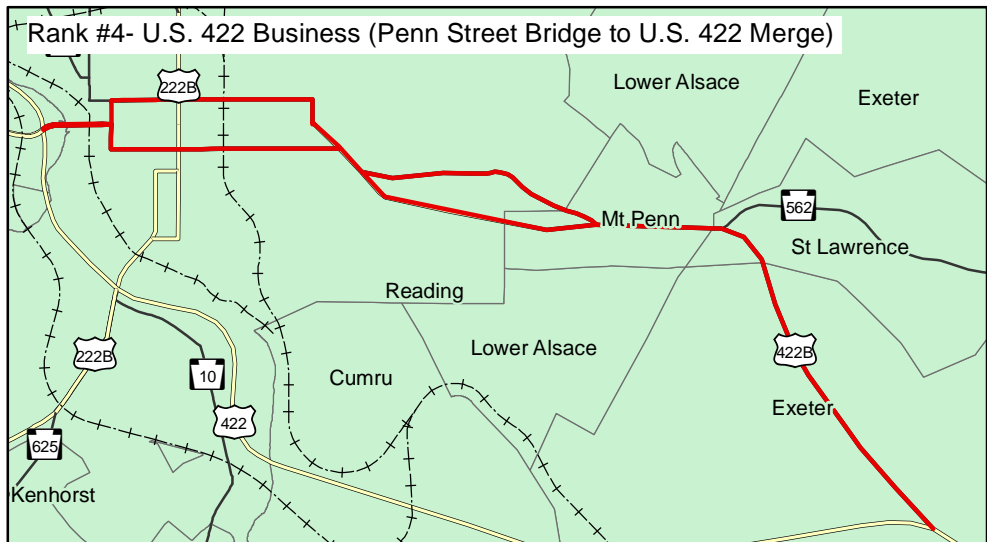
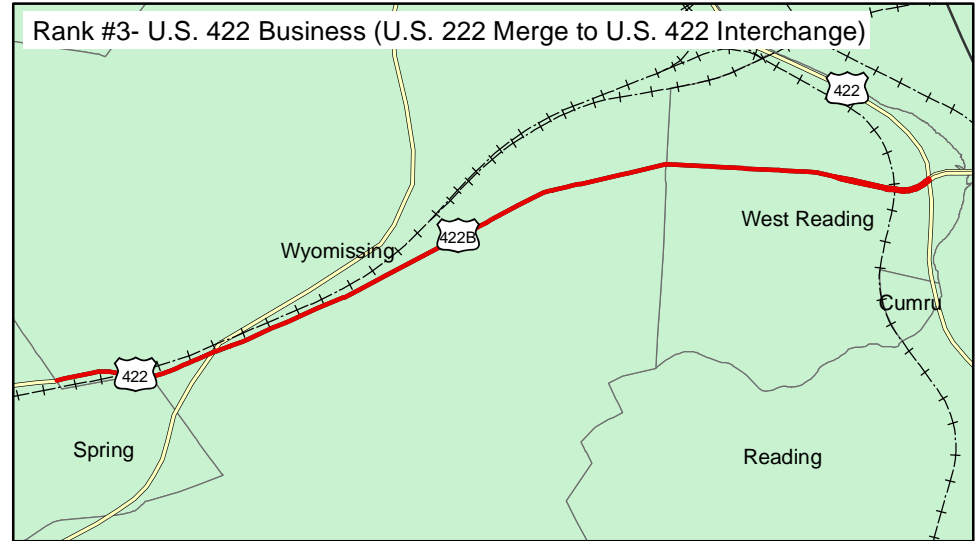
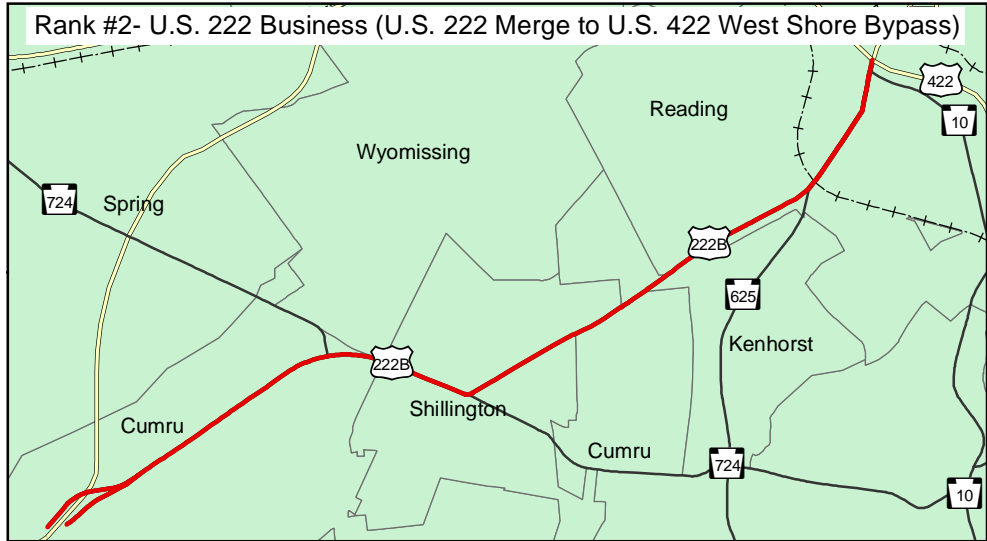
Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT September 13, 2017 and July 18, 2017

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Suburban Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan Congested Corridors Based on Travel Time and Volume

FIGURE 22



- Congestion Management Corridor
- US Route
- - - Railroads
- State Route
- Interstate
- Municipal Boundaries

Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks DES,
PennDOT, RATS 2016 Congestion Management Process

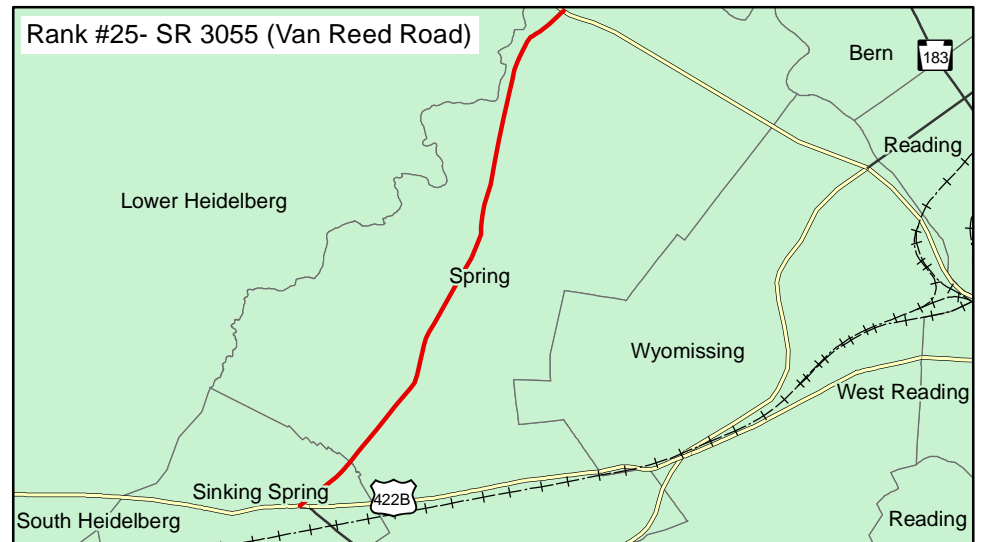
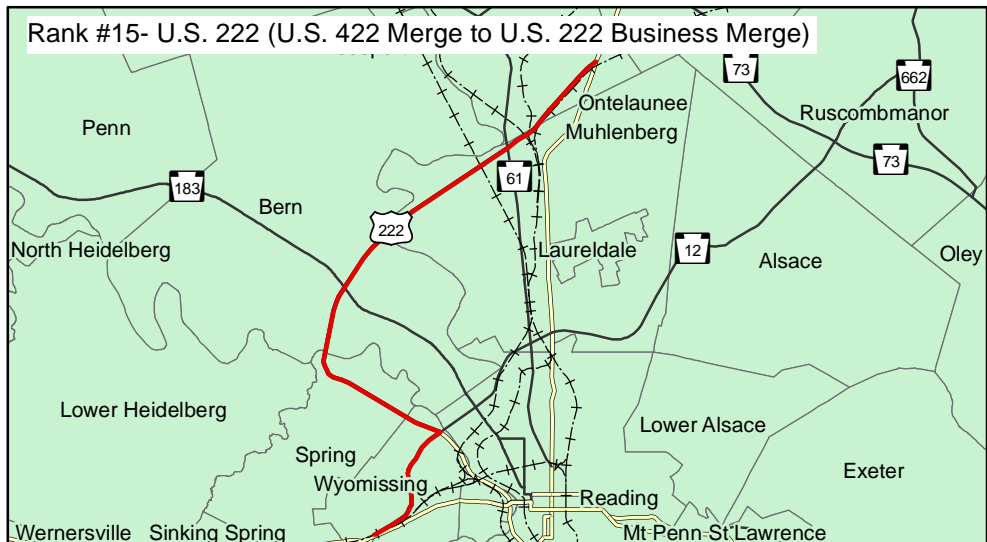
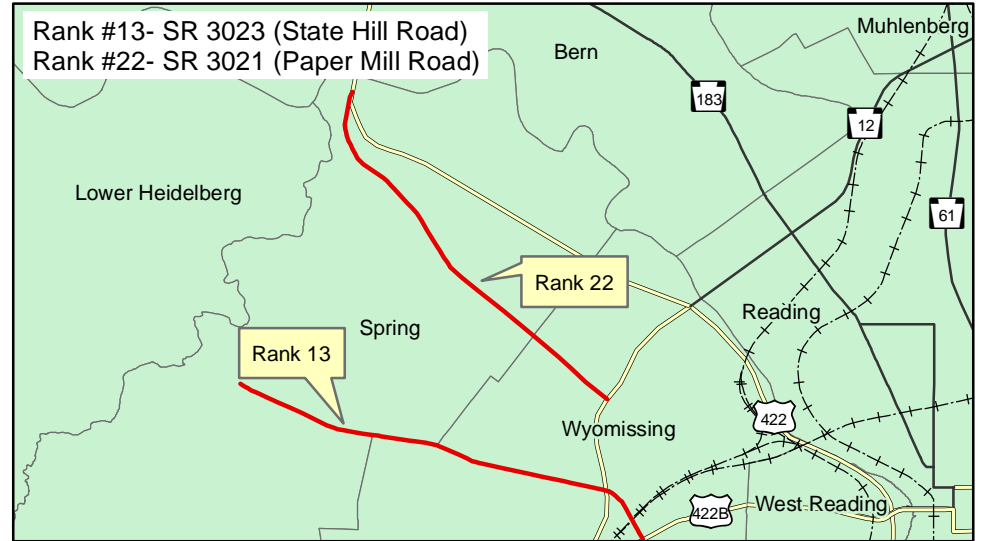
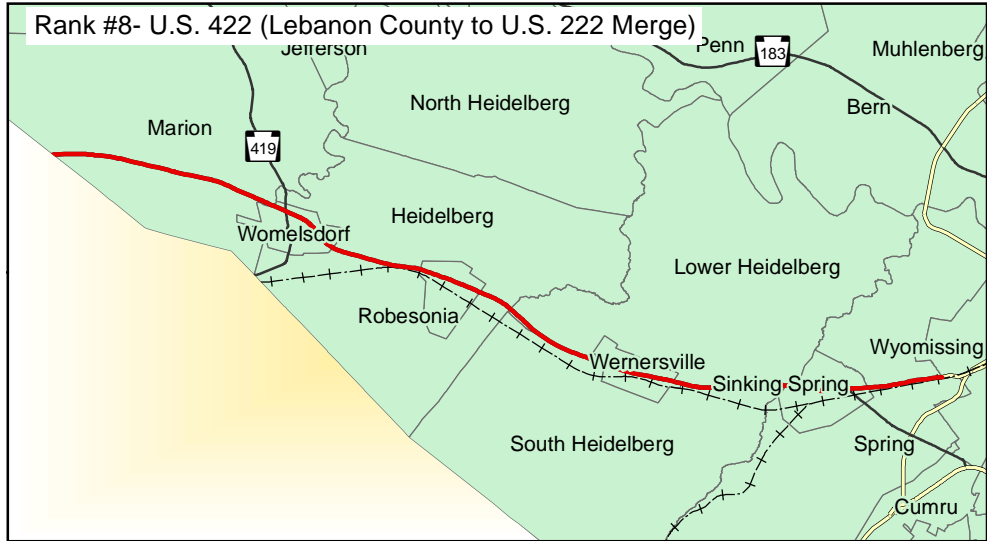
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Suburban Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan Congested Corridors Based on Travel Time and Volume

FIGURE 23



- Congestion Management Corridor
- US Route
- - - Railroads
- State Route
- Interstate
- Municipal Boundaries

Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks DES,
PennDOT, RATS 2016 Congestion Management Process

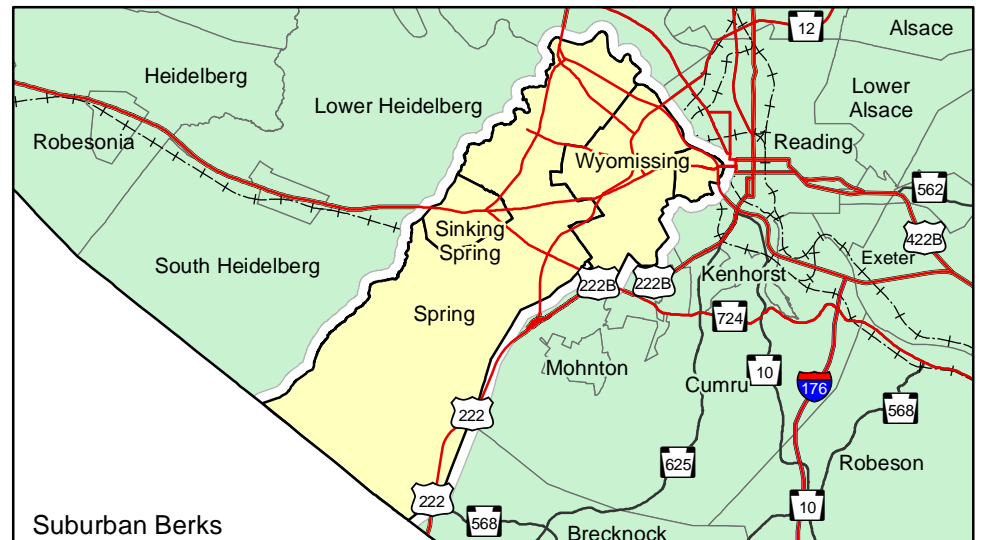
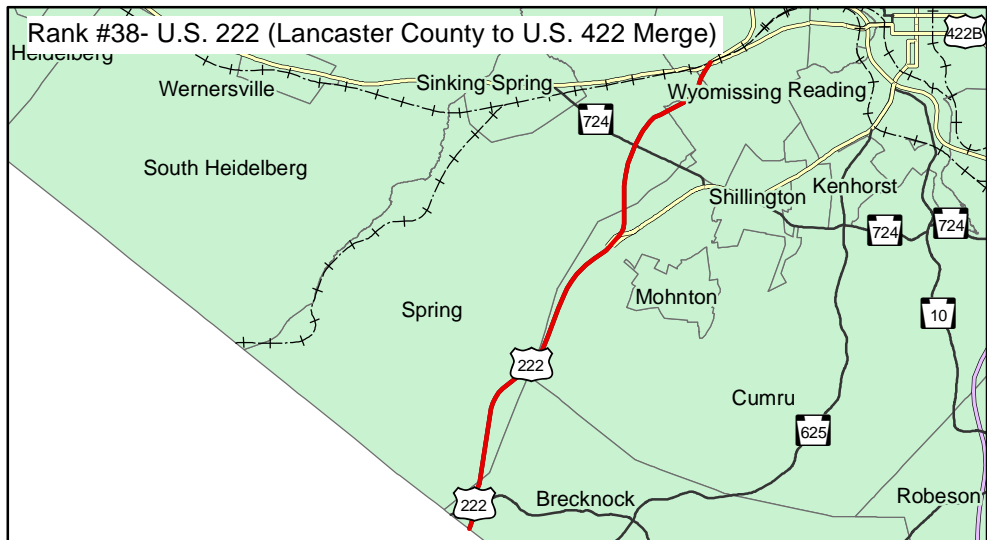
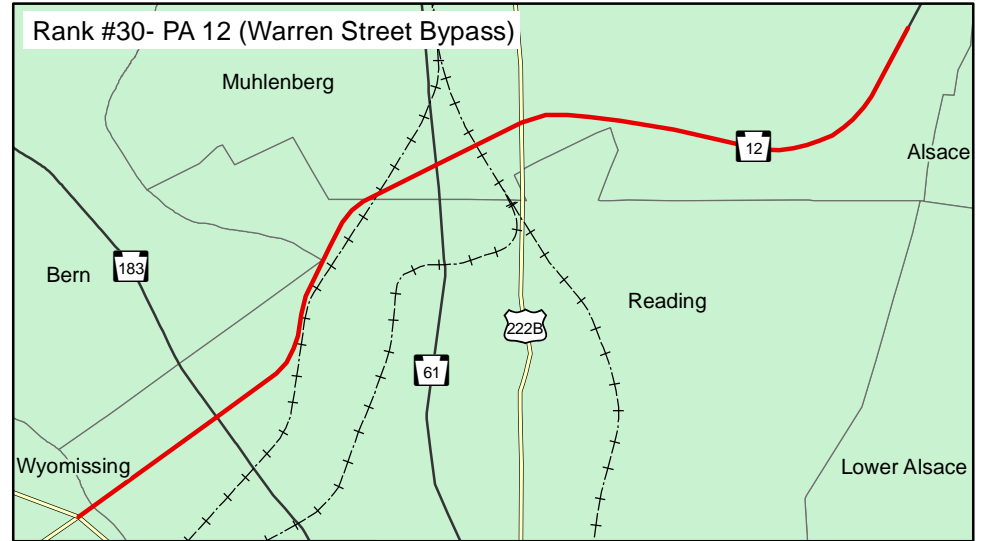
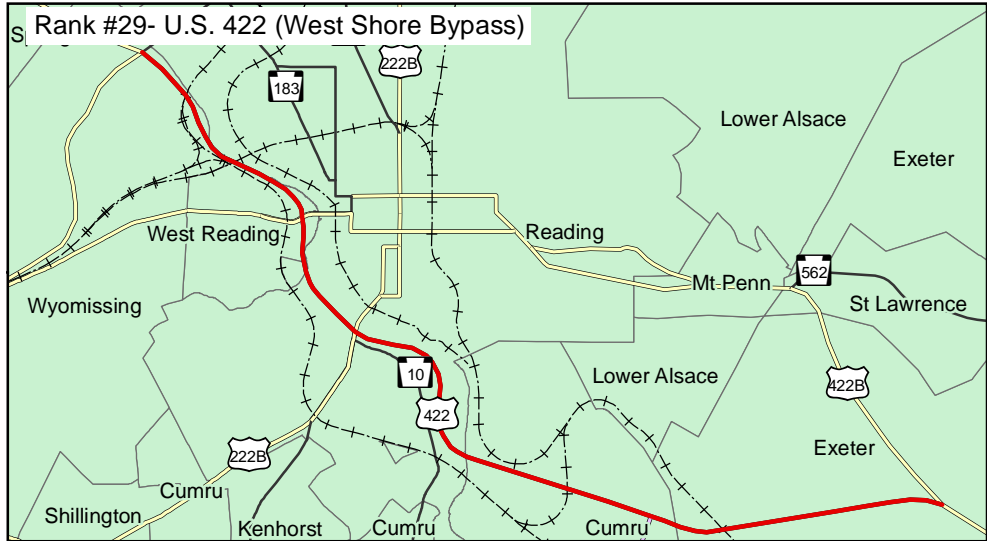
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Suburban Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan Congested Corridors Based on Travel Time and Volume

FIGURE 24



- Congestion Management Corridor
- US Route
- - - Railroads
- State Route
- Interstate
- Municipal Boundaries

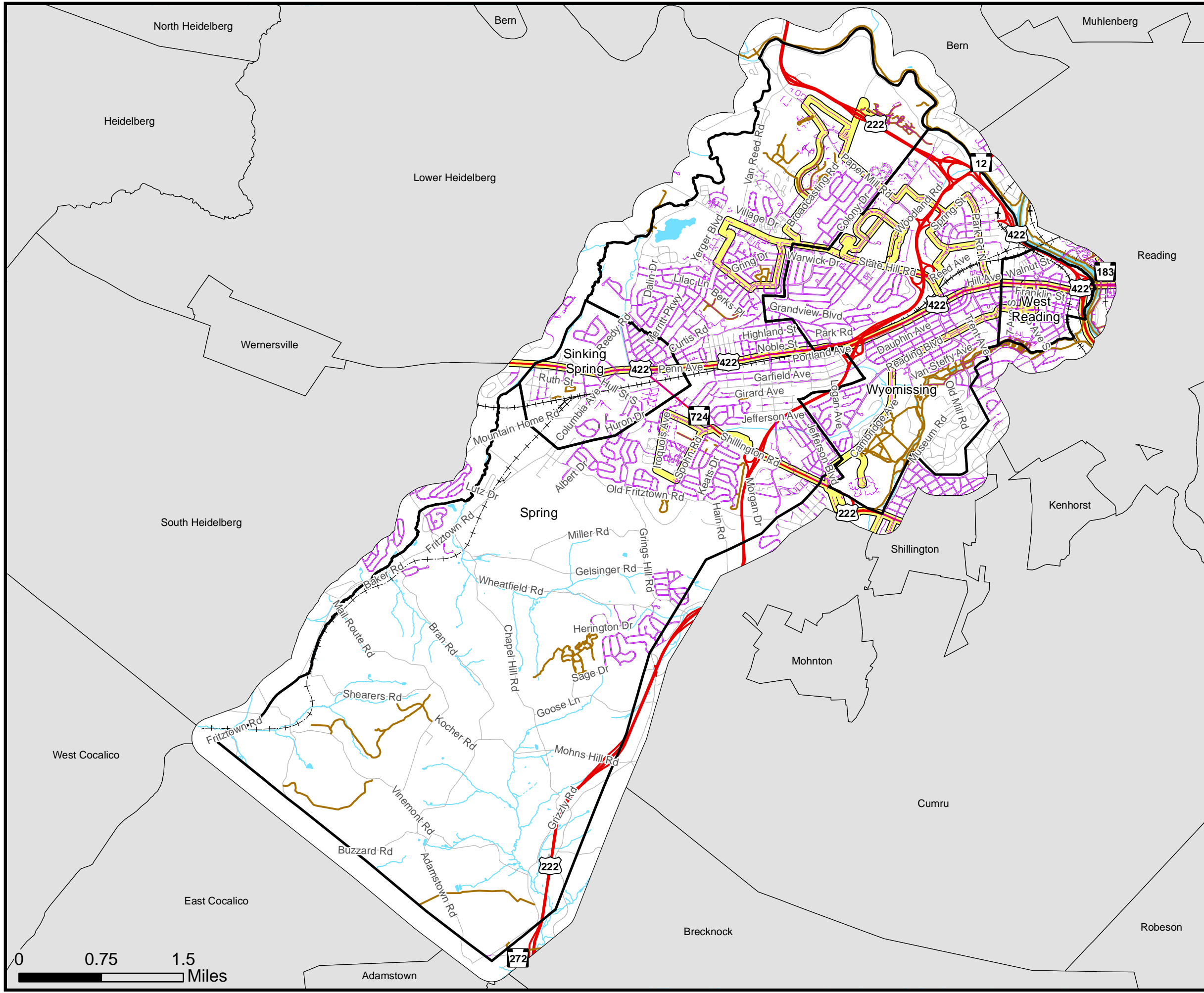
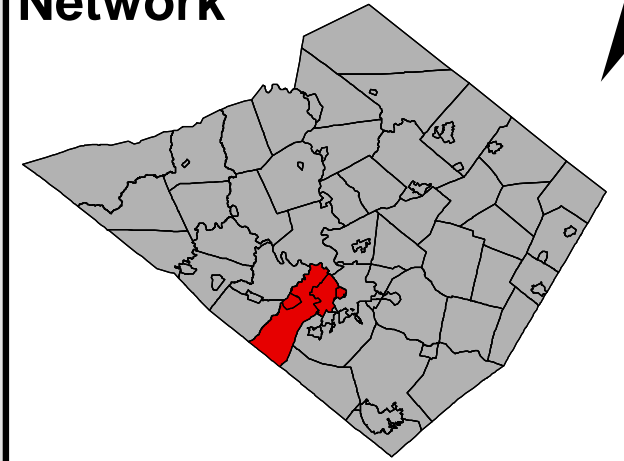
Source: Berks County Planning Commission GIS,
Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS, Berks DES,
PennDOT, RATS 2016 Congestion Management Process

BAB 10/18











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National Highway System and Sidewalk / Trail Network



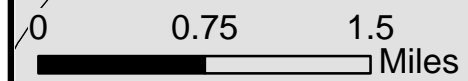
Legend

-  National Highway System
-  BARTA Routes
-  Sidewalk Network
-  Trail Network
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  Roads
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

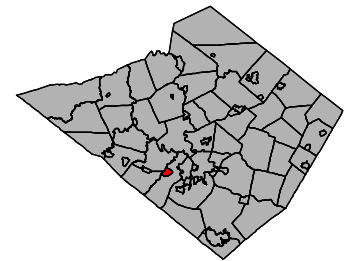
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


Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough National Highway System and Sidewalk / Trail Network



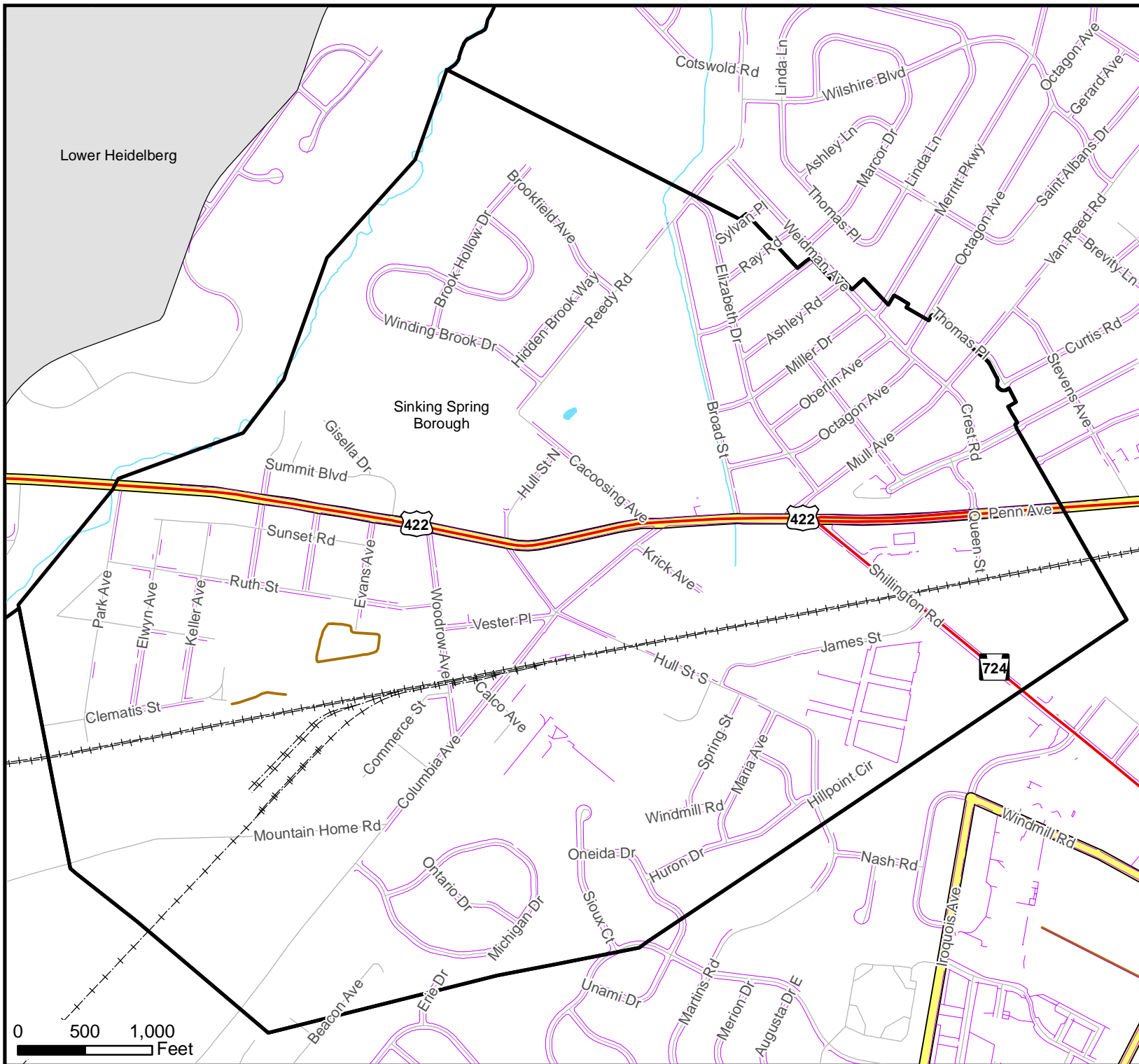
Legend

-  National Highway System
-  BARTA Routes
-  Sidewalk Network
-  Trail Network
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  Roads
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES

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Lower Heidelberg

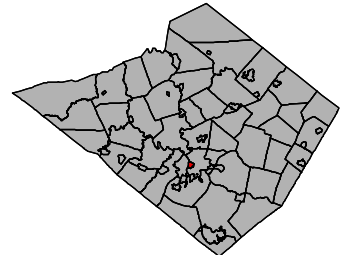
Sinking Spring Borough

0 500 1,000 Feet









FIGURE 27

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
September 2018

West Reading Borough National Highway System and Sidewalk / Trail Network



Legend

-  National Highway System
-  BARTA Routes
-  Sidewalk Network
-  Trail Network
-  Streams and Water Bodies
-  Roads
-  Railroads
-  Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, PennDOT

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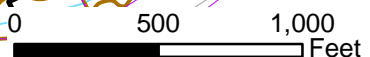
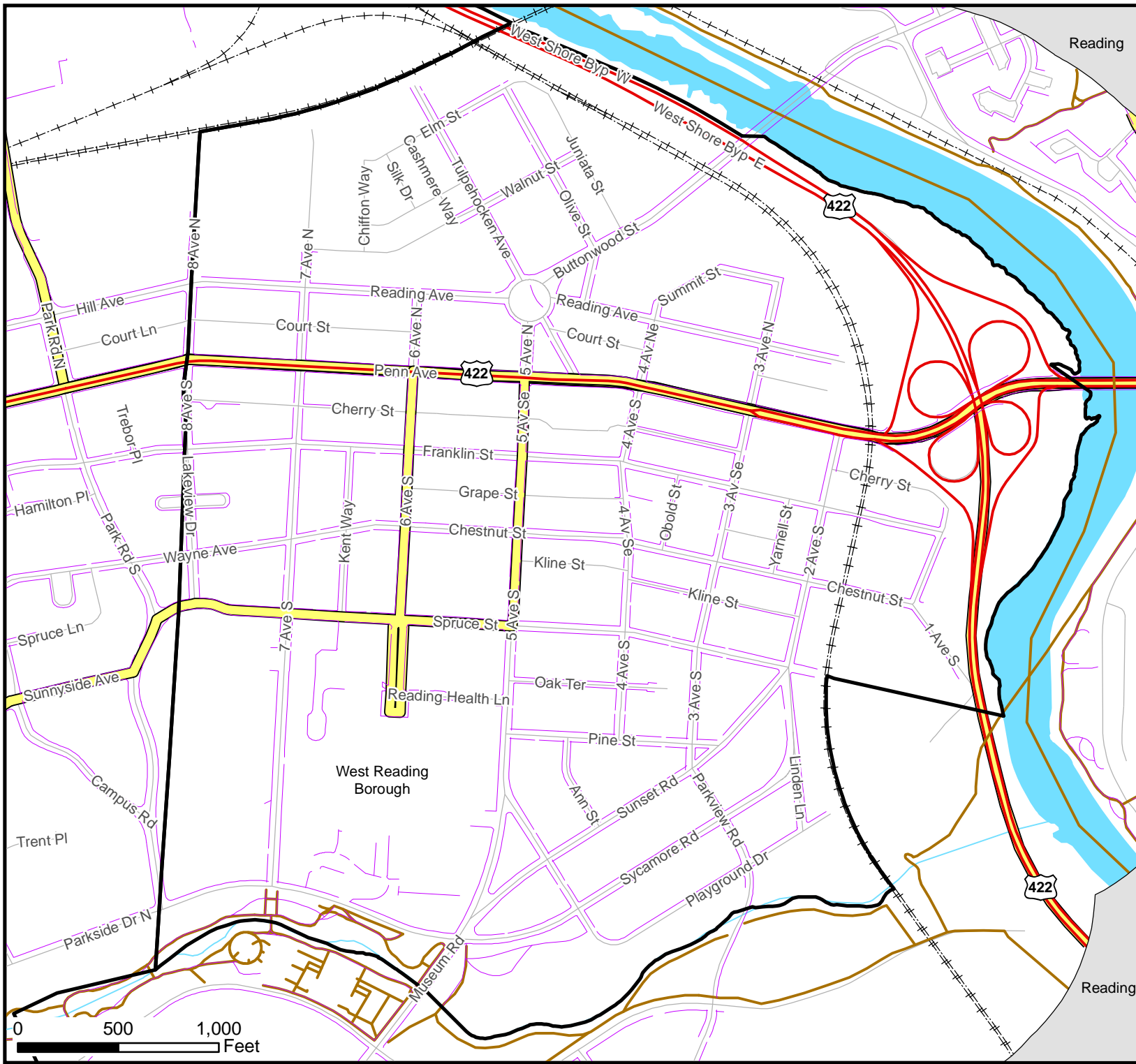
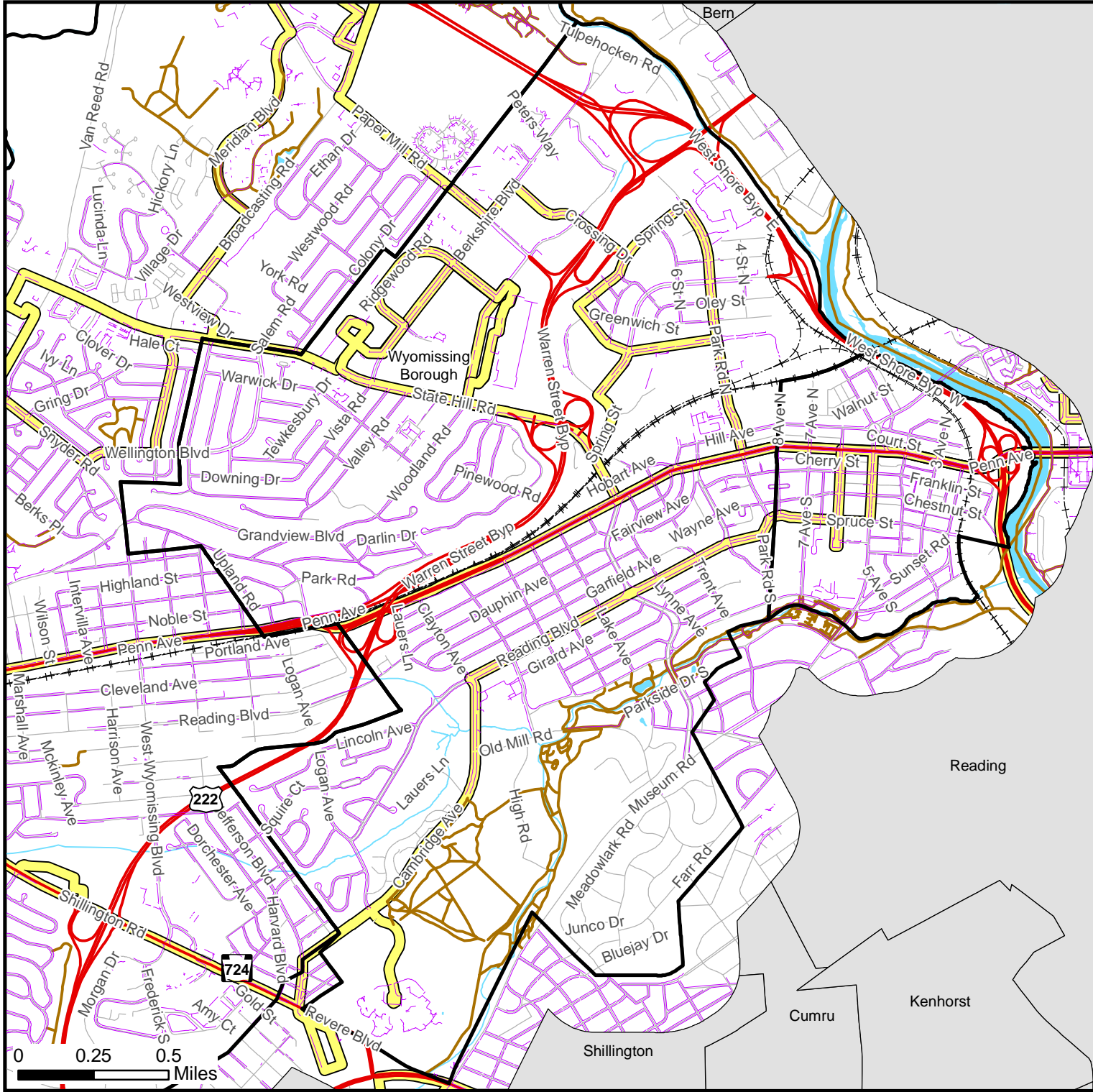
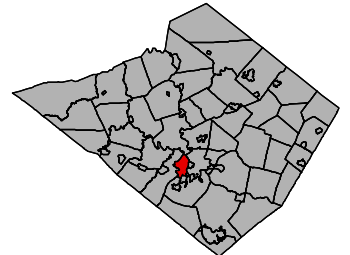


FIGURE 28

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough National Highway System and Sidewalk / Trail Network

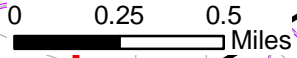


Legend

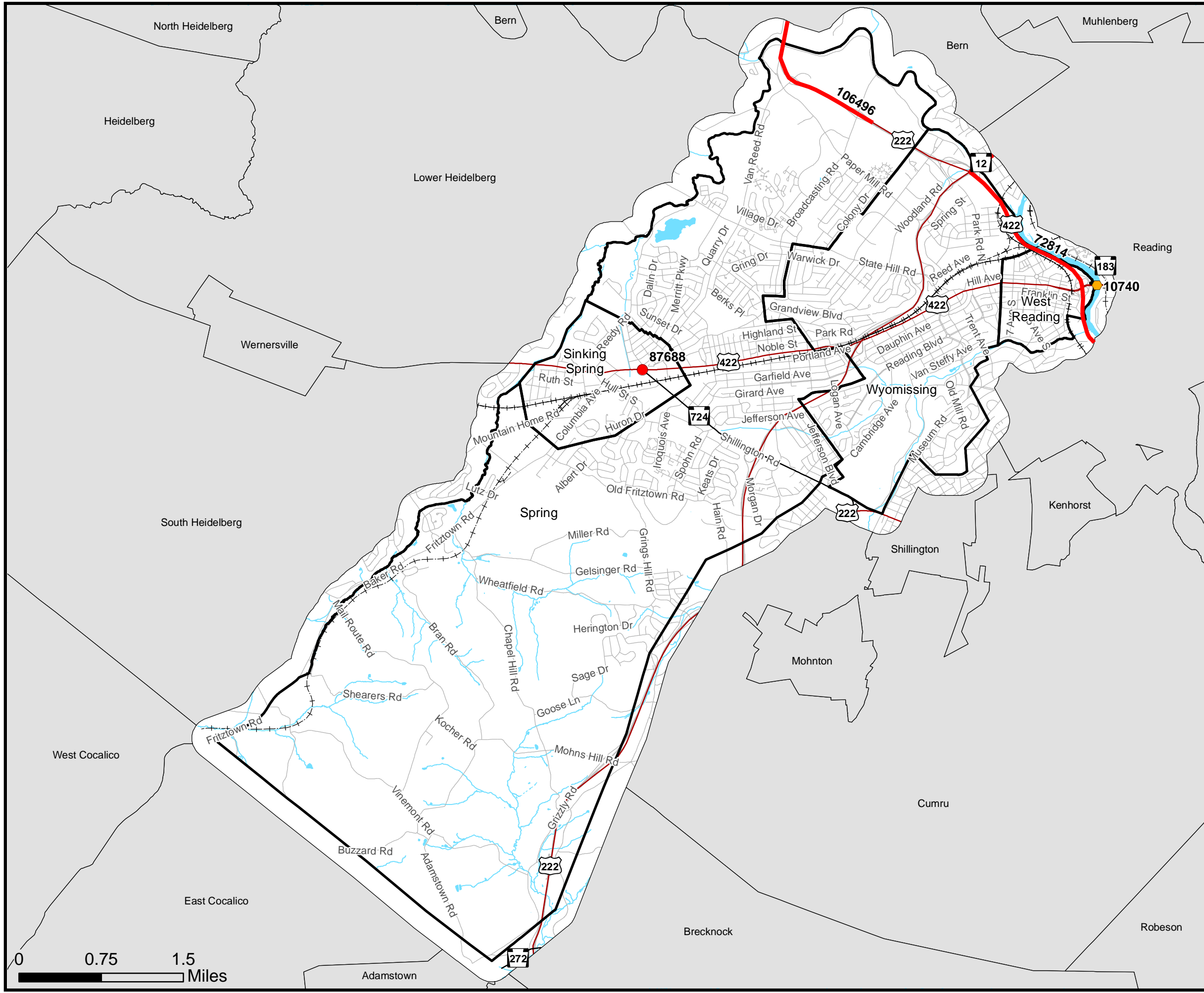
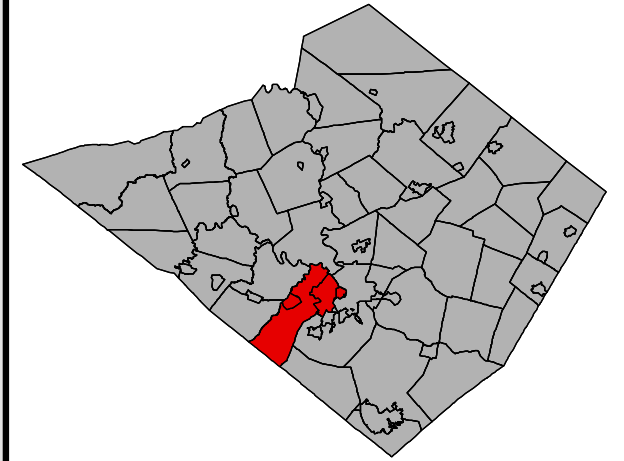
- National Highway System
- BARTA Routes
- Sidewalk Network
- Trail Network
- Streams and Water Bodies
- Roads
- + -+ Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES

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Transportation Improvement Projects



Legend

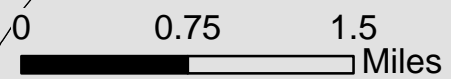
- Bridge Project
- Highway Project
- Highway Project
- Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

* Includes sites identified by surveys conducted from one or more of the following groups: Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission, Berks Nature, George Meiser and local historical societies.

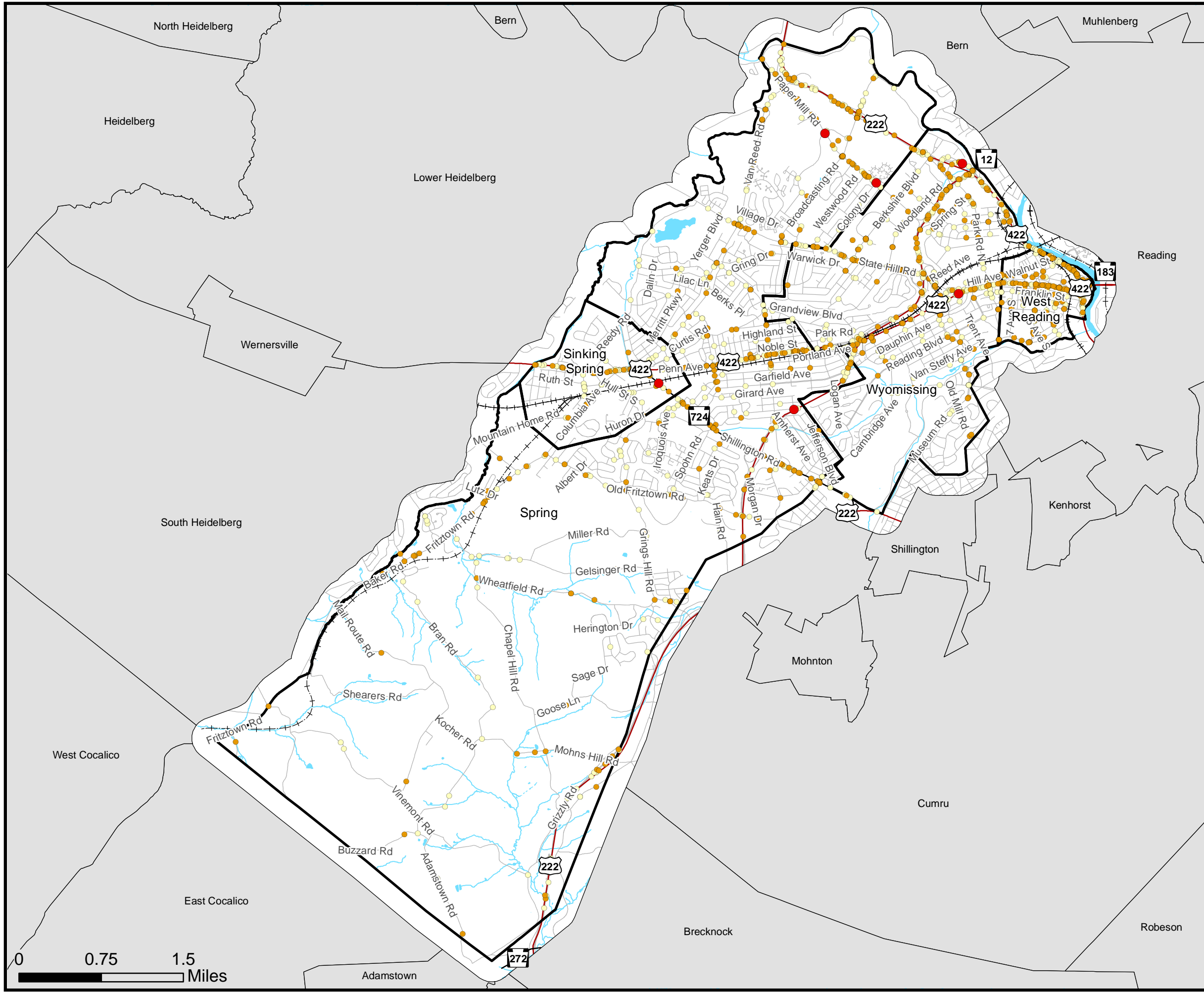
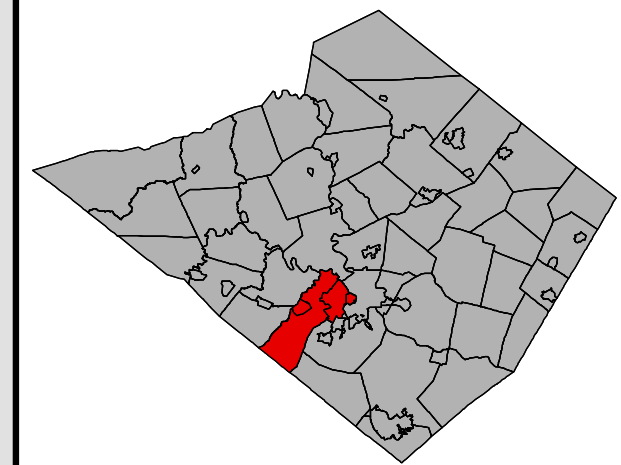
Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

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Municipal Crash Data 2014-2016

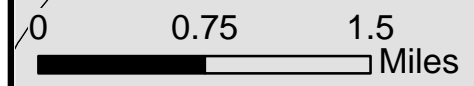


Legend

- Fatal Crashes
- Injury Crashes
- Damage Crashes
- █ Streams and Water Bodies
- US Route
- State Route
- Roads
- - - - Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, PennDOT

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EXISTING LAND USE PLAN

Land use is only one aspect of planning; however it is an extremely important one. Land use is the alteration of the natural environment into man-made or built environment and includes lands which are undisturbed by man. Development regulations, physical restraints and highway networks all contribute to the land use patterns within a region. Land use is used as a tool for evaluating current zoning and subdivision and land development policies as well as provides guidance for future development. Land use helps evaluate public needs, potential environmental impacts as well as prevents potential conflicts. Municipalities utilize land use planning to balance development and preserve natural resources. It serves to guide official decisions regarding the distribution and intensity of private development, reinvestment in urban centers and capital improvement programs.



The Shoppes at Wyomissing

For a land use to be practical, it must accurately inventory existing land uses and development characteristics. Then, with proper analysis, future land use schemes can reflect reality, and avoid the creation of nonconforming uses when implemented through zoning regulations. To determine existing land uses, two sources were consulted. First, the Berks County Planning Commission has prepared a land use GIS map coverage which blends tax parcel record information with land cover features as derived from aerial photograph interpretation. Specifically, tax parcel data is used within “developed” areas while land cover data is used in outlying rural areas. This land cover data can “split” larger properties into several uses. For example, a farm with a house will depict the house as one use, and the farmland as another; this gives a truer picture of uses in outlying rural areas. Conversely, within the Boroughs of Sinking Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing, and more populated portions of Spring Township the County’s tax parcel information was used to determine land use. Here, the tax records list one predominant land use on the entire property, which is also more accurate than aerial photo interpretation when analyzing a “built” environment. Second, the GIS data was reviewed by the Suburban Berks West Joint Planning Committee during this update with corrections noted. Regionally, the existing land use pattern includes a very wide range of uses and settings which are depicted on the Existing Land Use Map, found following this section.

Existing Land Use Patterns

The maps accompanying this section illustrate the existing uses of different areas of the region, as of 2018. The Suburban Berks West region encompasses a total area of 15,942 acres. Commercial development is concentrated along Route 422 Business (Penn Avenue), Woodland Road, Paper Mill Road, Park Road North, Broadcasting Road and Berkshire Boulevard. The commercial uses in these areas range from office complexes and regional shopping centers to mixed use commercial and residential uses in the more densely populated boroughs.

The area has a number of industrial properties. The bulk of these industrial uses are located along the Route 422 Business (Penn Avenue) corridor in Sinking Spring Borough and Spring Township along Fritztown and Mountain Home Roads. There are a number of industrial properties located sporadically in West Reading and Wyomissing Boroughs.

Institutional uses are abundant in the region. Institutional land use designations include municipal buildings, schools and hospitals. The Reading Hospital/Tower Health campus, a large regional medical and surgical center is located within the boundaries of West Reading Borough. The Berks County campus of Penn State University

Chapter 10 - Existing Land Use Plan

is located with Spring Township.

The denser areas of residential development have been limited to areas where central sewage service has been available and where it was allowed by zoning. These areas include within and around Wyomissing, West Reading and Sinking Spring Boroughs, as well as the northern portion of Spring Township around the borough boundaries.

The southern portion of Spring Township has experienced some scattered single family detached home subdivisions on one to two acre lots. Some of this land area continues to be wooded or used for agricultural activities.

Existing Land Use Analysis

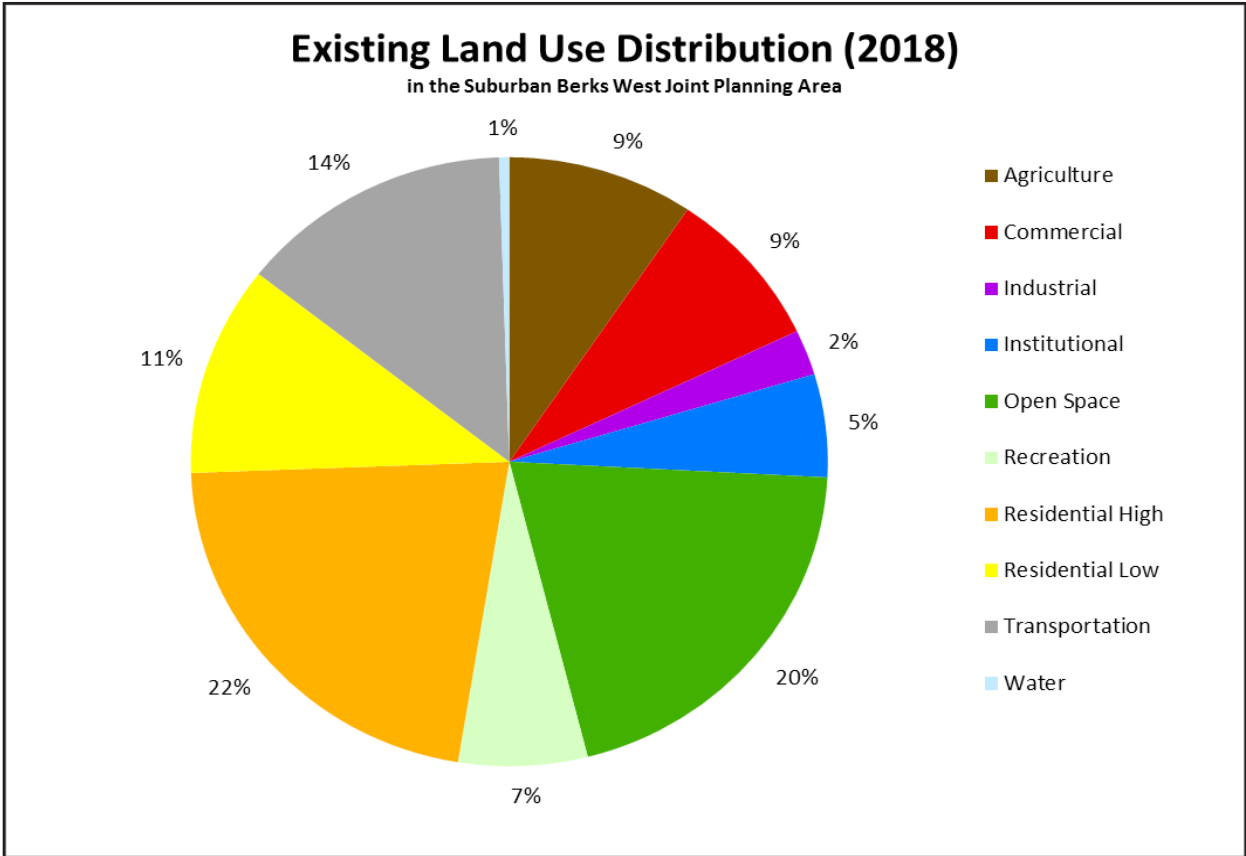
1. Methodology

The Existing Land Use Maps, Figures 31 through 34, were created digitally using a geographic information system (GIS). The Berks County GIS tax parcel data was modified to include a specific existing land use designation for each parcel. Land use assessment codes, aerial imagery, information from Act 537 sewer plans, and other GIS data related to land use was also used in the analysis.

The table and chart below illustrate the existing land uses by acreage in the region:

Existing Land Use in the Suburban Berks West Joint Planning Area, 2018										
LANDUSE	Joint Planning Area		Spring Twp		Sinking Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area
Agriculture	1,508	9.3%	1,487	12.5%	21	2.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Commercial	1,353	8.4%	639	5.4%	112	14.0%	60	15.8%	542	18.7%
Industrial	384	2.3%	217	1.8%	105	13.1%	10	2.6%	52	1.8%
Institutional	871	5.6%	598	5.0%	27	3.4%	65	17.1%	181	6.2%
Open Space	3,223	21.0%	3,075	25.9%	47	5.9%	19	5.0%	82	2.8%
Recreation	1,044	6.5%	719	6.1%	55	6.9%	17	4.5%	253	8.7%
Residential High	3,480	21.8%	2,114	17.8%	292	36.5%	88	23.2%	986	34.0%
Residential Low	1,780	10.6%	1,691	14.3%	9	1.1%	0	0.0%	80	2.8%
Transportation	2,217	14.0%	1,250	10.5%	131	16.4%	121	31.8%	715	24.6%
Water	82	0.5%	70	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	0.4%
Total	15,942	100.0%	11,860	100.0%	799	100.0%	380	100.0%	2,903	100.0%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission



2. Residential Lands

Residential Low

The Residential Low category consists of primarily single-family detached dwelling units on one to five acre lots. A lot size larger than five acres was subject to more than one existing land use designation, as the residue land was typically designated as Open Space.

- Comprising 10.6% of the region’s land area or 1,780 acres, Residential Low land is the fourth largest land use category. Spring Township (1,691 acres) contains the majority of this type of residential development.
- West Reading Borough has no residential low land use.

Residential High

The Residential High category is characterized by a variety of dwelling unit types, including single-family detached, semi-detached, townhouses, apartments, and mobile homes within parks, at densities that exceed one unit per acre.

- At 21.8% this is the predominant land use within the region. The majority of this land is concentrated in Spring Township (2,114 acres) with Wyomissing (986 acres) having the second largest concentration.

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3. Commercial Lands

The Commercial lands category contains such uses as, retail, offices, utilities (electric and phone companies) and personal, professional and business services.

- Commercial uses comprise 8.4% of the region's total land area or 1,353 acres.
- The majority of the commercial uses are located within Spring Township and account for 639 acres or 47% of commercial land use within the Suburban Berks West Region. Wyomissing Borough contains the second largest amount of this land use at 542.

4. Industrial Lands

Industrial land uses include processing, fabrication or assembly of raw materials or component parts, wholesale trade and warehousing. Landfills, junk yards, and quarries are also included within this designation.

- Approximately 384 acres or 2.3% of industrial land uses encompass the land in the Suburban Berks West Region.
- Industrial uses within the region are primarily located in Spring Township and Sinking Spring Borough.

5. Institutional Lands

Institutional lands are used for public services such as governmental and public safety facilities, educational facilities (including athletic fields owned by educational institutions), cemeteries and religious institutions.

- Institutional lands occupy 871 acres or approximately 5.6% of the region's land area.
- Nearly 69% of the institutional land is located within Spring Township.

6. Agricultural Land

The rich soil, aided by a favorable climate and centralized Mid-Atlantic location, has contributed to a strong agricultural tradition in Berks County. Agriculture lands are used for crops, pasture, the raising of livestock, farmsteads, barns, silos, mushroom farms, and the fields where trees and plants are harvested for nurseries.

- Agricultural lands occupy 1,508 acres or approximately 9.3% of the region's land area.
- Out of those 1,508 acres, Spring Township has the majority of land area occupied by agricultural uses. Spring has 1,487 acres or approximately 98% of the region's agricultural production.
- Not surprisingly the boroughs contain very little to no agricultural uses because of their dense residential and commercial development.

7. Recreation Lands

Recreation land provides space and facilities for people to engage in active and passive recreation activities. These include playgrounds, parkland, state gamelands/forests, as well as recreation land owned by non-profit recreational groups (i.e. homeowners associations, sportsman clubs, little league) and commercial recreation (i.e. golf courses, miniature golf courses, campgrounds).

- Recreation lands occupy 1,044 acres or 6.5% of the region's total land area.
- 68% of the total recreation land in the region is located within Spring Township.

8. Open Space Lands

Open Space is land that is predominantly wooded or open land that does not include a structure such as meadows and fields (not farmland). Residue land associated with large residential lots over 5 acres, as well as forested land on farmland is also included in the category. The majority of this land is private except for municipal watershed lands.

- Open Space is the second largest use of land at 3,223 acres or approximately 21% of the region's total land area.
- Not surprisingly, 95% of the total open space in the region is found in Spring Township.

9. Transportation Lands

Transportation lands are used for roads and railroads. While the network of transportation modes that serves the region also includes bus and motor freight services, these land uses, as well as parking garages are included in the commercial category.

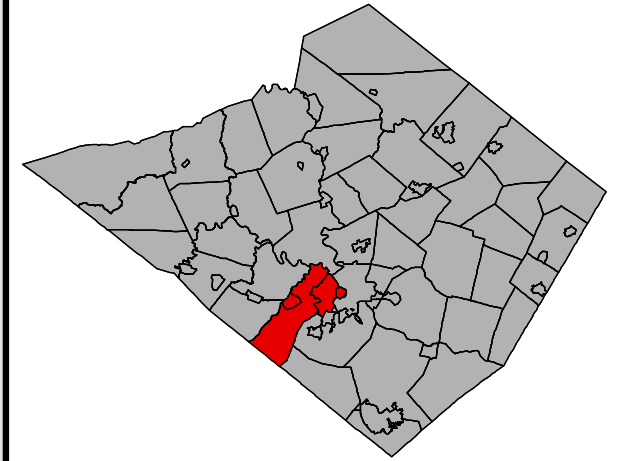
- The amount of land area consumed by such a network is somewhat significant (2,217 acres or approximately 14% of the total region's land area), due to the varying widths of rights-of-way associated with the highway and railroad modes of transportation.
- Spring Township has the most land area covered by transportation at 1,250 acres or 56% of the region's total transportation land area.
- The transportation category is the third largest land use designation by area in the joint planning area.

10. Water

The water category is comprised of rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes.

- Water occupies 82 acres or approximately .5 % of the region's total land area.

Existing Land Use



Legend

- Residential Low
- Residential High
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Water
- Transportation
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES, Spring Township

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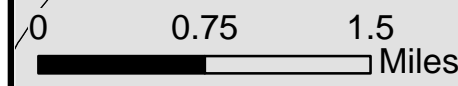
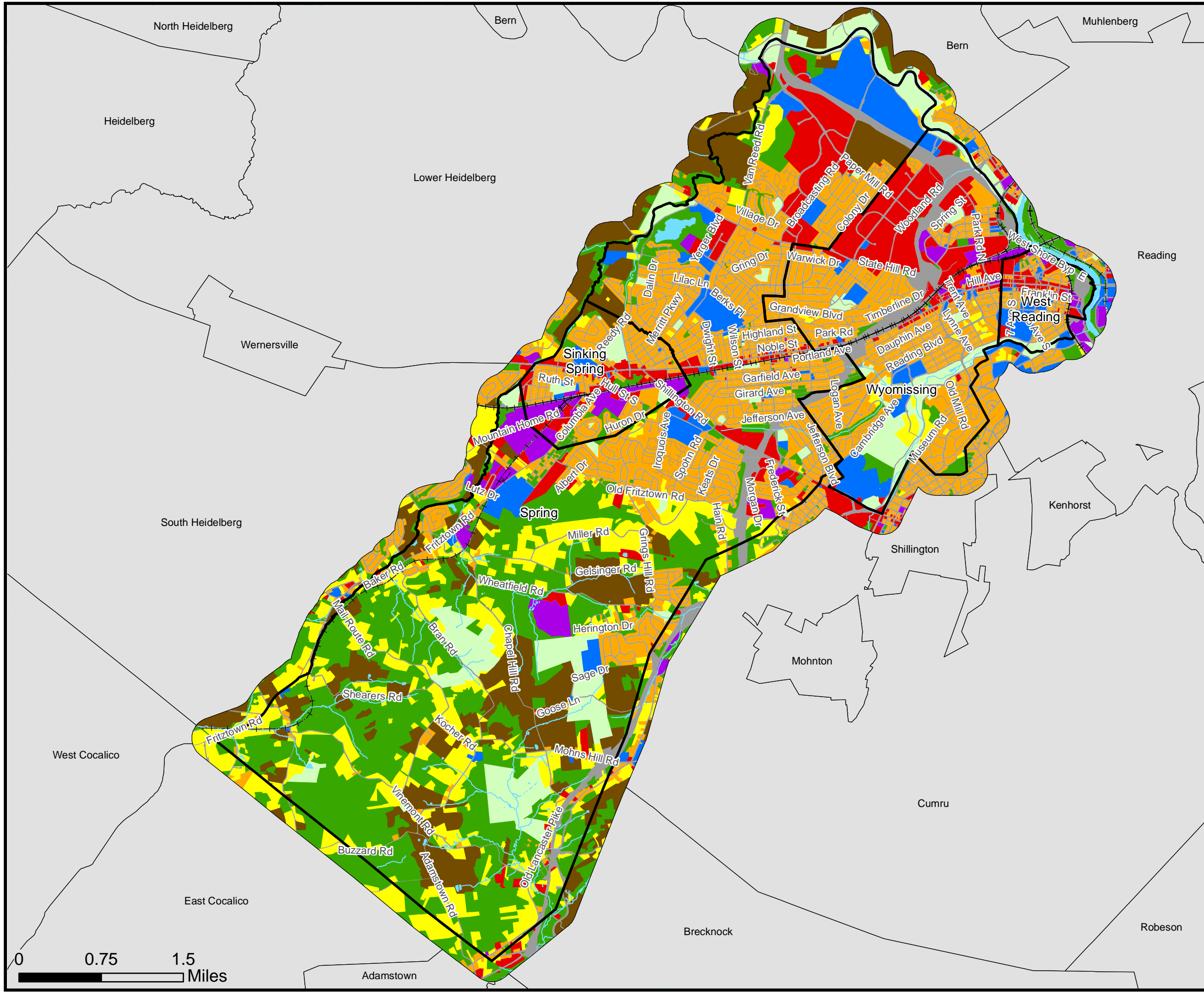
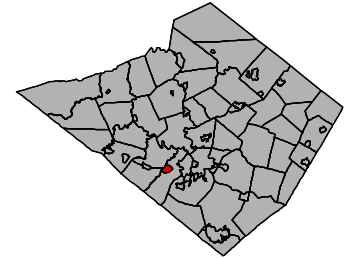


FIGURE 32

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomingissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

- Residential Low
- Residential High
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Water
- Transportation
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, Spring Township

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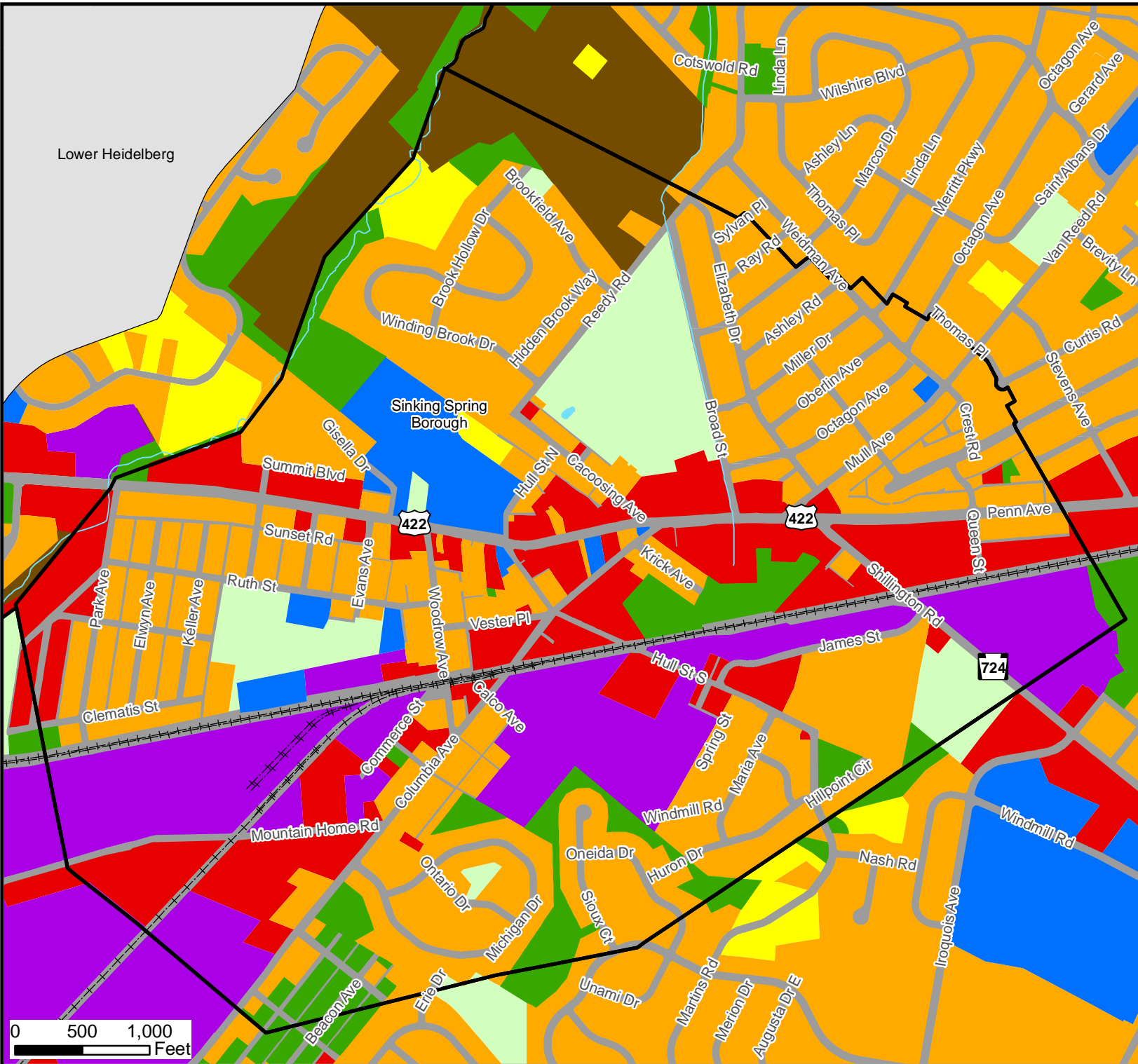
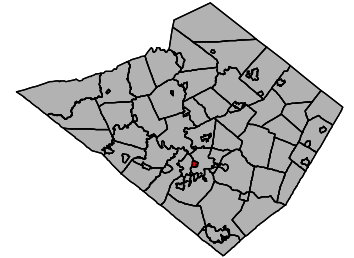


FIGURE 33

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
September 2018

West Reading Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

- Residential Low
- Residential High
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Water
- Transportation
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, Spring Township

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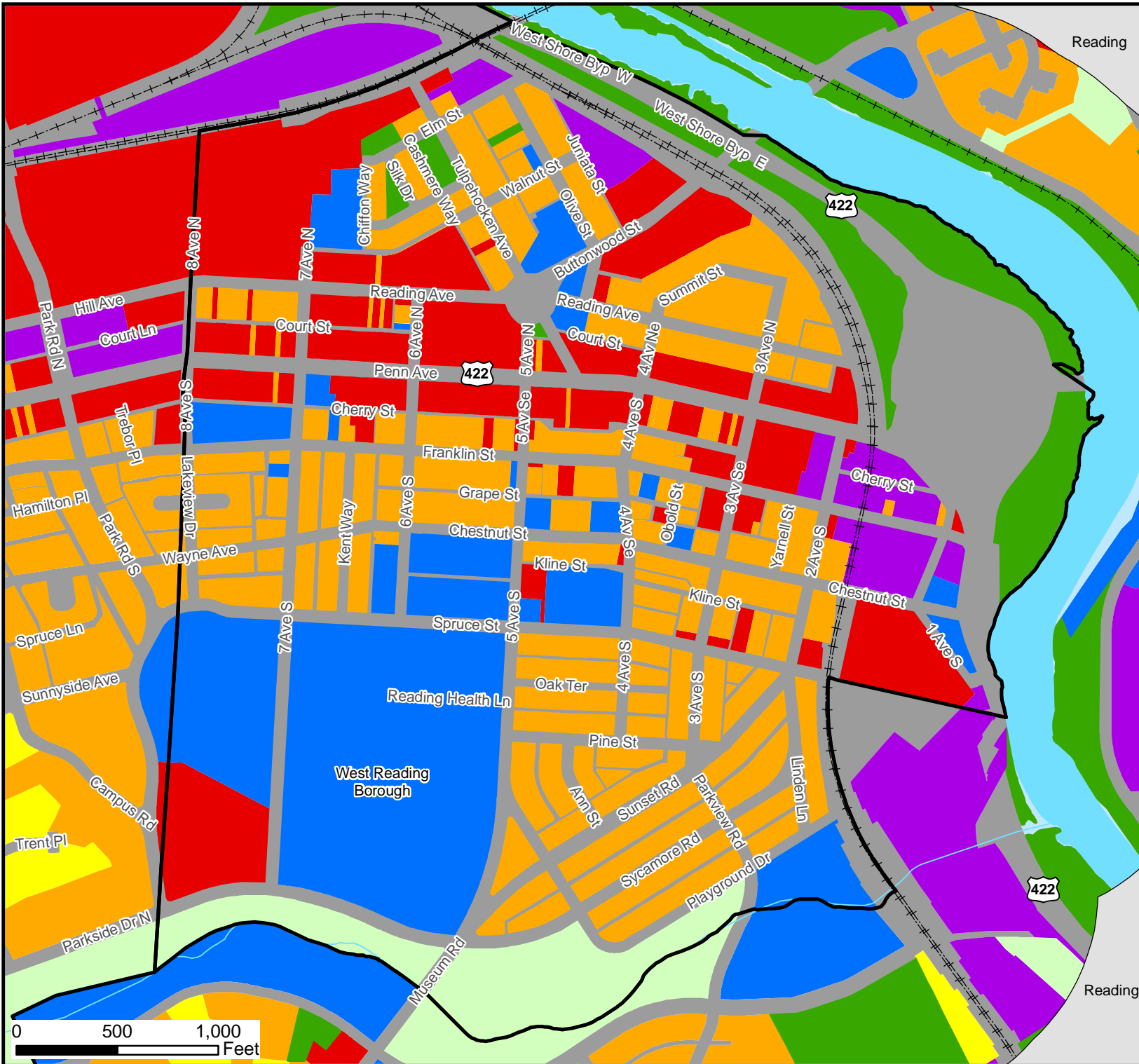
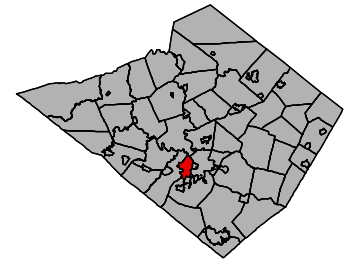


FIGURE 34

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Existing Land Use



Legend

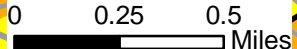
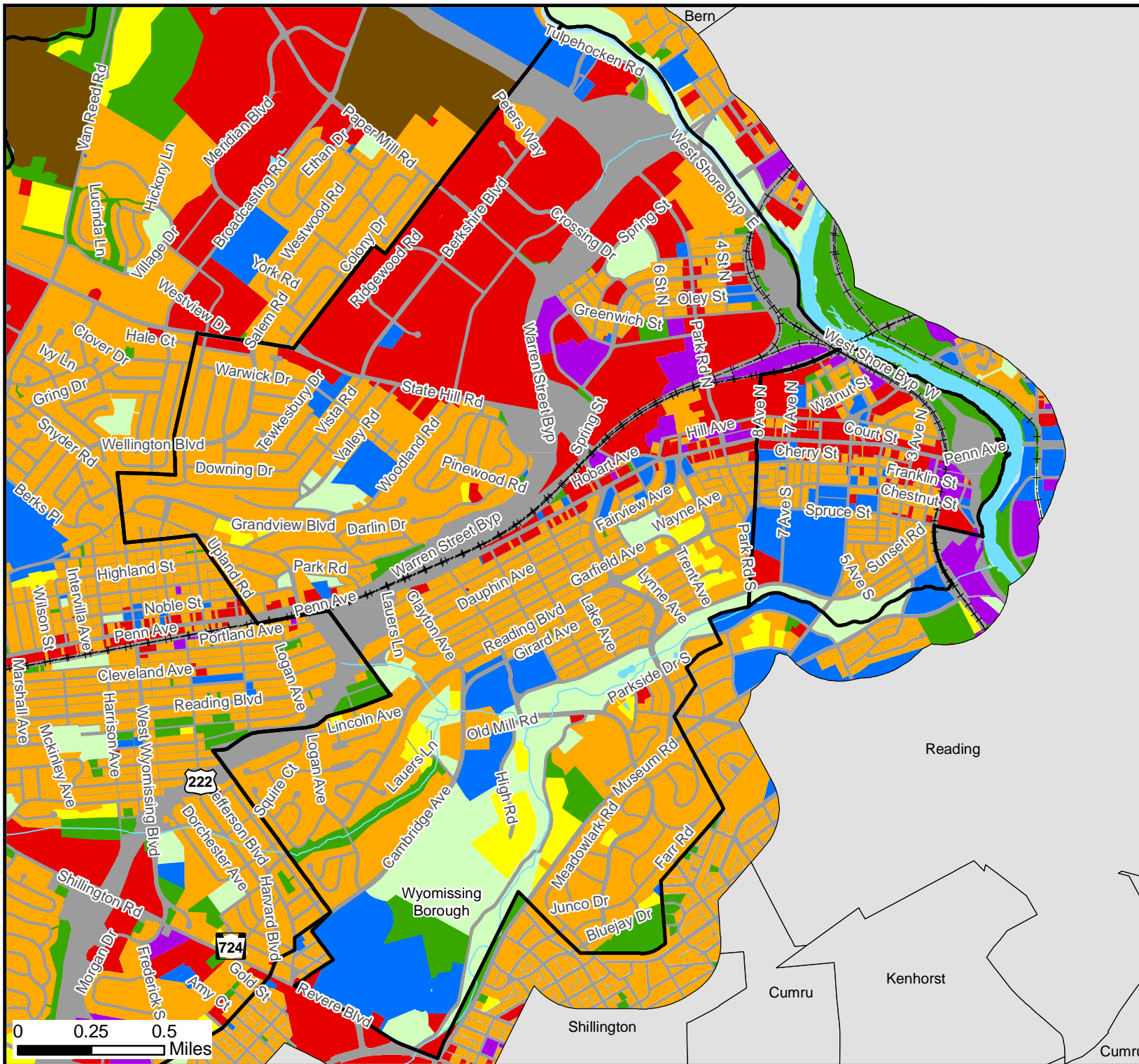
- Residential Low
- Residential High
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Recreation
- Open Space
- Agriculture
- Water
- Transportation
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES, Spring Township

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FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan emphasizes land use planning that accommodates projected community and economic growth, directs growth to areas of existing or planned infrastructure, and protects sensitive resources from development and its impacts. The core purpose of the Future Land Use Plan is to manage the amount, intensity, character and timing of development.

Future Land Use Plan Recommendations

The following describes land use categories, as shown on the Future Land Use Plan Maps. In most cases, these categories are intended to generally relate to zoning districts. The Future Land Use Plan is primarily intended to:

- a) protect existing residential neighborhoods,
- b) moderate the rate of housing construction to avoid overloading the public school system, roads, utilities and groundwater supplies,
- c) coordinate development across municipal borders, including municipalities that are not part of the Suburban Berks West Regional Comprehensive Plan,
- d) avoid serious traffic congestion and safety problems, particularly by avoiding new commercial strip development along major roads,
- e) promote new business development in appropriate locations, including the strengthening of older business areas, with careful attention towards the types of businesses allowed in areas near homes, and
- f) make sure development properly relates to the natural features of the land, particularly to protect steeply sloped areas, major water supplies and creek valleys.



100 Park at Wyomissing Square

Future Land Use Analysis

Methodology

The Future Land Use Plan was created digitally using a geographic information system (GIS). The existing land use and zoning GIS data was used as the foundation to create the Future Land Use Maps. Additional GIS data such as public water and sewer areas, slopes, floodplains, tax parcels, and preservation easements were overlaid onto the existing land use. The combination of all the different GIS data allowed an analysis to be performed which determined areas that are currently developed, areas where growth should occur at different densities, conservation areas, recreation, as well as areas where industrial and commercial development should occur.

The Future Land Use Plan depicts the pattern of projected land use, targeting areas that are appropriate for urban growth and reinvestment, as well as areas that should be preserved/conserved for their agricultural, recreational or natural resource assets.

Chapter 11 - Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Use Plan is divided into twelve (10) categories:

1. Low Density Residential
2. Medium Density Residential
3. High Density Residential
4. Mixed Residential / Commercial
5. Rural Conservation
6. Commercial
7. Industrial
8. Public / Institutional
9. Recreation
10. Transportation Network

The table below shows the acreage for each Future Land Use category for the Region.

LANDUSE	Joint Planning Area		Spring		Sinking Spring		West Reading		Wyomissing	
	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area	# Acres	% of Area
Low Density Residential	1,540	9.7%	641	5.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	899	30.9%
Medium Density Residential	1,216	7.6%	831	7.0%	293	36.7%	16	4.2%	76	2.6%
High Density Residential	882	5.5%	606	5.1%	66	8.3%	49	12.9%	161	5.5%
Mixed Residential / Commercial	1,330	8.3%	1,083	9.1%	72	9.0%	72	18.9%	103	3.5%
Rural Conservation	5,383	33.8%	5,360	45.2%	0	0.0%	23	6.0%	0	0.0%
Commercial	747	4.7%	245	2.1%	20	2.5%	0	0.0%	482	16.6%
Industrial	480	3.0%	230	1.9%	169	21.2%	26	6.8%	55	1.9%
Public / Institutional	903	5.7%	618	5.2%	24	3.0%	72	18.9%	189	6.5%
Recreation	1,424	8.9%	1,076	9.1%	49	6.1%	17	4.5%	282	9.7%
Transportation Network	2,044	12.8%	1,169	9.9%	105	13.2%	106	27.8%	664	22.8%
Total	15,949	100.0%	11,859	100.0%	798	100.0%	381	100.0%	2,911	100.0%

Source: Berks County Planning Commission

The following describes the ten (10) land use categories portrayed in the Future Land Use Plan.

1. Low Density Residential

This category is primarily intended to provide for single family detached development. With on-lot well and septic systems, a one or one-and-a-half acre minimum should be required depending on the municipality. With central water and sewage services, a lot size of approximately ½ acre to 1/3 acre would be appropriate in most areas.

The Low Density Residential designation accounts for approximately 9.7% or 1,540 acres of the planning area making this designation the third most abundant land use behind the Rural Conservation and Transportation Network designations.

2. Medium Density Residential

This category is primarily intended to provide for single family detached homes and twin houses. With central water and sewage services, an average of approximately 4 to 5 homes per acre would be appropriate without open space preservation. The Open Space Development option could provide for approximately 1/4 or 1/6 acre average lot sizes with 30 percent of the tract preserved as open space.

The Medium Density Residential category encompasses approximately 7.6% of the land use within the region. Over 36% of the land area in Sinking Spring Borough is designated as Medium Density Residential, making it the most abundant land use category in the Borough.

3. High Density Residential

This category is intended to provide for a mix of housing types at densities at over 6 homes per acre. Higher densities (such as 8 to 12 homes per acre) could be appropriate if the housing was limited to persons age 55 and older or through transfer of development rights. These areas should allow for all housing types. These areas are particularly important to meet obligations under State law to offer opportunities for all types of housing. It also is important to provide opportunities for various housing types in order to meet the needs of different types of households, such as empty nesters, singles, low income and senior citizens. All apartment and townhouse developments (except the smallest) should be required to include some recreation or open space area for residents.

High Density Residential can be found mostly within the borders of the Boroughs and in Spring Township along the boundary with Wyomissing. Although the majority of this land is already built up it is only appropriate to locate this type of development in areas already served by existing or proposed infrastructure.

4. Mixed Residential / Commercial

This category is intended to provide for a mix of light businesses and a mix of housing types. These areas should provide for retail stores, offices, personal services, day care centers, banks, exercise clubs and similar uses. The intent is to prohibit the heaviest commercial uses that are most likely to spur demolition or create nuisances for neighbors, such as 24 hour convenience stores, gas stations, vehicle repair, adult bookstores, restaurants with drive-through service and vehicle sales.

In the downtowns and older villages, development should be encouraged that complements, rather than detracts from, the existing character of historic areas. In older areas, new buildings should be placed with setbacks from the road/street that are similar to nearby older buildings. To the maximum extent feasible, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings. If desired, the Traditional Neighborhood provisions of the State Planning Code could be used to require that new construction be consistent with existing buildings (such as requiring parking to be to the side or rear of buildings and requiring front porches for new homes).

In the planning area this designation encompasses 1,330 acres or 8.3% of the total land area. The majority of which is located along the 422 Business / Penn Avenue corridor. In West Reading Borough this category is quite prominent. Businesses such as restaurants and boutiques occupy the first floor of a traditional row or semi-detached buildings and residential units occupy the upper floors.

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5. Rural Conservation

This category is intended to emphasize conservation of important natural features, particularly in the southern portion of Spring Township. This area is not proposed to be served by central sewage systems. These lands are characterized by low density development, prominent forest cover, and may contain slopes greater than 15%, as well as fragmented areas of farmland and land eased for agriculture, open space, natural resource or woodland conservation. Development should be subject to flexible siting standards, conservation design standards, and disturbance limitations designed to avoid the most critical environmental constraints, and allow land to be developed efficiently with the least degree of environmental impact.

The Rural Conservation category also contains the region's agricultural land. As described in chapter 4 (Nature Features and Agricultural Preservation) Spring Township has a number of parcels preserved through Act 43, the Agricultural Security Law. Act 43 authorizes townships to create Agricultural Security Areas (ASAs) on a voluntary basis. Landowners are encouraged to enroll farmland in an ASA that offers three benefits: 1) Protection from condemnation or eminent domain; 2) Protection from local nuisance ordinances; and 3) Eligibility for the County's Agricultural Conservation Easement (ACE) Program.

Note - Landowners with 10 acres or more may voluntarily petition their township to form an ASA. A minimum of 250 acres is needed to establish an ASA and a minimum of 500 acres is needed for that land enrolled in the ASA to be eligible for the ACE Program. Most townships in Berks County with an ASA have more than 500 acres enrolled. An ASA may be increased at any time. Landowners simply need to submit an enrollment form to the township office by certified mail, as it is important that the landowners can verify the date the application was submitted. In addition to the township's responsibility to respond to enrollment forms, every seven years townships may review lands enrolled in ASA with the option of adding additional land, at the request of the landowners, or withdrawing land previously enrolled.

The Rural Conservation category is the largest category in the Future Land Use analysis. Rural Conservation accounts for nearly 34% of the region's total acreage.

6. Commercial

This category is intended to provide for a wide range of commercial development, particularly in areas of more "highway" oriented commercial development. As opposed to the Mixed Residential / Commercial areas described earlier in this chapter, these areas should provide opportunities for uses such as gas stations, vehicle sales and auto sales. A careful set of standards are needed to require coordinated traffic access among different uses. In most cases, these areas are not adjacent to residential development.

If an excessive amount of commercial zoning is allowed at one time, it may encourage sprawled development, with businesses simply relocating from one business site to a new site, leaving the old site vacant. If the supply of commercially zoned land is held to a moderate amount, it will encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment of older commercial sites.

This category is proposed to include many existing commercial areas including the Berkshire Mall and the former Vanity Fair Outlet site.

4.7% or a total of 747 acres of the region includes this Commercial designation.

7. Industrial

The Industrial areas are intended to provide for a wide range of industrial uses. These areas are particularly important to meet obligations under State law to provide opportunities for all types of business uses, including some uses that are less desirable. The heaviest industrial uses should need special exception from the zoning hearing board or conditional use approval from the supervisors/borough council.

Because this plan involves multiple municipalities, it will not be necessary for each municipality to provide for all types of industrial uses. It is recommended that the heavier industrial uses be concentrated around the existing petroleum tank farms along Columbia Avenue and Mountain Home Road in Sinking Spring and eastern Spring Township.

A careful set of performance standards should be used to control noise, dust, vibration and other nuisances and hazards, especially from industrial uses. Extensive landscaped buffers should be required next to homes. Where a very intensive use is proposed next to homes, a landscaped earth berm and/or solid fencing should also be required.

A high quality setting will help to attract additional desirable types of business development and higher paying types of jobs. In newer industrial areas, a set of site design regulations should be used to promote light industrial/office parks in a well-landscaped campus-like environment. Truck parking and outdoor storage areas should be required to be screened from view from roads. The majority of the first 30 feet along a road should be landscaped, with truck loading docks and truck parking located to the side or rear of buildings.

Approximately 480 acres of the region's total land area is reserved for Industrial use.

8. Public / Institutional

This category recognizes existing large public, semi-public and institutional uses, such as hospitals, schools and municipal buildings. A total of 903 acres are designated as Public/Institutional within the planning area.

9. Recreation

Recreation land provides space and facilities for people to engage in active and passive recreation activities. These include playgrounds, parkland, state gamelands/forests, as well as recreation land owned by non-profit recreational groups (i.e. sportsman clubs, and little league organizations) and commercial recreation (i.e. golf courses, miniature golf courses, campgrounds). Recreation lands occupy 1,424 acres or 8.9% of the Region's total land area.

10. Transportation Network

Land in this category contains roads and railroads. While the network of transportation modes that serves Berks County also includes air service, bus and motor freight services, these land uses, as well as parking garages are included in the commercial category.

While many factors can influence growth and development patterns, the existing transportation network has always been prominent in shaping Berks County, as well as the Suburban Berks West planning region. Over time development has historically concentrated near major transportation facilities to take advantage of their accessibility. The amount of land area consumed by such a network is 2,044 acres or almost 13% of the region's total land area. Recent upgrades to the highway network include U.S. 222 South. Plans are underway to completely rehabilitate the Route 422 West Shore Bypass and the Penn Street interchange. This project is still in its engineering phase with work slated to begin sometime in the year 2022.

Further discussion of the transportation network within the Region can be found in the Transportation section of this plan.

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Concepts for Future Development

1. Extend the best features of older development into newer development.

Consideration should be given to strongly encouraging forms of “traditional neighborhood development.” This involves extending the best features of the older areas into new neighborhoods. As discussed later in this Chapter, this concept also involves making sure that development or redevelopment of lots within older neighborhoods occurs in a way that fits within the “urban fabric.” Traditional neighborhood development primarily involves the following:

- Street trees should be planted to eventually provide a canopy of shade over streets. Studies show that mature street trees can increase the value of homes up to 10 percent. If it is not appropriate to have shade trees in the right-of-way, they can be required immediately outside of the right-of-way.
- Requiring that new street lights meet a certain design standard that is similar to older styles of street lights.
- Sidewalks should be provided (or asphalt paths along main roads in rural areas). There should be an orientation to pedestrians, with an ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks. Overly wide residential streets and intersections should be avoided to discourage speeding and to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street.
- A modest density should be encouraged that is similar to the typical development that occurred during the 1930s through 1940s. This density (such as 5 to 8 homes per acre) should make best use of available land, while avoiding overly dense development and parking problems.
- Whenever practical, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings, so that the front yard can be landscaped. At best, parking and garages would be placed to the rear of lots, with access using alleys. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking.
 - If rear access to garages is not practical, then garages should enter onto the side of homes whenever possible, particularly on corner lots. If a front-entrance garage is proposed, it should be designed so that it is not an overly prominent part of the street. For example, a one lane driveway can pass along the side of a house and then widen to enter a two-car garage that is setback from the front of the house. “Snout” houses should be avoided that have a front entrance garage as the home’s most prominent feature.
 - Care is needed to discourage new twin and townhouse development that has numerous driveways entering directly onto a street from the front. Garage doors should not be an overly prominent part of the views of housing from the front. Where garages and parking cannot be avoided in the front yard, larger lot widths should be required to make sure that there is green space in the front yard. Regulations are needed to make sure that the majority of the front yards of housing developments are not covered by paving.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front or side porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors. On a corner lot, a side porch can have the same effect. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

This concept can be used to maintain the character of older residential areas. For example, driveways can be required to access onto an alley or side street where it is available, as opposed to having a front garage and driveway. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking. Otherwise, new driveways may remove as many parking spaces as they create.

New buildings can be required to have a maximum setback from the street that is similar to other buildings on the block. New buildings can also be required to include front porches. Front porches encourage interaction among neighbors, which builds more of a community spirit. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the proper authorities.

Most new parking can be required to be placed to the rear or side of the main building on the lot, which makes the building and not parked cars the most visible feature along the street.

New street trees can be required by a zoning ordinance as part of the construction of any new principal building, instead of only being required for new subdivisions. Neighborhood character can also be established with older styles of street lights and street name signs.

Under the State Planning Code, a municipality can require some of these features in zoning ordinances. Or, a municipality could offer density incentives for this type of traditional development.

2. Traffic Access Control

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

At best, intense business development should be concentrated in well-planned developments with internal roads that access a major road with a traffic signal and turn lanes. Where a traffic signal is not warranted at the present time, there should still be a plan for where traffic signals are intended to be built in the future. This will allow driveways and street intersections to be directed towards those intersections so that the traffic signal will be well-placed in the future. Where traffic signals are not appropriate, adjacent commercial uses should have shared driveways and interconnected parking lots. The interconnected parking lots are particularly valuable so that a person can visit more than one adjacent business without having to enter and re-enter a major road.

3. Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)

This concept should be a voluntary option in the Zoning Ordinances of the municipalities. TDRs offer incentives for private developers to pay to preserve land. If a developer of one tract of land pays an owner of another tract to permanently preserve their land, then the developer could receive approval to build at a higher density on the developer’s tract. The tract that receives the higher density would need to be in an area that the township has designated as being suitable for a higher density. The tract that would be permanently preserved would need to be in an area that the township has targeted for preservation. The developer and the owner of the open land would negotiate on their own to determine how much the developer pays to the other landowner for the preservation.

- This method allows development to be shifted from locations where preservation is desired to allow a higher density on other tracts in a municipality that are well suited for development.
- The municipality would then approve the development at a higher density at the same time as a conservation easement went into effect to preserve the other land. The preserved land would remain privately owned but could never be developed. The preserved land could be re-sold and could be used for agriculture or certain open space uses.
- For example, this process might allow preservation of land in the Rural Conservation area, in return for allowing a higher density in a Low Density Residential or Medium Density Residential area. Or, density might be transferred from one part of a Rural Conservation area to another part of the Rural Conservation area.

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- The number of homes that could be transferred from one tract to another would be based upon a “Yield Plan.” This sketch plan would show how many homes would have been permitted on the tract that is to be preserved. Once the township accepts this Yield Plan, that number of homes could be transferred from one tract to another tract. However, there would still be limits on the density of the tract being developed to make sure that it is not excessive.
- TDR can also be used in combination with commercial development. For example, for every housing unit that is transferred from one area of a municipality, an additional amount of building coverage or impervious coverage could be allowed in a business district.

4. Work to Preserve Open Space in New Development

Throughout the nation, there is increased emphasis in permanently preserving important open spaces as part of new development. This concept has been promoted by the Natural Lands Trust and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources using the term “Conservation Design” development. This Plan uses the term “Open Space Development.”

Attractive incentives are needed so that any development of the large open tracts of land in the Township would be developed with substantial areas of preserved open space (such as 35 to 70 percent), as opposed to standard “cookie-cutter” type lots.

The intent is to design development in a manner that conserves the important natural, scenic and historic features of a site. Large percentages of a tract are permanently preserved in open space. In comparison, “Conventional Subdivisions” typically involve very little or no open space preservation. Conventional Subdivisions are also known as “Cookie Cutter Subdivisions” because every lot is typically the same size and shape, regardless of the features of the land.

Advantages of Open Space Developments - Based upon the work of the Natural Lands Trust, the following are some of the major advantages of Open Space Development:

- *Important natural features can be preserved.* Regulations and incentives should direct buildings away from steep slopes, wetlands, waterways and other important natural features. As a result, homes are placed on portions of the tract that are most environmentally suitable for development - as opposed to being evenly spread across the land. Large contiguous areas can remain in woods and other natural vegetation - which are important as wildlife corridors. Thick natural vegetation can be preserved along creeks - which is essential to filter out eroded soil and other pollutants from runoff before it enters the creek. This vegetation along creeks is also important to maintain high quality fishing habitats.
- In comparison, if an entire tract is divided into lots, it is likely to mostly be in mowed grass - which is a “mono-culture” that does not have the same environmental benefits.
- With open space preservation, stormwater runoff can be managed in a more natural manner that encourages recharge into the groundwater. This may negate the need to build extensive stormwater systems which are costly to build and maintain.
- *Scenic features can be preserved.* Open Space Developments can place homes on less visible portions of a tract, while maintaining scenic views. For example, many Open Space Developments set back homes from main through-roads and limit placement of homes on major ridgelines. As a result, the main angle of vision along major roads involves green space.
- Mature woods can be preserved in locations that hide views of development. The preservation of open space also provides visual relief from seeing continuous development.

- Stormwater runoff can also be managed in a more attractive manner - as opposed to within deep man-made channels and detention basins.
- *Recreational opportunities can be increased.* Open Space Developments typically include attractive areas for walking, jogging, cross-country skiing and nature study. In some cases, active recreation facilities can be included. These open spaces can also increase interaction among neighbors.
- *Developers can achieve lower costs* for grading, lengths of roads, lengths of utilities and other improvements.
- Developers may also be able to save time and money by avoiding wetland alterations and waterway crossings.
- Open Space Developments can provide the flexibility in layout to move homes off of steep slopes, which are more expensive to build upon. Avoiding steep slopes can also reduce the need for blasting.
- By allowing flexibility in placement of buildings, it is easier to find suitable sites for septic systems.
- *Municipalities can save on maintenance costs.* Shorter lengths of roads, utilities and other improvements mean there is less to maintain. It is expensive to maintain and plow snow from steeply sloped roads. Open Space Developments can result in roads being placed at more modest slopes.
- *Developers can often achieve higher sales prices.* More and more developments are stressing in their advertising that homes are adjacent to preserved open spaces. Developers can often receive a premium price for lots that are adjacent to or overlook preserved open space. The presence of trails and other open space amenities can also spur sales.
- Studies have also shown that homes near preserved open space are likely to increase in value faster than other homes.
- *Reliable central water and sewage services* can be extended. It is usually uneconomical to provide central water and sewage services with lot sizes of 2 acres or larger. However, if homes are clustered on a tract, then it is often possible and/or necessary to provide central water and sewage services. Public water and sewage services typically are more reliable than individual wells and septic systems.
- Central sewage service avoids the threat of groundwater contamination from failing malfunctioning septic systems. Central water service avoids the risks of well water contamination from various sources.

Open Space Development can also occur with a design that allows homes to be “hidden in the woods” and in clusters that resemble a rural village, while allowing most of the farmland to be preserved.

The following major policies should be emphasized to encourage Open Space Developments:

1. *Strong incentives and disincentives* are needed to encourage open space preservation in new development. It typically is not sufficient to allow the same density for an Open Space Development as for a conventional subdivision. This is because developers prefer to build what has been successful in the past, as opposed to trying new concepts. Also, developers may feel (often inaccurately) that the homes on larger lots may have a higher market value than homes on smaller lots with open space. Therefore, density bonuses are needed for open space preservation. A community needs to trade-off a modestly increased number of dwelling units in return for substantial open space preservation.

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2. The process for approval of an Open Space Development should not be much more burdensome or time-consuming than the process for a Conventional Subdivision. Where practical, the process to gain approval for a desirable type of development should be easier than the process for a Conventional Subdivision. Discipline is needed in writing Open Space Development standards to make sure that they are not overly restrictive. If Open Space Development standards are too detailed or too extensive, they may not allow enough flexibility for a good design. If the standards get in the way of a developer's marketing plans or cause excessive costs, a developer may choose to do a Conventional Subdivision.
3. Proper standards are needed to make sure that the preserved open space is well-located and improved so that it serves important public functions. In many cases, mature woods, steep slopes and creek valleys should simply be preserved in their natural state. In other cases, the open spaces may be intended for active recreation. In still other cases, trees should be planted in the open spaces and trails should be installed. The key is to avoid a process in which the "open space" is simply the land that is left over after the most economical set of lots and roads are laid out. Narrow strips of open space should be avoided, unless they would preserve a scenic tree line or provide an important trail link.

5. Strengthen Older Residential Areas

It is extremely important that the older areas of the Suburban Berks West region remain strong and viable business and residential areas. This includes the older areas of Spring Township, West Reading, Wyomissing and Sinking Spring Boroughs. The best way to control sprawl is to make sure that older areas remain healthy and desirable places in which to live and conduct business.

This section recommends actions to stabilize and improve older residential neighborhoods. Stable neighborhoods are not only important to provide desirable places to live, but also to protect the health of nearby business areas. If the residential areas deteriorate, they will cause crime and vandalism problems that will discourage business activity. If the surrounding residential areas are strengthened, they will provide a strong base of customers who will hopefully find the downtowns a convenient place to serve their shopping and service needs.

To maintain its economic health, it is important to continually work to attract and retain middle-income households in older areas. This is particularly true because there will always be existing residents moving into newer and more expensive houses, and because there will always be older residents who will be moving to nursing homes, personal care centers or retirement communities. To maintain the same owner-occupancy rate, there needs to be a continual stream of new home-buyers.

Promoting Home Ownership - Many households could afford the monthly costs of owning a home, but do not have sufficient savings for the closing costs and down payment. These households need to be linked with available programs to help them achieve home ownership.

However, care is needed to avoid placing very low-income households in subsidized home-ownership. In too many cases, these households do not have the funds to pay for repairs that are periodically needed in an older home. If they have no equity in the home, they may be tempted to walk away from the mortgage. As a result, a property can stand vacant for months until foreclosure occurs and the property is resold. During this time, the property can deteriorate and/or be vandalized.

The availability of housing designed for senior citizens is an important part of the mix. This type of housing relieves older persons of maintenance and repair responsibilities and expenses. If older persons decide to move from large homes to senior housing, it then frees up that housing for families, and often puts those homes in the hands of people who can better maintain the homes. However, if there is insufficient demand by homebuyers for those homes, this trend of older homeowners moving out can reduce owner-occupancy rates.

Maintaining Housing Conditions - It is important to prevent blight and deterioration before it occurs. A single problem property can encourage responsible residents of nearby properties to move out of the neighborhood and

can discourage new home-buyers from investing in the neighborhood. A problem property can also discourage homeowners from investing in improvements to their home because they do not believe they will be able to see any return on their investment if they sell.

To promote home ownership and neighborhood stability, and to avoid parking problems, the conversions of existing one family homes into additional numbers of housing units should be prohibited. Owner-occupied housing typically has a much higher level of property maintenance than older renter housing. Types of new housing should be promoted that are most likely to be owner-occupied, such as singles, side-by-side twin homes and townhouses, as opposed to apartments or one unit above another unit.

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

Many older communities have adopted programs for the periodic inspection of rental properties to make sure they meet basic safety standards. To target an inspection program to the properties that are most likely to involve fire and safety hazards, inspections could be limited to buildings that were constructed prior to the enforcement of any comprehensive building codes. This would avoid the need for regular inspection of apartment buildings built during the last few decades, because those buildings typically have fire-resistant construction and safe means of access.

One option would be to require inspections when there is a change in tenants. This would make the program less intrusive to tenants. This option would also target the program to the housing units with the most turnover, which often are the units that need the most improvements. The cost of inspections can be covered by an annual license fee.

Emphasize housing rehabilitation - Most housing efforts primarily involve low-interest loans to rehabilitate homes owned by households with low or moderate incomes. Expanded marketing efforts are needed to make sure that eligible owners of properties in need of rehabilitation are aware of the financing programs that are available. Particular attention needs to be paid to low-income resident owners of property who need to make improvements to comply with municipal codes.

The Berks County Area Agency on Aging also offers a "Home Modification" program for minor household repairs and safety modifications. In most cases, the homeowner only pays for the cost of materials. The program is mainly aimed towards older persons with limited incomes and persons with disabilities.

Buyers of older homes should be encouraged to take advantage of the Federal Housing Administration's 203(k) program. This allows a homebuyer to receive a single loan to purchase a home and to complete a major rehabilitation of it.

It would be desirable to combine job training funding with County housing rehabilitation programs. The Federal Government has provided greater flexibility to use Federal job training dollars in ways that address local needs. Local non-profit housing organizations should work with job training agencies to design programs to meet mutual needs. Residents can learn useful job skills, while the job training programs help provide funding for needed housing rehabilitation.

Densities - Higher densities should only be considered for: a) housing developments that are limited to senior citizens and the physically handicapped, and b) the conversions of older non-residential buildings (such as old mills) into apartments.

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Density bonuses should be considered for developments limited to persons age 55 and older and their spouses, with no children under age 18. These density bonuses are logical because the typical household of older persons generates less traffic, less need for parking and less water and sewage usage compared to other types of housing. Housing for older persons also does not generate additional public school students, thereby avoiding negative impacts upon school finances.

Compatibility in Uses - It is important to protect older residential areas from incompatible development. This is a particularly a concern in older areas where there is typically a relatively dense mix of commercial, industrial and residential uses, with small setbacks.

In commercial areas near neighborhoods, the types of commercial uses should be carefully controlled. Most commercial areas near neighborhoods should not allow for heavy commercial uses, such as gas stations, 24 hour convenience stores, nightclubs and auto repair. Where practical, the hours of operation and hours of trucking activities should be controlled (such as conditions upon any zoning hearing board approval that is needed). Other problem uses should be very carefully controlled or prohibited, such as after-hours clubs that are open after 2 a.m. In areas closest to neighborhoods, it may be appropriate to prohibit or require zoning hearing board approval for a use to be open to the public or patrons between Midnight and 5 a.m. The zoning hearing boards should carefully review changes to existing business uses in residential zoning districts (which are called “nonconforming uses”) to make sure they will not harm the neighborhood.

In industrial areas near neighborhoods, great care is needed about the types of uses that are allowed. The heavier types of industrial uses should be prohibited from these areas or need special exception or conditional use approval.

Neighborhood Character - Zoning provisions can be put into place to require that new buildings in older neighborhoods be compatible to nearby buildings. This concept is described earlier in this chapter.

6. Continue to Carry Out the West Reading Main Street Program, and Use Similar Measures in Other Older Commercial Areas.

Many of these same policies being used in West Reading might be applied to strengthen other older commercial areas, including Penn Avenue in Sinking Spring, Wyomissing and Spring Township. The West Reading Program is modeled upon the nationwide “Main Street Program.”

The corridor extends along Penn Avenue from the railroad bridge west of the West Shore Bypass interchange westward to the Wyomissing border at 8th Avenue.

The West Reading program stresses four major approaches:

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

The West Reading Main Street Program works through a Foundation, an Authority and a set of volunteer committees. A key to the success of the program has been the active involvement of officials of the Borough government and local business-persons.

7. Continue the Work of the Borough of Sinking Spring Revitalization Committee (BOSS 2020).

Formed in 2008, the Borough of Sinking Spring Revitalization Committee (BOSS 2020) is an independent, Federal 501(c)(3) charitable, non-profit, community development organization created by elected and non-elected leaders of the municipality. Its mission is to develop and manage the mechanisms for improving the prosperity of its citizens and businesses and for improving the overall quality of life within the borough. BOSS 2020 acts broadly to 1) promote a sense of community and unified purpose, 2) assure the historic continuity of the borough's architectural heritage, 3) improve the image and perception of the borough to residents and visitors and 4) strengthen economic revitalization of property and commerce for the benefit of all.

In 2008 Borough Council asked BOSS 2020 "to develop a revitalization plan for the Borough's central business district and improve the quality of life for all." BOSS 2020 determined that the chief impediment to economic growth in the business district was heavy vehicle traffic congestion caused by two major misaligned crossroad intersections in the borough's core.

The Committee developed an 'Official Map' that realigns these intersections into traditional right-angle configuration. Additionally, the Official Map creates a new through street parallel to and south of the main east-west corridor, U.S. Route 422, Penn Avenue. This new through street will serve two purposes, 1) to connect the eastern and western north-south routes on either side of the central business district and 2) act as the Borough's new downtown 'Main Street' that allows access to over 20 acres of under-developed commercial land in the district.

In 2009, BOSS 2020 conducted a professional traffic study which confirmed that the Official Map infrastructure plan would significantly reduce traffic congestion. In 2010, the Committee contracted with a professional architectural firm to envision a preliminary plan for the redevelopment of the 20 acres into a New Town Center development using the principles of 'new urbanism' and 'smart growth'.

The four-phased plan for revitalization is well underway. Phase 1 on the eastern edge of the central business district (CBD) was redeveloped in 2010 as a 10-acre modern shopping destination known as Spring Market Center which now serves the community and generates tens of thousands of dollars in business tax revenue for the Borough. In the near future, the center will expand to include new and popular businesses.

Phase 2 of the Revitalization Plan will realign the western CBD intersection of Penn, Columbia and Cacoosing Avenues allowing for improvements in semi and tanker truck traffic maneuverability from nearby refineries while relieving much of the business district's traffic congestion. This Phase is fully funded and is scheduled for construction in 2017-2018.

Phase 3, constructing the new downtown Main Street and through street connector is in engineering. This new thoroughfare is the lynch pin of the BOSS 2020 revitalization plan and will create economic sustainability for the Borough. Phase 3 will be constructed beginning in 2017 using two awarded grants from the State's Multimodal Transportation Fund Program; \$784,000 from PennDOT and \$1.1 million from Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Additional funding will come from the Borough, the Berks County Redevelopment Authority and private developers. This phase is expected to be completed by 2019.

Finally, Phase 4 of the infrastructure plan realigns the eastern CBD intersection of Penn, Shillington and Mull Avenues thereby completing the traffic circulation and alleviating the remaining cause of congestion.

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BOSS 2020 is working with private enterprise and other County and State agencies in a cooperative effort to begin engineering and design as soon as possible. The current estimate is to complete Phase 4 by 2020. More on this revitalization effort can be found on the BOSS 2020 website at: <http://boss2020.org/>.

8. Continue Implementing the Recommendations of the Spring Township Penn Avenue Revitalization Plan.

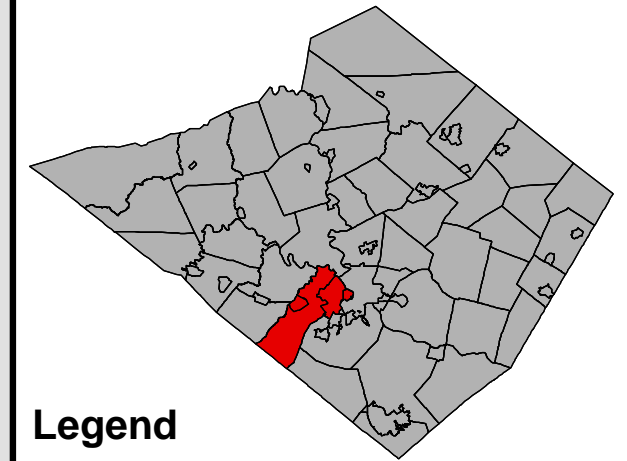
In 2011, Spring Township adopted the Penn Avenue Revitalization Plan, which provides guidelines for improvements to the portion of the Penn Avenue corridor located within the Township. The Plan includes recommendations intended to increase economic activity, improve pedestrian safety, enhance attractiveness and livability, and better manage parking along the corridor. The Township has undertaken the following activities in accordance with the recommendations in the Plan:

- Modifications to the Zoning regulations have been enacted, including the creation of new districts for the Penn Avenue corridor, revised use regulations, design guidelines and compliance standards, and increased flexibility in the parking standards.
- The Township has worked with property owners as their properties have been developed to complete the installation of sidewalks along the corridor.
- The sale of the Township's property along Penn Avenue to a commercial business should provide an anchor along the corridor.

The Township intends to continue the process of implementing recommendations in the Plan, such as:

- Encourage façade and sign improvements to make the corridor more visually inviting.
- Promote street trees, landscaping and attractive pedestrian-level street lighting.
- Pursue funding for traffic improvements and streetscape enhancements to increase safety, improve traffic flow, manage on-street parking, and make Penn Avenue more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- Encourage business retention and expansion by focusing on business needs.

Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture*
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Water Bodies
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

* The Agriculture future land use designation is only shown in areas adjacent to the Suburban Berks West Joint Comprehensive Plan boundary.

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks County Mapping, Berks DES

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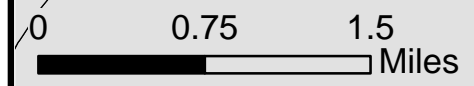
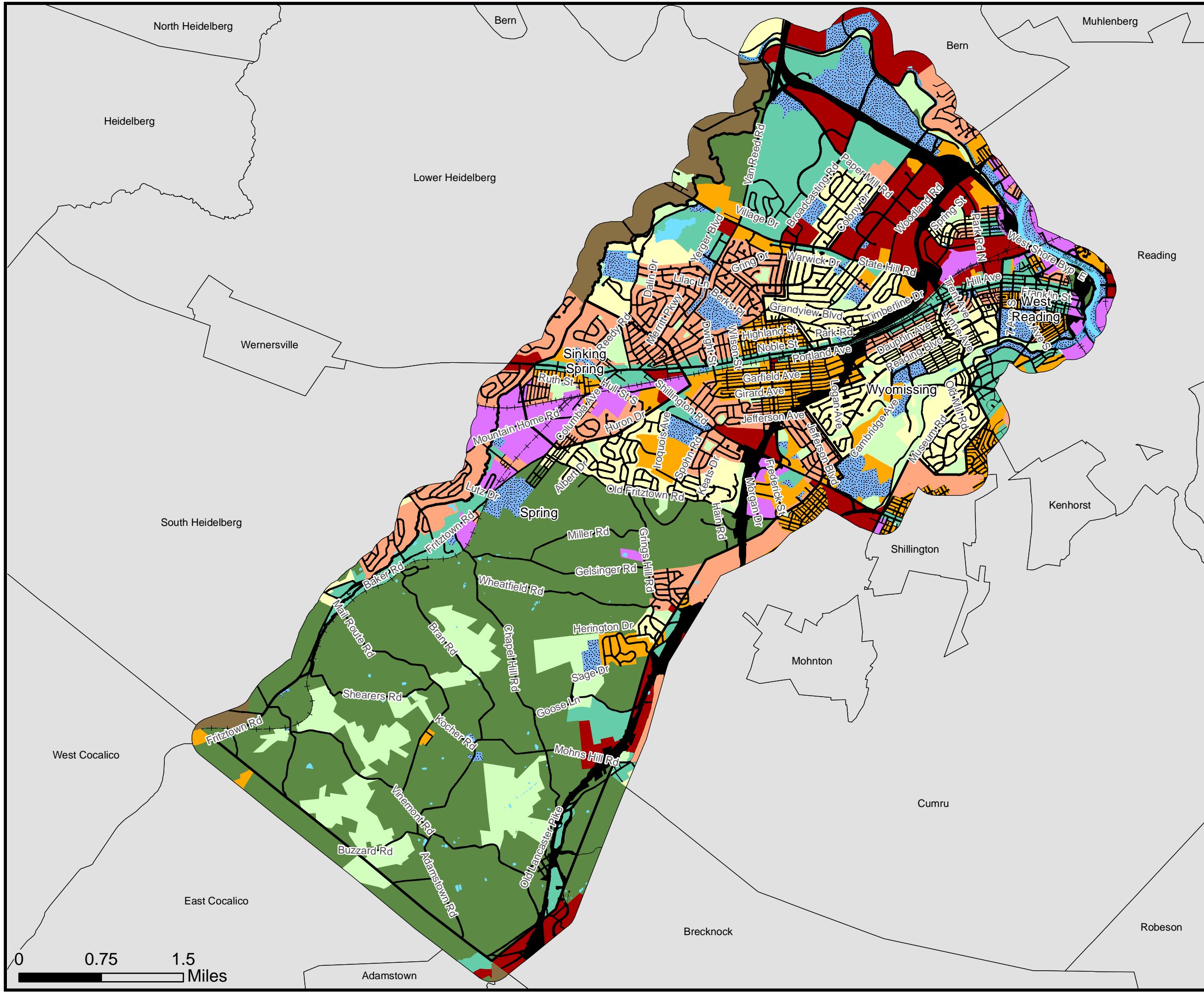
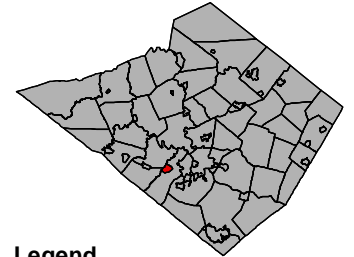


FIGURE 36

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Sinking Spring Borough Future Land Use



Legend

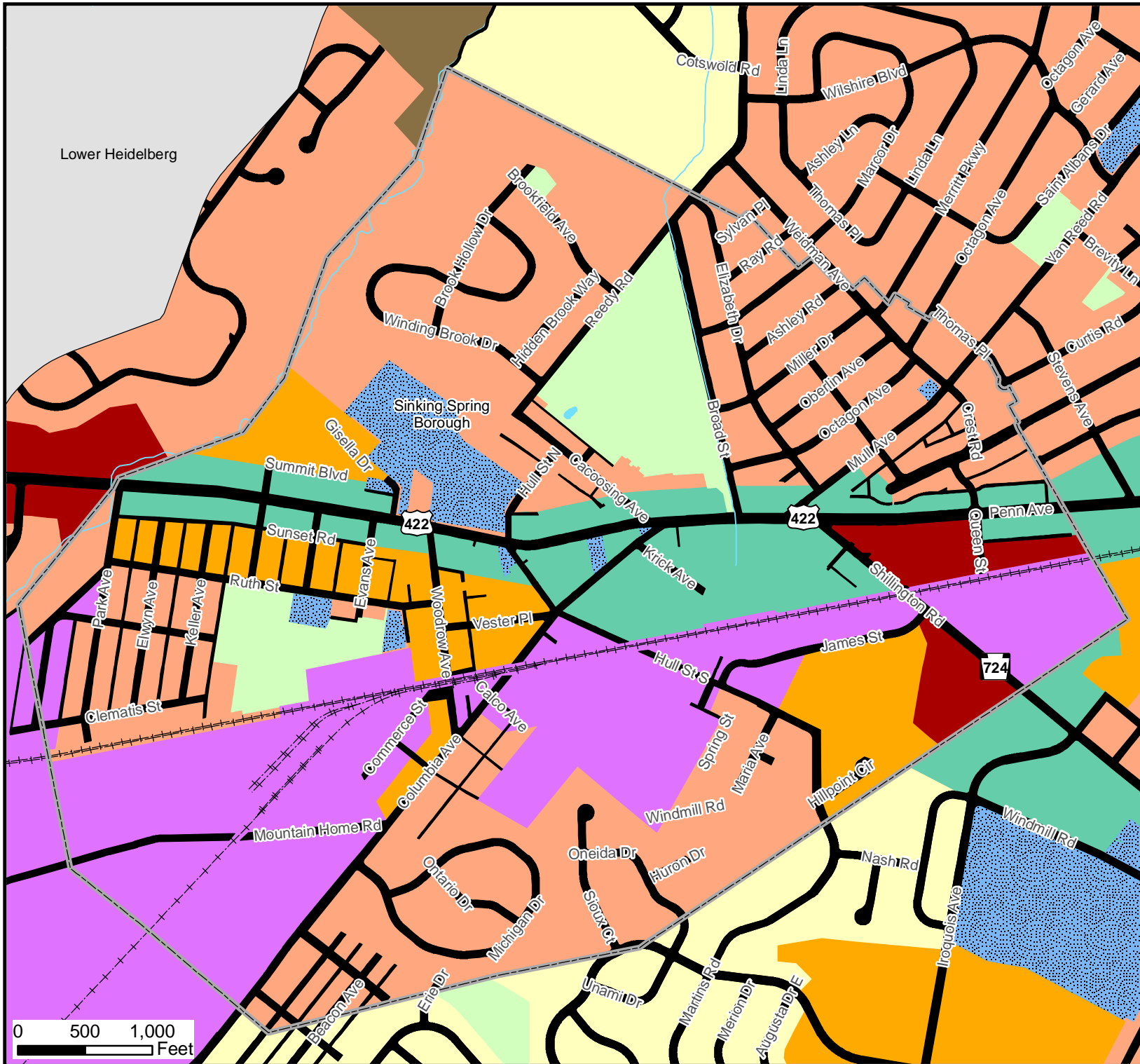
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Agriculture*
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
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- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

* The Agriculture future land use designation is only shown in areas adjacent to the Suburban Berks West Joint Comprehensive Plan boundary.

Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES

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Lower Heidelberg

Sinking Spring Borough

422

422

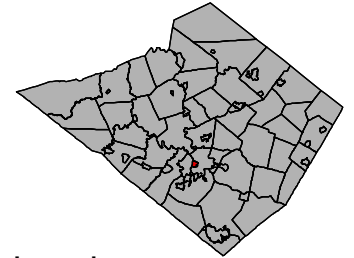
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FIGURE 37

Sinking Spring, Spring,
West Reading, Wyomissing
Joint Comprehensive Plan Update
September 2018

West Reading Borough Future Land Use



Legend

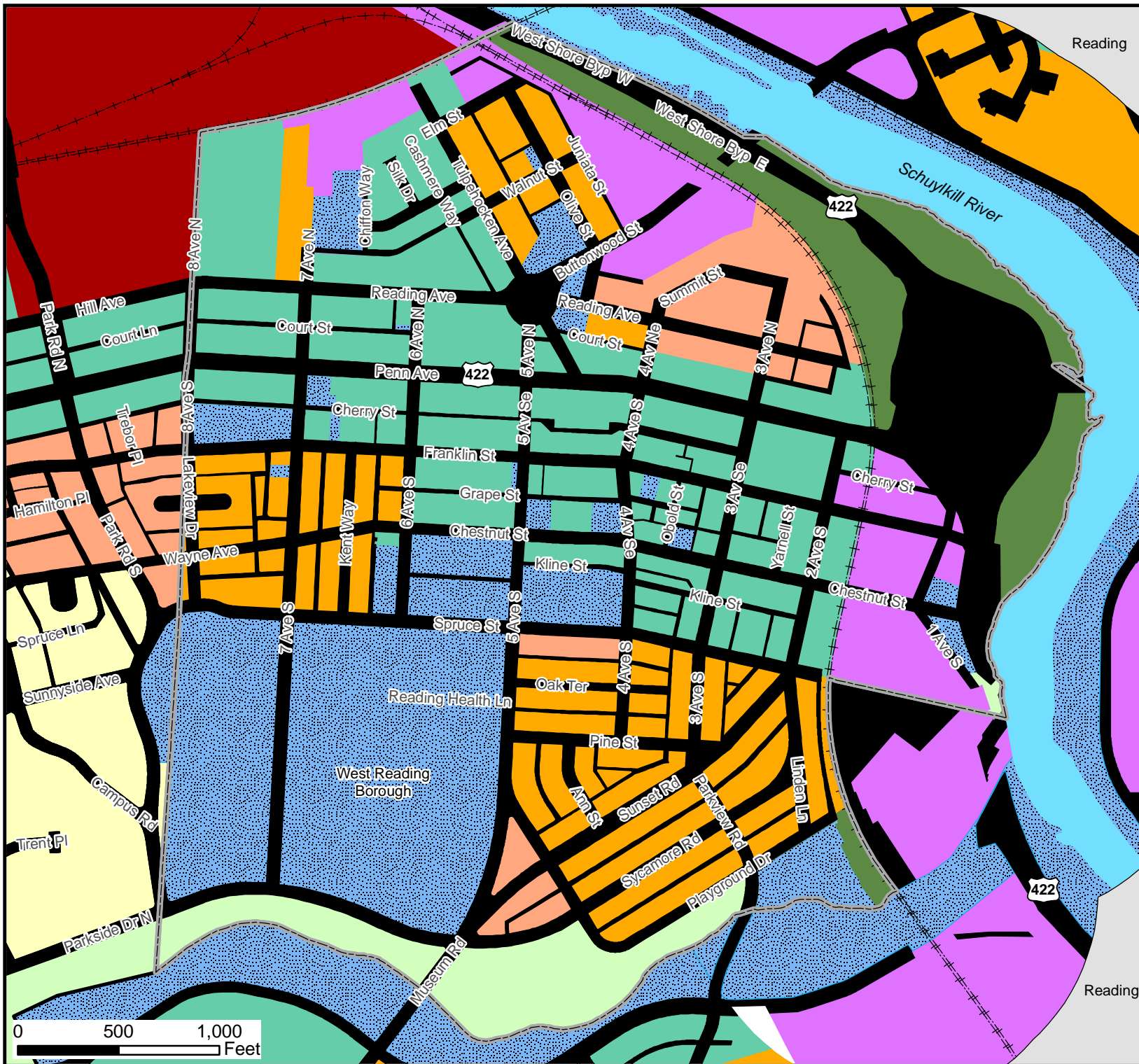
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Water Bodies
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

Source data:
Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County
Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES

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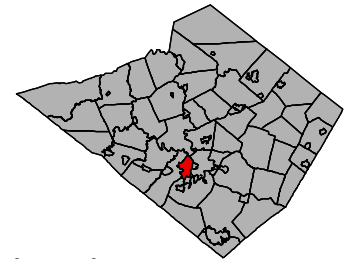


Reading
Reading

FIGURE 38

Sinking Spring, Spring, West Reading, Wyomissing Joint Comprehensive Plan Update September 2018

Wyomissing Borough Future Land Use



Legend

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Rural Conservation
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public / Institutional
- Recreation
- Transportation Network
- Water Bodies
- Railroads
- Municipal Boundaries

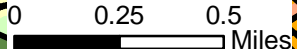
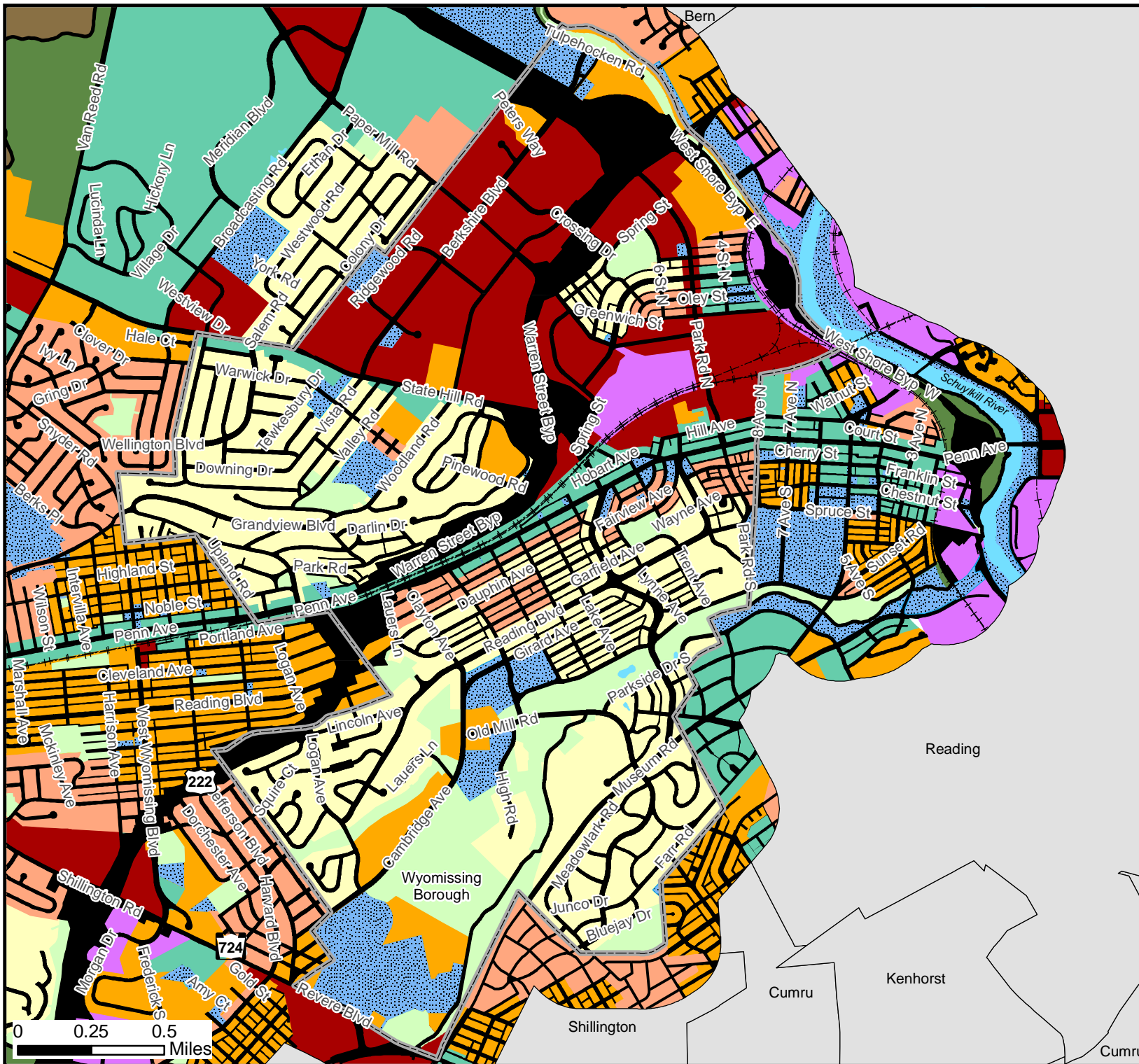
Source data: Berks County Planning Commission GIS, Berks County Mapping, Berks County GIS/IS, Berks DES

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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This section describes methods that should be considered to implement this Plan.

GOAL: Promote substantial citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and encouraging volunteer efforts to improve the community.

The volunteer efforts of neighborhood and civic organizations and individuals are essential to further improve the region and to carry out this Plan. The objective is to strengthen community pride and emphasize volunteer efforts for residents and property-owners to improve their surroundings.

It is essential to keep citizens informed and provide opportunities for meaningful citizen input, while making use of new technologies for communication.

The websites of each municipality should be regularly updated with information that will help spur public interest, enthusiasm and involvement. This should include information on recreation programs, special events and agendas for upcoming municipal meetings. Opportunities for citizen involvement should also be highlighted through the newspaper, municipal newsletters and other media.

GOAL: Continually work to put this Plan into action - through a program of updated planning and many short-term actions within a long-range perspective.

Planning is an on-going process. The Comprehensive Plan should be implemented through a continuous process of follow-up planning and action. The most immediate action should be updating, as needed, each municipality's development regulations.

Maximize communications, coordination and cooperative efforts between the municipalities, the School Districts, adjacent municipalities, the County and other agencies and organizations.

To be effective, community development efforts need wide participation. A close working relationship is needed with Federal, State and County agencies and adjacent municipalities.

The municipalities cannot implement this Comprehensive Plan alone. Involvement is needed by residents, neighborhood organizations, civic groups, businesses, institutions, property-owners and many other groups.

This Comprehensive Plan should be consistently used as an overall guide for land use and transportation decisions. In addition, the Plan needs to be reviewed periodically and, if necessary, updated to reflect changing trends.

Use a Full Set of Tools to Implement this Plan

This Comprehensive Plan establishes overall policies for guiding the future development and conservation of the region. However, this Plan is not a regulation. The following major tools are available to help implement this Plan:

- the Municipal Zoning Ordinances,
- the Municipal Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances,
- the Construction Codes,

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- an Existing Property Maintenance Code,
- an Official Map,
- explore LERTA areas (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance),
- computerized (GIS) mapping,
- Capital Improvements Planning,
- the municipality's annual spending, and
- seeking Federal, State and County grant funds to accomplish important projects.

Construction Codes

State law requires that a full set of modern construction codes be enforced within all municipalities. The State is using the International Construction Codes, which were prepared by a national organization. These codes are particularly important to minimize fire hazards. The construction codes include provisions allowing modifications of the codes to spur renovations of historic buildings. As noted in the Historic Preservation Plan section, a well-qualified appeals board is important to address these types of modifications.

Existing Property Maintenance Codes

Each municipality should adopt and/or enforce an Existing Property Maintenance Code to control blight. This standard code is used throughout much of the nation and sets basic standards for existing buildings, as opposed to new construction.

Official Map

The State Municipalities Planning Code grants municipalities the authority to adopt an "Official Map." An Official Map can designate proposed locations of new streets, street widenings, intersection improvements, municipal uses and parks. The Map may cover an entire municipality, or only certain areas. This process may be particularly useful, for example, to reserve right-of-way for a future street widening.

Once an Official Map is officially adopted by the governing body, then the municipality is provided with a limited amount of authority to reserve land for the projects on the map. If the land affected by the proposed project is proposed for development, then the municipality would have one year to either purchase the land for its fair market value or decide not to go forward with the project. This one year period is intended to provide time to raise funds to acquire the land, and avoid lost opportunities. If this one year period is not in effect, a person could obtain a building permit almost immediately in many cases and construct a building that could obstruct an important project. An Official Map also serves to provide notice to property-owners about the municipality's future plans.

Sinking Spring Borough used this process for their planning as it related to the continued development of the BOSS 2020 plan.

LERTA

Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance allows taxing authorities to exempt new construction and improvements to a commercial, industrial, and/or business property if such property is located in a deteriorated area. In order for a LERTA to apply to a property, each taxing authority (County, Municipal and School District) must by ordinance or resolution, exempt from real estate property taxes, the assessed value of the improvements to deteriorated properties and the assessed value of new construction within the designated areas.

Typically the exemption schedule is not to exceed ten years and shall specify the portion of the improvements to be exempted each year. Savings would be realized on a sliding scale beginning with 100% in year one and decreasing annually 10% until the tenth year.

The County has adopted a resolution that enables any municipality in Berks County to enact a LERTA provided the location that the proposed LERTA area is located within a Future Growth Area as identified on the Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

Computerized Mapping (GIS)

The County, and some municipalities, operate modern computerized mapping/ “Geographic Information Systems (“GIS”). These systems have been used for the maps in the Plan. Increased efforts are needed to fully integrate this system with operations of municipal agencies. For example, regular mapping of traffic accident locations can be helpful to identify hazardous conditions that need to be resolved, such as sight distance problems.

Capital Improvements Planning

Each municipality should have a system in place to continually plan and budget for major capital expenditures. “Capital” improvements are projects involving a substantial expense for the construction or improvement of major public facilities that have a long life span and that are not annual operating expenses. Examples of capital projects include major street improvements, acquisition of parkland, major storm sewer construction projects and new bridges.

A municipal Capital Improvements Program (CIP) can help identify projects that will be needed, prioritize the projects, identify possible funding sources and then budget for their completion. A typical CIP looks five years in the future. A CIP should identify major street reconstruction projects that will be needed over the next few years, which can help coordinate the reconstruction with underground construction projects by various utilities. This avoids the need to cut into a street after it has been recently repaved. Through a CIP, many different projects can be combined into a single bond issue, which avoids the high administrative costs of multiple bond issues. A CIP also can allow a municipality to carefully time any bond issues to take advantage of the lowest interest rates.

Other Implementation Tools

Many other tools are available to carry out the Comprehensive Plan, including the following:

- priorities decided as part of each municipality’s annual budget, and the annual setting of tax rates, which affect decisions of businesses and residents on whether to remain or move into a municipality, and
- aggressively seeking Federal, State and County grants to reduce the burden upon local taxpayers.

GOAL: Update municipal development regulations to carry out this Plan, and periodically update the Plan and regulations as needed.

Zoning Ordinance

The municipalities’ Zoning Ordinances are the primary legal tool to regulate the uses of land and buildings. Each Zoning Ordinance includes a Zoning Map that divides the municipality into different zoning districts. Each district permits a set of activities and establishes a maximum density of development. Each Zoning Ordinance and Map should be updated as needed to be generally consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, to modernize standards and to address local concerns.

In addition to regulating land uses and densities, zoning also controls the following:

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- the heights of buildings,
- the percentage of a lot that may be covered by buildings and paving,
- the minimum distances that buildings may be placed from streets and property lines,
- the minimum size of lots,
- the maximum sizes and heights of signs, and
- the protection of important natural features.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

Each municipality is regulated by a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. These Ordinances mainly regulate the creation of new lots, the construction of new streets by developers, and the site engineering of new commercial, industrial and institutional buildings.

GOAL: Maximize communications, coordination and cooperative efforts between the municipalities, the school districts, adjacent municipalities, the County and other agencies and organizations.

This Plan helps to establish a framework for further cooperative ventures among the municipalities in the region, and between municipalities and the County. Intergovernmental cooperation can not only decrease the costs of many services, it can also improve the quality of services. The Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Act provides broad and flexible authority to organize joint efforts as municipalities deem appropriate. In most cases, the Act promotes the use of ordinances that are adopted by each municipality to formalize an agreement. One option involves one municipality providing a service to a second municipality through a contract.

These same concepts can also apply between a municipality and a school district. For example, a municipality may agree to plow snow from school parking lots and driveways in return for free municipal use of some school facilities.

A State law also provides that State agencies must treat a Council of Governments in the same manner as a municipality in any funding program.

The following types of alternatives should be considered to promote inter-governmental cooperation:

- Shared Services and Shared Staff-persons - Shared staff-persons can be particularly beneficial for specialized staff, such as different types of construction inspectors or zoning officers. Two or more municipalities could hire the same person to do the same job, with so many hours assigned to each municipality. This allows each municipality to hire a highly qualified person who is working full-time, as opposed to each trying to find a part-time person. This can reduce turnover, which reduces training costs and reduces the potential for mistakes being made by inexperienced staff. In addition, sharing staff makes staff-persons available during more hours of the day, which is beneficial to residents and business-persons. It also provides greater coverage during periods of illness or vacation. Some municipalities also have a joint application and testing programs for police officer applicants, which reduces costs and results in a larger pool of applicants.
- Shared Consulting Staff - There are also great efficiencies when adjacent municipalities choose the same consultants, such as municipal engineers, sewage engineers or solicitors. This promotes good communications between municipal governments. It also reduces the costs of having different professionals having to become educated about complex issues and having to spend time meeting with consultants of other municipalities to share information.
- Shared Recreation Programs - When municipalities share and coordinate recreation programs, it greatly increases the types of programs that can be offered. For example, one municipality may offer a gymnastics program, while another municipality offers basketball programs, with residents of each

municipality being allowed to participate in each at the same cost per person. There has been great success in parts of Pennsylvania with multi-municipal recreation programs, where each municipality contributes funds towards one set of programs. These programs are often organized in partnership with a school district.

- Joint Yard Waste Collection and Composting - This is a very cost-effective way of handling the disposal of yard waste, which requires significant land and expensive equipment.
 - The toughest issue in joint municipal services is determining a fair allocation of costs. The State Department of Community and Economic Development has several publications that can assist in these issues.
- Snowplowing - There may be cases where two municipalities must each send out a snowplow to clear different segments of the same street. It may be beneficial to trade responsibility for different street segments, so that a single snowplow can be used to clear the entire length of a street.
- Joint Purchasing - Joint purchasing can reduce the costs to each municipality of preparing bid documents and legal ads. It also can result in lower costs because larger volumes are being purchased. This process is particularly useful for annual purchases of standardized materials, such as road salt. The State also has arrangements that allow municipalities to “piggyback” upon State purchases. State law allows a similar process of “piggyback” bids between municipalities and a County. The State Intergovernmental Cooperation Act includes rules for joint municipal purchasing. Under State law, one municipality can be the lead municipality in purchases, without requiring multiple municipalities to seek bids. Municipalities can also join together to jointly purchase insurance, to hire traffic signal maintenance services, or to jointly contract for solid waste collection. Joint auctions can also be used to sell surplus vehicles and equipment.
- Sharing of Equipment - This sharing is most beneficial for expensive equipment that is needed by each municipality for only portions of the year, such as paving, rolling or grading equipment. The equipment could be jointly owned, or be owned by one municipality and leased other municipalities. Or an arrangement could allow trading of equipment.
- Joint Tax Collection - The Local Tax Enabling Act allows municipalities and the school districts to contract with each other to have one office jointly collect local taxes.
- Councils of Governments (COGs) - A COG can provide municipal services if authorized by municipalities. For example, some COGs take care of code enforcement. Other COGs primarily serve to promote good communications between municipal officials, to study issues, and to lobby for State or Federal funding for projects.
- Joint Authorities - Municipalities can create formal joint municipal authorities to address many types of matters.
- Joint Planning Commissions - Municipalities can appoint joint planning commissions. These joint commissions could serve in place of municipal planning commissions, or in addition to them.
- Cooperation Between or Merger of Fire Companies - Consideration should be given to promoting additional cooperation between or merger of fire companies, including one or more fire companies in neighboring municipalities. Spring Township has been a leader in this initiative, and Wyomissing has established a municipal fire department. Merger or cooperation are particularly beneficial to make the best use of extremely expensive fire apparatus, such as rescue trucks, hazardous materials equipment, tanker trucks and aerial ladder trucks. Merger or cooperation are also important to make the best use of the limited number of volunteers.

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- Joint Police Forces - A joint police force involves two or more municipalities establishing one police force that is directed by commission members appointed by each municipality. Another option is to have one municipality contract for police services from a second municipality, which then manages the force. A joint police force makes it easier to provide 24 hour service and specialized services, such as for investigations and youth. A joint police force can result in increased training and professionalism, which can reduce liability costs. A joint force also makes it easier to investigate crime that crosses municipal borders.
- Incentives for Intergovernmental Cooperation in Grants - Many competitive State grant programs provide preference to projects that involve cooperation between more than one municipality. Therefore, if two similar projects are in competition for a grant, and one involves cooperation between two municipalities, the two municipality project is most likely to be funded.

Role of the Joint Planning Committee

The Joint Planning Committee has played an active role in developing and implementing this Joint Comprehensive Plan update. The Committee should continue to meet quarterly to promote the implementation of this plan and address regional issues.

Role of the Municipal Planning Commissions

Some of the greatest responsibilities of each Planning Commission are to oversee the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the preparation of Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance revisions. On a monthly basis, the Planning Commission also reviews proposed developments. The Planning Commission also has a role in reviewing proposals of other government agencies.

Role of the Board of Supervisors and Borough Councils

The final decision on nearly all matters affecting the growth and preservation of each municipality rests with its Borough Council or Board of Supervisors. Therefore, close communications and cooperation between the Planning Commissions, the municipal staff, and the elected officials will be essential in continuing to improve the quality of life in the Suburban Berks West Region.

ACTION PROGRAM

The following table summarizes the major recommendations of this Plan. Certain items are recommended as high priorities. The timing of each recommendation is listed, as well as which agencies should have the primary responsibility to carry out the recommendation.

NATURAL FEATURES AND AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Continue to expand Agricultural Security Areas in Spring Township to make land eligible for easement purchase and to protect farmers against nuisance challenges.	Township Supervisors, PCs, Property-owners	Short-term	
Consider zoning provisions that preserve farmland and natural areas, particularly through promoting the optional transfer of density to more suitable lands.	Governing bodies, PCs	Ongoing	
In rural conservation areas, permit a range of activities that allow opportunities for supplemental income for farmers on large tracts of land.	Governing bodies, PCs	Short-term	
To protect water quality and fish habitats, carefully enforce State regulations on erosion control through on-site inspections.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Ongoing	
Minimize unnecessary removal of trees during construction, and make sure temporary fencing is used to avoid damage to tree trunks and root systems.	Governing bodies, PCs, property-owners	Short-term	
Spring Township should continue to prohibit new buildings in the entire 1% floodplain and to require studies by developers where there is any question that an unmapped floodplain may exist. The boroughs should continue to carefully regulate building in the floodplain	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Ongoing	X
Require professional wetland studies whenever development is proposed in suspect areas and establish a 20 foot building setback around wetlands to avoid intrusions by construction equipment. Require a building a paving setback from all creeks. A smaller width is appropriate in more urban areas, while a larger width should be required in rural areas.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners, PennDOT	Ongoing	

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Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Require professional geologic studies to address sinkhole/subsidize hazards at the time any major new development is submitted for approval within areas with limestone geology within the region.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Ongoing	
Continue to use mandatory dedication provisions in subdivision ordinances to require dedication of open space or payment of recreation fees as part of major new residential developments.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Ongoing	
Minimize potential impacts to core habitat areas. Development activities should be extremely limited in areas of known core habitat.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Short-term	X
<p>Protect important natural features, with a special emphasis upon the creeks, steep slopes and mature woods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continually work to avoid and address stormwater problems. - Continue to limit development in flood-prone areas. - Work with neighboring municipalities, State agencies and volunteer organizations to preserve important natural areas. - Maintain and plant thick vegetation along streams to protect water quality and fishing habitats, including carrying out Best Management Practices recommendations in the regional Tulpehocken Creek Stormwater Management Plan. 	Governing bodies, PCs, ZHBs, Property-owners, Adjacent municipalities	Ongoing	X

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Encourage modes of transportation, patterns of land uses, and designs of buildings that conserve energy.	Governing bodies, PCs, Property-owners	Long-term	

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Improve existing parks and playgrounds to meet a wide variety of recreational needs.	Governing bodies, Municipal Parks and Recreation	Ongoing	
Emphasize high-quality police, emergency medical and fire protection services. Promote continued cooperation between providers, including those in adjacent municipalities.	Emergency providers, Governing bodies, Adjacent Municipalities	Ongoing	X
Continually explore ways to minimize local government expenses and increase revenues, including use of grants.	Governing bodies, Municipal staff	Ongoing	
Continue to provide excellent water and sewage services, with regular investments to provide reliable services.	Municipal Authorities and water companies	Ongoing	

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Consider alternative ways to preserve important historic buildings, such as requiring special zoning approval by the governing body or zoning hearing board before demolition is allowed.	Governing bodies, PCs, Historic Organizations	Ongoing	
Seek cost-effective ways of preserving historic buildings, including providing information and advice to property owners. Promote greater interest in the region's history and historic buildings.	Municipal staff, Historic organizations	Ongoing	
Consider zoning incentives to promote the preservation of historic buildings. This could include allowing certain uses within restored historic buildings that otherwise would not be allowed in the zoning district. For example, a restored historic building in a residential district might be allowed to be used as an office or bed and breakfast inn.	Governing bodies, PCs	Short-term	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Update zoning ordinances to make sure that all desirable types of businesses are allowed in appropriate business zoning districts. Hold requirements for special zoning approvals to a reasonable minimum and minimize setbacks between adjacent businesses. These steps are important to promote economic development and a wider choice of employment opportunities.	Governing bodies, PCs	Short-term	X
Utilize the County's Economic Development Web Mapping Tool to identify appropriate sites to locate industrial and commercial development.	Governing bodies, PCs, EDs, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	X
Market high priority sites for economic development initiatives	Governing bodies, PCs, EDs, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	X
Prioritize infrastructure improvements associated with sites that are identified as potential locations for industrial development.	Governing bodies, PCs, EDs, BCIDA, BCPC	Short-term	X
Support entrepreneurship and small business development and partner with higher learning institutions and technical schools.	Governing bodies, PCs, EDs, Local colleges, School districts, GRCCI	Short-term	
Strengthen business districts to maximize revenue, including pedestrian amenities and transportation systems. Support reuse of existing buildings and infill development.	Governing bodies, PCs, EDs	Short-term	
Strengthen the quality and competitiveness of the Region's workforce. Partner with higher learning and workforce institutions.	Governing bodies, PCs, Local colleges, School districts	Short-term	
Position the Suburban Berks West Region as a destination Region. Partner with Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chamber, and arts organizations to promote arts, culture and events.	Governing bodies, PCs, GRCVB	Short-term	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Cultivate and attract a skilled workforce by providing access to attainable and high quality housing options, well-maintained neighborhoods and amenities and ensuring high quality schools for families.	County agencies, Job training organizations, School districts, Local colleges	Ongoing	X
Complete the initiatives of the BOSS 2020 Revitalization Committee.	Sinking Spring Borough, PennDOT, BCPC	Ongoing	X
Continue implementing the recommendations of the Spring Township Penn Avenue Revitalization Plan	Spring Township	Ongoing	X

TRANSPORTATION

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Work with PennDOT to resolve traffic congestion bottlenecks and traffic safety problems, such as encouraging new road links around trouble-spots. Seek funding through the 12 Year Plan to resolve traffic problems in the region.	Governing bodies, PCs, PennDOT	Ongoing	X
Design residential streets (in new developments) to discourage use by through-traffic, limit truck traffic on residential streets where feasible, and improve major roads to relieve congestion so traffic will not be diverted to residential streets.	Governing bodies, PCs	Ongoing	
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access and encourage greater use of public transit. Study the potential of expanded public transit service in the region.	Governing bodies, PCs, BARTA/SCTA	Ongoing	
Continually explore ways to ease parking issues for residents and businesses. Try to come up with low cost alternatives rather than creating expensive and unsightly parking structures.	Governing bodies, PCs	Short-term	
Consider the development of a regional trail/ pedestrian/bicycle plan that provides guidance for an interconnected system of pedestrian improvements between the municipalities and to other regional trail systems.	Governing bodies, PCs, Municipal parks and recreation		

LAND USE

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Update, if necessary, each municipality's development regulations to carry out the Future Land Use Plan.	PCs, Governing Bodies	Short-term	
Adopt and/or enforce existing municipal property maintenance codes to avoid blighted and unsafe conditions.	Governing bodies	Short-term	X
Utilize the County's Blighted Property Review Committee to review and eliminate blighted residential properties from neighborhoods so that they can be redeveloped into usable housing.	Governing Bodies, BCRA, BCPC	Ongoing	
Help to link residents that are in need of assistance with the resources that are available, including housing rehabilitation and job training programs.	Municipal staffs and non-profit organizations	Short-term	
Work to increase home ownership, including expanding programs to help persons afford closing costs of home purchases.	Co. agencies, financial institutions, PHFA	Ongoing	
Review and/or update zoning ordinances to make sure that all desirable types of businesses are allowed in appropriate business zoning districts. Hold requirements for special zoning approvals to a reasonable minimum and minimize setbacks between adjacent businesses. These steps are important to promote economic development and a wider choice of employment opportunities.	Governing bodies, PCs	Short-term	
Make sure that local regulations and permit processes are as streamlined as reasonable, to avoid unnecessary delays and higher housing costs. This is particularly important for routine changes to existing homes and for new and expanding employers.	Governing bodies, PCs, ZHBs, Municipal staffs	Short-term	

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Use zoning regulations to direct most housing away from areas planned for rural conservation and important natural areas. Provide moderate densities on areas that can be served by existing public water and sewage services - to minimize the total amount of land consumed by development.	Twp. PCs, Property owners, Co. Conservation District	Ongoing	
Place an emphasis on zoning provisions that preserve farmland and natural areas, particularly through “Open Space Development” that involves clustering of homes in return for permanent preservation of a substantial part of the tract in open space. In the townships, promote the optional transfer of development rights that allows the number of homes that would have been allowed on an outlying tract to be developed on a more suitable tract, in return for preservation of the outlying tract.	PCs, Property-owners, Co. Conservation District	Ongoing	
Review and/or update zoning ordinances to make sure that excessive setbacks are not required for routine additions to homes and for decks and pools. These types of improvements should not be overly regulated in order to encourage residents to invest in older homes, instead of moving to new homes in outlying areas. This policy is particularly important because excessive setback requirements can cause an administrative burden upon property-owners and the municipalities.	Governing Bodies, PCs	Short-term	
Update zoning ordinances to carefully control the types and locations of intense business uses near neighborhoods. This particularly includes gas stations, 24 hour stores, adult uses and similar uses that may cause nuisances for neighboring homes.	Governing Bodies, PCs	Short-term	
Provide density incentives for housing developments that are permanently limited to occupancy by older persons.	Governing Bodies, PCs, ZHBs	Ongoing	
Work with adjacent municipalities to ensure that compatible land uses and road patterns are in place.	Governing Bodies, PCs	Short-term	

Chapter 13 - Action Program

Recommended Action:	Responsible Parties	Time-frame	High Priority?
Emphasize code enforcement to avoid blight in neighborhoods. Consider a systematic housing inspection program for older rental units in the boroughs.	Governing Bodies, PCs, Adj. Mun.	Short-term	X
Use this plan as a guide to direct development, both in terms of location and type, where and how you want it to occur.	Governing bodies, PCs	Ongoing	

Abbreviations of Responsible Agencies/Groups:

Governing Bodies = Borough Councils and Township Boards of Supervisors/Board of Commissioners

PC = Municipal Planning Commissions

ZHB = Zoning Hearing Boards

Adj. Mun. = Adjacent Municipalities

DA = Downtown Associations

EDs = Berks County Economic Development Organizations

BCPC = Berks County Planning Commission

PennDOT = Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PHFA = Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency

PHMC = Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

SCTA = South Central Transit Authority

BCRA = Berks County Redevelopment Authority

BCIDA = Berks County Industrial Development Authority

GRCVB = Greater Reading Convention and Visitors Bureau