

FALLS TOWNSHIP

WYOMING COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Planning Needs

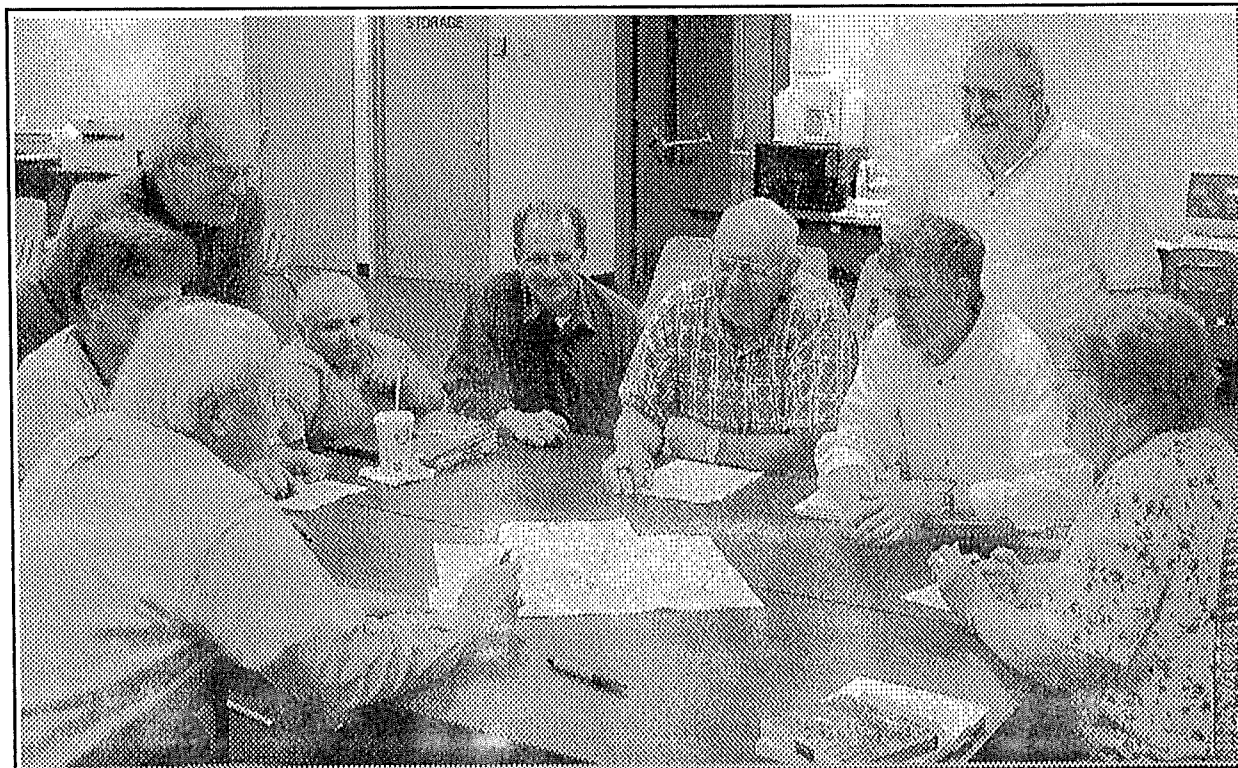
This *Falls Township Comprehensive Plan* was undertaken by the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in recognition of four principal critical community needs:

- The need to identify and inventory the growth and development which has taken place in the Township in recent years;
- The need to establish a framework for the conservation of the Township's character, open land, and environment while concurrently providing for sustainable growth and development;
- The need to provide a base for land use management effected by zoning and subdivision and land development regulations; and,
- The need to organize for the most efficient administration of Township government and the delivery of community facilities and services.

Planning Process

Local Planning in the Commonwealth is governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and this *Comprehensive Plan* was prepared and adopted in accord with Planning Code requirements. The Falls Township Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors conducted the planning process. Community Planning and Management Associates of Paupack, Pennsylvania, provided professional assistance. Citizen participation included a community survey distributed to all households and property owners in the Township, a series of community meetings, and the Planning Commission meeting and Supervisors hearing required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code prior to the adoption of the *Plan*. The results of the community survey are included in the Appendix, with agriculture and rural character preservation the overriding concerns expressed by survey respondents, along with availability of jobs.

The planning process involves the collection and analysis of information on a wide range of community



Falls Township Planning Commission Meeting

characteristics and concerns aimed at identifying planning implications. This data is compiled in the following plan sections which are included in the *Background Studies* element of the Plan:

- *Community Character and Development History*
- *Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use*
- *Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns*
- *Demographics and Economic Base*
- *Financial Analysis*
- *Community Facilities and Services*
- *Highways and Transportation*
- *Planning and Development in Wyoming County, the Region and Contiguous Municipalities*

The *Plan Goals and Objectives* provide a vision of how residents expect the community to develop and evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. The *Goals and Objectives* were formulated by the planning group based on the community survey, community meetings, and the findings of the background studies. Based on this community vision and the needs identified in the planning process, the Township officials formulated the various plans to guide the future growth and development of the Township including:

- *Land Use, Natural resource Conservation and Environmental Protection Plan*
- *Community Facilities and Services Plan*
- *Transportation Plan*
- *Housing Plan*
- *Capital Improvements Program*
- *Official Map*
- *Regional Planning and Intermunicipal*

Cooperation

- *Planning Process and Interrelationship of Plan Elements and Implementation Strategies*

Need for Continued Planning

It is important to emphasize that a comprehensive plan should not simply be considered a *document on a shelf*, but instead, one element of a community management process dependent upon the attitude and on-going foresight of the public officials charged with the responsibility of guiding the growth and development of the community. A comprehensive plan is a starting point - a blueprint to guide the future development of the Township and should be revised and updated periodically to reflect changing conditions, attitudes, situations, and goals of the community. The success of the planning program will be measured only in the form of accomplishment. The effectuation of the plan will be the responsibility of the Township's residents. It will require public support and positive action by the Township Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Planning Issues Overview

Every community is unique in terms of community character and development concerns. Geographically, Falls Township lies in southeast Wyoming County draining to the Susquehanna River which flows for some seven miles along and forms the western border of the Township. The Township shares a border with Lackawanna County to the east and Luzerne County is just a few miles to the south. State Route 92 parallels the Susquehanna in Falls Township from north to south and then crosses into Exeter Township connecting Falls and West Falls. State Route 92 serves as the primary route connecting the Tunkhannock area with the urbanized Route 11 corridor at West Pittston and Pittston, and on to Interstate Route 81 and Interstate Route 476 (Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike). State Route 307, crossing the northeast sector of Falls Township, is the other primary highway in the Township carrying travelers between the Clarks Summit area through Mill City and Lake Winola and its connection with Route 92 at Osterhout. The Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad also parallels the Susquehanna River along its entire length in the Township carrying freight from Lackawanna Valley and Wyoming Valley connections to the north through Tunkhannock, Towanda and Athens/Sayre into

New York State.

This regional location has been key to shaping the Township's rural character and will continue to effect its future growth and development. Large scale commercial development has been limited by the somewhat isolated location away from the major highway network and urban development areas. Yet, given the trend of population migration to rural areas, Falls Township with any easy commute to population and employment centers will certainly not be immune from residential development. While Falls Township has not experienced the level of development of many nearby areas, this potential for growth has crystallized for residents and local officials the importance of long range planning for the Township. Given the amount of undeveloped land in the Township and the resulting attractive rural character, coupled with the Township's relatively close proximity to the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre metropolitan area, continued strong growth in population and number of housing units is expected.

Many of the soils in the Township which have historically supported agriculture are also available for development in terms of suitability for subsurface sewage disposal and construction of dwellings. Concurrently, the conservation and protection of natural resources and the environment is critical to the quality of life in the Township. Agriculture and forestry, while declining in economic importance, remain important parts of the fabric of the Township. As evidenced by Chesapeake Bay protection efforts, stream flow and water quality are important to downstream areas of the Susquehanna watershed, and the quality and quantity of groundwater is critical to sustain the area's future.

Continued growth and potential for change presents to the Township the challenge of providing public services and facilities to meet the demands of the increasing population. Township real estate tax revenue is based on assessed valuation and the millage rate. With a total taxable assessed valuation of some \$18,600,000 one mill of tax generates \$18,600, and with a state-imposed taxing millage limit of fourteen mills without court approval, the total potential revenue is just over \$260,000. The real estate tax rate in the Township now stands at 3.4 mills. The maintenance of almost twenty-six miles of roads continues as the major expense for the Township. Although the Township

does receive some state funding for local roads, it is obvious that expenditures must be carefully considered in terms of available funding. At the same time, the Township is responsible to assure that the growth and development occurs in accord with sound planning principles with the goal of preserving the environment and community character. In short, the citizens and public officials of Falls Township must resolve the land use conflicts which result from the necessary balance between new development and need for facilities and services, and environmental protection and community and open land conservation. This combination of growth and development issues clearly demonstrates the critical need for this *Comprehensive Plan* and evaluation of land use controls in the Township.

FINDINGS

This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* summarizes the major findings of the planning process. The findings are organized in the same sequence as the Background Studies section of the *Plan*.

Community Character and Development History

(See Background Studies, Section I for details.)

- ☞ Falls Township lies in the southeast corner of Wyoming County within easy access to the greater Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan areas.
- ☞ Easy access to all of Northeast Pennsylvania is one factor in the recent changes occurring in the community, and will continue to play a key role in future growth and development
- ☞ Falls Township can best be characterized as a rural, largely bedroom community where agriculture has lost some of its economic importance, yet open land remains a predominate feature of the landscape
- ☞ Residential development has become more important as evidenced by population increases since 1970.
- ☞ The Township's population decreased by about sixty persons between 1990 and 2000, or 2.8 percent while the number of housing units increased by sixty-five, or 9.3 percent.
- ☞ Given the attractive rural character of the Township and its regional location, the population decrease is somewhat surprising, and the situation can change quickly as the area is *discovered* by individuals and families in nearby urban centers or if some large development or event changes the regional perspective.
- ☞ Single-family dwellings are the most numerous types of dwellings along with a number of mobile homes.
- ☞ Commercial development is largely retail/service in nature and is situated primarily along Route 307 in the vicinity of Mill City.

- ☞ Woodland is the predominate land cover and timbering remains an important part of the local economy.
- ☞ Timbering and agriculture served as the base for the initial settlement and early economic development of the Township.
- ☞ Today, most Township residents work outside of the Township, traveling to jobs in the larger region.
- ☞ The Township holds great potential for development should the demand for housing be stimulated by a revitalized home market or by an increased pace of the relocation of nearby urbanites to full-time residency in the Township.
- ☞ Without careful planning and land use control, this growth will certainly change the rural character of the Township by fragmenting agricultural lands and increasing demand for community facilities and services.

Growth and Development, and Existing Land Use

(See Background Studies, Section II for details.)

- ☞ Falls Township's economy and land use pattern is inextricably linked to Tunkhannock and Wyoming County and the greater Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan region, and as these areas expand there will be more pressure for development in the Township.
- ☞ The challenge in developing a land use plan for Falls Township is to provide for the essential economic growth and development of the Township while concurrently conserving its scenic and natural environment and natural resources, and the viability of agriculture.
- ☞ Area economic development organization efforts to attract light manufacturing and commercial development could provide jobs for the entire region, and enhance the Township's attraction as a residential community.
- ☞ Falls Township's future land use, environmental quality and community character will evolve in

- response to the actions of community leaders and active citizens combined with the forces of the local and regional economy, and the demand for land and community facilities and services.
- ☞ Intermunicipal cooperation and area wide planning will be vital to meeting the problems created by regional growth and development.
 - ☞ Woodland and agriculture remain the primary land use types in the Township – comprising almost eighty-four percent or some 11,340 acres of the Township’s total land area of 13,525 acres.
 - ☞ Agriculture and forestry continue to be principal element of the Township’s rural working landscape but have lost much of their historic economic importance.
 - ☞ Only three dairy farms remain in the Township with a total of some 470 cows.
 - ☞ The 2000 Census reported that 4.2 percent of employed persons in the Township worked in agriculture, forestry and mining, as compared to 3.7 percent county-wide and 1.3 percent state-wide.
 - ☞ Land with better soils is used for field and forage crops, and less productive land is used for pasture.
 - ☞ More and more agricultural land is falling out of production as farming becomes more economically difficult.
 - ☞ The development pattern which has taken shape in Falls Township in the recent past can best be characterized as residential with limited retail/service commercial. More residential development will spawn more retail/service commercial development.
 - ☞ Continued loss of agricultural land to development, and the fragmentation of larger agricultural parcels will seriously affect the long-term viability of agriculture.
 - ☞ Township officials must encourage the use of the agricultural security program and agricultural easement program in the Township; and consider adopting land use controls aimed at preserving agricultural land, forest land and other open land.
 - ☞ Residential development comprises a modest percentage of the total land area in the Falls Township – about 8.5 percent of the land area or 1,150 acres.
 - ☞ Residences are found throughout the Township, primarily on lots which were taken piecemeal from larger parcels and which front on and strip public roads, with several planned communities.
 - ☞ The subdivision of one residential lot from a larger parcel sets the tone for additional development and affects the agricultural use of a wider area.
 - ☞ Commercial development accounts for about 2.4 two percent of the land area and is comprised primarily of retail and service establishments, with most commercial activity located along Route 307 in the Mill City area
 - ☞ Institutional land uses in Falls Township include the Township building and small parcel along Sand Plant Road south of Falls, the Mill City Elementary School, the St. Michael’s School for Boys along Route 92 on Hoban Heights, several churches and cemeteries.
 - ☞ The Township holds great potential for increased development. With few lots available in existing subdivisions, most new development will occur on new lots subdivided from agricultural and other open land.
- Natural Features, Land Suitability for Development and Development Concerns**
(See Background Studies, Section III for details.)
- ☞ Falls Township’s agricultural land and natural resources have been the key assets for fostering development, but the natural environment must be conserved given its finite capacity for development.
 - ☞ Falls Township lies in the Appalachian Mountain Section of the Ridge and Valley Province, one of the major physiographic divisions of the Commonwealth. The Township is underlain by bedrock of the Catskill Formation of the Devonian System which is some 365 to 405 million years old

- which serves as the groundwater aquifer for Township residents.
- ☞ The primary minerals of potential use extant in Falls Township, and the County as a whole, are bluestone and quarry stone associated with the underlying sandstone bedrock, and sand and gravel deposited by the glaciers and the movement of the Susquehanna River.
 - ☞ No commercial bluestone cutters operate in the Township, however, one stone and two sand and gravel pits are in operation.
 - ☞ Recent amendments to the Pennsylvania municipalities Planning Code precludes local zoning ordinances from regulating mining beyond the extent of applicable state mining laws and requires municipalities to provide reasonable opportunities for mining.
 - ☞ Residents rely entirely on groundwater for domestic supply, and well water quality and quantity are important issues to Township residents.
 - ☞ Groundwater supply is adequate and quality is generally good, but on-lot sewage systems and agricultural fertilization can cause bacterial and nitrate contamination, and highlight the need for water quality protection.
 - ☞ The glaciers which covered the region some 15,000 years ago significantly affected the Township's soils resulting in current soil conditions.
 - ☞ Slow or too rapid permeability, fragipans with perched water tables, high water tables, shallow bedrock, slope, and other conditions present severe limitations for development on many of the soils in the Township.
 - ☞ The Township does not include extensive areas of prime agricultural soils with good productivity for field crops. This, along with the declining economic viability of farming, will make the preservation of agriculture more difficult.
 - ☞ Prime agricultural soils also are well suited for residential and commercial use and are often developed if agriculture does not remain viable.
 - ☞ A number of wetlands are found in the Township, but will not be a significant limiting factor for development.
 - ☞ Falls Township and all of Wyoming County lie in the Susquehanna River Watershed with the Susquehanna flowing to the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean.
 - ☞ Most of the Township falls within the Buttermilk Creek Watershed. Keeler Creek drains the southern section of the Township, and the Post Hill area drains to Fitch Creek.
 - ☞ Although no critical water quality problems have been reported in any of the streams, no extensive water quality monitoring has been conducted.
 - ☞ The lowlands along the Susquehanna River encompass the majority of floodplain in Falls Township.
 - ☞ A number of homes are located in the floodplain along Route 92 upstream of St. Michael's School towards Whites Ferry and these are the only homes in the Township to have sustained any flood damage.
 - ☞ While many soils in the Township have severe limitations for on-lot sewage disposal, soils adequate for elevated sand mounds are found throughout the Township.
 - ☞ On-site, subsurface systems are the primary type of sewage disposal in the Township and new systems must be installed in accord with DEP regulations to assure water quality protection.

Demographics and Economic Base

(See Background Studies, Section IV for details.)

- ☞ Falls Township is transforming from a very rural, agriculture based community to an emerging bedroom community linked to regional employment centers. This will result in more residential development, less agriculture, and the need for additional community facilities and services.
- ☞ The Township population increased from 1,331 persons in 1960 to 1,997 persons in 2000, and

increase of fifty percent.

- ☞ The greatest increase in population in the Township occurred between 1970 and 1980 when the number of people increased by almost thirty-one percent - from 1,473 to 1,924.
- ☞ The U.S. Census reported a small decline in the Township population between 1990 and 2000, fifty-eight persons, while the number of housing units increased by sixty-five.
- ☞ The population of Wyoming County remained essentially unchanged between 1990 and 2000.
- ☞ Although a small decrease was reported in the most recent Census, the Township hold great potential for development and long-term growth is expected.
- ☞ Although not drastic when considered incrementally, the long term effect on the Township of consistent population increase is clear -- more pressure for the development of open land. The importance of planning is obvious. The Township must direct development to the most appropriate areas where roads and community facilities are adequate.
- ☞ The Township population, as a whole, became older between 1990 and 2000, with the median age increasing from 30.9 to 37.4. The County median age during the same period increased from 35.1 to 38.
- ☞ Between 1990 and 2000 the proportion of children decreased by almost seventeen percent.
- ☞ An older population requires services different than a younger population with health services an obvious example.
- ☞ The number of housing units in Falls Township increased from 613 in 1980 to 702 in 1990, an increase of 14.5 percent, with another increase of sixty-five units, or 9.3 percent between 1990 and 2000, bringing the number of units to 767.
- ☞ The 1990 Census reported about seventy-seven percent of dwellings in the Township are single-family detached, fifteen percent mobile homes and only six percent multi-family dwellings, and this proposition has not changed significantly since 1990.
- ☞ Most dwellings in the Township are relatively new and in good condition with almost sixty-percent constructed since 1960.
- ☞ 2000 median value of owner-occupied homes in Falls Township, at \$95,300, was somewhat higher than that of the County and Commonwealth. Home values have a direct bearing on a municipality's ability to generate operating revenues.
- ☞ The Township economy is linked to that of both Wyoming County and the larger region. The average travel time for all workers was about twenty-seven minutes.
- ☞ The *education, health and social services* and the *manufacturing* sectors employ the highest proportions of people living in the Township. Given the dearth of such facilities in the Township, the fact that residents are employed outside the Township becomes more apparent.
- ☞ The bedroom community character of the Township can be expected to continue and the Township must address how to best accommodate the anticipated growth while preserving agriculture and open land.
- ☞ As a whole, Township residents, with a 1999 (the most recent Census data available) per capita income of \$16,392 had a per capita income level slightly lower than the County but significantly lower than the Commonwealth. Median household income, adjusted for inflation, increased by 3.8 percent in the Township between 1989 and 1999, while in the State it increased by 2.7 percent.
- ☞ The poverty rate in the Township increased from 12.8 percent in 1979 to 14.3 percent in 1989, and declined to 9.8% in 1999.
- ☞ Taking a regional approach to economic development will provide the greatest opportunity for sustaining the Township's rural character and regional economy.

Financial Analysis

(See Background Studies, Section V for details.)

- ☞ Based on recent fund balances, non-escalating expenditures, and lack of long term indebtedness, Falls Township appears to be in good financial condition.
- ☞ Falls Township collects five types of taxes: real estate, real estate transfer; earned income, occupational privilege, and per capita.
- ☞ The revenue generating capacity of the Township should be adequate to fund community facilities and services requirements at least over the next ten to fifteen years.
- ☞ The general fund real estate tax millage in Falls Township has been held at 3.4 mills in the recent past (3.2 for general fund purposes and 0.2 for the fire company). Absent court authorization, state law allows a maximum real estate tax rate of fourteen mills for townships of the second class.
- ☞ 2002 real estate millages for the municipalities in Wyoming County ranged from a low of 1.2 mills in Braintrim Township to a high of sixteen mills in Nicholson Borough.
- ☞ The market value of real estate per capita in Falls Township, \$31,179 in 2000, ranked among the lowest one-third of the twenty-three municipalities in the County. This provides an indication of the Township's relative real estate tax generating capacity.
- ☞ Cash surpluses can easily be depleted by any large scale capital projects, however, with the exception of road improvements, the Township anticipates no such near term expenditures.
- ☞ The Township's sound financial condition provides the opportunity to sensibly plan for funding any longer term capital expenditures such as recreation facilities or a municipal building.
- ☞ A formal Capital Improvements Budget would be a valuable tool for matching anticipated revenues with projected spending for large scale equipment, road improvements or other expenditures.

Community Facilities and Services

(See Background Studies, Section VI for details.)

- ☞ Community facilities and services in Falls Township are provided by the Township, Wyoming County, the Tunkhannock Area School District, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and quasi-public organizations.
- ☞ As the Township and regional population continues to increase, the demand for facilities and services will also increase -- more classroom space, police protection, social services, recreation facilities, etc. will be needed.
- ☞ In addition to the historic role of providing road maintenance, Townships in Pennsylvania are becoming responsible for a wider range of facilities and services including land use controls, environmental protection, police protection, water, sewer and storm water facilities, parks and recreation, and solid waste disposal.
- ☞ Falls Township is served by the Tunkhannock Area School District. The Township has no direct involvement in school planning which is governed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. However, the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan will require submission to the Township Planning Commission for review, any school district proposal involving school land or buildings in the Township. (See PA MPC §305.)
- ☞ The Township currently owns the administrative/maintenance building on two acres and a salt and cinder shed on rented land.
- ☞ Township meetings are conducted records are maintained at the Township building.
- ☞ Current Township staffing appears adequate to meet current and short-term administrative needs.
- ☞ Fire protection and emergency response service is provided by Lake Winola Fire Company No. 1, Inc., which recently merged with the Falls Hose Company in Exeter Township (Wyoming County).
- ☞ Police protection in the Township is provided by the Township Police Department comprised of a

full-time Chief and part-time Sergeant.

- ☞ Seventy-one percent of community survey respondents reported that police service is adequate, sixteen percent disagreed and twelve percent were uncertain.
- ☞ The Township also provides forty hours of contracted services per week to Overfield Township.
- ☞ Solid waste collection and disposal is provided by private contractors and appears to be adequate.
- ☞ Given the Township's low population and reliance on nearby facilities, limited recreation facilities are provided by the Township, with the baseball field on Brides Drive the only Township facility.
- ☞ Thirty-eight percent of community survey respondents agreed that recreation opportunities are adequate, but forty-eight percent disagreed, and thirteen percent were uncertain.
- ☞ As the Township population grows, the demand for recreation facilities will increase, and the Township should consider planning for recreation and community activity facilities and programs.
- ☞ Roads, drainage and other community facilities for new development must be provided in accord with the subdivision and land development ordinance, now under the jurisdiction of Wyoming County.

Highways and Transportation

(See Background Studies, Section VII for details.)

- ☞ The nearest expressways to Falls Township are I-81 and I-476 in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.
- ☞ Route 92 and Route 307 serve as the arterial routes providing connection between Falls Township, adjoining communities and the region.
- ☞ The Township owns and maintains 25.43 miles of roads.
- ☞ Level-of-service, a measure of a traffic flow, is satisfactory for current volumes of traffic; that is,

the roads in Falls Township carry peak volumes of traffic without congestion.

- ☞ Level-of-service on roads in the Township is expected to remain satisfactory over the next ten to fifteen years even with increased traffic, projected by PennDOT at two-to-three percent per year.
- ☞ State roads in the Township are generally in good condition with steep grades and sharp turns, and poor sight distance at certain intersections the major concerns.
- ☞ Township maintained roads are generally adequate for the traffic volumes carried if reasonable speeds are observed.
- ☞ The primary concern for Township roads is drainage and routine paving/maintenance which will not place a serious strain on the Township budget.
- ☞ The Township owns four bridges -- three are in good condition and one needs replacement.
- ☞ Diligent re-paving, routine maintenance, and shoulder widening are the major concerns for state roads.
- ☞ The Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad freight line which follows the east shore of the Susquehanna River through Falls Township and Wyoming County connects the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area with Towanda and points north in New York, but there are no sidings or freight customers in the Township.
- ☞ Skyhaven Airport, located in Eaton Township just south of Tunkhannock, serves small planes, and the Wyoming County Board of Commissioners recently formed an Airport Authority to consider various options for the future of the Airport
- ☞ The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca is the nearest major commercial airport.
- ☞ Public transportation in Wyoming County is associated only with the provision of social services. The Luzerne/Wyoming County Transportation Department currently provides van

service to elderly and disabled social service clients.

Planning and Development in Contiguous Municipalities, Wyoming County and The Region
(See Background Studies, Section VIII for details.)

- ☞ The *Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan* was adopted in 1997 and designates Mill City as a future development area, and nearby Lake Winola in Overfield Township, and West Falls across the River in Exeter Township.
- ☞ The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission serves as a planning and development information source and conduit for grants and special projects but has no municipally authorized regional planning power.
- ☞ No significant inconsistencies are anticipated between the plans and land use controls of adjoining municipalities and this *Plan*.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Public participation is critical to the success of the comprehensive planning process and the community survey conducted by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors was one of the key elements of this *Plan*. While it can be convincingly argued that the survey results would not represent a true cross section of resident opinions (as would a random sample survey), the decision was made to distribute the survey form to all residents of the Township to give everyone the opportunity to participate and provide their responses about the growth and development of the community. A random sample survey with higher return rates would have resulted in a better cross section of opinions but would have precluded many interested residents from participating. In other words, it is important to remember that the survey results represent the opinions of those residents who are

interested in the future of the community and responded to the survey and not necessarily all Township residents. In any case, the survey results have been incorporated into the *Comprehensive Plan* and have been used as one factor for the formulation of community goals and objectives.

The survey form included thirty-one questions about the quality of life in the Township, future expectations, land use management issues, community facilities and services, and respondent characteristics. Survey forms were mailed to 1,500 Township residents, and postage-paid, pre-addressed return envelopes were included. A total of 517 completed surveys were returned, a 34.5 percent response rate - an excellent return for a survey without a reminder card and follow-up phone call. A summary of the results of the survey follows.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Eighty-seven percent of survey respondents rate the quality of life in Falls Township good to excellent.
- Twenty-eight percent of the respondents believe that the **quality of life** in Falls Township will become more desirable over the next five to ten years. Almost forty percent indicated that it would stay about the same and only about twenty-one percent felt it would become less desirable.
- The respondents rated the **individual elements of the quality of life** in the Township as follows:
 - Scenic beauty, environmental quality, and natural areas were rated good to excellent by the highest proportion of respondents - ninety-five, eighty-six and eight-five percent, respectively.
 - Job opportunities, places to shop, and social/recreational activities received the greatest proportion of poor ratings - thirty-five, twenty-eight and twenty-eight percent, respectively.
 - Local government services were rated good by forty-nine percent and fair by twenty-nine percent, with nine percent poor ratings.
 - The quality of schools was rated good to excellent by seventy-eight percent, and the Township as a place to raise children was rated as good to excellent by ninety percent.
- The **individual elements of the quality of life** received a range of importance ratings by survey respondents. The range is typical for small rural municipalities.
 - The Township's environmental quality, quality of schools, and place to raise children garnered the highest ratings of importance.
 - Job opportunities in the area, rural character, local government services and scenic beauty were somewhat less

important.

- Availability of places to shop, natural areas, recreational activities and social activities were ranked the least important.
- Although all elements were important to survey respondents, a key question is: How do local officials maintain rural character and environmental quality while encouraging growth to provide job opportunities and places to shop?

COMMUNITY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Farming, tourism, hunting and fishing, and small stores, shops and offices were ranked as the most important for Falls Township; and large scale commercial development, manufacturing and industry, and electronic/high tech firms were ranked as least important.
- Seventy-six percent of survey respondents believe the type and density of **residential development** should be controlled and thirteen percent feel all types should be allowed anywhere in the Township.
- Sixty-six percent of respondents believe **affordable housing** is available to all income groups in the Township, with elderly housing cited as the most needed type of housing.
- Fifty-three percent of the respondents feel **commercial development** should be controlled, thirty-nine percent feel it should be discouraged, and nine percent feel it should be allowed anywhere in the Township.
- The types of commercial development for the future of Falls Township supported by survey respondents suggest a desire to limit the scale of development.
 - **Recreation facilities** were identified as the most desirable commercial activity for the Township.
 - **Home based business** also ranked high as a commercial use acceptable to respondents.
 - About seventy-five percent of respondents suggested that additional **services** such as doctors, attorneys, plumbers, electricians, etc., should be located in the Township.
 - About forty-seven percent feel that **convenience stores** should be developed in the Township.
 - The proportion of respondents supporting **office uses, neighborhood shopping, and regional shopping** were fifty-four, fifty-one, and thirty-seven percent, respectively.
 - **Restaurants** were favored by sixty-six percent of respondents.
 - The most suggested **locations for commercial uses** are along main roads and *anywhere*.
- Fifty-five percent of the respondents feel **manufacturing and industrial development** should be controlled, nine percent feel it should be allowed anywhere in the Township, and thirty-nine percent feel additional manufacturing and industry should be limited.
- There is support for certain types of **industry**, with light manufacturing gaining the most support of respondents:
 - Heavy industry - fourteen percent
 - Warehousing- thirty-four percent

- Electronic/high tech - forty-five percent
- Light manufacturing - fifty-four percent
- Almost all respondents (ninety-seven percent) believe that **agricultural land, forest land, and other open land** are critical to the Township's rural character and rural lifestyle; and,
 - Seventy-six percent support Township action to preserve agricultural land, forest land, and other open land
 - Thirteen percent do not support such action
 - Eleven percent are not sure
- Three-fourths of survey respondents agree that the Township should adopt **zoning**.
- Township residents rely on **wells** for drinking water . . .
 - Nine respondents reported that their wells have gone dry in the past and twenty reported some type of contamination.
 - Eighty-nine percent believe the Township should adopt rules to protect water quality and promote water conservation.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- A majority of respondents reported that **ambulance response service** (eighty-nine percent) and **fire protection/emergency response** (ninety percent) are adequate for Township residents; and almost one hundred percent of all respondents noted that these services are very important. Many were uncertain of ambulance (nine percent) and fire protection adequacy (nine percent), probably due to not having used the services.
- Somewhat less respondents believe that **police service** is adequate (seventy-one percent), with sixteen percent finding it inadequate and twelve percent not sure. Police service was also identified as a very important service.
- Survey respondents were largely satisfied about the condition and traffic volume capacity of **state roads**; seventy-six percent giving good marks, twenty-two percent raising concerns, and one percent noting uncertainty.
- In the case of **Township roads**, seventy-six percent of survey respondents agreed that the roads are in good condition and are adequate to carry current traffic volumes, twenty-one percent disagreed, and three percent were uncertain.
- **Road and street maintenance**, while important in the view of respondents, was somewhat less so than fire, ambulance and police protection.
- Only thirty-eight percent of respondents agree that **recreation facilities** available to Township residents are adequate, forty-nine percent disagreed and thirteen percent were not sure, suggesting a possible role for the Township in providing recreation facilities.
- **Youth recreation** was identified as more important than **adult recreation**. Types of needed facilities and programs reported most included youth recreation programs, picnic areas, bicycle routes, and playgrounds.
- *Township road improvements* elicited the highest number of responses to the question *Which of the following programs would you be willing to support with Township tax revenues?* A fair number of respondents would support other programs as well.

Which of the following programs would you be willing to support with Township tax revenues?

# of responses	Program
226	Township road improvements
197	increased police protection
195	agricultural/open land preservation
181	improved fire protection
176	improved ambulance service

# of responses	Program
172	zoning
166	recreation facilities, programs
48	none
18	improved Township buildings

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- Survey respondents own a wide range of **property sizes** in the Township, with forty-one percent owning two acres or less, thirty-one percent between two and ten acres, and twenty-eight percent owning ten or more acres.
- **Age distribution . . .**

AGE	18-24	25-44	45-64	65-74	75+
	6%	31%	40%	13%	11%

- More than half of the respondents are **employed** with almost half working in the Scranton/Clarks Summit area, fourteen percent in the Tunkhannock area, and twenty-one percent within the Township in home based businesses and other occupations.
- Most respondents are **long term residents** of Falls Township, with some sixty percent residing in the Township for twenty years or more and more than three-fourths for more than ten years. Only twelve percent have resided in the Township for five or fewer years.
- Of the 250 respondents who **moved into the Township**, forty-nine relocated from other areas of Wyoming County, 115 from Scranton, Clarks Summit and other areas of Lackawanna County, and twenty-eight from Wilkes-Barre and Luzerne County. Seventeen moved to Falls Township form other parts of the Commonwealth and thirty-one from other states.

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Any community conservation and land use management effort by its very nature, must include goals. Without goals, there would be little direction to the future of the community. In the case of planning for a residentially developing rural community such as Falls Township, goals establish the framework for change and growth management, and the foundation for maintaining key community characteristics. Goals pronounce the community's expectations and provide a vision of how the community is expected to evolve into the future. Objectives are specific actions which are designed to achieve goals and satisfy community needs. Effecting objectives improves the physical condition of the community and sustains and enhances the overall quality of life.

The goals of all residents of the community will not be the same. Some residents will favor increased economic development, while other residents demand environmental protection. Some residents will demand more community facilities and services, while others prefer lower taxes. Some residents will strive for land use diversity, while others would prefer to live in a residential community. One function of the community conservation and land use management process is to strike a balance between these varied expectations to meet the overall goals of the community.

The authors of Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities suggest that rural communities and residents of rural communities are characteristically unique from their more urban counterparts, and have the opportunity to directly mold their communities. They go on to say,

The rural community is seen as the conservator of its own resources, habitat, and culture. Local citizens are directly involved in the control of community assets as they plan for the retention, enrichment, and equitable use of those assets for present and future generations.¹

- 1. Rural people place a high value on self-reliance and self determination. They have experience with techniques for cultural and economic survival. They can make decisions regarding their long-term interests, design and carry out programs, evaluate the results of their work, and make necessary adjustments.*
- 2. Rural people value cooperation as a guide to problem solving. This attitude has evolved from generations of experience in rural living, where cooperation is a major tool of survival and community maintenance.*
- 3. Long-term sustainability of a rural environment is achieved when citizens guide economic development according to the "physical carrying capacities" of the ecosystem (local environment). Land ownership is valued not just for its market value but also for sustaining a way of life. Consideration of the ecosystem's physical carrying capacity assumes that, although efficiency of use can vary, physical and natural resources are finite and can bear only so much use.*
- 4. Increasing the self-reliance of citizens in rural communities can be the basis for sustainability. A self-reliant community possesses the knowledge, skills, resources, and vision to identify changing conditions, locate appropriate technical assistance, and initiate actions in a manner that conserves the rural environment and distributes benefits in an equitable manner.²*

Along with the community's goals, specific objectives must be identified; actions and methods for achieving the goals. Some objectives will be the direct responsibility of local elected and appointed officials. Others will require the cooperation and participation of other levels of government and the private sector.³

¹ P. Lusk, J. A. Rivera, F. O. Sargent, M. Varela, (1991) *Rural Environmental Planning for Sustainable Communities*, Island press, Washington, D. C., p. 5

² Ibid., p. 5

³ Ibid.

Another key factor in formulating a set of local goals and objectives is any planning conducted at the County and regional level. As mandated by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Wyoming County Planning Commission has developed and Board of Commissioners have adopted a county comprehensive plan. Typically, a county comprehensive plan establishes a broad framework for the future growth and development of the county. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, at §301.4, states, *Municipal comprehensive plans which are adopted shall be generally consistent with the adopted county comprehensive plan.* The intent of this *Falls Township Comprehensive Plan* is to be consistent with the County Plan, and this is addressed in detail in Section VIII of the Background Studies.

This *Comprehensive Plan* is intended to serve as a means of addressing the future growth and development of Falls Township by identifying key issues and establishing goals and objectives. The community planning process also is aimed at fostering cooperation between the County and the Townships as envisioned by §306 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which states, *both the county and the municipality shall each give the plan of the other consideration in order that the objectives of each plan can be protected to the greatest extent possible.*

The following goals and objectives were developed by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors based on the planning process, resident opinions and expectations expressed in the Community Survey conducted in June 2001, and at public meetings conducted as part of the process. The goals and objectives are intended to serve the Townships as a guide for land use management and community facilities and services decision making. Any significant action taken by a local municipality, be it the adoption of a zoning ordinance or the improvement of a municipal building, should be evaluated in terms of the community's goals and objectives. In addition, community planning and land conservation and development management is an on-going process, and the Townships must periodically evaluate the goals and objectives to ensure that they adequately reflect current community conditions and the expectations of residents and officials.

General Community Development Objectives

The following general community development objectives are included to provide a broad statement of the community's expectations for the future growth and development of the Township.

- A. To strive for coordination between policies, plans, and programs in the community through cooperation among governing officials, community interest groups, and the general populace.
- B. To achieve the best use of the land within the Township with the focus on the preservation of agriculture and open space while allowing for reasonable residential and commercial development. This will insure that the varying uses of land will complement one another and thus improve the economic, social, and aesthetic character of the community.

Note About Open Space

The preservation of open space is a common thread of this *Comprehensive Plan*. Open space is land which has not been developed for a constructive or productive use and is intended for environmental and natural resource protection, scenic, or recreational purposes. Open space may include, for example, woodland, wetlands, watercourses, reverting farmland, and floodplain. In the case of a development project, open space may include passive recreation areas such as ballfields, lawns and buffer areas. Agricultural land is certainly open land, but not truly open space because it is in fact highly developed for crop and livestock production.

- C. To provide for a wide range of residential and commercial uses at appropriate locations and establish performance standards through zoning to ensure that such uses do not unduly affect adjoining properties or the public health, safety and general welfare and are consistent with the historic character of the community.
- D. To establish realistic population densities in order to insure health standards, privacy and open space and in order to provide utilities, police protection, and community services and facilities in the most convenient and efficient manner.
- E. To maintain and improve the road system for better internal circulation and movement of through traffic, which will facilitate the efficient and safe

- movement of people and goods.
- F. To provide the necessary community facilities and services to meet the needs of increased development and the growing population.
 - G. To ensure that adequate sewage disposal is provided to maintain the public health and protect water quality, and consider the impact of central sewage on development.
 - H. To guide the location of future development and establish developmental standards in such a way that negative impacts on the natural environment and natural resources are minimized, and to minimize existing and future water, air, land and noise pollution.
 - I. To provide the opportunity for a wide-range and variety of housing types at reasonable densities to meet the needs of all Township residents; newly-formed households, growing families and senior citizens.
 - J. To update and revise planning goals and objectives, and the operational tools necessary for implementation, in light of new data and changing conditions, and to meet a changing population, both current and new residents, in concert with maintaining a rural character.
 - K. To provide the opportunity for local business and strengthen the area economy by encouraging well-planned commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational growth which will provide for local employment, shopping facilities, and recreational opportunities which in turn will strengthen the local tax base.

GOAL 1

Achieve greater awareness, understanding and participation of Township residents in carrying out the recommendations in the comprehensive plan.

Objectives:

- A. Publicize the *Comprehensive Plan* to obtain maximum participation and involvement of Township residents in planning and decision-making.
- B. Continuously use the *Comprehensive Plan* to help make decisions that affect land use, community facilities and services, and the highway system serving the Township.
- C. Cooperate with all adjoining municipalities on all planning related matters of mutual concern, whether the ramifications of each matter have immediate, short term, long term effects on the Township.
- D. Encourage the formation of subcommittees and/or local interest groups to work with and advise the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on local problems and issues.
- E. Ensure coverage of planning issues and activities in the news media.
- F. Obtain the assistance of appropriate regional, county and state agencies in maintaining and coordinating the on-going planning process.

GOAL 2

Maintain Falls Township's existing rural-residential and agricultural character and quality lifestyle; and, conserve agricultural land and forest land as important elements of the local economy, character, and scenic setting.

The Township's physical environment, regional location and past development practices have shaped and maintained its character as a rural-residential community with limited commercial and industrial development. Agriculture and forestry remain important parts of the local economy, and open land is the predominate feature of the landscape. Although agriculture is declining, much agricultural land remains along with forest land. Residential development is spread along the roads throughout the Township with somewhat higher concentrations of dwellings in Falls and Mill City. No large residential subdivisions have been developed in the Township. Typical of most rural communities, small scale businesses and home occupations are found throughout the Township, with most found along Route 307.

Open land was the cornerstone of the foundation of the area when its earliest settlers arrived, and has played a key role in the growth and development of the Township. Without this open land, the timber resources it held and the agricultural capability it offered, the character of the Township would be dramatically different. Maintaining open land and the quality lifestyle associated with it is key to the future of the Township. Falls Township is perceived as an attractive community offering a high quality of life, and is within an easy commute to employment in the greater Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan area. This combination creates great potential for individuals and families to settle in the Township, which will result in new subdivisions, increased population and demand for facilities and services. Future development must be controlled and managed with an overriding concern to sustain the area's community character while meeting the needs and expectations of residents for employment, shopping and services with controlled commercial development.

Objectives:

- A. Preserve and conserve agricultural land, forest land, open space, significant natural features, and sensitive land areas.
- B. Develop local land use management tools including flexible zoning performance standards to control density and minimize conflicts between existing and future development, and update the management tools periodically to address changing conditions.
- C. Promote the use of *conservation subdivision design* zoning to cluster residential development away from important agricultural land and natural, historic, scenic and cultural features, and preserve the resulting open space.
- D. Encourage landowners to participate in the *Agricultural Security Program*, and the *Agricultural Preservation Program* for purchase of easements.
- E. Encourage the use of *Act 319 Clean and Green* and other tax incentive programs as a means of forestalling development.
- F. Do not overly restrict agriculture and forestry enterprises with unnecessary zoning and other regulations.
- G. Evaluate, in cooperation with the Wyoming County Planning Commission, more progressive means of open land preservation including open land zoning, purchase of easements, and transfer of development rights, especially in cooperation with conservancy and land trust organizations.
- H. Consider the use of joint zoning with neighboring municipalities as a means of directing higher density residential and commercial/industrial development to areas best suited for such development.
- I. Ensure that adequate community facilities including sewage disposal and water supply are provided for all development.
- J. Encourage the use of soil based methods for sewage disposal; that is, on-site subsurface

- disposal and land application, instead of collection and treatment facilities with a surface water discharge.
- K. Carefully consider the expansion of community facilities such as central water supplies and central sewage collection and treatment facilities in terms of stimulating unwanted development in agricultural areas and areas with important natural, scenic and cultural features.
- L. Carefully control the location and scale of commercial establishments while recognizing the importance of such development to the convenience of local residents and to strengthen the tax base.
- M. Limit heavy commercial uses and industrial uses to certain areas and establish performance standards to control noise, outdoor manufacturing, processing and storage; lighting; and other potential effects.
- N. Provide for a wide range of residential and commercial uses in appropriate areas which when developed in accord with zoning performance standards are consistent with rural character.
- O. Control common law nuisances and threats to public health and safety due to, among others, noise, lack of property maintenance, poor building practices, junk accumulation, odors and uncontrolled burning.
- P. Cooperate with local business development organizations to promote commercial and industrial development which will not compromise the qualities of the Township which make it so attractive.

GOAL 3

Conserve natural resources and open space and use the resources in a way to sustain the area's economy.

Exploitation of the natural resources and sensitive environmental areas in the area can lead to the decline of the attractive rural character of the area and the quality lifestyle it affords, with eventual direct threats to the environment and public health and safety. Of special concern are soil and surface and ground water resources. Continued conservation of soil is vital to agriculture, and keeping the soil on the land prevents stream siltation. All Township residents rely on ground water wells for potable water. The Township also recognizes that the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) mandates that Township planning and land use ordinances must be consistent with and cannot exceed the requirements of the *Clean Streams Law*, the *Agricultural Area Security Law*, the *Right to Farm Law*, the *Nutrient Management Act*, and state mining laws. The MPC also requires that forestry activities must be allowed as a principal permitted use in all zoning districts, prohibits zoning from unduly restricting agricultural activities, and requires zoning ordinances to provide for the reasonable development of minerals.

Objectives:

- A. Identify sensitive natural areas such as wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, woodlands, steep slopes, poor soils and flood plains, and adopt regulations to protect such areas by limiting development.
- B. Evaluate and develop land use management tools in terms of effects on open space with the goal of maintaining open space to the greatest extent possible while allowing a reasonable density of development.
- C. Maintain up-to-date regulations and standards for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, well development, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- D. Consider the use of land use control incentives, such as a density bonus, for the preservation of large sensitive natural areas, agriculture and open space.
- E. Promote the use of *conservation subdivision design* to cluster residential development away from important natural, historic, scenic and cultural features, and preserve the resulting open space.
- F. Encourage home occupations and small businesses

- as a means of allowing the owners of large parcels to realize economic gain thereby forestalling the development of open land.
- G. Use land use management tools to direct new residential and commercial development away from floodplain to areas where land is adequate to provide facilities necessary to support development and flood damage is minimized.
- H. Require as part of the land use control process the assessment of impacts of residential and nonresidential development on water quantity and quality.
- I. Encourage the use of soil based methods for sewage disposal; that is, on-site subsurface disposal and land application, instead of collection and treatment facilities with a surface water discharge.
- J. Monitor the effectiveness of existing on-lot sewage disposal systems and ensure that new systems are installed in accord with DEP standards
- K. Monitor ground water quality and consider the adoption of wellhead protection regulations to supplement the current Township well grouting requirements.
- L. Monitor development projects in adjoining municipalities and assess impacts on the Township.
- M. Evaluate zoning regulations in terms of effects on the viability of agriculture and the reasonable opportunity for mineral extraction.

GOAL 4

Ensure that commercial and industrial development is located where infrastructure is adequate and is designed to be compatible with existing land use and community character.

A healthy economy fosters a healthy community by providing business development and employment opportunities. Given the historical agricultural and later residential development pattern of the Township, with limited commercial development, residents have historically relied heavily on the nearby Scranton and Wilkes-Barre and the greater Wyoming County areas for employment and shopping and personal services. Local government may choose to take no direct role in economic development, but can institute land use control and development policies that have a positive effect on the local economy and tax base, while addressing community conservation concerns and recognizing that residents will continue to rely on the greater region for employment and shopping and service needs.

Objectives:

- A. Direct new commercial development to areas of existing commercial development and where roads and other community facilities are adequate.
- B. Develop guidelines for commercial development to encourage design sensitive to the environment and community character.
- C. Adopt, monitor and update commercial and industrial development standards to protect the public health, welfare and safety, to preserve community character, and to minimize conflicts with the tourism-recreation trade by limiting such characteristics as noise; outdoor manufacturing, processing and storage; lighting; and other potential effects.
- D. Promote local economic viability by allowing home occupations and home businesses consistent with residential districts and small businesses consistent with agricultural uses and the overall community character.
- E. Recognize the importance of the regional economy and monitor and participate in county and regional business development activities.
- F. Encourage commercial cluster development to avoid commercial strip development.

GOAL 5**Provide for a variety of housing types and densities.**

Families and individuals of all income levels reside in the Township and need continued access to decent and affordable housing with proper community facilities. The special needs of young families looking for their first home and senior citizens on fixed incomes must be addressed.

Objectives:

- A. Allow residential development of various types (single-family, two-family, multi-family, mobile home parks) in certain areas at a density sufficiently high to moderate the land cost of the increasing cost of housing, yet assuring adequate water supply and sewage disposal.
- B. Encourage where it can be adequately be accommodated, the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing older homes which typically are larger and more difficult to maintain, especially for individuals on fixed incomes.
- C. Investigate and encourage participation in all county, state and federal housing rehabilitation and assistance programs to ensure residents have the opportunity to receive full benefit from such programs.
- D. Require all residential development to meet adequate design standards and provide proper community facilities via the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, while concurrently avoiding overly restrictive or excessive design requirements which add unnecessarily to the cost of housing. (allowing narrower streets, for example.)
- E. Require in the Subdivision Ordinance the continued ownership and maintenance by the Township or a homeowners association of all improvements and facilities associated with residential development.
- F. Foster a housing market affordable to younger and fixed-income residents by carefully evaluating the affect of land use management tools on the cost of housing.
- G. Consider the adoption of an ordinance to regulate nuisances and safety hazards associated with dilapidated and dangerous structures.
- H. Monitor the enactment of the pending statewide building code and apply it to meet the specific needs of the Township.

GOAL 6**Ensure that community facilities and services which will be adequate to meet expected needs are provided.**

Residents rely on community and public facilities and services to meet their transportation, educational, water supply, sewage disposal, police protection, emergency response, recreation and other daily living need. Townships do not, and cannot, provide all the facilities and services demanded by its residents, many such services being provided by other levels of government or volunteer organizations. Nevertheless, without diligent and ongoing attention to the operation and maintenance of existing facilities and services, and planning for new facilities and services, a municipality can fall short in adequately serving its residents.

Objectives:

- A. Systematically identify the need for local municipal community facilities and services, including useful life replacement of existing facilities, and develop a capital budget to meet the needs.
- B. Plan for community facilities, particularly central water and central sewage, in a manner to guide growth to appropriate areas and with an understanding that such facilities can stimulate growth.
- C. Provide necessary maintenance of existing Township community facilities to extend the useful life and forestall unnecessary capital expenditures.
- D. Encourage and continue to support volunteer fire, ambulance and other public service organizations.

- E. Ensure that an adequate and safe water supply system, proper sewage disposal system, well designed and constructed roads and other facilities are provided by developers as part of any residential development.
- F. Manage all Township facilities and services efficiently and effectively.
- G. Encourage and participate in any area intergovernmental cooperation efforts for community facilities planning and economies of scale for joint purchasing, recreation and other facilities and services.

- H. Maintain up-to-date standards for storm water control, soil erosion and sedimentation control, sewage disposal, solid waste disposal and other environmental concerns.
- I. Monitor the need for recreation facilities and plan as necessary.

GOAL 7

Establish and maintain a road system adequate to safely and efficiently move goods and people through the Township.

Safe and well maintained roads are vital to all communities, serving not only as the means of travel within the community, but as the direct link to the region and beyond. Route 92 is the primary north-south route serving the Township, with Route 307 the primary east-west route. Connection to Interstate Route 81 is made via Route 307 and Route 6 east to Clarks Summit or Route 92 through West Pittston. Falls Township owns 25.93 miles of the roads in the community, being responsible for improvements and maintenance. The more heavily traveled routes are owned and maintained by the state and total 29.22 miles. Land use management tools must take into consideration the capacity of roads, directing commercial and higher density development to areas served by roads capable of carrying increased traffic and the trucks necessary to serve commercial establishments. Local officials must plan carefully to ensure adequate funding for the improvement and maintenance of locally-owned roads.

adequate off-street parking and loading, limited curb cuts, controlled and well designed access points, and standards for dedication of roads to the Township.

Objectives:

- A. Inventory and classify according to function all public roads in the Township and assess maintenance and improvements needed.
- B. Identify key intersections and other problem areas, and plan for improvements.
- C. Maintain the adequacy of roads by requiring

- D. Limit higher density and higher traffic impact development to areas with adequate highway capacity to accommodate such development.
- E. Develop a road and intersection maintenance and capital improvements program.
- F. Maintain an up-to-date Township road ordinance setting standards for construction of public roads and establishing procedures for dedication to the Township.
- G. Actively participate in all County and PennDOT highway planning programs.
- H. Encourage intermunicipal cooperation as a means of addressing regional highway needs.
- I. Require as part of zoning approval for new or expanded uses, the issuance of a highway occupancy permit by the Township or PennDOT, as appropriate.
- J. Maintain an up-to-date Township road occupancy ordinance setting standards for driveway access to Township roads and storm water and utility

improvements within the Township road right-of-way.

- K. Establish in accord with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, a memorandum of understanding with PennDOT for the mutual review of land subdivisions and developments, and applications for state highway occupancy permits.

- L. Discourage commercial strip development and require access controls to facilitate traffic flow and maintain safety.

GOAL 8

Protect historic resources as an important part of the character of the Township.

Many historic structures are found in the Township, ranging from farm residences and outbuildings, to the older homes in villages, to old schools and churches. These buildings were merely erected as part of a growing community, and although many of the early structures are now gone, the many which remain add tremendously to the character of the area. In addition to buildings, stone walls and fences are significant historic features throughout the Township. Originally an integral part of early agricultural practices, stone wall and fences are now being incorporated into home design and as the prime feature in landscaping. The preservation of historic buildings and other features, and encouraging new development to be consistent with the existing historic character are critical to the future of the community.

Objectives:

- A. Develop an inventory of historic resources in the Township.
- B. Based on the historic resources inventory, create a local historic register and consider nomination of qualifying structures and places to the National Register of Historic Places.

- C. Include in development design standards the consideration of historic features. For example, use conservation residential subdivision design to preserve farm residences and stone walls.
- D. Develop guidelines for residential and commercial development to encourage historically sensitive design. These guidelines would be recommended to developers in areas not included in a formal historic district where specific architectural design standards can be applied by ordinance.
- E. Allow the *adaptive use* of large older homes to enable owners to adequately maintain the structures. For example, allowing the inclusion of an apartment unit would or a bed and breakfast business would generate income for overall building maintenance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND SPECIFIC ACTIONS

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Continue and increase local, inter-municipal, and regional cooperation for comprehensive planning and land use control implementation; and overall local municipal administration and management.
2	Direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas and conserve large blocks of open land.
3	Identify areas for growth within and adjacent to existing developed areas.
4	Require adequate community facilities for new development.
5	Promote the idea of growth management - an effort to manage the location, type, and timing of future growth.
6	Evaluate all public and private actions with the goal of preserving agriculture, forestry and open land as a viable part of the community.
7	Encourage a mix of business and commercial development in appropriate locations in the Townships.
8	Encourage a variety of housing types.
KEY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	
1	Annual review of this <i>Plan</i> to evaluate new development and regional issues which warrant plan changes.
2	Development of short-term and long-term capital improvements program to prioritize needed improvements and allocate funds to those improvements; with annual progress evaluations and adjustments in capital project timing and capital equipment purchases.
3	Continuing education about land use management for local officials and the public via seminars and workshops.
4	Diligent updating of any adopted land use management ordinances to effect the land use plan, provide environmental protection, preserve open land, maintain rural and historic character, and achieve community facilities and services and housing objectives.
5	Focusing limited Township resources on those community facilities and services which are most critical to meet resident needs.
6	Monitoring community facilities and services provided by the county, state, and federal government to ensure such services are adequate and the four Townships are obtaining their <i>fair share</i> .
7	Participating in all county, state and federal entitlement and grant funding programs, not solely for the sake of participation, but only if such programs can be sensibly used to achieve valid community development objectives.
8	Making a specific finding as to relationship to this <i>Plan</i> for all subdivisions and land development proposals.

SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Notes:

Responsibility: The ultimate responsibility for Township actions lies with the Board of Supervisors. Advisory assistance and certain delegated actions are the responsibility of by the Planning Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, Township staff, community groups and the public at large.

Resources: Refers to funding in the sense that the Township must ultimately fund all actions via tax revenues, entitlements and grants. It also refers to assistance provided by professionals and outside agencies.

Priority / Timing: *short-term* - 6 months to 1 year; *mid-term* - 1 to 3 years; *long-term* - 3 to 5 years; *far-term* - 5 years plus; *ongoing* - continuation of present practices or immediate initiation of new practices.

LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN

#	ACTION	<u>RESPONSIBILITY</u> RESOURCES	<u>PRIORITY</u> TIMING
Land Use Management			
1	<u>Education</u> - Use this <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> to foster a better public understanding of growth and development issues and zoning. -- Publish a comprehensive plan brochure for distribution to residents. -- Arrange for local officials detailed training about zoning ordinance preparation and administration. -- Conduct a public education program to answer residents' questions about zoning.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
2	<u>Zoning</u> - Develop and adopt a zoning ordinance.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
3	<u>Plan Consistency</u> - Make the zoning ordinance consistent with the <i>Comprehensive Plan</i> , particularly by recognizing designated growth and rural resource areas.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
4	<u>SALDO</u> - Develop and adopt a subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO).	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term
Residential Development			
5	<u>Zoning</u> - Provide protection for residential areas by maintaining separate residential and nonresidential zoning districts, applying environmental, development and operational performance standards to commercial and industrial uses, and establishing increased lot sizes, setbacks, and buffers where such uses adjoin residential development.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
6	<u>Conservation Design</u> - Incorporate into any zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance provisions to effect conservation design development to conserve agricultural and other open land, conserve sensitive natural areas, preserve historic resources and maintain rural character. AND Consider requiring conservation design in certain districts and/or incorporating density bonuses as a means of encouraging conservation design.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term (zoning) mid-term (SALDO)
7	<u>PRD</u> - Consider allowing a mix of housing types (and sometimes commercial uses) as a means of more efficient use of land and conserving open space in the current Planned Residential Development ordinance.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
8	<u>Conservation Easements</u> - Consider the purchase of conservation easements with Township funds to preserve open land.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	far-term
9	<u>Land Conservation Organizations</u> - Support the efforts of local groups such as the North Branch Land Trust.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	ongoing

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING
LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN			
Nonresidential Development			
10	<u>Zoning</u> - Allow a range of commercial uses, with development performance standards, in the <i>rural resource area</i> to enable owners of larger parcels to realize reasonable economic gain to forestall residential development and the decline of agriculture.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
11	<u>Design Guidelines</u> - Prepare and adopt design guidelines for commercial, industrial, and institutional development to encourage the most efficient use of commercial land and development consistent with the areas' rural working landscape.	Business Owner Committee Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
12	<u>Conservation Design</u> - Require in zoning conservation design for nonresidential development.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
13	<u>Zoning Standards</u> - Include effective zoning ordinance performance standards to enure community and environmental protection and update to meet changing needs, but not so onerous that commercial and manufacturing development is discouraged.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
14	<u>Retail - Service</u> - Provide for the development of smaller scale retail and service establishments to meet the daily living needs of residents, and allow for sensible controlled manufacturing and industrial development to provide local job opportunities; but continue to rely on the region as a whole, where community facilities are adequate to absorb major commercial and industrial development.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
15	<u>Home Occupations</u> - Allow for a variety of services, professional and light manufacturing uses to be conducted as home occupations in all zoning districts provided nuisance elements are controlled.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
16	<u>Community Uses</u> - Allow community related nonresidential uses, such as schools, churches, and nursing homes, in commercial and residential districts.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
17	<u>Regional Economy</u> - Cooperate with area economic development groups to broaden the regional economy to provide more local jobs.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	ongoing
Agriculture			
18	<u>Ag Land Preservation</u> - Focus open land preservation efforts on agricultural land.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	ongoing
19	<u>Ag Conservation Easements</u> - Support the Wyoming County Agricultural Preservation Program and encourage the County Commissioners to supplement the state funds for acquisition of conservation easements.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	ongoing
20	<u>Ag Action Plan</u> - Encourage and work with the Wyoming County Planning Commission to develop an <i>Agriculture Preservation Action Plan</i> and appoint an County-wide Agriculture Preservation Task Force to specifically address the preservation of agriculture.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	ongoing
21	<u>Ag Practices</u> - Recognizing that commercial agriculture production can impact water supply sources, encourage the use of best management practices to reduce soil erosion and manure/fertilizer runoff.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING
LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN			
Agriculture			
22	<u>Ag-Friendly Zoning</u> - Carefully design any zoning ordinance to preclude provisions which may inhibit agriculture and include provisions to specifically promote agriculture.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
Forestry, Mining			
23	<u>Forestry</u> - Ensure that the zoning ordinance is consistent with the MPC by classifying forestry as a principal permitted use in all zoning districts, and includes <u>reasonable</u> standards for logging plans, compliance with state laws and good forest management practices.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
24	<u>Mining</u> -Ensure zoning standards require coordination with the plan information and standards applied by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and ensure that mining operations are conducted in appropriate locations and in accord with sound practices and environmental regulations.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	short-term
Other Specific Land Use Control and Environmental Protection Actions			
25	<u>Inter-Municipal Planning</u> -Continue to work toward working cooperatively to address land use, natural resource, open space and environmental issues.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term
26	<u>Land Trust</u> - Support the efforts of the North Branch Land Trust and other such organizations for land protection in the Township and region.	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission	ongoing
27	<u>Sewage Disposal</u> - Encourage the use of soil based sewage disposal methods in order to match development to the carrying capacity of the land, and to increase groundwater recharge.	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission Sewage Enforcement officer	ongoing
28	<u>Water Monitoring</u> - Consider initiating a surface water and groundwater monitoring program to assess current and changing water quality.	Sewage Enforcement Officers Board of Supervisors	mid-term
29	<u>Natural Area Inventory</u> - Use the County Natural Area Inventory completed in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy to identify unique plant and animal communities in land use planning and approval decisions	Board of Supervisors Planning Commission	ongoing
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES			
30	<u>Township Administration and Buildings</u> - No needs identified.	no action required	
31	<u>Road Equipment</u> - replace 1990 pick-up truck	Board of Supervisors	mid-term
32	<u>Road Equipment Inventory</u> - maintain an inventory of all equipment including the useful life of each item in order to anticipate replace timing and estimated costs	Road Supervisor	short-term
33	<u>Emergency Services</u> - Continue financial support.	Board of Supervisors	annually
34	<u>911 Emergency Call System</u> - Support County efforts to implement 911 emergency call system including street addressing		
35	<u>Police</u> - Maintain existing level of service and monitor the incidence of crime, along with municipal financial conditions, in order to assess need for increased local police protection. If needed, explore the merits of a regional police force as a cost effective approach.	Police Chief Board of Supervisors	on-going

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING
Water Supply			
36	Adopt a well ordinance.	Sewage Enforcement Officer Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term
37	Adopt wellhead and aquifer protection standards.	Sewage Enforcement Officer Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term
38	Develop a well testing program.	Sewage Enforcement Officer Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	mid-term
39	Require water conservation devices in new construction.	Board of Supervisors PA Uniform Building Code	as part of Code
40	Require developers of projects involving use of large quantities of groundwater to document potential impacts and mitigation actions.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	as part of zoning and sub ords
41	Maximize groundwater recharge by encouraging the use of innovate stormwater management techniques.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	as part of zoning and sub ords
Sewage Disposal			
42	Encourage the use of soil based sewage disposal methods.	Planning Commission Sewage Enforcement Officer Board of Supervisors	as part of zoning and sub ords
43	Monitor the functioning of existing on-lot sewage disposal systems.	Sewage Enforcement Officer	ongoing
44	Ensure that all new systems meet DEP regulations.	Sewage Enforcement Officer	ongoing
45	Consider on-lot sewage systems maintenance program.	Sewage Enforcement Officer Board of Supervisors	far-term
46	Update Sewage Facilities Plan as needed.	Sewage Enforcement Officer Board of Supervisors	as needed
47	<u>Solid Waste</u> - Monitor private waste haulers and regulate if necessary.	Board of Supervisors	ongoing
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES			
Recreation/Community Activities			
48	<u>Commission</u> - Create a Falls Township Park and Recreation Commission to prepare a recreation and open space plan for the Township - Identify and choose site(s) for recreation facilities. - Develop a funding plan.	Board of Supervisors Park/Rec Commission	far-term
49	<u>Official Map</u> - Show planned recreation facilities on Township Official Map to ensure that the land can be acquired by the Townships.	Board of Supervisors	far-term
50	<u>Fees/Dedication</u> - Based on adoption of recreation plan, require for new subdivisions dedication of recreation land or fees in-lieu thereof.	Board of Supervisors	far-term

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING
HISTORIC RESOURCES			
51	<u>Historical Society</u> - Encourage the creation of a Township Historical Society to focus attention on historic preservation and work on preservation.	Board of Supervisors	mid-term
52	<u>National Register</u> - Work toward the inclusion of qualifying structures on the National Register.	Historical Societies	mid-term
53	<u>Inventory/Local Register</u> - Complete an historical and architectural history and an inventory of historic resources in the Townships, and consider the development of a local historic register program.	Historical Societies	mid-term
54	<u>Zoning Provisions</u> - Incorporate the preservation of historic resources in conservation design for residential development as part of any zoning ordinance.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	as part of zoning
55	<u>Home Occupations</u> - Allow home occupations in all zoning districts as a means of encouraging productive use of historic structures which tend to be larger and more difficult to maintain.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	as part of zoning
TRANSPORTATION PLAN			
56	<u>Advisory Board</u> - Participate in the PennDOT Customer Advisory Board to communicate concerns to PennDOT.	Board of Supervisors Road Supervisor	ongoing
57	<u>Task Force</u> - Work with adjoining municipalities to create a Road Task Force to meet regularly with Wyoming County and PennDOT officials to discuss highway improvement needs and prioritize and promote specific improvement projects.	Board of Supervisors	short-term
58	<u>Improvements</u> - Work with local legislators, the County and PennDOT to schedule studies to identify improvements to correct identified road and intersection deficiencies	Board of Supervisors Road Supervisor Township Engineer Road Task Force	short-term
59	<u>Road Inventory</u> - Complete and update annually a detailed Township road inventory and evaluation (see Appendix for form) to identify needs and develop an improvements schedule within normal budgetary process.	Road Supervisor	ongoing
60	<u>Road Equipment</u> - Maintain an up-to-date inventory of Township road maintenance equipment as a means of planning for replacement and inclusion the capital improvements program.	Road Supervisor	ongoing
61	<u>Road Encroachments</u> - Require the issuance of a highway occupancy permit by the Township for any access or drainage work along Township roads.	Board of Supervisors Road Supervisor	short-term
62	<u>New Subdivision Roads</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt an up-to-date road ordinance setting standards for construction of public roads and establishing procedures for dedication to the public. - Review road construction standards to ensure adequacy for public safety and eliminate excessive requirements to minimize the consumption of resources for construction and long term maintenance. 	Board of Supervisors Road Supervisor Township Engineer	mid-term
HOUSING PLAN			
63	<u>Building Code</u> - Monitor the progress of the adoption of the state building code, carefully evaluate enforcement options, and choose the one best suited to the Townships.	Board of Supervisors	ongoing

#	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY RESOURCES	PRIORITY TIMING
HOUSING PLAN			
64	Housing Programs -Support the housing recommendations of the County Housing Authority relative to subsidized housing programs for low and moderate income families and assure area residents receive fair consideration for available programs.	Board of Supervisors	ongoing
Land Use Controls			
65	Assess land use controls in terms of barriers to affordable housing and make necessary adjustments based on the need for affordable housing.	Planning Commission Board of Supervisors	part of zoning and subdivision ordinances
66	Adopt standards to ensure that higher density development is directed to identified growth areas served by an adequate water supply, sewage disposal system, and other improvements.		
67	Consider the use of <i>conservation design</i> development, planned residential development, and development incentives such as density bonuses as a means of providing more affordable housing.		
68	Review Township land use controls in terms of standards not directly linked to public health and safety which increase housing costs.		
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM			
69	Develop a capital improvements program for anticipated capital expenditures	Board of Supervisors	as needed
OFFICIAL MAP			
70	Adopt an official map when and if land is identified for any public purposes.	Board of Supervisors	as needed

PLANS

PLANS

The individual plan elements included in this *Comprehensive Plan* are intended to reflect the established goals and objectives, to consider the findings of the background studies, and to set the overall growth and development direction for Falls Township. Having stated this, it is important to note that municipal planning must be considered an on-going process, and a

community's goals and objectives will change with changing conditions in the community. Therefore, the basic planning tenet of this *Comprehensive Plan* is the continual review of the Township's goals and objectives with adjustments made to the associated plans and policies.

LAND USE, NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN

Summary of Planning Issues

- Falls Township, given its location near the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan areas, rural character, quality of life, and open land, holds great potential for growth and development.
- More residential development will spawn more retail/service commercial development, and increased demand for municipal facilities and services.
- With relatively few lots available in existing subdivisions, most new development will occur on new lots subdivided from agricultural and other open land.
- More and more agricultural land is falling out of production as farming becomes more economically difficult.
- Continued loss of agricultural land to development, and the fragmentation of larger agricultural parcels will seriously affect the long-term viability of agriculture.
- Township residents, as reported in the community survey, overwhelmingly support the protection of open space and preservation of agriculture.
- The challenge is to provide for the essential economic growth and development of the Township while concurrently conserving its scenic and natural environment and the viability of agriculture.
- About seventy-five percent of community survey respondents suggested that additional service establishments are needed in the Township.
- The locations for commercial uses most suggested by community survey respondents are along major highways and *anywhere*.
- Fifty-four percent of community survey respondents think light manufacturing is important for the Township.
- Seventy-five percent of survey respondents believe zoning should be adopted to guide growth and development, sixteen percent disagree and nine percent are not sure.
- Reliance on on-lot sewage systems and agricultural fertilization can cause bacterial and nitrate contamination, and highlight the need for groundwater water quality protection.
- Streams with good water quality are key components of the Township's environment and rural character, and sound land use management is vital to protecting water quality.
- The potential for growth and recent land use proposals crystallized the need for land use planning and management.

Existing Land Use and Environmental Controls

As authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the subdivision and land development

ordinance and the zoning ordinance are the principal land use management tools which are available to local municipalities in Pennsylvania. Until the adoption of this *Plan*, the Township had no comprehensive plan. The Township has not adopted a zoning ordinance and is under the jurisdiction of the Wyoming County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. When a local municipality adopts a zoning ordinance or subdivision and land development ordinance, the locally adopted ordinance supercedes the corresponding County ordinance.

The subdivision and land development ordinance provides standards for dividing land and for residential and non-residential development projects assuring the provision of adequate community facilities such as roads, water supply and sewage disposal, utilities, proper highway access, and storm water control. The zoning ordinance regulates the use of land by dividing a community into districts to separate land use activities (residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial, etc.); sets standards for lot size, setbacks and building height; includes specific standards for a broad range of land uses including for example: parking, signs, junkyards, mobile home parks, natural resource uses and multi-family dwellings, and other general community development and environmental performance standards.

Future Land Use -- Conserve Working Landscape and Encourage Appropriate Economic Development

Falls Township's regional location coupled with the area's attractive rural character, is expected to continue to stimulate both residential and commercial development, with continued progression to a *bedroom community* character. At the same time, increased demand for retail and service establishments will be generated by the residential development. The need to provide improved employment opportunities in the community is recognized, as is the importance of maintaining existing businesses, so any local municipal zoning ordinances must be carefully crafted to include reasonable standards which will not discourage such development. Nevertheless, the historic and present importance of agriculture has been identified as a key element of the community. In short, Falls Township officials intend to conserve the community's agriculture and rural working landscape while concurrently encouraging economic development in appropriate locations consistent with the rural character.

Rural Character Defined ????

The term *rural character* or *rural atmosphere* is often used to describe what residents hold important about their communities. But, what is rural character? When this question is posed, a variety of answers is the norm, and most are specific to the respondent. In other words, rural character means different things to different people. One person may define rural character as an idealized, romantic, nostalgic vision of what is or what used to be. To another, it may be the combination of homes, open land, agriculture, small businesses and other economic activities that comprise the rural working landscape. It is simply the way one person, or a group of people, remembers their past, individually or collectively, or sees the present. Rural character is relative. What is rural to newcomers may be seen as rampant development to natives. Rural character is ever-changing but is also most often seen as the better way. Rural character cannot be photographed, recorded, standardized or copied. It is individual and unique, and exists in the mind of the person living within, and longing for, that place that is rural in character.

And so, how does a local municipality protect the rural character when the term is not, and cannot, be defined to satisfy everyone? For the purposes of this *Plan*, rural character is interpreted as the *rural working landscape* which recognizes agriculture, timbering, small businesses and residential development as equally important elements of the community.

Zoning - The Principal Land Use Management Tool

Based on this philosophy, this *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes that the adoption of a zoning ordinance is the most critical action required to implement the future land use plan and manage the growth and development which is inevitable for Falls Township. Continued planning by consulting, reviewing and updating this *Comprehensive Plan*, and amending the zoning ordinance to address changing conditions are associated on-going actions. The timing of the adoption of a zoning ordinance is the critical question. While seventy-five percent of community survey respondent support zoning, the number who disagree and who are *not sure* suggest the need for more factual information about zoning before making a determination of support.

The Township must determine its timing and approach to educating the public about zoning and its adoption.

As noted previously, zoning is the primary tool used by municipalities in Pennsylvania to manage land use and development. At the current time, the Wyoming County Planning Commission and Commissioners do not support creating a county-wide zoning ordinance. This position is obviously shared by most county commissioners in the Commonwealth, with less than ten of sixty-seven counties having adopted zoning ordinance. Zoning has historically been viewed as a local municipal prerogative and most counties are reluctant to exercise authorities generally held by local officials. Similar to subdivision ordinances, a locally adopted zoning ordinance automatically supercedes a county zoning ordinance. In addition, the administration of a county-wide zoning ordinance is difficult.

Traditional Zoning - District Separation

Traditionally, zoning has been used to divide communities into various districts to segregate various land use types such as agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial. The intent is to prevent the *externalities*, or the negative spillover effects, of one use on an adjoining use. One of the problems faced by local officials in designating districts, particularly in rural areas, is determining the ideal use of the hundreds of parcels of land in the community. Each parcel may have the potential for many uses and limiting the use of one parcel to agriculture while allowing commercial development on other parcels may result in a windfall for one owner and severe limitation for another.

Performance Zoning

More recently, municipalities have begun to use *performance zoning* or flexible zoning. In its purest form, *performance zoning* would allow any type of land use on any parcel of land and would control the negative spillovers with development standards. Ordinance criteria would govern such issues as building height, noise, setbacks, lighting, and buffers aimed at protecting the rights of adjoining landowners and community at large, and all new development would be subject to the performance standards.

Traditional and Performance Combined

This *Plan* envisions the use of a combination of the traditional district designation approach and

performance zoning. District designation is important to recognize areas already developed and where the restriction of incompatible uses can be logically applied. Existing residential neighborhoods, residential subdivisions, village main streets and commercial strips are good examples. In areas with little development, a broad range of uses would be permitted and performance standards would be applied. The Township will develop a zoning ordinance within this broad framework creating such zoning districts and including the performance standards necessary to address local needs. A recent report by the Cascade Policy Institute, a non-profit Oregon policy research center, includes a discussion on the *digital economy* which points to the need for flexible zoning techniques.

In the 21st century economy, land-uses are likely to be much more varied than they have ever been. Technological innovation is breaking down geographic barriers at a rapid pace, with telecommunications capacity doubling roughly every 18 months. These innovations are giving Americans more choices with regard to where and how they live, work and recreate. This means that people will increasingly scatter themselves across the landscape, continuing a trend that has been underway for most of this century. Indeed, the trend is likely to accelerate because the technologies that enable people to live and work in disparate locations are becoming less expensive all the time. In terms of hours of work needed to pay for consumer goods, the costs of the four major technologies that allow suburbanization – electricity, telephones, computing, and motor vehicles -- are now a tiny fraction of when those products were first manufactured. In addition, the cost of housing has declined, encouraging people to seek larger homes on larger lots.¹

Cooperative Zoning

Inter-municipal, cooperative zoning would carry this approach to the next level with two or more municipalities working together to manage land use from a regional perspective. This approach, authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code if based on a joint comprehensive plan, allows great flexibility. Each municipality can adopt and administer

¹*Beyond Zoning: Land Use Controls in the Digital Economy*, Charles, John A., Cascade Policy Institute, Portland, Oregon, June 1998, www.CascadePolicy.org

its own ordinance or can adopt and administer a joint ordinance. Zoning cannot be used to exclude particular uses from a municipality, a dogma long held firm by the courts. In other words, a local municipal zoning ordinance must provide reasonable opportunity for the development of all legitimate uses including such activities as adult businesses, cell towers, solid waste disposal facilities, jails, and drug treatment centers. Cooperative zoning enables participating municipalities to spread the range of legitimate uses around the entire area, each not having to provide for every use within individual municipal boundaries. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires a joint comprehensive plan and formal inter-municipal implementation agreements between all municipalities participating in cooperative zoning. Other benefits derived from cooperative zoning include the ability to address land use on an area wide basis, less duplication of effort, shared manpower and staff costs, increased availability of grant monies, and the option of using one zoning hearing board.

Municipal Long Term Commitment

It is critical for local municipalities to understand that zoning, whether adopted individually or undertaken cooperatively, requires a significant commitment from local officials. Developing the comprehensive plan and then the zoning ordinance are only the first steps in a perpetual effort. Understanding the limitations of zoning as the ordinance is prepared and the diligent administration, enforcement and evaluation of the ordinance are critical to its effectiveness. As noted earlier, the task of determining the future use for each parcel of land is a difficult one, and local officials must undertake this daunting responsibility with an eye to flexibility and the use of performance standards in districts where a broader range of uses are permitted. Concurrently, certain areas such as residential neighborhoods may warrant the designation of more exclusive districts to protect existing community character.

Management -- Not Preservation of Status Quo

Another zoning pitfall is that many local officials undertake zoning as a means of preserving the status quo. Overly large minimum lot sizes and excluding or over regulating certain uses are examples of such efforts. This approach simply does not work and results in extreme loss of credibility with constituents. Simply stated, zoning must provide for all legitimate

land uses and is intended to guide, and not stop, development. Once adopted, the effective and reasonable administration of the ordinance is critical. The ordinance must be applied consistently to all properties, a qualified and dedicated zoning officer must be hired, and the zoning hearing board must closely follow prescribed standards and procedures. In addition, local officials must monitor the effect of the ordinance on the community and be willing to amend it to improve misdirected standards and meet changing community needs. In short, zoning is an ongoing process which requires careful attention to detail, a commitment to professional administration, and a willingness to make required changes.

Specific Actions Related to Land Use Management

Falls Township officials recognize that zoning is the key to the long-term realization of any adopted land use plan, yet also realize that zoning is a community-changing action. The Township Supervisors and Planning Commissioners are committed to developing and adopting a zoning ordinance. Specific actions include:

- Using this *Comprehensive Plan* to foster a better public understanding of growth and development issues and land use management.
- Publishing a comprehensive plan brochure for distribution to residents.
- Arranging for local officials detailed training about zoning ordinance administration.
- Conducting a public education program to answer residents' questions about zoning.
- Developing and adopting a zoning ordinance.
- Developing and adopting a subdivision and land development ordinance to complement the zoning ordinance in the land use management program.

Designated Growth Area and Rural Resource Area

This land use plan reflects the direction taken by the Year 2000 amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code which included definitions of *rural resource area* and *designated growth area*. These types of designations serve well for envisioning the future growth and development of Falls Township. A definition of each designation, modified somewhat from the MPC definitions, and how each applies to the planning area are included in the following sidebar. The future creation of these areas will depend largely on the adoption of zoning ordinances by the Township.

Designated Growth Areas

Recognizing existing nonresidential uses and the need for good road access, zoning would be used to direct higher density and higher intensity uses to this area. Provision of public water and sewer is not anticipated now or in the near term; however, higher density development would be permitted if central water supply and central sewage disposal are provided by the developer. Single-family, two-family and multi-family residential development would be permitted at densities of one unit to the acre or more, and higher intensity commercial, industrial and institutional uses in specified areas in accord with development performance standards. Includes the in-fill and expansion around already existing residential neighborhoods and subdivisions.

Rural Resource Area

Rural resource uses including agriculture, timbering, mining, quarrying and other extractive industries, forest and game lands and recreation and tourism would be encouraged and enhanced, along with low density residential and limited commercial development which is compatible with or supportive of such uses. Mobile home parks would be permitted and other residential development would be limited to single- and two-family dwellings and mixed residential development, including multi-family, using conservation design. The provision of public water or sewer is not anticipated now or in the very long term, and no increase in density would be provided for central water supply and central sewage disposal proposed by a developer.

County Planning

The Falls Township *Land Use Plan* is consistent with the approach used by the 1997 *Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan*. In short, the Township *Plan* will serve to be more specific than the County *Plan* in terms of growth and development management. Figure Plans-1, Future Development Areas, Wyoming County Plan, 1997, shows the information for the Falls Township area included in the *County Comprehensive Plan*, which is intended to provide a ten to twenty-year

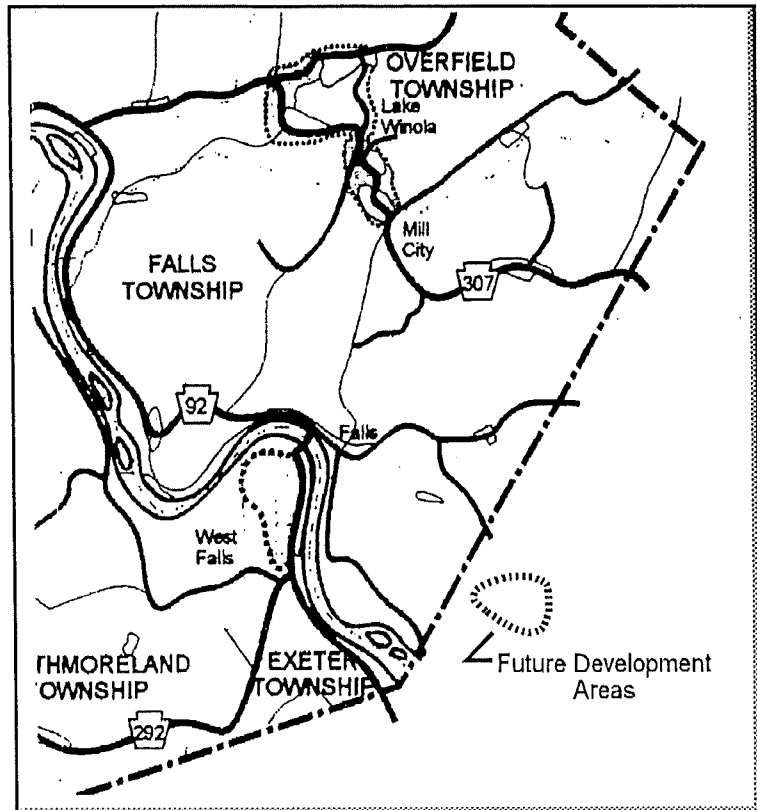


Figure Plans-1, Future Development Areas, Wyoming County Plan, 1997

generalized description of development areas. In Falls Township, the *Wyoming County Plan* designates Mill City as a future development area, along with nearby Lake Winola in Overfield Township, and West Falls across the River in Exeter Township. The *County Plan* goes on to state:

These areas are located in and immediately surrounding the five boroughs and major villages at points of good accessibility along the transportation network so that they may be easily reached and conveniently served. Each is designed to contain a wide range of land use activities, with the exception of heavy industry which should be situated on the periphery along major transportation corridors. Over the next ten to twenty years, intensive varied development would be encouraged within these development areas.

For the most part, the development areas are proposed around existing development concentrations; however, a number of new development concentrations at strategic locations are

also proposed. These new development areas can be encouraged to occur through local level zoning, the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, improvements to the transportation network, and the provision of adequate public infrastructure, particularly water and sewer.

A variety of housing types will be encouraged in each of the development areas including low-density (one to three per net residential acre), and medium-density (five to ten per net residential acre). A variety of housing is conducive to growth in the County by attracting residents with diverse backgrounds, preferences, and abilities who seek diversity in their choices of housing.

There exists a significant relationship between residential density and open space in the Centers Concept of land use. As the population continues to increase, there is a greater pressure to develop remaining vacant land to the extent that residential growth is dispersed. The amenities and efficiency of the total concept is decreased. By limiting spatial spread of residential development, the Centers Concept encourages the construction of some multi-family dwellings and the restoration and continued maintenance of the existing housing inventory. The "cluster" technique in the development of new housing areas should be strongly encouraged throughout Wyoming County.

As residential growth is encouraged within the various development areas, commercial and industrial growth should be encouraged to locate in close proximity. In addition, the concentration of population in a relatively small area tends to encourage a wider range of cultural and social activities. Another advantage of concentrating residential, commercial, and industrial development is that locally provided utilities, such as water, sewer and solid waste disposal, can be more economically provided and efficiently operated within the growth area.

Generalized Future Land Use Plan

The basic land use planning approach and factors for delineating future land use used by the Township for evaluating and designating future land use in are included in the accompanying sidebar. The generalized future land use plan for the Township is shown in Figure Plans-2, Falls Township Future Land Use. It

outlines future land use in very broad terms and will serve as the foundation for the development of the zoning ordinance and zoning map to designate specific zoning districts defined by roads, property lines and other easily identifiable boundaries.

<p style="text-align: center;">FALLS TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN</p> <p><u>Basic Land Use Planning Approach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conserving and protecting vulnerable environmental resource areas • preserving agriculture, forestry and the rural working landscape • protecting residential uses • providing well-situated and appropriate development areas to accommodate higher density residential development and larger scale commercial growth • allowing throughout the planning area residential development at densities consistent with the rural working landscape • providing for limited scale businesses and light manufacturing throughout the planning area which is consistent with the rural working landscape <p><u>Factors for Delineating Future Land Use</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regional location • existing land use in the four Townships and adjoining municipalities, and existing zoning districts • adequate road access • environmental constraints • extent of agricultural use

Designated Growth Area

The designated growth areas in Falls Township includes Mill City and the Route 307 corridor entering Mill City, and the Route 92 corridor from Post Hill Road north to the Tunkhannock Township line. Higher density residential development and higher intensity commercial and industrial uses will be directed to these two areas served by Route 307 and Route 92, the two arterial routes in the Township, to afford adequate road access and connection to the region, without overburdening Township and secondary state roads. (See Figure Plans-2.) Dwelling unit densities will be held at one per acre unless the developer provides central water supply and central sewage disposal when a density of two units per acre would be permitted, along with somewhat higher density for multi-family dwellings. Directing higher density residential and higher intensity commercial/industrial development to

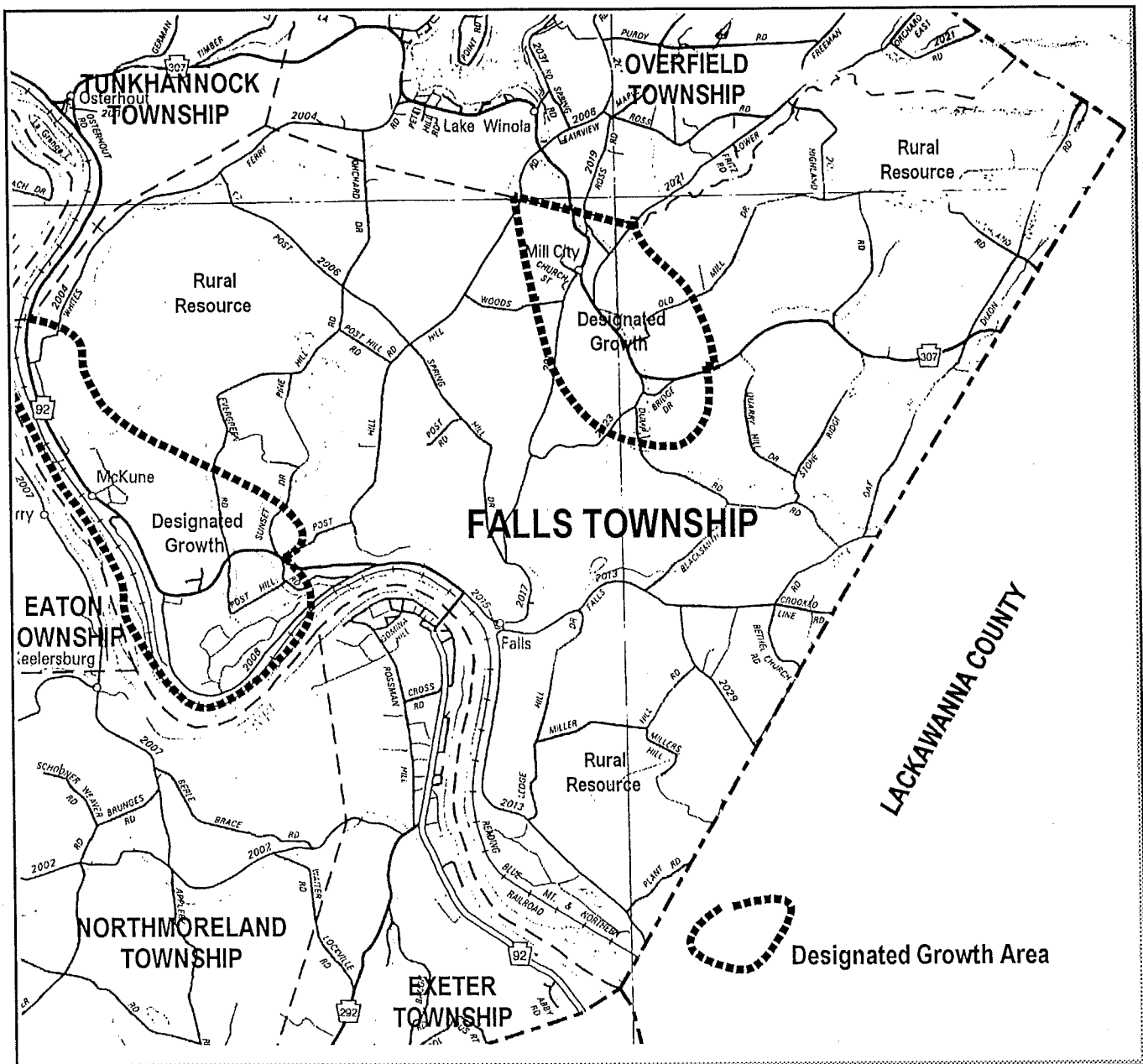
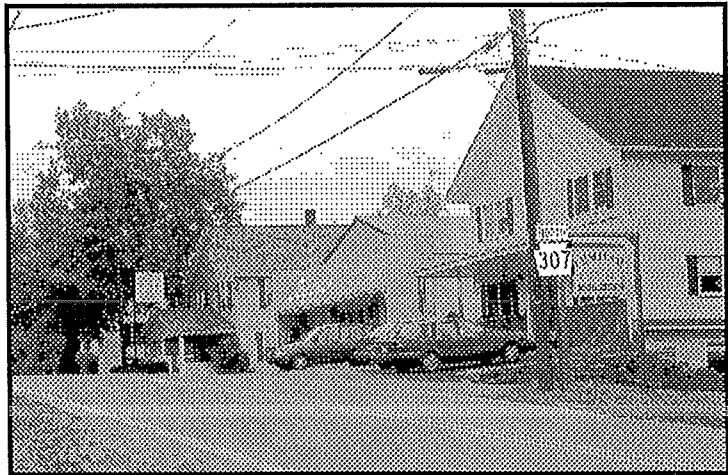
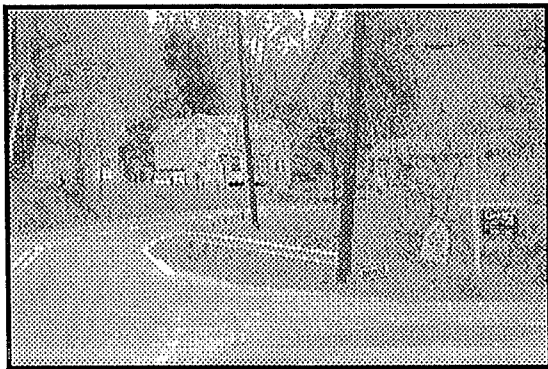
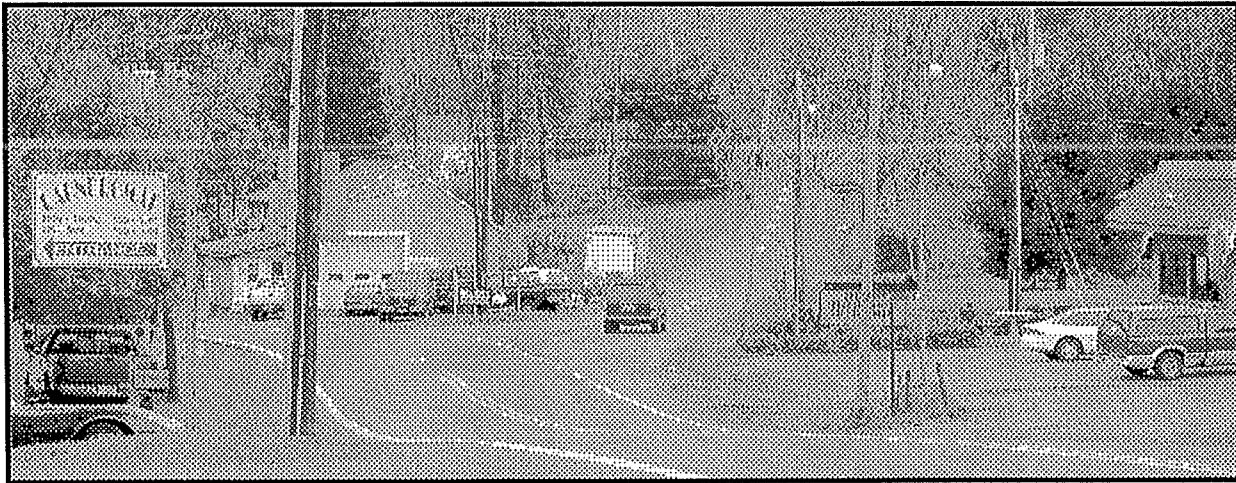


Figure Plans-2, Falls Township Future Land Use

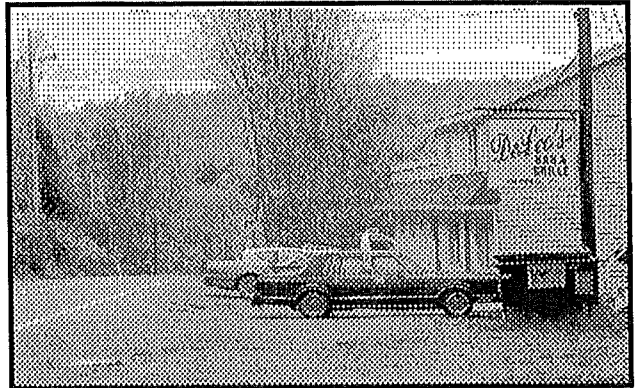
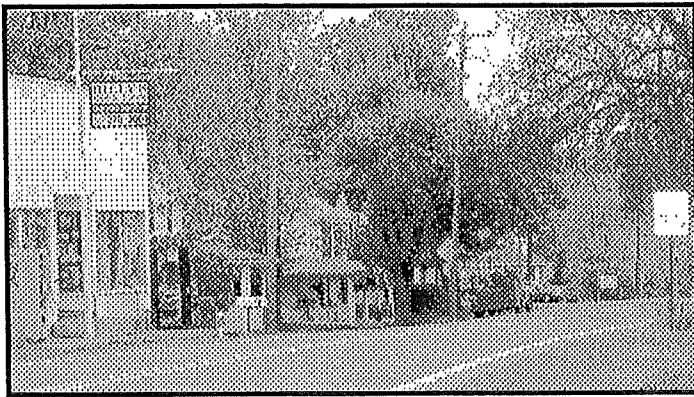
this area will minimize the effects of such development on the balance of the Township. Consistent with the *County Comprehensive Plan*, this *Plan* also recognizes that Falls Township is part of the larger area served by the nearby County-designated development areas in Lake Winola and West Falls, and these two areas, with existing residential and commercial development and better road access, are more suited for growth than areas of Falls Township outside Mill City and the Route 92 corridor.

The greatest concentration of commercial development in the Township is already located in Mill City. Although its horizontal and vertical alignment with sharp curves and quick rises do present sight distance concerns for driveway access, Route 307 is one of the two arterial routes serving the Township, and this factor, along with the potential for future connection to the Lake Winola sewage collection and treatment system, make Mill City more suitable for growth than most other areas of the Township. Slopes and wetland also limit development of some of the land immediately

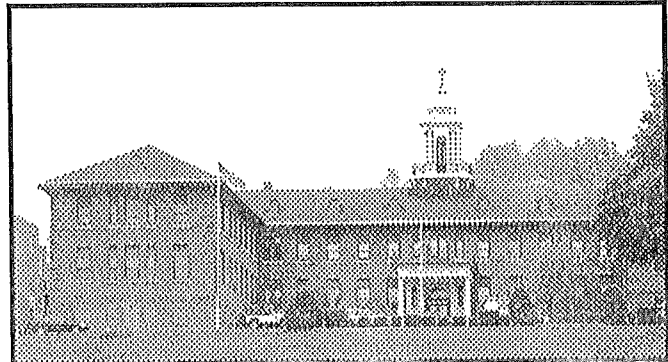
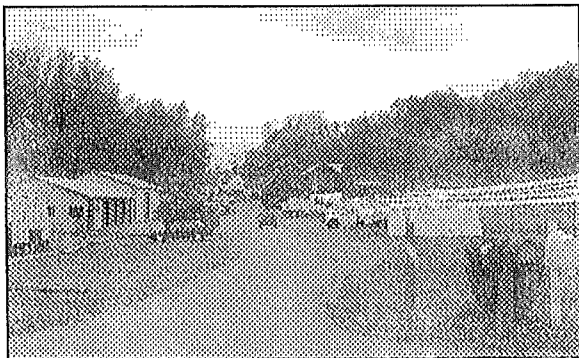
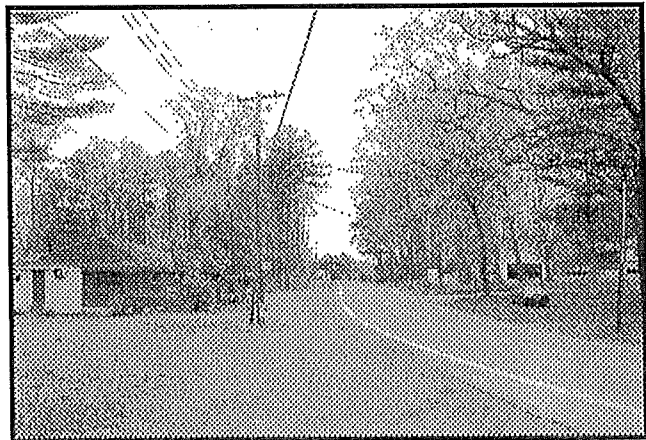
MILL CITY - ROUTE 307 DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA



MILL CITY – ROUTE 307 DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA



ROUTE 92 DESIGNATED GROWTH AREA



along Route 307, but upland areas hold potential for development. The Route 92 corridor is identified as a growth area given its good road access, availability of land for development, railroad access, and the potential for sewage effluent discharge to the Susquehanna River. Of course, simply designating these two areas for future growth will not immediately result in development, which instead will largely be dependent on the demand for housing and associated retail and service establishments. Simply put, when compared to other areas of the Township Mill City and the Route 92 corridor present the best locations to which future growth should be directed.

Rural Resource Areas

The balance of the Township is designated a *rural resource area* with the principal goal of protecting agricultural land and preserving agriculture as a key component of the community. Concurrently, recognizing that farmers have long been good stewards of their land and must be able to glean a reasonable economic return from this care, single-family residential development, and mixed use residential development using conservation design, and limited commercial development will be permitted. Development techniques such as conservation residential subdivision design and large lot commercial zoning will be used to minimize effects on agriculture and open land and residences.

Residences

The highest density of residences in the Township is found in the Mill City area and the two Wyoming County Housing Authority townhouse projects, with other residences found on individual lots throughout the Township. Local officials recognize that the future land use plan must allow for all types of commercial and manufacturing uses. However, this *Plan* must also afford to existing residences and new residential development protection from incompatible uses and the *externalities*, that is, negative effects, of unrestrained commercial and industrial development. This is best accomplished by designating separate residential and nonresidential zoning districts, applying environmental, development and operational performance standards to commercial and industrial uses, and establishing increased lot sizes, setbacks, and buffers where such uses adjoin residential development.

Open Land and Natural Area Conservation

Open land and natural areas are key ingredients of the area's rural working landscape, and Township officials must encourage the conservation of open land if this character is to be maintained. A large majority of community survey respondents support the preservation of open land. Much of the farmland in the Township and many unique land features have already been developed with single-family dwellings. Continued unabated, all areas of privately owned land which are not wetlands or are not extremely steep, or not already protected by easement, could be developed, using central sewage disposal if necessary. Taken to the extreme, the entire area which is available for development would be platted into lots meeting the minimum lot size requirement. This scenario does little to preserve the character of the area which is so dependent on agricultural, forest and other open land.

Conservation Subdivision Design

Another means of conserving open space is conservation design development which allows the same number of units on a parcel as a typical subdivision but with a reduction in minimum lot size. The balance of land needed to maintain the density established by the ordinance is set aside as permanent open space. In addition to maintaining open land, conservation design reduces development costs (and commitment of resources) given shortened road and water and sewer line length, minimizes long term maintenance costs of such improvements, and limits environmental affects such as soil disturbance and storm water. The same design process can be applied to multi-family and commercial development. The Natural Lands Trust, a nationally known land conservation organization suggests that the conservation design concept be taken to a higher level by providing incentives (or disincentives) to encourage the conservation of open land and establishing specific techniques for the design of open space subdivisions. The process is presented in detail in the handbook, *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach*, published by the Natural Lands Trust. Incentives could include allowing higher density for open space design; a disincentive would be the reduction in density if a traditional lot layout is used in place of the open space design. In fact, some communities mandate the use of open space

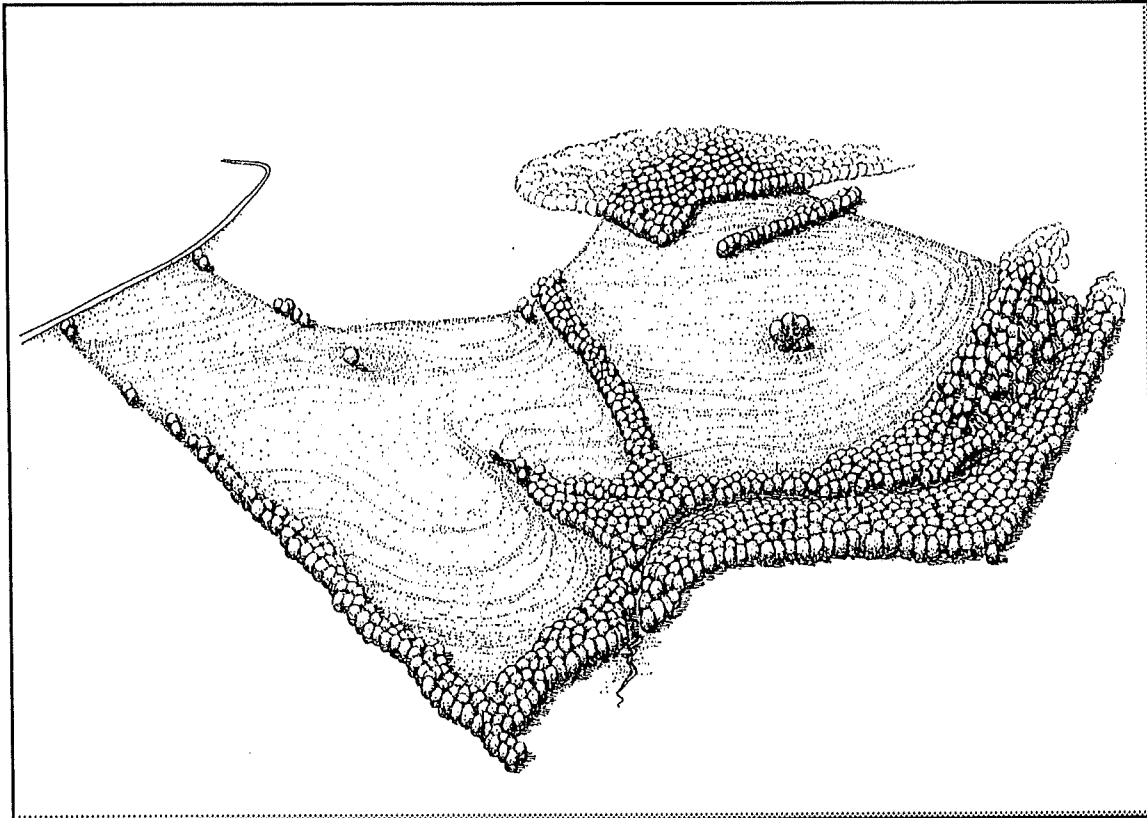


Figure Plans-3.1 – *Before Development*

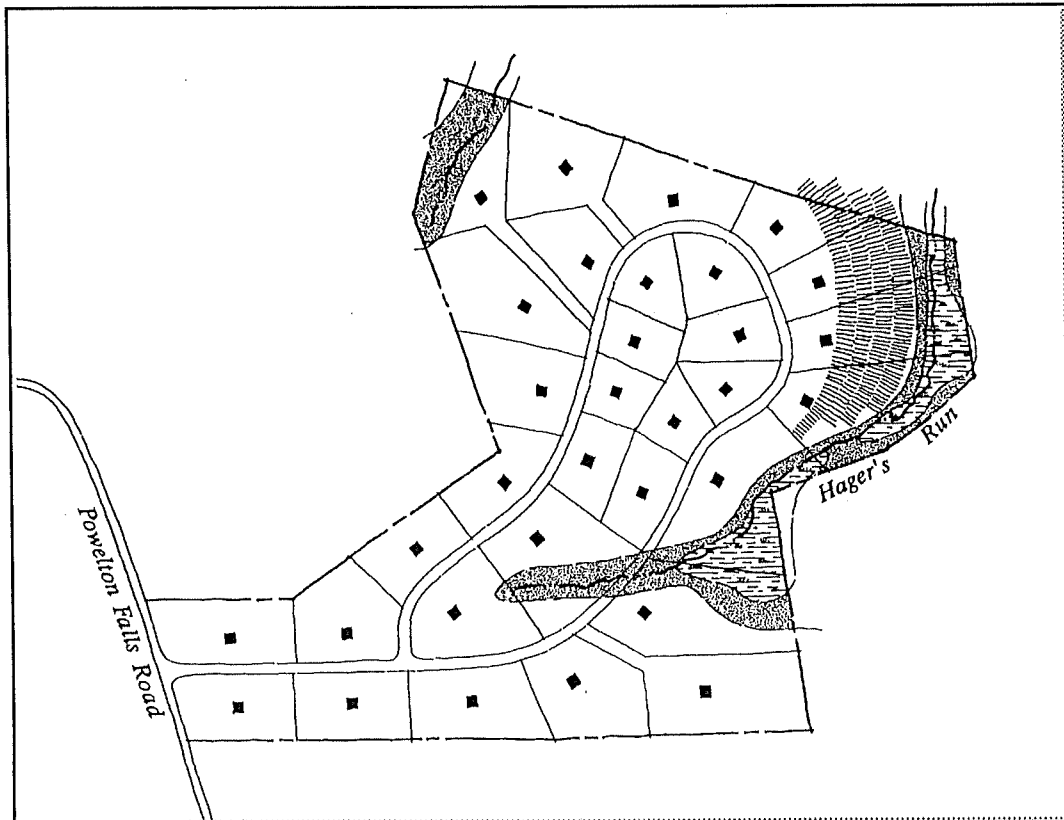


Figure Plans-3.2 -- *Yield Plan*

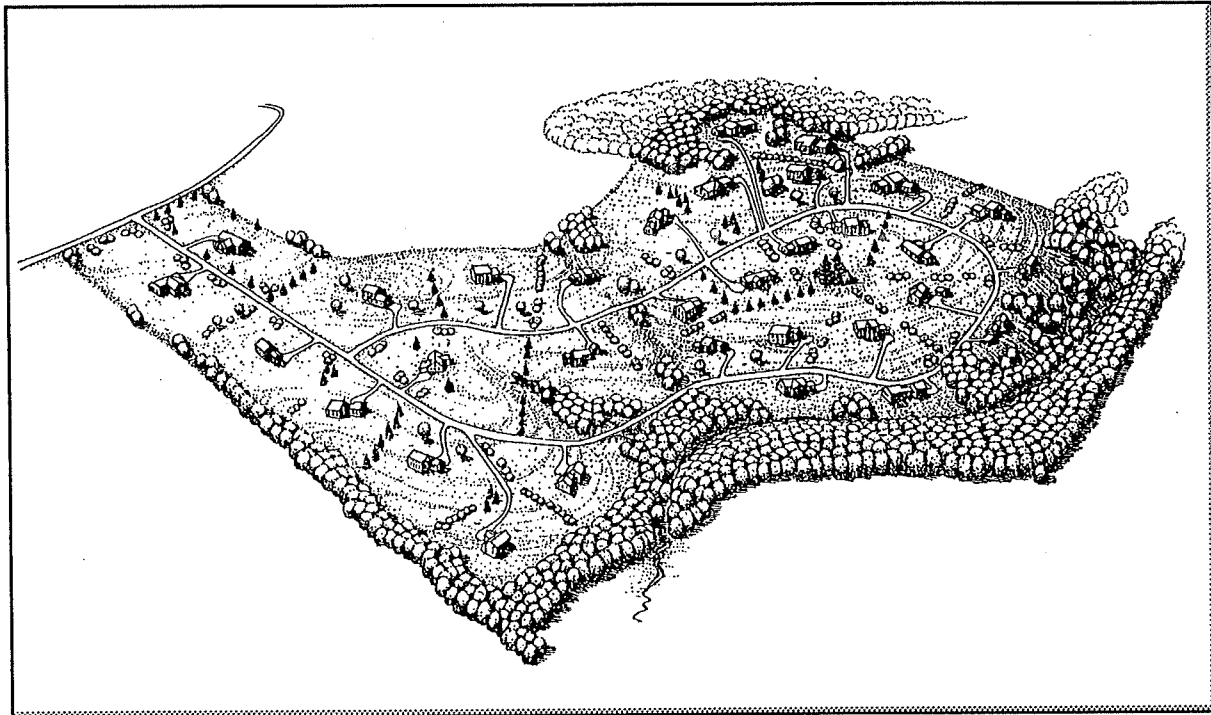


Figure Plans-3.3 – *With Conventional Development*

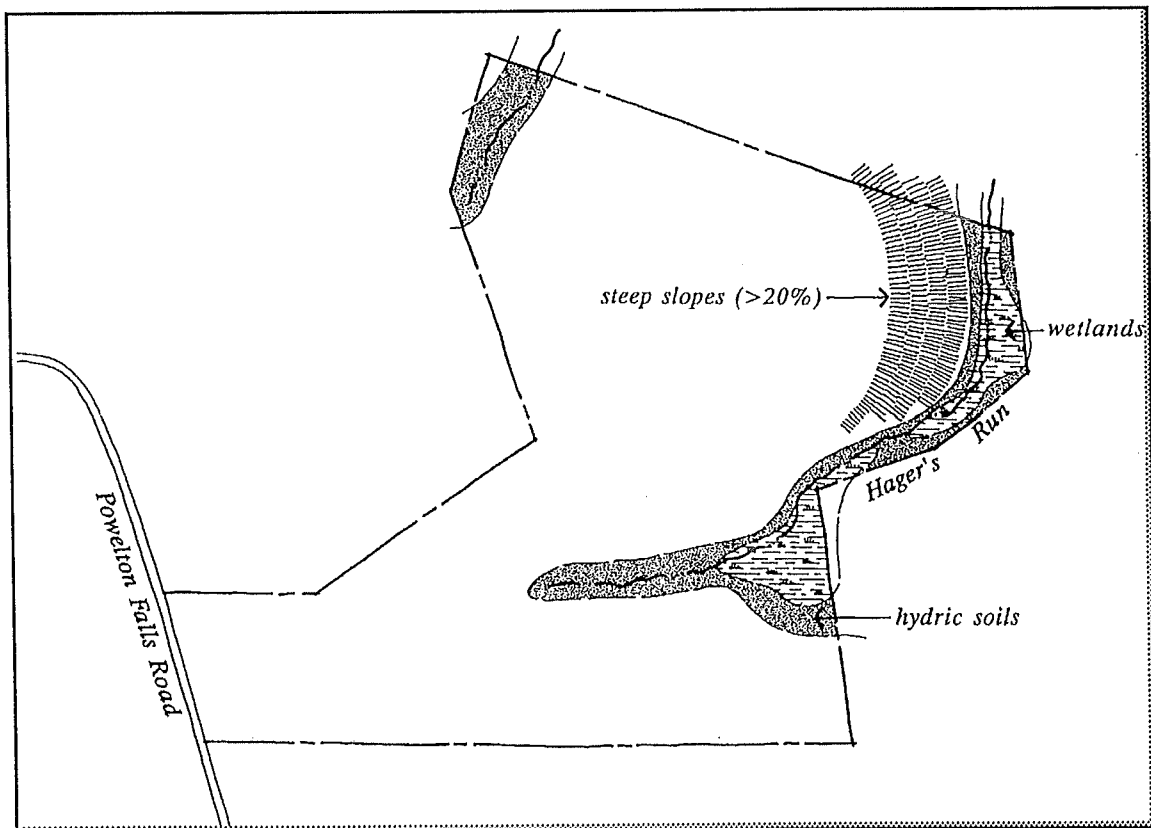


Figure Plans-3.4 – *Identifying Primary Conservation Areas*

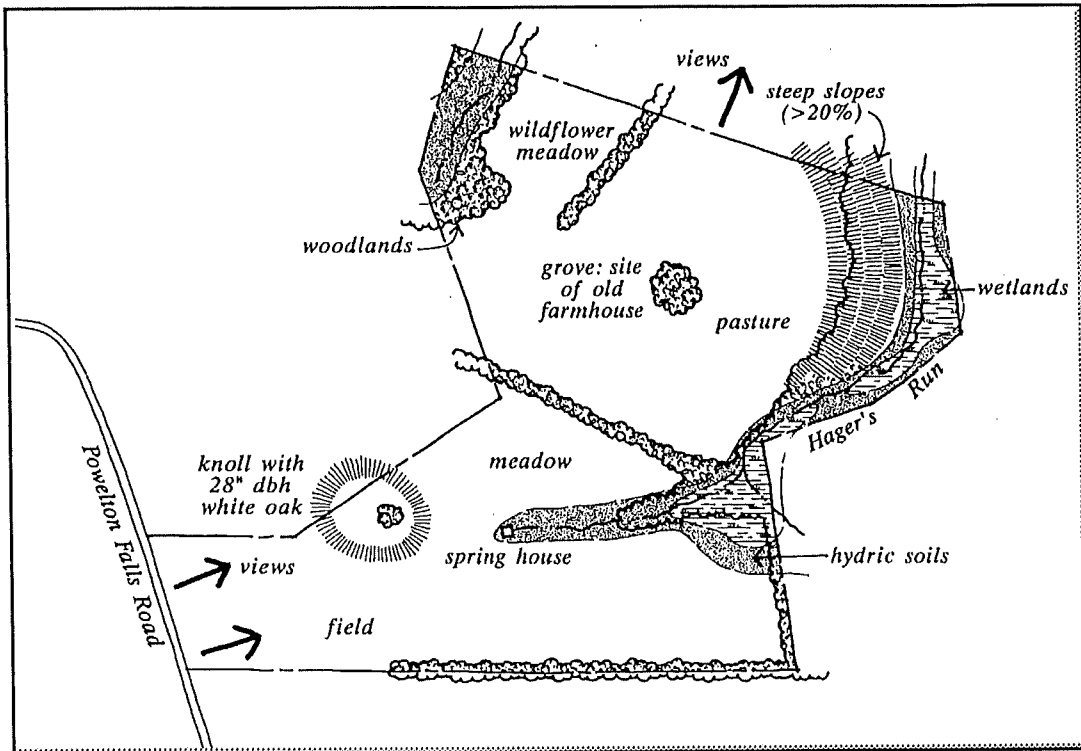


Figure Plans-3.5 – Identifying Secondary Conservation Areas

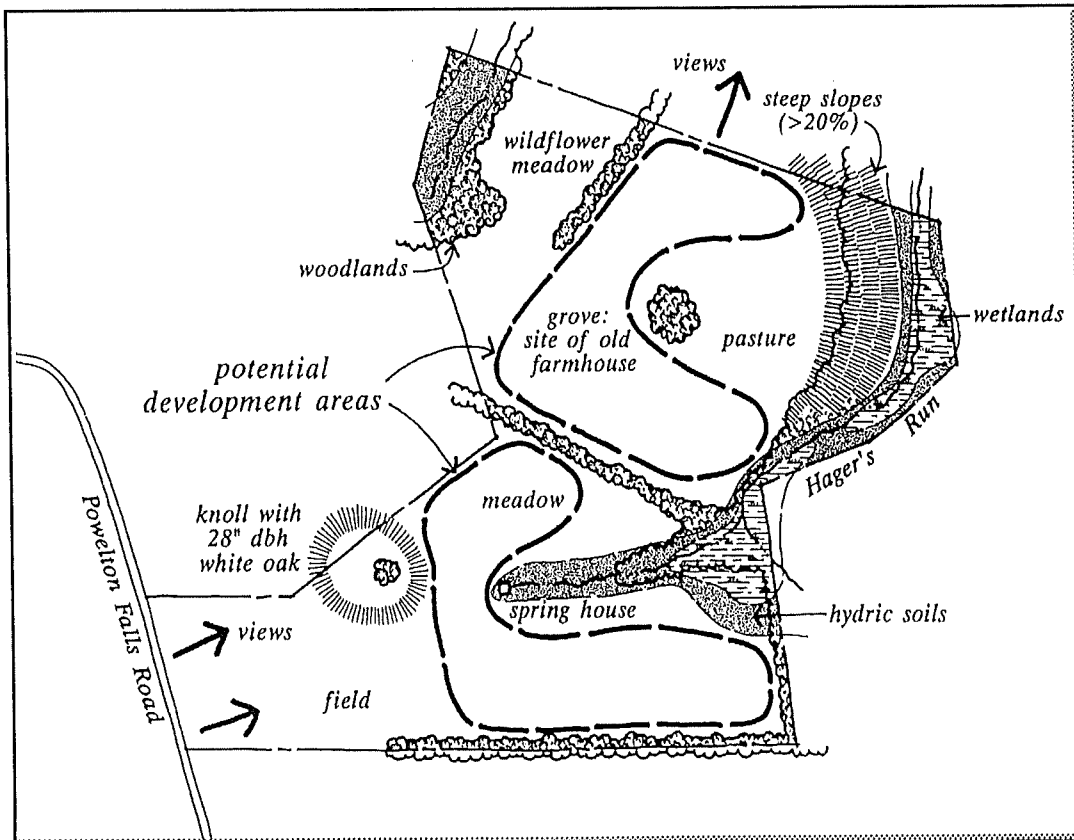


Figure Plans-3.6 – Identifying Potential Development Areas

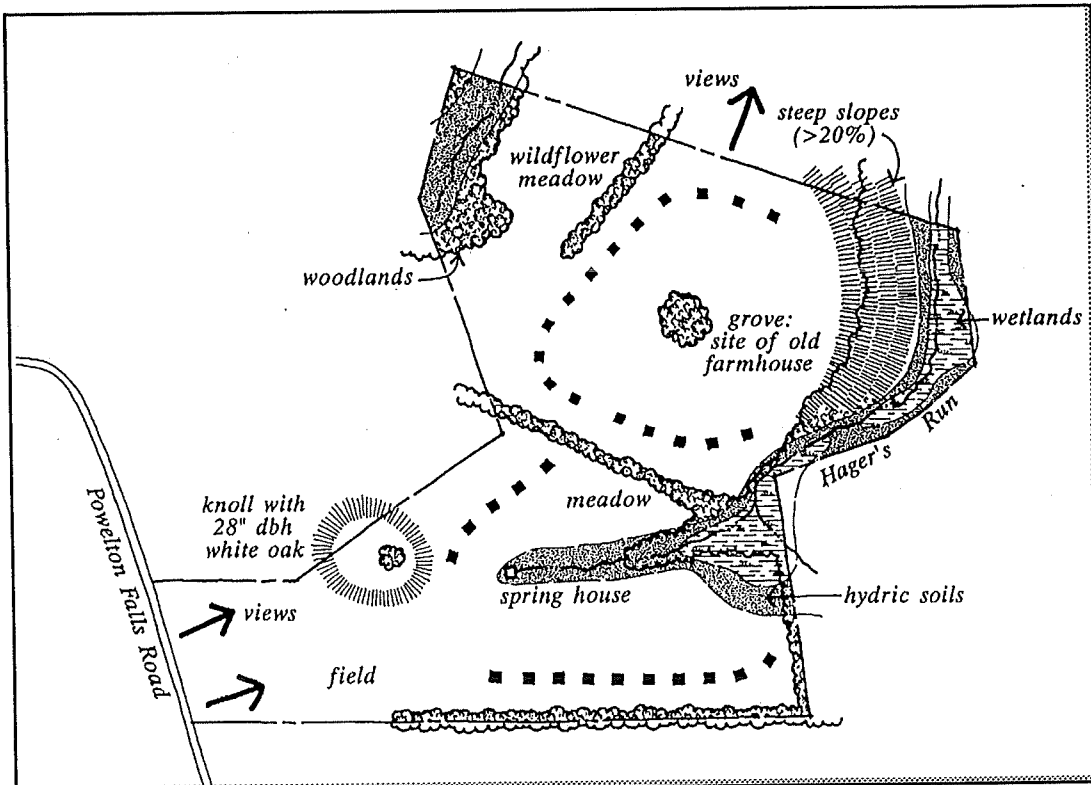


Figure Plans-3.7 – Locating Potential House Sites

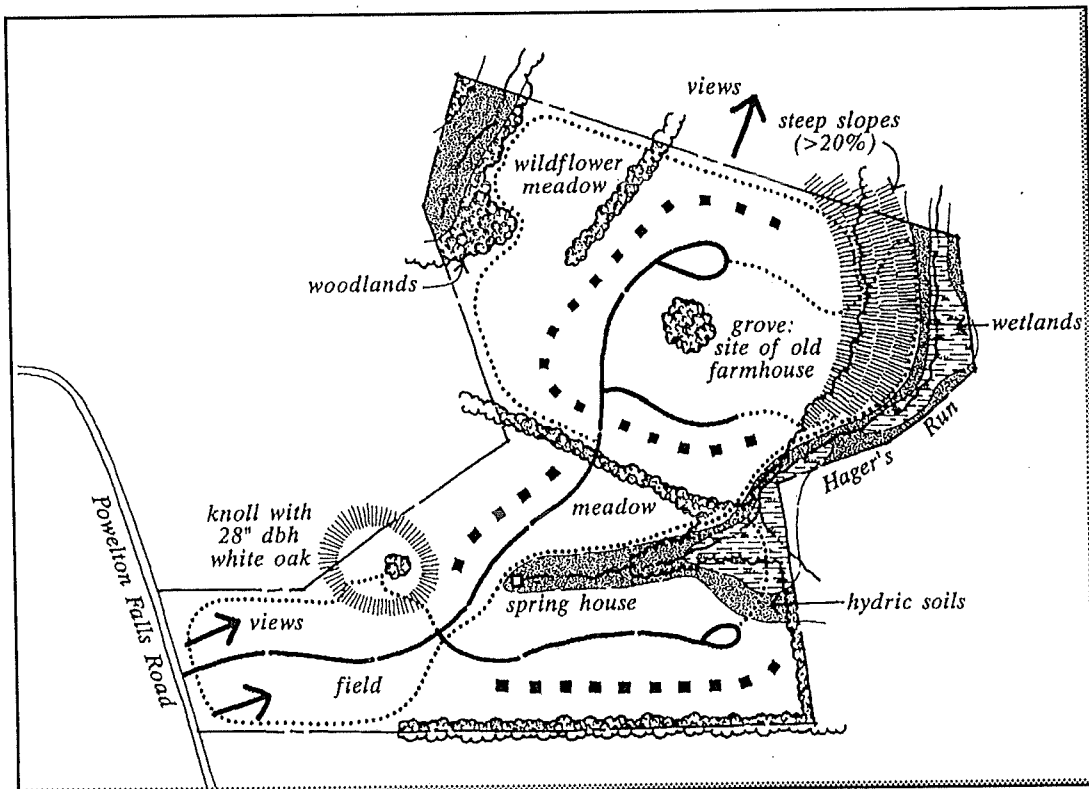


Figure Plans-3.8 – Designing Road Alignments and Trail Links

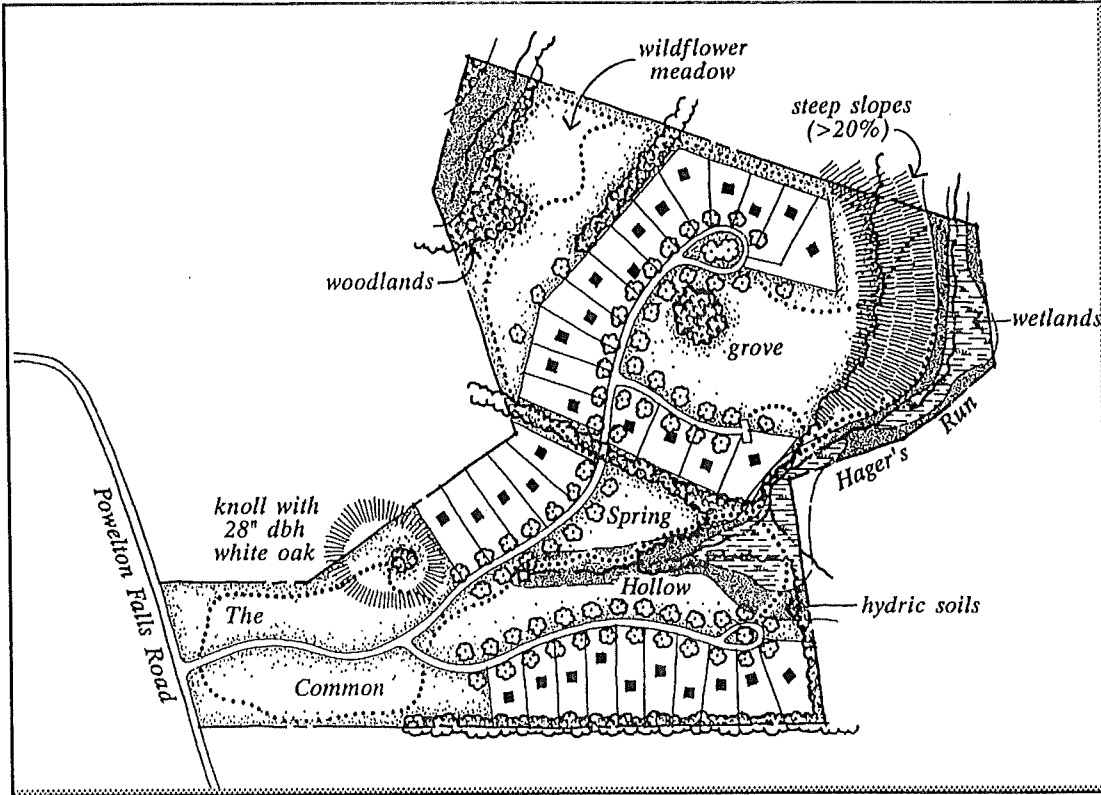


Figure Plans-3.9 – Drawing in the Lot Lines

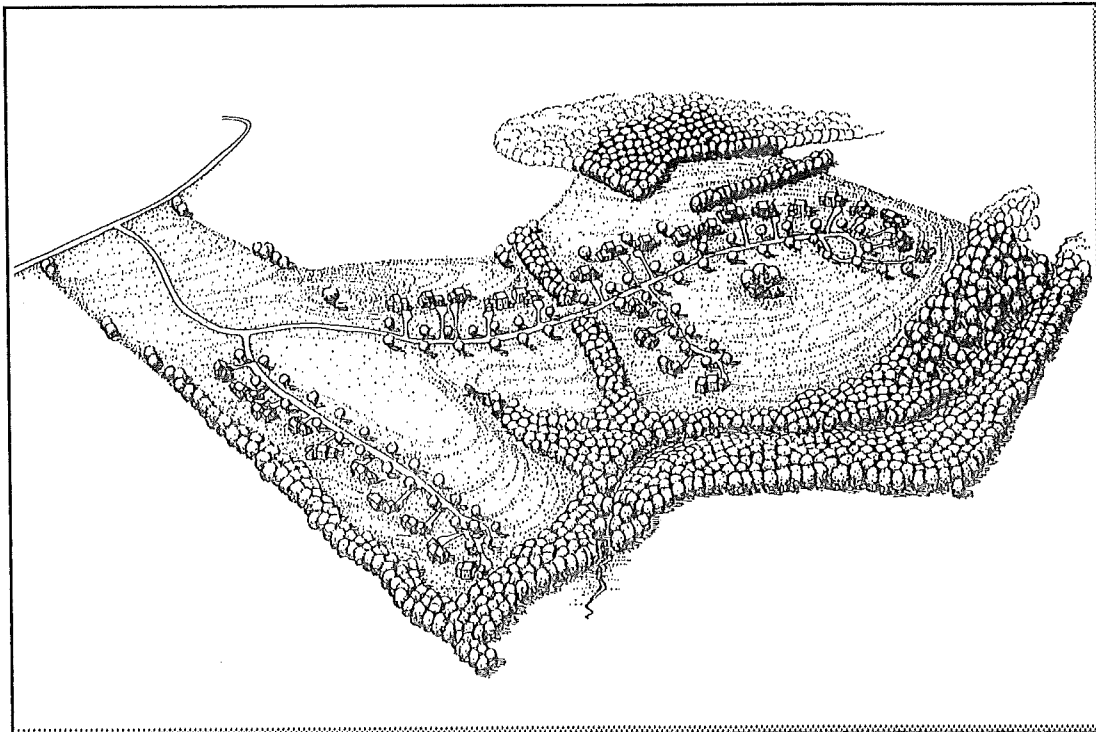


Figure Plans-3.10 – With Open Space Design

space design for all development. The design process involves the following steps: (See Figures Plans 3.1-3.10 for illustrations from *Designing Open Space Subdivisions, A Practical Step-by-Step Approach.*)

1. Yield Plan - the number of units which could be developed on the site using the traditional subdivision approach.

2. Identification of all potential open space areas including primary conservation areas such as . . .

- ⇒ Soils suitable for on site sewage systems
- ⇒ Water bodies
- ⇒ Floodplain
- ⇒ Wetlands
- ⇒ Steep slopes

and secondary conservation areas such as . . .

- ⇒ Mature woodlands
- ⇒ Prime farmland
- ⇒ Significant wildlife habitats
- ⇒ Historic, archeological, and cultural feature
- ⇒ Views into and out from the site
- ⇒ Aquifers and recharge areas

3. Identification of potential development areas -- Where should the houses be logically located on the site?

4. Location of potential house sites -- Where should individual units be located within the development area?

5. Design of road alignments and trails -- How is access best provided with the least impact on conservation areas?

6. Drawing in the lot lines at the reduced lot size results in the conservation of the designated open land.

The open land set aside in the conservation design subdivision would also be coordinated with the *Map of Potential Conservation Lands* which is included as part of this *Plan*. This is intended to create an interconnected network of open land in the Township.

Fiscal Benefits of Open Land Preservation
The Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences

Cost of Community Services Ratios by Land Use				
Township In:	\$ revenue collected : \$ spent on services			
	Resid	Comm	Indus	Open
South Central Townships				
Bethel Lebanon Co.	1 : 1.08	1 : 0.07	1 : 0.27	1 : 0.06
Carroll Perry Co.	1 : 1.03	1 : 0.06	—	1 : 0.02
Maiden Creek Berks Co.	1 : 1.28	1 : 0.11	1 : 0.06	1 : 0.04
Richmond Berks Co.	1 : 1.24	1 : 0.11	1 : 0.06	1 : 0.04
Straban Adams Co.	1 : 1.10	1 : 0.17	1 : 0.05	1 : 0.06
Philadelphia Area Townships				
Bedminster Bucks Co.	1 : 1.12	1 : 0.006	1 : 0.04	1 : 0.04
Buckingham Berks Co.	1 : 1.04	1 : 0.16	1 : 0.12	1 : 0.08
North Central Townships				
Bingham Potter Co.	1 : 1.56	1 : 0.26	1 : 0.15	1 : 0.15
Stewardson Potter Co.	1 : 2.11	1 : 0.37	--	1 : 0.15
Sweden Potter Co.	1 : 1.38	1 : 0.07	--	1 : 0.08
Western Township				
Allegheny Westmoreland Co.	1 : 1.06	1 : 0.15	1 : 0.14	1 : 0.13
Source: <i>Calculating a Cost of Community Services Ratio for Your Pennsylvania Community</i> , The Pennsylvania State University, 1998				

Cooperative Extension, in *Extension Circular 410 - Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses, The Pennsylvania Experience*, reports on a study conducted in a number of townships throughout the Commonwealth. The study found that:

- Land uses affect the size of the local government, the types of services it offers, the types of equipment it must purchase, and the taxes it must levy.



Residential and Agricultural Land Use Conflicts?

- *Land use also affects the number of students in the local school district, the sizes and number of school buildings, the number of teachers, and the taxes and tax rates the school levies.*
 - *The overall fiscal impact of a land use depends on both its (tax) revenue and its (municipal) expenditure impacts.*
 - *Residential land, on average contributed less to the local municipality and school district than it required back in expenditures.*
 - *Commercial, industrial, and farm- and open land contributed more to the local municipality and school district than they took, thus helping to subsidize the (service) needs of residential land.*
 - *If growth must occur, commercial and industrial development has a potentially beneficial impact on the tax base as long as it does not dramatically raise the demand for services.*
 - *When farmland is converted for residential purposes . . . the land will be converted from a net contributor to the municipality and school district into a net drain.*
 - *Even with preferential assessments, farmland ends up subsidizing the educational costs of residential land and plays a positive economic role in the community.*
- To conserve open land, including those areas containing unique and sensitive natural features such as woodlands, steep slopes, streams, flood plains and wetlands, by setting them aside from development.
 - To focus on the preservation of prime and other active agricultural land as a means of preserving agriculture.
 - To provide greater design flexibility and efficiency in the siting of services and infrastructure, including the opportunity to reduce length of roads, utility runs, and the amount of paving required for residential development.
 - To reduce erosion and sedimentation by the retention of existing vegetation, and the minimization of development on steep slopes.
 - To provide for a diversity of lot sizes, building densities, and housing choices to accommodate a variety of age and income groups, and residential preferences, so that the community's population diversity may be maintained.
 - To implement adopted municipal policies to conserve a variety of irreplaceable and environmentally sensitive resource lands, including provisions for reasonable incentives to create a greenway and trail system for the benefit of present and future residents.
 - To implement adopted land use, transportation, and community policies, as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.
 - To protect areas of the Township with productive agricultural soils for continued or future agricultural use, by conserving blocks of land large enough to allow for efficient farm operations.

The Penn State data represents a cross section of communities in terms of level of development, from very rural townships in north central Potter County to highly developed townships in the Philadelphia area. The conclusion in all reported townships was consistent, the cost of services to residential development exceeds the amount of tax revenue generated.

Goals for Conservation Design Development

- To create neighborhoods with direct visual access to open land, with amenities in the form of neighborhood open space, and with a strong neighborhood identity.
- To provide for the conservation and maintenance of open land within the Township to achieve the above-mentioned goals and for active or passive recreational use by residents.
- To provide multiple options for landowners in order to minimize impacts on environmental resources (sensitive lands such as wetlands, flood plain, and steep slopes) and disturbance of natural or cultural features (such as mature woodlands, hedgerows and tree lines, critical wildlife habitats, historic buildings, and fieldstone walls).
- To provide standards reflecting the varying circumstances and interests of individual landowners, and the individual characteristics of their properties.
- To conserve scenic views and elements of the rural working landscape, and to minimize perceived density, by minimizing views of new development from existing roads.

Specific Actions for Residential Development

- Provide protection for residential areas by maintaining separate residential and nonresidential zoning districts, applying environmental, development and operational performance standards to commercial and industrial uses, and establishing increased lot sizes, setbacks, and buffers where such uses adjoin residential development.
- Incorporate into any adopted zoning ordinance and subdivision and land development ordinance provisions to effect conservation design development to conserve agricultural and other open land, conserve sensitive natural areas, preserve historic resources and maintain rural character.
- Consider requiring conservation design in certain districts and/or incorporating density bonuses as a means of encouraging conservation design.
- Provide for planned residential development, and consider allowing a mix of housing types (and

sometimes commercial uses) as a means of more efficient use of land and conserving open space.

- Consider other methods of preserving open land as described in the adjoining sidebar.
- Support the efforts of local land conservation organizations such as the North Branch Land Trust.

Other Preservation/Conservation Techniques

Comprehensive Planning - enables counties, boroughs, and townships to create a vision for the future which can focus on open land preservation.

Maximum Lot Size Standards - limits the amount of land devoted to a use as a means to preserve agriculture.
Lot Averaging Standards - overall density is maintained while the individual lot size varies.

Flexible Lot Size - sets lot size based on the availability of public water supply and/or sewage disposal.

Transferable Development Rights - the right to develop is sold from areas to be preserved to areas where development is encouraged; the overall area density development remains the same. Units which would be constructed on the *sending* property are developed on the *receiving* property, and the *sending* property is preserved.
Overlay Zoning - applies special standards in addition to the underlying zoning district for areas of special concern (e.g., floodplains, prime farmland, steep slopes).

Agricultural Protection Zoning - designate areas where farming is the primary land use and discourage other land uses in that area.

Open Space and Natural Area Acquisition -conservation easements or fee simple title acquired by public bodies or conservation organizations. Permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation value.

Greenways - corridors of public and private lands preserved as open space, often along streams.

Riparian Buffers - areas of vegetation left undisturbed along streams and lakes.

Wellhead and Aquifer Protection - special standards wells and groundwater sources to protect water quality.

Sewage Facilities Planning - conducted in accord with DEP regulations and aimed at assuring adequate sewage disposal and water quality protection.

Floodplain Management - local regulations based on National Flood Insurance Program standards to minimize flood related damages to structures.

Stormwater Management - local regulations based on area wide plans to minimize stormwater runoff.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control - coordination with County Conservation District to minimize soil loss and protect water quality.

Conservation Easements private and public actions to preserve land and rural character

A conservation easement is a legal agreement that is voluntarily entered into between a landowner and a land trust or government agency which places permanent restrictions on the use or development of land in order to protect its conservation values. The easement may be sold or donated by the property owner. In addition to government agencies community based non-profit organizations are also acting to preserve land and rural character by accepting donation or acquiring conservation easements. Such organizations range in size from the Nature Conservancy, a nationwide organization, to small organizations with Board members from the local community. One such local organization, the North Branch Land Trust holds an easement on a 123-acre Noxen Township farm comprised of pasture, hayfields, woodlands, hardwood forest, and wetlands -- with a spectacular view of the Endless Mountains in Wyoming County. The farm is adjacent to PA State Game Lands 57 and 13.

From a landowner who donated an easement to a local conservancy - Twenty years ago I bought a small farm. I love this land, and don't ever want to see it subdivided But I didn't know how to prevent it. Then I called the Conservancy. They helped me draft a conservation easement that prohibits any subdivision. I gave my development rights to the Conservancy, and they will ensure that those rights are never exercised. My easement allows me to continue to farm, to operate a home business, or to run a fruit stand to sell my farm produce. I can even replace or enlarge my home, as long as I don't build too close to the river. In exchange I received a significant income tax deduction from the IRS. This reduced the amount of federal income tax that I will pay for the next six years. The Conservancy visits once a year to insure that the easement is honored. I know they are serious about protecting my land, and I rest easy knowing my farm will forever remain as it is today.

Advantages Offered by Conservation Easements

Private Ownership: The property remains in private ownership and continues to contribute to the local tax base. The landowner may choose to live on the land, sell it, or pass it on to heirs.

Owners Satisfaction: Gives the landowner the satisfaction that the land will remain unchanged.

Flexibility: Easements are flexible and can be written to meet a particular land-owner's needs while protecting the property's resources.

Permanency: Most easements are permanent, remaining in force when the land changes hands. The easement holder ensures that the restrictions are maintained.

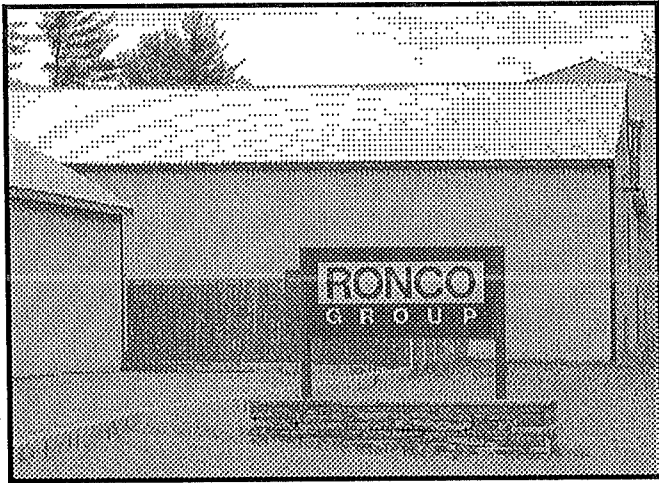
Tax Reduction: There are significant tax advantages if easements are donated rather than sold.

Charitable Taxes: The donation of a conservation easement to a land trust is treated as a charitable gift of the development rights. The donation creates a charitable tax deduction, equal to the value of the conservation easement, on the landowner's Federal and State income tax returns.

Estate Taxes: Estate taxes are significantly lower, sometimes making the difference between heirs holding onto the family land or selling it to pay inheritance taxes.

Property Taxes: Conservation easements will sometimes lower property taxes, a result of reduced valuation on property subject to the conservation easement.

Minimizes Effect of Development: Minimizes other impacts of residential development such as increased population, traffic, and demand for community facilities and services.



One of the Largest Employers in the Township

Commercial, Manufacturing and Institutional Uses

This *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes that commercial, manufacturing and institutional uses are important to maintaining the economic and social health of the Township. While the type, location and intensity of such uses in the planning area have changed over its development history, local residents rely on them for employment, goods and personal services, and community facilities and services. Specific actions follow:

- Include effective performance standards in zoning ordinances to ensure community and environmental protection and update the standards to meet changing needs.
- Allow a range of commercial uses, with development performance standards, in the *rural resource area* to enable owners of larger parcels to realize reasonable economic gain to forestall residential development and the decline of agriculture.
- Do not make standards so onerous that commercial and manufacturing development is discouraged.
- Prepare and promote design guidelines for commercial, industrial, and institutional development to encourage the most efficient use of commercial land and development consistent with the area's rural working landscape.
- Provide for the development of smaller scale retail and service establishments to meet the daily living

needs of residents, and allow for sensible controlled manufacturing and industrial development to provide local job opportunities; but continue to rely on the region as a whole, where community facilities are adequate to absorb major commercial and industrial development.

- Allow for a variety of services, professional and light manufacturing uses to be conducted as home occupations in all zoning districts provided nuisance elements are controlled.
- Allow community related nonresidential uses, such as schools, churches, and nursing homes, in commercial and residential districts.
- Require conservation design for nonresidential development.
- Cooperate with area economic development groups to broaden the regional economy to provide more local jobs.

Preservation of Agriculture

A distinction must be made between preserving agricultural land and preserving agriculture. Agriculture remains a significant activity in the Township, and its preservation is a key component of this *Plan*. Open land conservation techniques can be used to minimize the consumption of land for development, but such programs must be coupled with a concerted effort to directly preserve agricultural land



One of the Remaining Working Farms in the Township

and to minimize conflicts between residential and commercial development and agriculture. As development occurs and farmland is fragmented by interspersed residences, the potential for conflict increases. People who move to the country for the rural lifestyle are not accustomed to living with normal agricultural practices such as the application of pesticides and herbicides, spreading of manure and other fertilizers, machinery in fields at night, and slow moving farm vehicles on roads. If normal agricultural practices are impinged by the complaints of noise, odor and road delays, the preservation of agriculture becomes difficult. In short, many people are in favor of the preservation of agricultural land, but not necessarily in favor of preserving agriculture and its normal attendant practices.

Farmers - Long-Term Stewards

A successful agriculture preservation program cannot be accomplished solely by the Township. Agriculture preservation is a county, state and national issue which must be addressed by all levels of government and only with the cooperation of the landowners and public. Farmers have been preserving agricultural land for generations simply by working the land, and the decision to initiate a municipal agricultural land preservation program cannot be made without their concurrence and participation. The land and the value that it holds does in fact belong to the farmer and its preservation cannot be legitimately accomplished without maintaining the land's monetary value or compensating the farmer. Land values can be maintained where soils are productive, large parcels of contiguous land are available with few conflicting uses, and agriculture is an economically viable activity; large lot, low development density agricultural zoning may be effective in these areas. Should the farmer decide to sell his land which has been zoned for agriculture, the value of the land is maintained by its agricultural productivity. In contrast, instituting large lot agricultural zoning in areas where agriculture is not economically successful simply takes the value of the land. The land has limited agricultural value and residential development is precluded by the zoning. In essence, the landowner is paying for the public goal of open land preservation because he cannot capture the development value of the land. Where soils are less productive, or the agriculture economy is marginal, or development demand for land has inflated its value, other preservation techniques involving compensation

to the landowner may be necessary. In any case, a combination of programs and techniques are generally used in areas where agriculture has been successfully preserved. In the case of Falls Township, conservation design subdivision and planned residential development standards, and conservation easement acquisition appear to be the most promising means of preserving the remaining agricultural land and other open land.

Agricultural Protection Zoning

Agricultural protection zoning (APZ) is appropriate in areas with good soils and viable agriculture and is used extensively in Lancaster, Berks and York Counties. In

AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION ZONING

WHAT IT IS. Agricultural protection zoning (APZ) is used by townships to protect and preserve farmland and agricultural-related industries, which require a large contiguous land base free of conflicting land uses. Specifically, APZ discourages development on prime soils and limits non-agricultural uses in defined agricultural zoning districts. This type of zoning typically requires 20 to 40 acres per non-farm dwelling.

WHY IT WORKS. APZ ordinances come in two types: exclusive and non-exclusive agricultural zoning.

Exclusive APZ, which prohibits the construction of any non-farm dwellings and completely limits the zoned area to agricultural-related activities only, is the most extreme and least common type of APZ.

Non-exclusive APZ implements a number of zoning tools that are used by townships throughout Pennsylvania and have withstood court challenges. The simplest type of non-exclusive ordinance sets a very large minimum lot size, 40 acres for example. While this discourages development, it is not conducive to the continuation of commercial agriculture because it has the potential to cut up a large farm into 40-acre properties.

Another form of agricultural protection zoning found in Pennsylvania is referred to as "percent of

land APZ." Under this type of ordinance, townships specify the percent of tract — usually 10 percent — that can be devoted to development.

The more prevalent form of non-exclusive agricultural zoning in Pennsylvania is area-based allocation zoning, which specifies the numbers of dwellings that will be permitted on a tract and requires them to be sited on small building lots, thus leaving a large part of the tract open and suitable for farming.

Here again, townships are using two different approaches for area-based allocations: fixed and sliding-scale. Fixed area-based allocations require a specified number of acres for each additional dwelling. Sliding-scale area-based allocations allow a higher density of dwellings on small tracts than on larger tracts, reflecting the fact that smaller tracts are less well-suited to farming and have already passed out of the agricultural land market and into the developable land market.

These strict limitations on uses and on the number of dwelling units allowed are the essence of an APZ ordinance. However, good agricultural zoning is often accompanied by programs that increase the probability that agriculture can be sustained, including agricultural security areas, larger setbacks from agricultural areas or operations, and agricultural nuisance disclaimers.

Falls Township, the limited extent of prime soils, the difficult state of agriculture and infancy of planning and land use management, suggest APZ is probably not a viable approach for Falls Township. Typically, APZ sets a very low residential density for new development and limits non-agricultural uses. See the following side bar from the September 1995 *Pennsylvania Township News* for additional discussion.

Agricultural Securities Areas

The Falls Township Board of Supervisors, based upon the request of agricultural land owners, have participated in the inclusion of 2,167 acres of land, about fifteen percent of the total land area in the Township, as part of the Agricultural Securities Area Program (ASA) County-wide, 49,350 acres are included, about nineteen percent of the total land. Landowner participation in the ASA Program demonstrates an interest in continuing agricultural use of the land, and the Township should promote ASA's and provide all administrative support necessary.

ASA's, authorized by the Agricultural Area Security Law, PA Act 1981-43 (Act 43), are initiated by landowners whose combined parcels total at least 250 acres. The parcels must be viable agricultural land and the ASA may be comprised of non-contiguous tracts at least ten acres in size. As of October 1999, some 3.2 million acres of farmland are included in 824 ASAs in the Commonwealth. ASA's provide protection from local ordinances which restrict farming practices and nuisance ordinances unless the local municipality can clearly demonstrate a direct public purpose for the protection of the public health and safety. The ASA also restricts land condemnation procedures by state, county and local governments without approval by the State Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board. The ASA program is voluntary and not permanent, with each ASA reviewed every seven years.

Agricultural Conservation Easements

Conservation easements, which can be applied to agricultural land and other open land, preclude development on the land. The landowner voluntarily sells the perpetual easement to a government agency or private conservation organization such as a land trust. (See previous conservation easement sidebar.) The selling price is typically the difference between development value and the agricultural value. The Wyoming County Board of Commissioners have

appointed the Wyoming County Agricultural Land Preservation Board which directs Wyoming County Agricultural Preservation Program, and provides ongoing administrative funding. The Program enables the County to participate in the state-funded agricultural easement purchase program. Easements are purchased based on criteria which include soil quality, likelihood of conversion of the farm to other uses, proximity to other eased lands, and quality of land stewardship. No conservation easements have been purchased in Falls Township. Given the economic difficulty of applying agricultural protection zoning in the Township, the purchase of conservation easements, if adequately funded, could be the most effective means for long term agricultural land preservation in the Township, and throughout the County.

Tax Incentives - Clean and Green

Differential assessment laws enable counties to assess agricultural land and forest land at its agricultural and forest use value instead of its fair market value. This protects the landowners from tax increases from rising property values. A ten-acre minimum parcel size is required and development is precluded. Should the landowner develop the property, the tax savings over the prior seven years must be paid in addition to a penalty of six percent. The amount of tax revenues lost from the land enrolled in the program must be shifted to the other taxpayers in the municipality. However, this in essence places the tax burden on those developed properties which generate the greatest demand for services. The Act 319 *Clean and Green* Program (the Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974) is the most widely used in the Commonwealth with hundreds of thousands of acres enrolled statewide. *Clean and Green* is most effective and finds more participation in areas which have been recently reassessed. In counties which have not reassessed for many years, there will likely be little difference in market value and agricultural use value, diluting the interest in the program.

Clean and Green has found widespread use in Wyoming County. As reported by the County Assessment Office in 2001, the *Clean and Green* program includes 136,550 acres County-wide (fifty-four percent of total land area) and 6,270 acres in Falls Township (forty-six percent of total). The Township must monitor the effect on the shift of the tax burden to non-319 properties and how the Program affects

minimum lot sizes in future subdivisions. In Susquehanna County, for example, many subdivisions with a ten-acre minimum lot size have been platted to take advantage of the 319 Program, and some of these lots are valued less than smaller lots not in the program.

Specific Agriculture Protection Actions

- Continue to support landowner participation in the Agricultural Securities Area Program and encourage additional landowners to include their land.
- Focus open land preservation efforts on agricultural land.
- Encourage and work with the Wyoming County Planning Commission to develop an *Agriculture Preservation Action Plan* and appoint a County-wide Agriculture Preservation Task Force to specifically address the preservation of agriculture.
- Support the Wyoming County Agricultural Preservation Program and encourage the County Commissioners to supplement the state funds for acquisition of conservation easements.
- Carefully design the zoning ordinance to preclude provisions which may inhibit agriculture and include provisions to specifically promote agriculture.
- Recognizing that commercial agriculture production can impact water supply sources, encourage the use of best management practices to reduce soil erosion and manure/fertilizer runoff.

Forestry

This *Comprehensive Plan* encourages forestry activities throughout the Township provided such operations are conducted in accord with sound forest management practices and environmental regulations. Landowners manage their forests for a variety of reasons including income from timber sales, wildlife habitat, recreation, water quality protection, biodiversity, and timber for long-term investment. Improper harvesting and management practices often raise stream water quality and other environmental concerns with local residents and local officials. It is critical for public acceptance of forestry, environmental

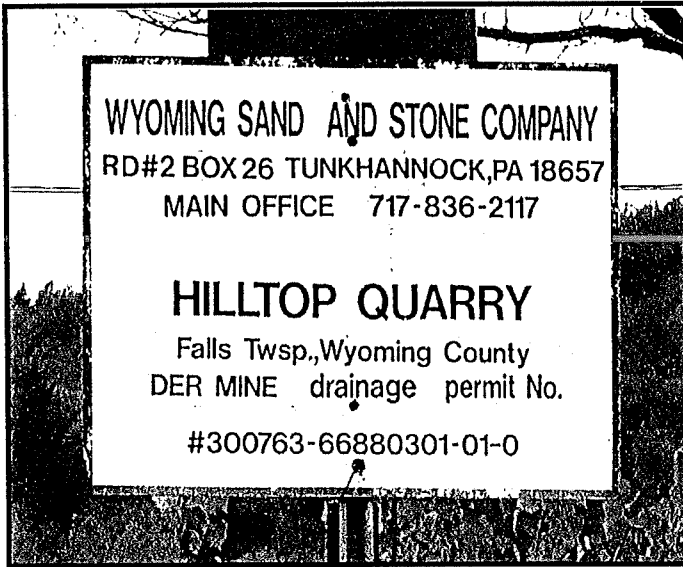
quality and the long-term viability of the industry and forest resources that logging professionals and individual landowners use best management practices when harvesting and for long-term forest maintenance.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), at §603(c)(7), states that *zoning ordinances may not unreasonably restrict forestry activities* and goes on to require that in the Commonwealth, *forestry activities . . . shall be a permitted use by right in all zoning districts in every municipality*. The Code defines *forestry as the management of forests and timberlands when practiced in accord with accepted silvicultural principles, through developing, cultivating, harvesting, transporting and selling trees for commercial purposes, which does not involve any land development* (buildings such as sawmills and wood products manufacturing are treated as separate uses). The zoning ordinance adopted by the Township will be consistent with the MPC by classifying forestry as a principal permitted use in all zoning districts. Reasonable standards for timbering, such as requirements for logging plans, compliance with state laws and good forest management practices, should be included, but should not be so onerous as to discourage forestry enterprises.

Mineral Extraction

The primary minerals of importance extant in the Township are sand and gravel, quarry stone, and bluestone. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code clearly recognizes mineral extraction as a lawful use. Along with other community effects, such uses can have impacts on water supply sources and are governed by state statutes that specify replacement and restoration of affected water supplies. In addition, the Planning Code now severely limits the range of development and operational standards which can be applied to mineral extraction by local municipalities, with location standards the primary tool available to the Township. Planning Code §603(I) states that *zoning ordinances shall provide for the reasonable development of minerals in each municipality*. The Code definition of minerals is: *Any aggregate or mass of mineral matter, whether or not coherent. The term includes, but is not limited to, limestone and dolomite, sand and gravel, rock and stone, earth, fill, slag, iron ore, zinc ore, vermiculite and clay, anthracite and bituminous coal, coal refuse, peat and crude oil and natural gas*. The Code, at §603(b) allows zoning

Mineral Related Businesses



ordinances to regulate mineral extraction, but only to the extent that such uses are not regulated by the state Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, the Noncoal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, and the Oil and Gas Act. These Acts regulate such things as setbacks, dust, noise, blasting, water supply effects, and reclamation.

This *Comprehensive Plan* recognizes the need to provide for the *reasonable development of minerals* in the Township, and similar to forestry, encourages mineral extraction provided such operations are conducted in appropriate locations and in accord with sound mining practices and environmental regulations. Concurrently, the Township should confirm that mineral extraction operations comply with state regulations and are located in suitable areas of the Township where impacts will be minimized. A zoning ordinance provides the most effective means of directing mineral extraction to appropriate locations and may contain standards to require coordination with the plan information and standards applied by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Other Specific Actions

The future land use plan will be implemented via the continued enforcement of the County subdivision and land development ordinance (or Township ordinance when adopted), a zoning ordinance and zoning map, and other special purpose ordinances. In addition to the specific actions noted previously the Township will ...

- Recognizing that continued area wide strong growth and development will have significant effects on Falls Township, take formal action to establish inter-municipal planning cooperation with adjoining municipalities.
- Periodically review and update the Township zoning ordinance or subdivision and land development ordinance to reflect the findings and goals and objectives of this *Comprehensive Plan*.
- Monitor the effectiveness of land use management ordinances and environmental standards and update as necessary.
- Support the efforts of the North Branch Land Trust and other organizations for land protection in the Township and region.
- Encourage the use of soil based sewage disposal methods in order to match development to the carrying capacity of the land.
- Consider initiating a surface water and groundwater monitoring program to assess current and changing water quality.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES PLAN

Community facilities and services are provided in the Township, either directly or by means of funding from other agencies, by all levels of government, and in certain cases by non-profit organizations. This element of the *Comprehensive Plan* focuses on those facilities and services which are under the direct jurisdiction of the Township. This is not to imply that Township officials should ignore the quality and adequacy of the community facilities and services provided by other entities. Instead, local officials should monitor these facilities and services to ensure that the needs of Township residents are being addressed, and the Supervisors should, via the appropriate administrative and political process, take any action necessary to effect such adequacy.

Summary of Planning Issues

- Falls Township, given its rural character, quality of life, regional location, and good land, holds great potential for growth and development.
- In addition to the historic role of providing road maintenance, townships in Pennsylvania are becoming responsible for a wider range of facilities and services including land use controls, environmental protection, police protection, water, sewer and storm water facilities, parks and recreation, and solid waste disposal.
- The low population density has resulted in very limited demand for Township community facilities and services other than road maintenance.
- More residential development will spawn more retail/service commercial development, and increased demand for municipal facilities and services.
- The Township must anticipate community facility and service needs and plan to meet these needs within available revenue sources.
- The maximum real estate tax rate without court order is fourteen mills, and the additional 7.6 mills available to the Township would generate a total of only some \$145,000 per year which leaves some flexibility for meeting any increased facilities and

services demand.

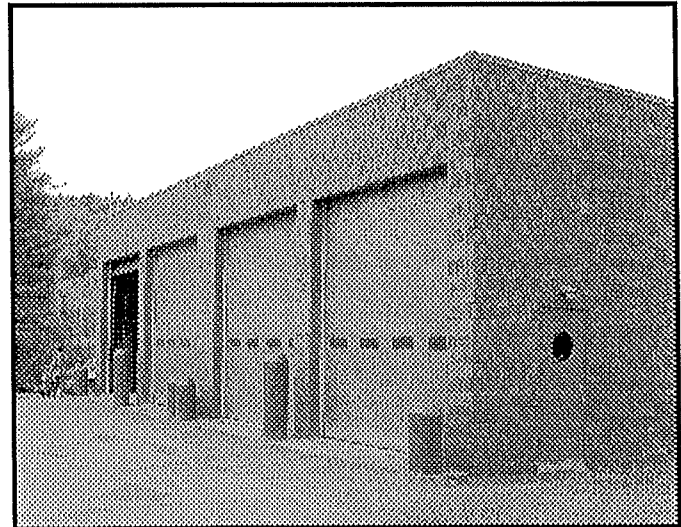
- Although response times to some areas of the Township are somewhat long, fire protection and ambulance service are adequate at this time.

Intermunicipal Cooperation

The provision of community facilities and services offers a myriad of opportunities for intermunicipal cooperation. Cooperation can result in efficiency of program operation and service delivery, and economies of scale in purchasing of supplies and materials. Falls Township officials will continue to explore and take advantage of any opportunities to improve facilities and services offered by intermunicipal cooperation. The Township is currently exploring the idea of joint building code enforcement and will likely share a zoning officer with another municipality.

Administration and Municipal Buildings

Township buildings and staff are adequate for current and near term needs. No staffing changes and no capital expenditures for buildings or land are planned. Any future building improvements should be included in a capital improvements program. (See *Capital Improvements Program* section which follows.)

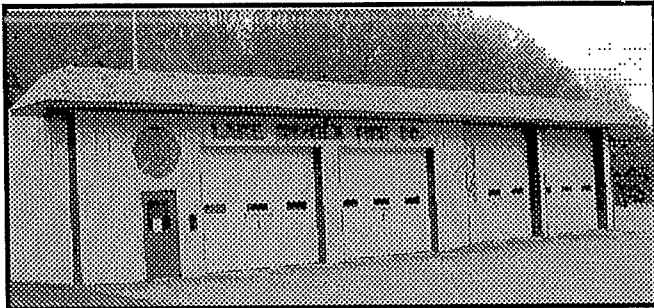


Township Maintenance Building

Road Equipment Needs

The Board of Supervisors anticipates replacing the 1990 pick-up truck in the next year at an estimated cost of \$15,000. No other major equipment purchases are

planned. The Road Supervisor should maintain an inventory of all equipment including the useful life of each item in order to anticipate replace timing and estimated costs. All capital equipment replacements or new purchases should be included in the capital improvements program. (See *Capital Improvements Program* section which follows.)



Lake Winola Fire Company in Exeter Township

Emergency Services

Fire protection, and ambulance and rescue service in the Township are provided entirely by the Lake Winola Fire Company, a volunteer organizations supported largely by the community. The Fire Company provides an invaluable service to Township residents in these times when many communities are unable to muster an adequate number of volunteers to provide emergency services. As new development occurs, the Township must address emergency services as part of the development regulation process and monitor the overall effectiveness of the area service. However, given the cost of establishing additional services, limited Township resources, and the ongoing problem of volunteer recruitment, continued reliance on the volunteer companies is the only viable and foreseeable option. The Township will continue its support of the Fire Company by providing the dedicated 0.4 mills of real estate tax, transferring the State Fireman's Relief Fund payments, and paying a share of the Company's worker's compensation insurance.

Police Protection

The current level of police protection will be continued with no new personnel planned, including contracted services to Overfield Township. Township officials must continue to monitor population growth and the incidence of crime, along with municipal financial conditions, in order to plan for any changes in the system. Although the current situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, when and if it does, the Township should explore the merits of a joint police

force and cooperating with other area municipalities on the organization of a regional police force as a cost effective approach. Funding for assessing the feasibility of such a police force and technical assistance may be available from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

Utilities

Utilities in the Township will continue to be provided by private, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission regulated, utility companies. The Wyoming County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires adequate community facilities, including utilities, for all new development, and will be enforced accordingly. A subdivision and land development ordinance adopted by any of the Township will contain similar provisions.

Water Supply

Groundwater is the source of drinking water all of the Township, and its protection is critical. Individual private wells will continue to be the primary means of water supply on larger lots. In cases where new, higher density subdivisions are proposed, privately owned community water supply meeting Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission requirements can be provided in accord with the applicable subdivision and land development ordinance.

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) §301,(b), requires comprehensive plans to contain a statement recognizing that: 1) *Lawful activities such as extraction of minerals impact water supply sources and such activities are governed by statutes regulating mineral extraction that specify replacement and restoration of water supplies affected by such activities.* 2) *Commercial agriculture production may impact water supply sources.*

The MPC also states that zoning ordinances can regulate mineral extraction and agriculture only to the extent that such zoning is not preempted or superceded by state regulation. The required water supply language appears to be a reminder to local officials of the limitation of regulating or arguing against mineral extraction and agriculture based on water supply impacts.

The Township, in order to protect groundwater quality and quantity, has identified the actions listed below:

- Adopt a well ordinance to regulate, in addition to

installation, the testing and closure of wells.

- Adopt wellhead and aquifer protection standards in a special purpose ordinance or in any zoning and subdivision ordinance which may be adopted.
- Develop a well testing program to monitor groundwater for bacterial and nitrate contamination. This could be an annual program with the Township sponsoring a community-wide well testing program where results are recorded and mapped.
- Require water conservation devices in new construction.
- In any adopted zoning ordinance or subdivision and land development ordinance . . .
 - require developers of projects involving use of large quantities of groundwater to document potential impacts and mitigation actions.
 - maximize groundwater recharge by encouraging the use of innovate stormwater management techniques.

Sewage Disposal - On-Lot

Sewage disposal is a key component of the future development and environmental quality of the Township. Without adequate sewage disposal facilities, continued development will be severely restricted and water quality can be degraded. Given the extent of suitable soils in the Township, reliance on on-lot sewage disposal should not be a limiting factor. The Township will encourage the use of soil based sewage disposal methods in order to match development to the carrying capacity of the land and avoid degradation of surface water quality. Sewage treatment systems using stream discharge will be considered as an option of last resort for new development and to correct existing sewage disposal problems where no other solution is possible. All facilities will be designed in accord with DEP regulations.

Other specific actions include:

- Continue to monitor the functioning of existing on-lot sewage disposal systems and ensure that all new systems meet DEP regulations.
- Consider adopting requirements for the

maintenance of on-lot sewage systems to include routine inspections and septic tank pumping.

- Review the Township Sewage Facilities Plans and update as needed to address current sewage disposal needs.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

Planning for solid waste disposal is a county responsibility as mandated by state statute, and local municipalities are authorized to regulate solid waste disposal by ordinance. Collection and disposal of solid waste by private haulers in the Township is adequate to meet current needs. The Township will monitor the adequacy of the private hauler solid waste collection and disposal system, and should any deficiencies be identified, take corrective measures via municipal ordinance. The County recently received a grant for four additional recycling drop-off locations and the Township will seek to have one of the four located for the convenience of Township residents.

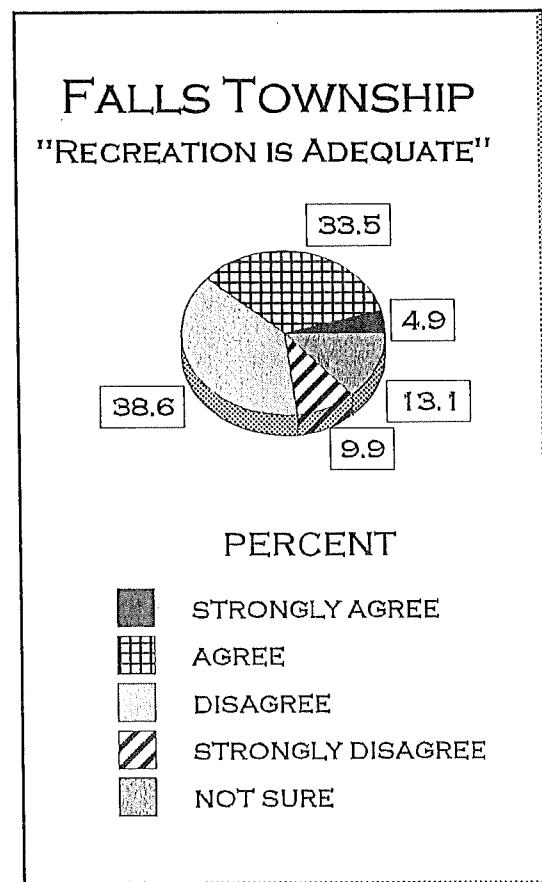
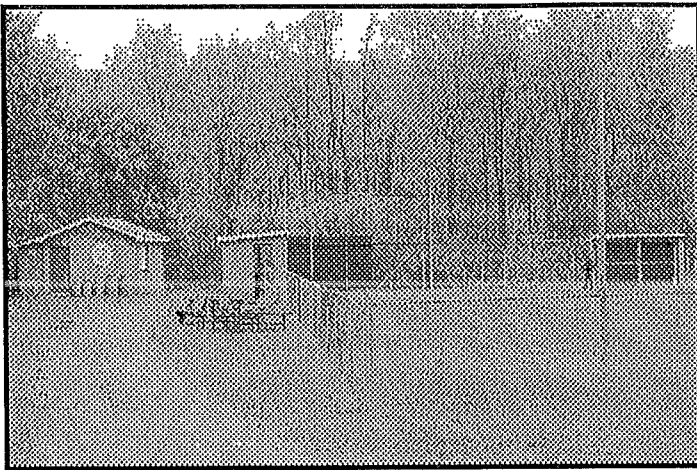


Figure Plans-3, Recreation Needs



Township Ballfield on Brides Drive

Recreation/Community Activities

The recreation facilities and programs provided by the School District and nearby municipalities have served to meet community needs. Simply put, in the past there has been no great demand for such facilities, and Township resources have been dedicated to meeting road maintenance needs. The baseball field on Brides Drive leased by the Township is the only recreation facility currently provided by the Township. However, as shown

**COMMUNITY SURVEY
RECREATION NEEDS**

# of responses	FACILITY/SERVICE
226	Township road improvements
197	increased police protection
195	agricultural/open land preservation
181	improved fire protection
176	improved ambulance service
172	zoning
166	recreation facilities, programs
48	none
18	improved Township buildings

on Figure Plans-3, Recreation Needs, the community survey revealed that forty-eight percent of the respondents believe recreation facilities in the Township are not adequate, while thirty-eight percent believe they are adequate, and thirteen percent are

uncertain. While there is certainly no immediate or critical need for the Township to actively pursue a Township sponsored recreation program, as the population grows and demands for such facilities increase, the Township should consider action.

Specific recreation facility actions when demand and resources permit include . . .

- Create a Falls Township Park and Recreation Commission to undertake a recreation and open space plan for the Township to . . .
 - focus on cooperation with neighboring municipalities and the School Districts
 - plan for recreation and open space from an area wide perspective
 - incorporate the use of the three acres owned by the Township along Sand Plant Road
 - maximize use of resources
- Ensure improvements are made in accord with an overall plan and all facilities are maintained.
- Identify potential sites for additional recreation facilities and amend the comprehensive plan to include these sites.
- Develop a funding plan to include:
 - Use of fees assessed for residential development under the subdivision and land development ordinance.
 - Solicitation of private contributions.
 - Grants.
 - Direct municipal contributions.
 - A special fund for land acquisition and capital improvements.
- Obtain technical assistance from the County and State agencies.
- Show planned recreation facilities on a Township Official Map to ensure that the land can be acquired by the Township. (See later *Official Map* section.)
- Cooperate with area wide community recreation organizations to improve recreation facilities and programs.

Recreation and the Planning Code

Under the authority granted by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Section 503(1.1), local municipalities can require the dedication of land for public use, and upon agreement of the developer, the construction of recreation facilities or the payment of fees in lieu thereof by developers for the construction and maintenance of recreation facilities accessible to the residents of the proposed residential development. Inclusion of this requirement in the subdivision and land development ordinance should be considered by each Township. Fees can be assessed on a per lot basis for subdivisions; and on a per unit basis for any mobile home park or multi-family dwelling. A formal recreation plan must be adopted and the subdivision and land development ordinance must also establish standards to ensure that recreation areas and facilities are:

- Consistent with the municipal comprehensive plan.
- Suitable for active and passive recreational activities.
- Reasonably accessible to all residents of the municipality with consideration given to all age groups.
- Provided with adequate vehicular access and parking and other necessary infrastructure and facilities.
- Developed in accord with an overall site plan intended to preserve to the greatest extent practical, natural vegetation and groves, lakes, ponds and waterways, scenic points, historic sites and structures, community landmarks, and other community assets.

Historic Resources

According to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) no structures in Falls Township are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see sidebar) and none have been identified which are eligible for the Register. The lack of designated or eligible structures does not mean that the Township does not have a rich history. Many of the older homes and buildings in the Township, along with the agricultural landscape itself, add to the historic fabric of the community. The following actions can be taken to preserve the history and historic structures:

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission manages the National Register of Historic Places for Pennsylvania. National Register properties are distinguished by having been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. These criteria recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have contributed to the history and heritage of the United States and are designed to help state and local governments, federal agencies, and others identify significant historic and archeological properties worthy of preservation and of consideration in planning and development decisions.

Listing in the National Register, however, does not interfere with a private property owner's right to alter, manage or dispose of property. It often changes the way communities perceive their historic resources and gives credibility to efforts to preserve these resources as irreplaceable parts of our communities.

Listing in the National Register contributes to preserving historic properties in a number of ways:

- Recognition that a property is of significance to the nation, the state, or the community.
- Consideration in the planning for federal or federally assisted projects.
- Eligibility for federal tax benefits.
- Qualification for federal assistance for historic preservation, when funds are available.

- Encourage the creation of a Township Historical Society to focus attention on historic preservation and work on preservation. The Society would . . .
 - Complete an historical and architectural history of the Township.
 - Work toward the inclusion of qualifying structures on the National Register.
 - Conduct an inventory of historic resources in the Township to include Indian sites, buildings, roads, railroads, stone walls, etc.

- Consider the development of a local historic register program.
- Incorporate the preservation of historic resources in conservation design for residential development as part of any zoning ordinance.
- Allow home occupations and bed and breakfasts in all zoning districts as a means of encouraging productive use of historic structures which tend to be larger and more difficult to maintain.

Community Facilities for New Development

Problems with community facilities can stem from inadequate requirements for new developments. Substandard roads, poor stormwater control, and lots with no soil suitable for sewage disposal are prime examples. The subdivision and land development ordinance enables the municipality to require adequate community facilities and long term maintenance for new development. It is vital that the applicable subdivision ordinance is diligently enforced and updated periodically to maintain adequate standards. The Township should also adopt regulations to govern dedication of roads, whereby roads are constructed to specified standards and then are accepted by the Township for public use.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Summary of Planning Issues

- Traffic on Routes 92 and 307, and the other roads in the Township will continue to increase as the population in the Township and region grows.
- Despite traffic increases, the level-of-service (ability to carry traffic) of all roads in the Township is not expected to decline over the next ten to fifteen years to levels where congestion and delays will be a problem.
- Township roads are largely adequate to meet current and expected volumes of traffic for the next ten to fifteen years, but continued maintenance should be a priority.
- Available and potential Township revenues will limit the amount of major road improvements.
- Diligent re-paving, routine maintenance, and shoulder widening are the major concerns for state roads.

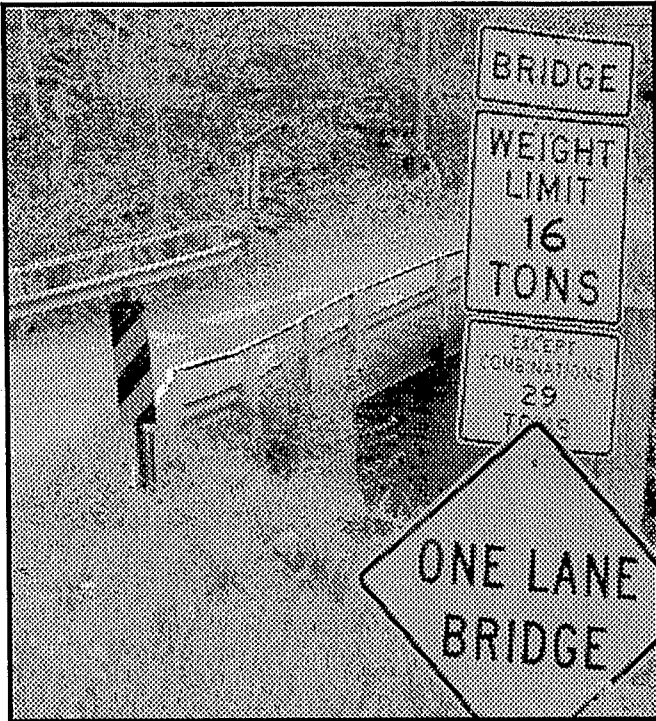
State Roads

Given the limited availability of state and federal funds for the construction and reconstruction of state roads, this *Comprehensive Plan* takes a more practical position with regard to major road improvements. The construction of new state roads and major realignment or reconstruction of state roads is not likely in the Township in the near term. Township officials have no direct control over the improvement of state roads.

However, Township officials should focus attention on the state road and intersection improvement needs identified by this *Plan* and work with the Wyoming County Planning Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to include these projects on any available state or federal programs to effect their construction.

Township Roads and Bridges

With the exception of new roads constructed by developers as part of residential subdivisions, no new local road construction in the Township is anticipated. Township Supervisors will focus on the maintenance and improvement of existing Township roads, and monitor the need and ability to correct specific width and alignment problems which would require reconstruction as traffic volumes dictate and available funds allow. The major maintenance concern is providing good drainage for all Township roads along with normal maintenance. Based on this policy, the Township Supervisors will use the *Road Inventory and Evaluation Form* included in the Appendix along with projected Township revenues, to plan for the improvement of Township roads over the next five to ten years within the normal budget process, and include any reconstruction projects in a capital improvements program. The Township owns and maintains four bridges with the bridge on Stone Ridge Road in need of replacement and, as one the highest project priorities, it should be included in the capital improvements program. (See following *Capital Improvements Program* section.) The Board of Supervisors has identified the following improvement projects:

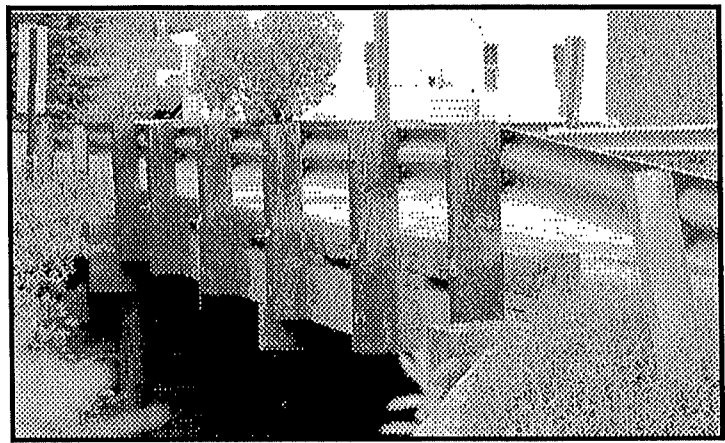


Stone Ridge Road Bridge

- Township Bridge on Stone Ridge Road, replace.
- Pave roads as funding permits

Specific Road and Intersection Improvement Actions:

- Participate in the PennDOT Customer Advisory Board to communicate concerns to PennDOT.
- Work with adjoining municipalities to create a Road Task Force to meet regularly with Wyoming County and PennDOT officials to discuss highway improvement needs and prioritize and promote specific improvement projects.
- Work with local legislators, the County and PennDOT to schedule studies to identify improvements to correct identified road and intersection deficiencies
- Complete and update annually a detailed Township road inventory and evaluation (see Appendix for form) to identify needs and develop an improvements schedule within normal budgetary process, and to identify potential capital projects.
- Maintain an up-to-date inventory of Township road maintenance equipment as a means of planning for



Timber Bridge on Brides Drive – 99-Year Warranty

replacement and inclusion the capital improvements program.

- Require the issuance of a highway occupancy permit by the Township for any access or drainage work along Township roads.

Subdivision Roads

New road construction in the Township is associated with residential development. The subdivision and land development ordinance sets standards for road layout, design, and construction. Roads may be owned and maintained by private communities, or if a road is constructed to the higher standards of the road dedication ordinance it may be accepted by the Township for general public use. Dedicated roads are then added to Pennsylvania Liquid Fuels Program reimbursement list and are owned and maintained by the Township. Specific actions for new subdivision roads include:

- Maintain an up-to-date road ordinance setting standards for construction of public roads and establishing procedures for dedication to the public.
- Maintain an up-to-date road occupancy ordinance setting standards for driveway access to Township roads and stormwater and utility improvements within the Township road right-of-way.
- Review road construction standards to ensure adequacy for public safety and eliminate excessive requirements to minimize the consumption of resources for construction and long term maintenance.

Airports, Railroads, and Public Transportation

Given the regional nature of airport and railroad development and support, this *Comprehensive Plan* calls for no specific action to be taken by the Township

with regard to air and rail service. Direct Township provision of public transportation is not feasible and no action is anticipated other than participation in regional transportation planning efforts.

HOUSING PLAN

Municipalities Planning Code Requirements

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) addresses housing from the perspective of ensuring affordable housing for families of all income levels. In terms of planning, MPC Section 301 requires comprehensive plans to include an element *to meet the housing needs of present residents and of those individuals and families anticipated to reside in the municipality, which may include conservation of presently sound housing, rehabilitation of housing in declining neighborhoods and the accommodation of expected new housing in different dwelling types and at appropriate densities for households of all income levels.*

In terms of land use management as effected by zoning, MPC Section 604 requires zoning ordinances to *provide for the use of land within the municipality for residential housing of various dwelling types encompassing all basic forms of housing, including single-family and two-family dwellings, and a reasonable range of multifamily dwellings in various arrangements, mobile homes and mobile home parks, provided, however, that no zoning ordinance shall be deemed invalid for the failure to provide for any other specific dwelling type.*

Court decisions have upheld this zoning provision of the MPC establishing a *fair share* rule which considers the percentages of land available for a given type of housing, current population growth and pressures within the municipality and surrounding region, and the amount of undeveloped land in a community. The Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development publication titled, *Reducing Land Use Barriers to Affordable Housing, Fourth Edition, August 2001*, lists a number of barriers to affordable housing associated with land use regulations, including among others:

- insufficient amount of land zoned for medium and high density residential development
- excessive lot frontage and setback requirements

which dictate greater lot sizes

- excessive street widths and construction standards unrelated to expected traffic volumes
- lack of provisions for cluster design and planned residential development
- limitations on the use of mobile homes and manufactured homes
- plan review and administrative delays

Housing Affordability

Municipalities throughout the Country have been addressing housing issues for many years, and the Summer 2000 *Affordable Housing Study* for Jacksonville Florida provides a good description of how affordable housing is assessed. The *American Dream* has long been associated with the possibility of owning one's home. National housing-market surveys report that the home ownership rate reached a peak in the late 1990s—almost sixty-seven percent in 1999—due mainly to a robust economy with record levels of low unemployment and low interest rates. However, while this unprecedented economic expansion enabled many Americans to purchase their own homes, it has pushed housing prices and rental rates higher, preventing many other households, with insufficient incomes, from either becoming homeowners or finding affordable, safe, and decent rental housing. Housing affordability is a relative concept—both rich and poor can experience difficulty in affording housing, depending on how much they spend toward housing costs. Housing in one community with a relatively high median income can be quite expensive but *affordable* compared to housing in another community with a relatively low median income.

Federal governmental guidelines, primarily those established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), define *affordable* housing as costing no more than thirty percent of a household's gross monthly income—referred to here as the 30

TABLE PLANS-1 – HOUSING DATA, 2000 CENSUS			
	Falls Township	Wyoming Co	PA
% Single- family	77.3%	71.8%	55.9%
% Duplex	1.2%	1.4%	17.9%
% Mobile Homes, R.V's	15.1%	17.3%	5.0%
% Multi-family	6.4%	9.5%	21.1%
Median Housing Value	\$95,300	\$93,900	\$97,000
Median Hsehold Income	\$35,571	\$36,365	\$40,106
Median Monthly Gross Rent	\$401	\$470	\$531
% Hsehlds with rent >30% of Income	17.4%	30.5%	35.5%
Median Monthly Owner Costs with Mortgage	\$929	\$931	\$1,010
% Owner Hsehlds home exp >30% of Income	21.6%	23.1%	22.8%

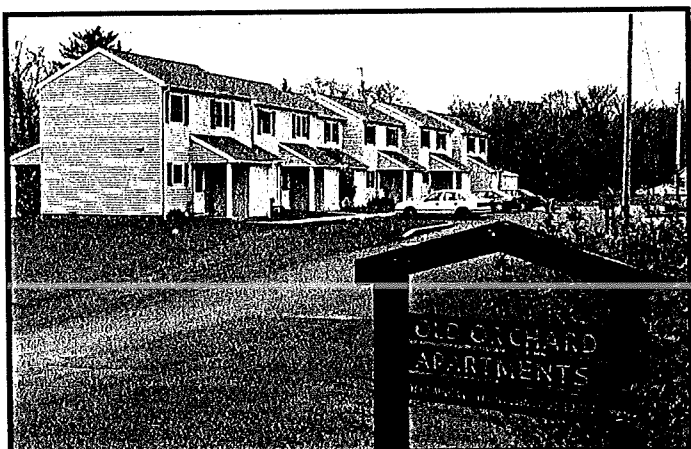
percent rule. The income counted is derived from all wages earned by people fifteen and older in the household. For homeowners, *affordability* is generally defined as owning a house with a value equal to slightly more than twice the household's annual income. The homeowner costs counted typically include a mortgage payment (principal, interest, taxes, and insurance) and utilities. For renters, the costs usually include contract rent and utilities. The *30 percent rule* leaves seventy percent for food, clothing, health care, child care, transportation to work, and other basic expenses. Because of increasing housing costs, many lower income Americans are forced to make tradeoffs and go without necessities. Tenants experiencing unexpected emergencies typically fall behind in their rent and face eviction. If not assisted, they may become homeless.

conducted by the Pennsylvania Housing Financing Agency, defined *affordable* as requiring less than thirty percent of gross monthly income for rent or less than twenty-eight percent for a mortgage and other related housing costs. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), guidelines continue to define *affordable housing* as costing no more than thirty percent of a household's gross monthly income.

Table Plans-1, Housing Data and Table Plans-2, Income Data, includes information for the Township, the County and the State to provide an indication of the affordability of housing in Falls Township. The types of housing units available in the Township are one indication of affordable housing availability. Although the proportion of multi-family dwelling units in the Township is low, the proportion of mobile homes is high when compared to the State, suggesting the availability of more affordable housing. Nevertheless there are significant proportions of home owning households and renting households that have housing costs which exceed thirty percent of household income, and the proportion of lower income households is higher in the Township than in the County and State. Sixty-five percent of the community survey respondents agreed that adequate and affordable housing is available to meet resident needs, twenty-one percent disagreed and fourteen percent were uncertain. Elderly, one-family, and middle income housing were cited as most needed.

TABLE PLANS-2 INCOME DATA, 1990 CENSUS			
	% of households with income		
	<\$15,000	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999
Falls Twp	16.2%	15.5%	17.2%
Wyoming Co	10.2%	12.5%	15.2%
PA	16.7%	13.8%	13.3%

Similarly, *Pennsylvania Housing*, a 1988 study



Wyoming County Housing Authority Apartments

Regional Perspective

Local municipalities must also recognize that housing needs cannot be addressed entirely at the local level. The Township must look to the County Housing Authority and their contacts with private affordable housing organizations, for assistance and to ensure residents' access to federally funded housing development, rent assistance and housing rehabilitation programs.

Specific Housing Actions

- Assess any proposed land use controls in terms of barriers to affordable housing and make necessary adjustments based on the need for affordable housing.

- Adopt standards to ensure that higher density development is directed to identified growth areas served by an adequate water supply, sewage disposal system, and other improvements.
- Consider the use of *conservation design* development, planned residential development, and development incentives such as density bonuses as a means of providing more affordable housing.
- Review Township land use controls in terms of standards not directly linked to public health and safety which increase housing costs.
- Monitor the progress of the adoption of the state building code, carefully evaluate enforcement options, and choose the one best suited to the Township.
- Support the housing recommendations of the County Housing Authority relative to subsidized housing programs for low and moderate income families and assure area residents receive fair consideration for available programs.
- Work with the County to develop a housing rehabilitation program for eligible residents.
- Work with the County Housing Authority to address the needs of low-income and elderly households in the Township by investigating the development of such subsidized housing projects.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

Along with land use control ordinances, a formal capital improvements program (CIP) is a primary tool for the implementation of a comprehensive plan. Although not legally binding, the capital improvements program includes and establishes a time frame for the long-term capital expenditures planned by a municipality. A capital expenditure may be defined as an outlay of municipal funds to purchase, improve or construct a piece of equipment or a facility that is expected to provide service over a long period of time. Typically, a capital expenditure is relatively large when compared to normal operating expenditures included in the budget. Examples include, the construction of or major improvements to buildings, land acquisition, recreation facilities, highway improvements, and

vehicle purchases. In short, the CIP is a budgeting device to guide the allocation of non-operating funds, and to avoid the unexpected mid-year expenditure of large sums.

The Practice of Local Government Planning, published by the International City Management Association, identifies the following benefits of an effective CIP:

- Ensures that plans for community facilities are accomplished.
- Allows improvement proposals to be evaluated against established policies.
- Enables the scheduling of improvements requiring

TABLE PLANS-3 SAMPLE FUND PROJECTION AND CAPITAL BUDGET						
GENERAL FUND PROJECTION	YEAR					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Projected general fund revenue	\$200,000	\$210,000	\$225,000	\$250,000	\$260,000	\$275,000
Projected general fund expenditures	\$160,000	\$168,000	\$175,000	\$205,000	\$215,000	\$250,000
Projected Net Funds Available	\$40,000	\$42,000	\$50,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$25,000
CAPITAL BUDGET						
Township Park - land acquisition, engineering, construction, and debt service. \$300,000 over 20 years beginning in 2003	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Road Improvement - right-of-way acquisition, engineering, construction, and debt service. \$200,000 over 10 years beginning in 2005.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Total New Capital Expenditures	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Net New Financing Required* <u>Equals</u> Total New Capital Expenditures <u>Minus</u> Projected Net Funds Available	(\$40,000)	(\$27,000)	(\$35,000)	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	\$10,000
* Parentheses indicate available funds exceed new capital expenditures.						

- more than one year to construct.
- Provides the opportunity for the purchase of needed land before costs increase.
- Encourages long range financial planning and management.
- Provides for sensible scheduling of improvements.
- Offers the opportunity for public participation in decision making.
- Leads to improved overall municipal management.

In developing a CIP a municipality must prioritize its capital needs based on the planning process findings, and the CIP establishes commitment for public investment in accord with the specific goals and objectives included in the comprehensive plan. *The Practice of Local Government Planning* reports one method is for a community to divide its needs into four categories: essential, desirable, acceptable, and deferrable. In prioritizing needs, the Township must also consider the revenue side of the equation. Needed capital expenditure can only be made by identifying anticipated revenues in terms of other operating

expenditures. In short, the costs of scheduled capital expenditures are evaluated in terms of acquiring the necessary revenue to fund the improvements. In any case, the CIP is by necessity an on-going process which must be reevaluated annually, with a planning period of six years being typical.

A variety of CIP techniques are available and the process can be very complex in larger municipalities. A more simplified approach is certainly more appropriate for Falls Township where capital needs are more manageable. A sample is provided in Table Plans-3, Sample Fund Projection and Capital Budget. In any case, the costs of operation and maintenance of new facilities and equipment must also be considered for inclusion in annual budgets. The principal anticipated direct Township capital expenditures identified by this *Plan* are outlined below.

- Essential - replace Township bridge on Stone Ridge Road
- Desirable - replace pick-up truck
- Deferrable - park and recreation facilities

OFFICIAL MAP

Article IV of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code grants the authority to municipalities to adopt an official map. The official map shows the location of areas which the municipality has identified as necessary for future public streets, recreation areas, and other public grounds. By showing the area on the official map the municipality puts the landowner on notice that the property has been reserved for future taking for a public facility.

The municipality may refuse to issue a permit for any building or development on the designated parcel; however, the municipality has one year to purchase the property at fair market value upon notice by the owner of intended development. This little used land use control tool can be invaluable for minimizing the cost of public improvements, and the Township should carefully consider its use as public improvement projects are identified.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION

A recurring point in this *Comprehensive Plan* is the need for regional planning and intermunicipal cooperation. Given the potential population and housing growth and associated commercial development anticipated in Falls Township and the potential negative effects on the area's rural character, the necessity of intermunicipal cooperation for regional planning is clear. The findings of this *Comprehensive Plan* clearly demonstrate that most issues facing the Township are area wide issues. Each municipality alone cannot adequately address the multitude of issues facing the area. Highway network planning, water supply, sewage disposal, police protection, emergency services, housing, recreation and most other community issues transcend municipal boundaries and can best be addressed from a regional perspective. In order to improve and expand cooperation, it is vital that the

Township take a role in promoting and organizing regional cooperation. For example, such cooperation could serve to focus attention on recreation facility needs in the area and begin to develop the framework to address the issues. Such cooperation could lead to the formation of a Council of Governments, which in addition to facilitating area-wide planning, could serve to improve the administration and fiscal condition of participating municipalities via . . .

- joint materials purchasing
- equipment sharing
- joint code enforcement
- sharing recreation facilities
- winter road maintenance agreements with adjoining townships to reduce travel time
- cooperative zoning

PLANNING PROCESS AND INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG PLAN ELEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Framework for the Future

This *Comprehensive Plan* provides a framework for the future growth and development of the Falls Township. The four principal elements of the *Plan* include:

- Land Use, Natural Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection*
- Community Facilities and Services*
- Transportation*
- Housing*

Although the *Plan* is comprised of these four separate elements, each element, and, in fact, each planning and

development action taken by a public body or private individual, is inextricably interrelated with other plan elements and planning and development actions. For example, the development of housing implementation strategies cannot be accomplished without taking into account land use controls and economic development trends. Economic development strategies cannot be formulated without considering land use controls and transportation needs. Community facilities and services planning requires an assessment of future development, transportation needs, and housing affordability. In most cases, these types of interrelationships and implementation strategies are discussed in the various comprehensive plan elements.

Planning Process

A theme consistent throughout all elements of this *Comprehensive Plan* is the concept of *process*. The published comprehensive plan document represents only the first step of what should evolve into an on-going planning process. If this *process* frame of mind is not firmly established, local officials, businessmen, land developers, and citizens, all players in the community growth and development arena, will have little chance of achieving the sustainable growth vital to the planning area's social, economic and environmental future. This process will also allow the recognition of the shifting interrelationships of community growth and development decisions vital to the success of long-term planning efforts.

Conservation of Community Character

Another key theme of this *Plan* is the conservation of area's rural-residential character and rural working landscape. All public and private actions must be assessed in terms of its effect on the community's character. For example, residential development standards in the normal pattern of large lots will fragment remaining agricultural lands and forest land. The alternative, conservation design or planned residential development provides the opportunity to conserve open land. The conundrum of central sewage disposal provides another good example of planning interrelationships. This community facility is often the only means of correcting sewage disposal problems yet can stimulate development of more land at higher population densities. Increases in population would trigger the need for improved or new community facilities and services such as schools and police protection. In short, without careful analysis, one *implementation action* taken by a Township can have unexpected and often undesirable effects.

To achieve the Township's growth and development goals and to establish the community's planning process for the future, this *Plan* makes the following overall recommendations:

1. Evaluate all public and private actions with the goal of preserving agriculture, forestry, and open land as a viable part of the community.
2. Direct development away from environmentally sensitive areas and conserve large blocks of open land.

3. Identify areas for growth within and adjacent to existing developed areas.
4. Require adequate community facilities for new development.
5. Promote the idea of growth management - an effort to manage the location, type, and timing of future growth.
6. Encourage increased local, inter-municipal, and regional cooperation for comprehensive planning and land use control implementation; and overall local municipal administration and management.
7. Encourage a mix of business and commercial development in appropriate locations in the Township.
8. Encourage a variety of housing types.

Community Vision

This *Comprehensive Plan* outlines a vision for Falls Township's future and recommends a course of action to achieve growth and development goals. However, the effective implementation of the *Plan* is necessary to make the planning program a success. Many of the resources, programs and techniques available for implementing the comprehensive plan are not within the direct control of local government. For example, although zoning and subdivision ordinances, the chief tools for land use control and land use plan implementation, are the purview of local governments, the funding, construction and maintenance of major roads and improvements have historically been the responsibility of the state and federal governments. The implementation of the *Plan* and the creation of an on-going planning process, must be a community-wide effort fostered by Township officials.

Community Involvement

It is obvious that the implementation of the *Comprehensive* will require broad-based community involvement and coordination and cooperation among various federal, state, and local agencies. Plan implementation will require both a commitment of financial resources and human resources. The human resources can include both volunteer and paid staff and professional assistance. Many of the recommendations identified in the *Plan* could require increased staff support and demand for volunteer services.

Implementation Strategies

A variety of implementation strategies have been recommended in this *Plan* and are oriented to developing long-term policies for growth management, strengthening the Township's land use control programs, anticipating capital improvement needs and facilitating inter-governmental cooperation to accomplish local and regional goals. The key implementation strategies included in this *Plan* include:

1. Annual review of this *Plan* to evaluate new development and regional issues which warrant plan changes.
2. Development of short-term and long-term capital improvements program to prioritize needed improvements and allocate funds to those improvements; with annual progress evaluations and adjustments in capital project timing and capital equipment purchases.
3. Continuing education about land use management for local officials and the public via seminars and workshops.
4. Adopting land use management ordinances, and on-going updating of the ordinances, to effect the land use plan, provide environmental protection, preserve agriculture, maintain rural character, and achieve community facilities and services and housing objectives.
5. Focusing limited Township resources on those community facilities and services which are most critical to meet resident needs.
6. Monitoring community facilities and services provided by the county, state, and federal government to ensure such services are adequate and the Township are obtaining their *fair share*.
7. Participating in all county, state and federal entitlement and grant funding programs, not solely for the sake of participation, but only if such programs can be sensibly used to achieve valid community development objectives.
8. Making a specific finding as to relationship to this *Plan* for all subdivisions and land development proposals.

By focusing the available resources on implementation of the this *Plan*, and the continuance of the *planning process* with an eye to preserving agriculture and open land, Falls Township can achieve sustainable growth and development into the future and maintain its quality of life.

BACKGROUND STUDIES

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Regional Location

Falls Township lies in the southeast corner of Wyoming County within easy access to the greater Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan areas. The Susquehanna River forms the western boundary of the Township and Lackawanna County forms the eastern boundary. In Wyoming County, Eaton, Northmoreland and Exeter Townships lie west beyond the River and Tunkhannock and Overfield Townships lie to the north. Two Lackawanna County Townships, West Abington and Newton lie to the east. Route 92 parallels the Susquehanna River connecting the Township to Tunkhannock Borough, the Wyoming County Seat, to the northwest, and to the southeast, Pittston and Interstates 81 and 476. Route 307 passes generally east and west through the northeast section of the Township, providing connection to the *Abingtons*, and

the City of Scranton in Lackawanna County, and Interstates 81 and 476. A railroad freight line parallels the Susquehanna River through Falls Township and Wyoming County, connecting the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area with Towanda and points north in New York. The line is operated by the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad to the south of Mehoopany and by the Norfolk Southern Railway Company to the north. In short, the Township has easy access to all of Northeastern Pennsylvania and the greater region, and this access is one factor in the recent changes occurring in the community, and will continue to play a key role in future growth and development. (See Figure 1-1, Regional Location Map.)

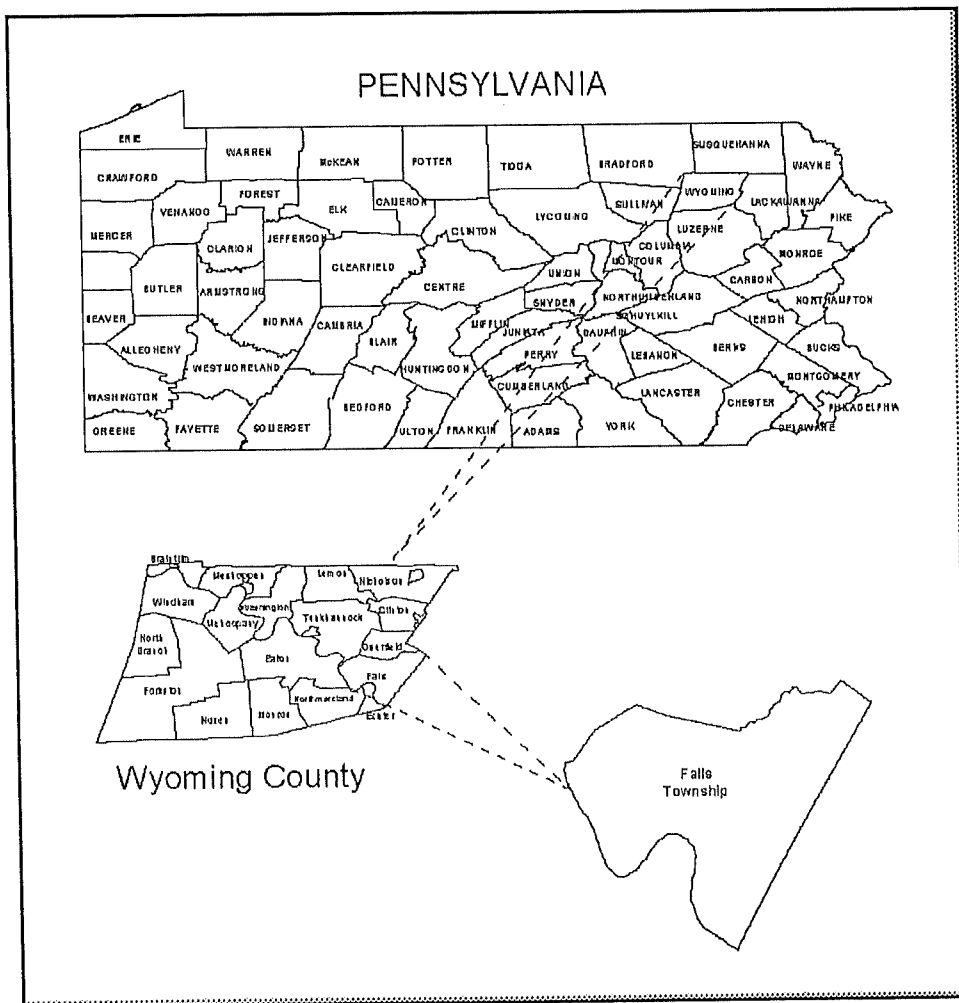


Figure I-1 Regional Location Map

General Characteristics

A community's character evolves from, and is defined by, a variety of interrelated factors. Falls Township's regional location, physical characteristics (geology, topography, soils), early settlement patterns, the area transportation network and the regional economy have been synthesized into the existing community character of the Township and context in Wyoming County and the larger region. Falls Township can best be characterized as a rural, largely bedroom community where agriculture has lost some of its economic importance, yet open land remains a predominate feature of the landscape. However, residential development is becoming more important as evidenced by population increases since 1970. Single-family dwellings are the most numerous types of dwellings along with a number of mobile homes. Relatively few two-family and multi-family dwellings are found in the Township, with two Wyoming County Housing Authority projects representing some thirty multi-family dwelling units. Residential development is found on individual lots divided from larger parcels and in historic village centers such as Falls and Mill City. Commercial development is largely retail/service in nature and is situated primarily along Route 307 in the vicinity of Mill City. Few dairy farms continue to operate in the Township, with the better land used for field and forage crops. Forest is the predominate land cover and timbering remains an important part of the local economy.

The Township is sparsely populated, but with a population density higher than many other Townships in Wyoming County. (See Table IV-3 for details.) The 2000 Census reported 2,050 permanent residents in the 21-square mile area, or ninety-six persons per square mile, compared to the county-wide population density of seventy persons per square mile and Tunkhannock Borough's 2,125. The Township's population decreased by about sixty persons between 1990 and 2000, or 2.8 percent while the number of housing units increased by sixty-five, or 9.3 percent. Given the attractive rural character of the Township and its regional location, the population decrease is somewhat surprising, and the situation can change quickly as the area is *discovered* by individuals and families in nearby urban centers or if some large development or event changes the regional perspective. For example, the area population increased most dramatically between 1970 and 1980 as a result of the development of the Proctor

and Gamble paper mill, and the relocation from the Wilkes-Barre area residents affected by the 1972 Agnes Flood. Population growth would certainly change the rural character of the Township by fragmenting agricultural lands and increasing demand for community facilities and services. On the other hand, economic stagnation or decline brings other planning issues such as the most efficient use of limited financial resources and the need for business development and job creation. In either case, careful planning and local municipal cooperation is important to the future of the area.

Early Development History

The following items are intended to provide an overview and the flavor of the early development history of Wyoming County and Falls Township.

County Background

- On April 4, 1842, the Pennsylvania Legislature created Wyoming County from the northern part of Luzerne County, which was created out of parts of Northumberland and Northampton Counties in 1786.
- The name Wyoming, honoring the Valley, is derived from an Indian word meaning *extensive meadows*.¹
- *The first courthouse and jail were erected in 1843, with funds (about \$5,000) raised by subscription among the citizens of Tunkhannock and vicinity. They were brick structures -- the first brick buildings erected in the borough. The courthouse was forty feet square, two stories in height.*²
- In 1852 the first boat passed through the North Branch Canal in Wyoming County,³ connecting

¹Historical Marker, Pennsylvania and Historical Museum Commission.

²*Wyoming County, 1842-1992, Sesquicentennial, A Look Back*, The Wyoming County Sesquicentennial Committee and the Wyoming County Historical Society, 1992., p. 1.

³*Ibid.*, p.1

Northumberland, PA and Sayre, NY.⁴

- The Tunkhannock Toll Bridge Company's 800-foot covered bridge across the Susquehanna River was destroyed by a gale when under construction in 1854, and completion took until 1857. An ice flood carried two spans of the bridge down river in 1865, three years were required to complete repairs, and more flood damage occurred seven years later.⁵
- The Wyoming County Agricultural Society was organized about 1855, it ceased to exist after three years but was reorganized in 1876, and conducted for many years a fair on twenty-one acres of land in Eaton Township leased from S.J. Harding.⁶
- *During 1868 the Lehigh Valley Railroad was completed to a point a mile below the Borough of Tunkhannock the telegraph line of the road was completed to this point during the presidential election in that year, and the news of the result was transmitted on that line.*⁷
- The Lehigh Valley Railroad Bridge across Tunkhannock Creek was completed in 1870 making connection to Waverly, NY,⁸ and by 1890 the Railroad was using double track in the County.⁹
- The first in the County, Wyoming Grange in Braintrim Township was formed in early 1874 as a family organization for the *better education of the farmer and his family* and Oriental Grange #165 in Falls Township was organized on March 16, 1874,

⁴*The Historical Development of Wyoming County*, Northern Tier Regional Planning Commission, 1968.

⁵*Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania - 205 Years of Progress, Daughters of the American Revolution, Tunkhannock Chapter, undated.*

⁶*Wyoming County, 1842-1992, Sesquicentennial, A Look Back*, p. 4.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.1.

⁸*Ibid.*, p.3.

⁹*The Historical Development of Wyoming County.*

with twenty-three members¹⁰

Falls Township

- Named for the waterfalls on Buttermilk Creek, Falls Township was formed from Tunkhannock Township in 1824.¹¹
- *One of the earliest settlers was Matthew Sherwood who moved to the area in 1789 with his wife and seven children.*
- Other early settlers included Fitch, Osterhout, Meredith, Sickler, Morehouse, Lockwood, Jones, Comstock, Williams, Joslin, Delevan, Taylor, Daily, Townsend, and Harris.
- *By the late 1700's and early 1800's, grist mills, sawmills, stores, distilleries and a tavern had been opened in the town of Falls.*
- *The first school was built on Post Hill in 1811.*
- While the North Branch Canal was operating, seven stores, two taverns, a tannery, grist mill, saw mill, and many other businesses were located in Falls.
- By 1863, only one store and one tavern remained.

The construction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1868 marked a period of prosperity for Falls Township. *Through the 1920's and early 1930's, rail transportation remained as the major mode of transportation for the Falls area.*

- *Falls became the mail distribution center for the outlying areas.*
- *A hotel, which stood until the early 1900's when it was consumed by fire, was built to cater to the needs of overnight travelers.*

¹⁰*Wyoming County, 1842-1992, Sesquicentennial, A Look Back*, p. 17.

¹¹*Wyoming County, 1842-1992, Sesquicentennial, A Look Back*, The Wyoming County Sesquicentennial Committee and the Wyoming County Historical Society, 1992, p. 41.

TOWNSHIP AND BOROUGH HISTORIES, WYOMING COUNTY.

17 Original Townships of Westmoreland town, Conn. (1782)

Salem	Wilkes-Barre	Springfield
Huntington	Pittston	Claverack
Newport	Providence	Ulster
Bedford	Exeter	
Plymouth	Northmoreland	
Hanover	Putnam	
Kingston	Braintrim	

Luzerne County, 11 Original Townships (1790)

Tioga	Wilkes-Barre	Kingston
Wyalusing	Hanover	Plymouth
Tunkhannock	Newport	Salem
Lackawank	Exeter	

Wyoming County (1842)

This is a survey of documentation to establish the formation dates of Wyoming County townships. *Research done Aug. 1987 by Jean Brewer and Paula Radwanski in Luzerne and Wyoming County Courthouses.*

BRAINTRIM

One of the original three set off from the parent county of Luzerne on 4 April 1842.

Luzerne County Deed Book 1 page 321, Frederick Vanderlip purchased in Braintrim Township — deed dated 3 January 1791.

Luzerne County Deed Book 3 page 279, Thomas Wigton purchased in Braintrim Township — 1794.

CLINTON

Taken from Wyoming County Road Docket 1 page 23, Pet. the 23 May 1843 and confirmed 20 Feb. 1844.

EATON

Taken from Tunkhannock. First tax asses. 20 Dec. 1817.

Luzerne County Deed Book 16 page 458 shows 22 Dec. 1815 that it was still Tunkhannock.

EXETER

One of the original townships or Northmoreland Township.

Luzerne County Deed Book 4 page 299, 1 Sept. 1786, Peter Harris bought land in Exeter Twp. recorded 16 Aug. 1796.

FALLS

Taken from Tunkhannock and Exeter Townships.

Pet. 1 Monday January 1822, continued until Nov. session 1823, confirmed Jan. session 1824, taken from Road Docket of Luzerne Co. Vol. 1.

FORKSTON

Taken from Windham which had originally been Braintrim.

Pet. Wyoming Co. Road Docket Vol. 1 page 26, 3 May 1844, confirmed 4 Oct. 1844.

LEMON

Taken from Tunkhannock Township.

Road Docket of Wyoming County Vol. 1 page 81, Pet. 3 Feb. 1847, confirmed 2 March 1847.

MEHOOPANY

Taken from Windham which had originally been Braintrim.

Wyoming County Road Docket Vol. 1 page 26, Pet. 3 May 1844, confirmed 4 Oct. 1844.

MESHOPPEN

Taken from Braintrim and Washington, Washington having been originally part of Braintrim and Tunkhannock.

Wyoming County Road Docket Vol. 1 page 250, Pet. 3 Sept. 1853, confirmed 3 Nov. 1853.

MONROE

Taken from original Northmoreland (Exeter).

Tax Asses. from Wyoming County is the 30 March 1833 (tax year 1832)

NICHOLSON

Taken from Tioga and Wyalusing, two of the eleven original townships of Luzerne County.

Original Pet. dated Thornbottom, April 1794.

Between 1795 and 1813 was divided into four new townships that are in Susquehanna County today.

Luzerne County Road Docket Vol. 1 page 200. Pet. for road in Nicholson Township August session 1795.

NORTH BRANCH

Taken from Forkston which was part of the original Braintrim.

Road Docket of Wyoming County Vol. 1 page 268. Pet. 26 Feb. 1856, confirmed 20 April 1857.

NORTHMORELAND

One of the original townships set off from Luzerne County on 4 April 1842.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 3 page 560. Paul Keeler buying land in Northmoreland 1795.

Luzerne County Road Docket 1 page 117. Pet. for road April session 1792.

NOXEN

Taken from Monroe, which was originally part of Northmoreland (or Exeter).

Wyoming County Tax Asses. as Noxen was 30 Nov. 1895. Tax asses. of 27 Dec. 1894 for Monroe Twp., showed the same people that were on the 1895 Noxen tax list.

OVERFIELD

Taken from Falls and Clinton Townships.

Wyoming County Road Docket Vol. 1 page 298. Pet. 26 Feb. 1857, confirmed 22 June 1860.

PUTNAM (also called Tunkhannock Township)

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 1 page 112, Putnam Twp., Zebulon Marcy bought land 1 May 1786.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 1 page 473, Putnam Twp., Obadiah Taylor bought land 16 Nov. 1791.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 5 page 215, Putnam Twp., a Harding bought land 8 Jan. 1795.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 11 page 494, Putnam Twp., 10 March 1810.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 14 page 162, Putnam Twp., 17 July 1811.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 24 page 77, Putnam Twp., 3 June 1820.

TUNKHANNOCK

One of original townships taken from Luzerne County on 4 April 1842.

Luzerne County Road Docket Vol. 1 page 133. Pet. for road in Tunkhannock Twp. 20 Aug. 1792.

WASHINGTON

Taken from Braintrim and Tunkhannock.

First tax asses. 30 March 1833.

Tri County History (1880) says Washington was formed 9 Aug. 1832.

WINDHAM

Taken from original Braintrim Township.

First Tax Asses. 26 Nov. 1816.

Luzerne County Deed Book Vol. 16 page 286, 1 Aug. 1807, Henry Champlon bought land in Braintrim Township.

Figure I-2 (Source: *Wyoming County, 1842-1992, Sesquicentennial, A Look Back*)

- *The construction of better roads for automobile traffic marked the demise of passenger service by the Lehigh Valley Railroad. This new-found mobility also allowed residents to change shopping habits which led to the closing of most local stores in the Falls and Exeter Townships. The number of stores dropped from a high of six full-service markets, some of which also included butcher shops, to the current two convenience stores.*
- *Over the years the school system was developed into the Falls Overfield School District, and in 1970, the District became part of the Tunkhannock Area School District.*
- *Through the 1960's, Falls Township was primarily an agricultural community and numerous family farms graced the area. This farm heritage was celebrated each fall with the Falls Overfield Fair.*
- *The last 150 years have seen this area transform from a farming to a residential community. Most family farms ceased operations in the 1970's and employment was found elsewhere.*
- *The town of Mill City was founded by Chauncey Sherwood. During the mid 1800's, there was a drug store, harness shop, grist mill, foundry, blacksmith shops, shoe shops, general stores, a Methodist Episcopal Church, two physicians and two clergymen.*
- *In 1865, a post office was established with Stephen O. Corwin as the first postmaster. Daily mail service was established in 1869 from the Falls Station.*
- *A number of businesses operated in Mill City over the years:*
 - *Grant Young operated a saw mill at the present site of the new Assembly of God Church around 1915.*
 - *In 1896 I. M. Carey started a cider mill on Carey Pond, and by 1938 he and his son, Robert Carey, were producing 20,000 gallons of cider each fall.*
 - *The Oriental Grange building housed Vosburg's*
 - *Store on the first level, and the upstairs was used for grange meetings and square dances. Today the building is used as a dress factory. The dress factory, which employed some thirty people, closed in 2001.*
- *Later on Glendon O'Dell owned and operated a general store, gas station and post office next to the grange hall from the 1930's through the 1950's.*
- *The old Wyoming Hotel was a grand structure that dates back to 1814 as a stagecoach inn. It has had many owners over the years. For a time it was used as a high school, where in 1920 the first class of seven seniors graduated. The building went back to being used as a hotel and gas station for tourists once again in the 1940's. It is now owned by John Bancala and is used as an antique shop.*
- *Ferries*
 - *Between 1890 and 1900 Hadder Smith maintained a rope ferry service between Forest Glen, on the west side of the river North of Falls, to "Granny" Smith's on the east bank.*
 - *In addition to the ferry, Tracy A. Smith whose nickname was "Commodore" also operated a launch to Canfield Island, one mile north of Forest Glen, from the Falls station of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. He also towed fishermen.*
 - *The only occupant of Canfield's Island was its owner, Frank H. Canfield, whose cabin was known as "The Wigwam." This island was washed away in the 1920 flood.*
 - *John "Doc" Hughes, the toll taker at Pittston's Ferry Bridge, operated a naphtha launch from Forest Glen. On 14 Aug. 1906, he placed an additional craft, a 25 passenger steamer into service. He purchased the new boat at Bloomsburg and named Captain William Hurrey of Pittston as its commander. The steamboat met all trains and also towed fishermen upstream.*

- *A gasoline launch, maintained by Fred Geisinger for passenger transportation between Falls railroad station and Forest Glen, burned on 5 July 1909.*
- *Isaac L. Smith purchased a ferry boat on 1 Feb. 1910, which he operated in passenger service between Falls and West Falls.*
- *Nelson Walker, who timbered the Keeler property at Keelersburg a few miles above West Falls, operated a freight ferry for about five years until 1900 from that plot to the McKune property, on the east side of the river, where the lumber was placed on Lehigh Valley railroad cars which reached there via a three-quarter mile rail spur.*
- *Solomon White commenced the operation of White's Ferry in 1838. He maintained it until his death on 23 July 1890, when his son, George White, who died on 2 July 1914, and his son, William M. White, continued ferry service at this place until late in November 1938.*
- The Falls River Bridge, started in 1919 and finished in 1922, was replaced by the current bridge which was opened for service on September 19, 1993.
- St Michael's School was opened by the Diocese of Scranton on November 1, 1916, as the Boy's Industrial School, a training school for orphan boys. The School now serves some 120 young men.

Timbering and agriculture served as the base for the initial settlement and early economic development of the Township and all of Wyoming County. The Susquehanna River provided the early means of transport with the later development of the Canal and Railroad bringing prosperity to Falls and Mill City. However, over the years these basic activities have lost significance to the local economy. Many acres in the region which once were forested or in agriculture are now subdivided into residential lots. While early settlers relied heavily on the River for transportation, continuing improvements, initiated by railroad access and culminating in modern road improvements and the completion of the interstate highway system, transformed Wyoming County into the mix of Northeastern Pennsylvania communities of today.

Surprisingly, in the midst of these changes, the population of the Township has not changed significantly over the past one hundred years. The area now is continuing its transformation from a natural resource based community to a bedroom community dependent on the larger region for employment.

Given the large private parcels of land and the attractive residential character, the area holds great potential for development as the population of the larger northeast region continues to shift from urban to rural municipalities. The direction plotted by this *Comprehensive Plan* and the land use control and growth management actions taken by the municipal officials of Falls Township, along with the private development decisions made in response to demands for housing and commercial development, will shape the community's character over the next ten to twenty years.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE

Growth and Development Overview

A community's growth and development is affected by a broad range of interrelating factors including such things as regional location, the transportation system, natural resources, land suitability for agriculture and development, available community facilities such as sewage disposal, condition of the general economy, local land values and real estate taxes. A change in one factor will in all likelihood result in a change in another factor, and the overall character of the community. In short, how a community's character has developed and how it will change into the future, are the result of a complex interaction of sometimes opposing forces ranging from no growth, exclusionary land use controls to unbridled commercial and residential development. Land use patterns in a community are the result of this complex interaction played out over the community's history.

The rural, scenic beauty of Falls Township in Southeastern Wyoming County is a key factor affecting growth and development. Rural areas close to urban centers attract residents who can easily commute to work or who can be employed anywhere via the use of computers and telecommunications. Population growth has not been significant in the past twenty years, and in fact, the 2000 Census reported a small decline. Nevertheless, Falls Township holds great potential to become such a community. The challenge in developing a land use plan for the Township is to strike a balance for sustainable development. That is, to provide for the essential economic growth and development of the Township and the area as a whole, while concurrently conserving its scenic and natural environment and particularly open land and natural resources, the very elements which have largely been the impetus for the area's past development.

Importance of Regional Location and Resulting Development Pattern

The significance of the effect of the Township's regional location on local land use patterns cannot be overemphasized. Although agriculture and forestry once were the principal elements of the Township's rural working landscape and economy, the importance of these natural resource based activities has declined. The development pattern which has taken shape in the

Township and area in the recent past can best be characterized as scattered residential, with primarily retail and service commercial development. With the exception of the Milan Davis Subdivision, located along Route 92 just south of St. Michael's School for Boys, no large planned residential developments are found in the Township. The greatest concentration of commercial development is situated along Route 307 in the Mill City area. Nevertheless, an ample supply of open land within the Townships is available for development.

Current trends indicate more and more families are relocating from metro areas to rural areas and are commuting back to metro areas for employment. Given the limited job opportunities in the immediate vicinity, it is obvious most employed persons living in the Township travel to other areas of Wyoming County, Lackawanna County and Luzerne County and the greater region for employment. Clearly, the Township's economy and resultant land use and development pattern is inextricably linked to Wyoming County and regional metropolitan areas. Without continued careful planning and growth management, the area's landscape and community character will be forever altered by haphazard development. Such development results from uncoordinated individual decisions by separate property owners. This *Comprehensive Plan* will serve to guide this set of independent decisions in a direction aimed at coordinated growth and development.

During much of its early history the area served as a source of natural resources and food supplies with its base in timbering and agriculture, and later developed industries linked to natural resources, and now is a more residential oriented area. Falls Township has evolved and will likely continue to evolve into a community where the work force relies heavily on the greater regional economy for employment. In any case, it is clear that if this trend continues the Township could, quite literally, become a suburb of the nearby urban areas and employment centers. However, this is not to say that commercial development is not a key ingredient of the area's character. The demand for more retail and service establishments can be expected as the residential population increases. Home occupations,

although difficult to assess in terms of numbers and types, appear to be becoming a more important part of the economy, fitting appropriately into the area's rural working landscape. In addition, County and area economic development organization efforts to retain and attract light manufacturing and commercial development will provide jobs for the entire region, and provide balance to area-wide development.

Growth vs. No-Growth and Need for Area Wide Planning

As noted earlier, achieving a balance between growth and development and maintaining the Township's quality of life and community character, and conserving its natural environment will be the land use challenge over the next ten to twenty years. If accurate, the Census counts in 1990 and 2000 revealed that the Wyoming County population on a whole remained essentially unchanged, and the number of residents in Falls Township decreased by 2.8 percent, almost sixty individuals. While the Township population decreased, the number of housing units increased by sixty-five, or 9.3 percent. Although the average household size decreased, the effect of more dwelling units can be significant in terms of loss of open land and fragmentation of agricultural land as lots are platted. Despite the recent slip in population, more families will certainly be attracted to the Township and the pressure for the development of open land will also intensify. In rural/residential areas such as Falls Township, development has not recently occurred by way of large, sprawling subdivisions, but more via smaller subdivisions and lot-by-lot from larger parcels. If careful consideration is not given to the *minor* subdivisions and land developments the cumulative effect of this type of development will result in a loss of open land and potentially strain the services and infrastructure of the four Townships. The need for adequate water supply and sewage disposal, soil erosion and sedimentation, storm water management and the increase in traffic are all factors which must be carefully planned and administered as the Township grows.

The Township's future land use, environmental quality and community character will evolve in response to the actions of community leaders and active citizens combined with the forces of the local and regional economy, and the demand for land and community facilities and services. The area's growth and

development will be tempered by the land's physical limitations (e.g., steep slopes, poor soils, and wetlands) and must be guided by the application of traditional and innovative land use controls, open land preservation techniques and environmental regulations as part of the planning and development process. Many of these issues extend beyond municipal boundaries and can best be addressed through the cooperation of the municipalities in the immediate area and larger region. The Commonwealth is a strong advocate of area wide planning conducted cooperatively by the local municipalities. This is evidenced by the high priority projects, conducted cooperatively, are given at the state level. The idea is that municipalities can avoid the impact of uncoordinated land use control decisions made independently and by other agencies involved in the growth and development management process. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code provides specific authorization for joint municipal planning and goes on to authorize cooperative municipal zoning, and establishes specific requirements for the adoption and administration of cooperative municipal zoning ordinance. Cooperative zoning enables communities to locate particular land uses in the most appropriate locations in the area rather than providing for every type of use in each participating municipality. While this *Plan* has been prepared independently by Falls Township, future cooperation with adjoining municipalities must be pursued.

Land Use Overview

Existing land use in Falls Township is shown on the *Existing Land Use Map* which accompanies this *Plan*. The map also shows property lines taken from the Wyoming County tax maps. It is important to note the *Existing Land Use Map* is not intended to show specific land use to the individual property line, instead it is simply intended to document the existing pattern of development, as well as historical trends, and facilitates the consideration of proposed future land use alternatives. Table II-1, Falls Township Land Use, provides a summary of the extent of the various land use classifications in the Township and Figure II-1 includes a graphic representation.

As reported by the U.S. Census, Falls Township includes almost twenty-one square miles, which at 640 acres per square mile, totals approximately 13,500 acres of land area which represents about five percent of Wyoming County's 397-square mile area. (See

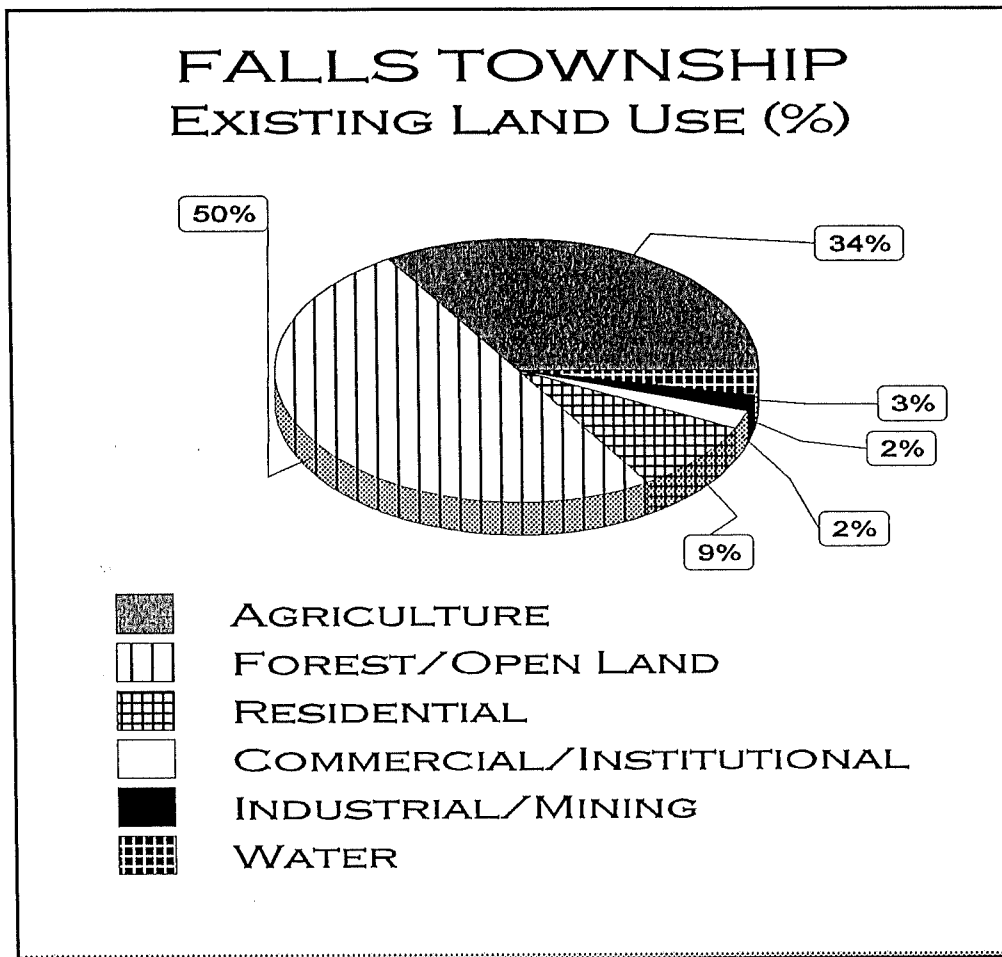


Figure II-1, Existing Land Use

TABLE II-1 FALLS TOWNSHIP EXISTING LAND USE		
	percent	acres
agricultural	33.9%	4,590
forest / open land	49.9%	6,750
residential	8.5%	1,150
commercial/institutional	2.4%	320
industrial/mining	2.0%	275
water	3.3%	440
TOTAL		13,525

Table IV-3 for individual municipal details.) The twenty-three local municipalities in Wyoming County range in size from the 0.2 square miles of Laceyville Borough to the 70.8 square miles of Forkston Township.

Although no historical data is available to provide a comparison of the change in land use in recent decades, housing unit data provides a good indicator of the increase in residential land use. In 1980, 613 housing units were reported by the U.S. Census in the Township; with the number reaching almost 770 by the Year 2000, an increase of about 160 units. (See Table IV-9 for other municipalities in the County.) While this rate of development, some eight units per year, seems insignificant, the long term effects are obvious -- the loss of more and more open land. Should the same rate of construction continue to 2010, the total number of units could reach 850 units. Although a relatively limited amount of land has actually been developed for

residential purposes in the twenty years, some 160 acres if one acre per unit is assumed, the area affected by the development is significantly many times greater. A one acre lot cut into a productive farm field can influence or affect ten acres around it. In addition, although the number of acres developed for commercial purposes over the past twenty years is not significant as a percentage of the total land area, it has been situated primarily along the major state routes and especially along Route 307 in the Mill City area. In the latter case, the development has raised traffic congestion and potential sewage disposal and water supply issues.

Residential Land

Historically, most homes were scattered throughout the Townships in association with farms or in the small villages of Falls and Mill City. The small villages remain with some additional homes constructed around village edges. Other residences continue to be distributed throughout the Township, primarily on lots which were taken piecemeal from larger agricultural parcels and which front on public roads. As noted earlier, residential development of larger land parcels involving multiple lots and the construction of new roads has been essentially non-existent. Future subdivisions should be expected, either in the form of planned developments or lot-by-lot subdivision from larger parcels. Residential development comprises a relatively small percentage of the total land area in Falls Township, about 8.5 percent or 1,150 acres. The primary type of residential development in the Township is single-family residential, with about seventy-seven percent single-family dwellings and fifteen percent mobile homes, and almost eight percent two-family and multi-family dwellings. With no mobile home parks, mobile homes are situated on individual lots throughout the Township. The Wyoming County Housing Authority maintains two public housing complexes in the Township totaling about thirty housing units, Whites Ferry Apartments on Whites Ferry Road and Orchard Apartments on Falls Road.

Commercial/Industrial and Institutional Land

Taken as a whole, commercial/industrial and institutional development within the Township is relatively limited. The total area devoted to commercial and industrial, and institutional uses is estimated at almost 600 acres or 2.4 percent of the total Township area. As noted earlier much of this development is

found along Route 307 in the vicinity of Mill City, and include a restaurant, hardware store, laundromat, propane sales, upholstery shop, bar and grill, greenhouse, and auto body shop. In addition, a number of small businesses, ranging from a septic service to auto repair, to contractors and a campground are scattered throughout the Township. Home occupations are also operating in the Township, but given the nature of many such business which rely on electronic communications and personal computers, the number of such enterprises cannot be assessed, although the 2000 Census report almost eighty self-employed workers in the Township.

Three of the largest operations in the Township are classified as industrial. The Ronco Group, which started as a local machine shop, now fabricates metal and designs, builds, re-manufactures and installs industrial machines from facilities in Pennsylvania, Florida, and Brazil. Ronco facilities in Falls Township include a fabrication shop and machine shop. The other industrial uses in the Township are related to mineral extraction and processing. Wyoming Sand and Stone operates the Hilltop Quarry off Route 307 just east of Mill City and a maintenance facility at Wyoanna at the southern tip of the Township; Geary's Enterprises takes sand and gravel from a pit along Falls-Mill City Road; and American Asphalt, a large road construction firm, operates a gravel pit along the Susquehanna River just north of Falls.

Institutional land uses in Falls Township include the Township building and small parcel along Sand Plant Road south of Falls, the Mill City Elementary School, the St. Michael's School for Boys along Route 92 on Hoban Heights, several churches and cemeteries.

Woodland and Agricultural Land

Woodland, agricultural land and reverting agricultural land remain the primary land use types in the Township. Agricultural land, comprised of field and forage crops and pasture, is generally associated with the better soils found in the sheltered valleys and lowlands. The cropped agricultural land is used primarily for hay and some corn and tomatoes. Only three dairy farms remain in operation in the Township, Grzybowski with about seventy head, Teel with almost 350, and Zydaniewicz with about fifty. D. Dickinson boards horses, and tree farms are operated by Bancala and Dickinson. No orchards currently are

in operation in the Township. Agricultural land totals some 4,590 acres or about thirty-four percent of the Township area. Forest land comprises approximately 6,750 acres or almost one-half of the Township area. Although agricultural and forest land remain the predominate land use types, the importance of agriculture and forestry to the local economy has declined. The 2000 Census reported that 4.2 percent of employed persons in the Township worked in agriculture, forestry and mining, as compared to 3.7 percent county-wide and 1.3 percent state-wide, probably a reflection of the mineral related enterprises in the Township.

Potential for Development

Falls Township holds great potential for further development. While it is true that many parcels and lots in platted subdivisions cannot be developed because of natural limitations such as poor soils, wetlands and steep slopes which make lots unsuitable for on-lot sewage disposal systems, the existing parcels in the Township include a number of already subdivided lots which are suitable for home construction. The area also includes many larger parcels with acceptable soils that can be developed. Again, poor soils and steep slopes may preclude the use of some areas, but the suitable land in the Township could be developed into many more residential lots. The large private holdings will remain undeveloped only as long as adequate returns are realized from agriculture and forestry enterprises. Tax assessments are also a vital factor in the overall equation.

In any event, the rate of development of new residential subdivisions and the improvement of existing lots in the area will be governed more by the demand for lots than by the paucity of land. Large scale development on the thousands of acres of privately held land will be limited by owner commitment to maintaining its current use and ability to pay the taxes based on agricultural and forestry returns. The Township must be prepared to manage whatever development is proposed by adopting, administering and updating the necessary land use management regulations.

NATURAL FEATURES, LAND SUITABILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS

Introduction

The residents of Falls Township and Wyoming County are fortunate in that much of the area remains undeveloped. This agricultural land and private and public forest land, combined with interspersed residential and limited, small-scale commercial development combine to create the rural-residential character of the Township and its quality lifestyle. Although the agricultural land and forest land are extensive, the environmental quality of Falls Township's natural areas and vitality of its rural character are very fragile. This is a particularly important point when the potential for residential and commercial development throughout the Township is considered. Clean, plentiful water, pure air, open land, vegetation and wildlife can be irreparably damaged by development undertaken without concern for the natural environment and careful planning and land use control. Rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetlands are natural features that make an area appealing to development. However, it is also these types of natural areas that tend to be more sensitive to development.

To preserve the environmental integrity and attractiveness of the area, consistent enforcement of such regulations as sewage, erosion and sedimentation, and storm water management, is vital. The fact that the majority of land in Falls Township is currently undeveloped does not diminish the need for careful planning and land use control. Instead, the conservation of these areas are key to preserving the rural community character of the Township as the inevitable residential development pressure builds.

Internal and external social and economic factors are the key determinant to the future development of the Township. The area's environment is its major asset for fostering future development. At the same time, the various elements of the natural environment must be conserved because the environment has a finite, limited capacity for development. And, given the interrelationship of all elements of the environment, a change in one element often results in an unexpected effect on another element.

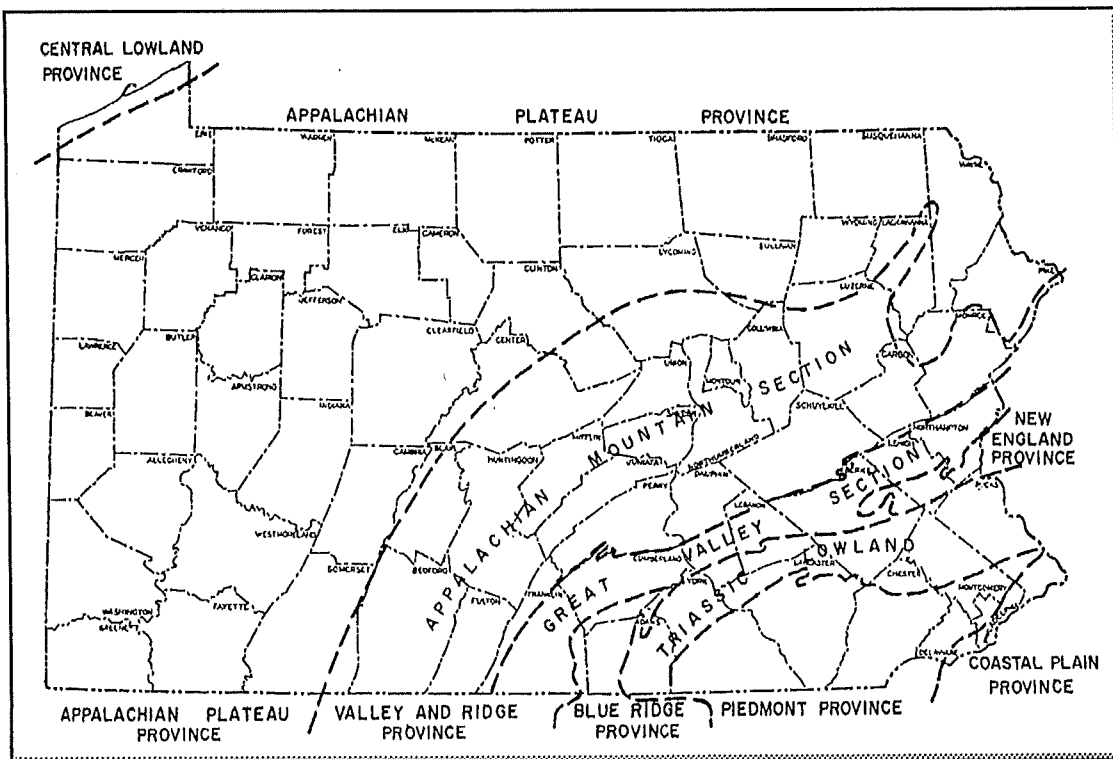


Figure I -1, Physiographic Provinces of Pennsylvania

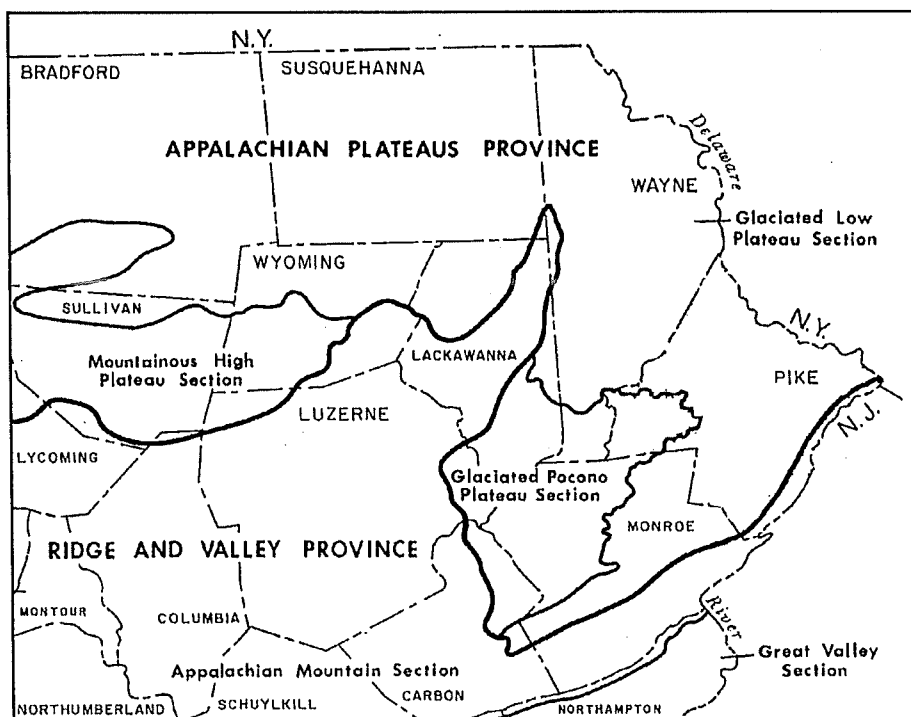


Figure III-2 - Physiographic Divisions of Eastern PA

Physiography and Geology

The natural features of Falls Township are a direct result of its geological past. Bedrock geology and glacial geology are key factors affecting the natural environment and development pattern by providing the base for the formation of soils. Falls Township and most of Wyoming County lie in the Appalachian Mountain Section of the Ridge and Valley Province, one of the major physiographic divisions of the Commonwealth. (See Figure III-1, Physiographic Provinces of Pennsylvania¹ and Figure III-2, Physiographic Divisions of Eastern Pennsylvania.²) The Township is underlain by bedrock of the Catskill Formation of the Devonian System which is some 365 to 405 million years old. The Catskill Formation is comprised of grayish red sandstone, siltstone, and shale, some conglomerate occurs, and it contains gray sandstone in the upper part. Groundwater is found in both primary and secondary openings in the formation

with well yields ranging from two to 325 gallons per minute.³

Geological studies are a vital part of the development process. Will the sewage disposal method considered be adequate? Can mineral resources be extracted while being compatible with current zoning? What are the possible effects of a land development that proposed a large amount of cut and fill for their project? An understanding of the geology of an area will allow the land use planner to answer these important questions. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code was recently amended to include a definition of *preservation and protection* related to land use controls that states *when used in connection with natural and historic resources, (preservation and protection) shall include means to conserve and safeguard these resources from wasteful or destructive use, but shall not be interpreted to authorize the unreasonable restriction of forestry, mining or other lawful uses of natural resources.* Planning Code §603, which provides the authority for zoning ordinances to regulate the use of land and conservation of resources, goes on to state that

¹*Pennsylvania Geology Summarized*, Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, B. Willard, 1968.

²*Report 65, Groundwater Resources of Pike County, Pennsylvania*, Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, D. K. Davis, 1989.

³*Summary Ground-Water Resources of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*, Map in Publication, Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, T. Newport, 1977.

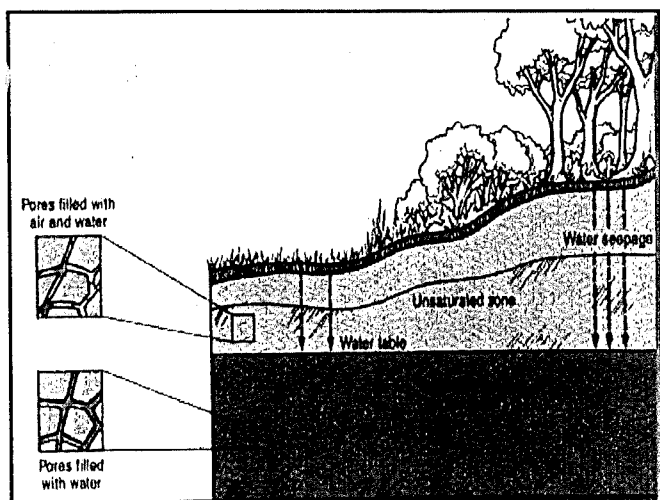


Figure III-3, Water Table

local zoning ordinances may regulate mineral extraction only to the extent that those regulations of mineral extraction by local ordinances and enactments have heretofore been superseded and preempted by the . . . Noncoal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, along with a acts regulating coal mining and gas and oil production. In short, local regulations cannot be more restrictive than the state law regulating the uses and cannot be unreasonable. The term *unreasonable restriction* is obviously undefinable and will require case-by-case litigation to be determined. In any case, the Pennsylvania Legislature has clearly established that state laws should take precedence where mineral extraction is being regulated; and local municipalities must carefully consider any such locally adopted regulations.

Groundwater

*Groundwater is that subsurface water in the saturated zone - the zone in which all the spaces or interstices in the rocks, ideally, are filled with water under pressure equal to or greater than atmospheric pressure. Rocks that are capable of yielding usable supplies of water to wells or springs are called aquifers.*⁴ (See Figure III-3, Water Table.) Ground water occurs in joints, bedding planes, fault and other fractures in the rock. The extent to which the rock is fractured, its density and size will all contribute to its ability to store and move water. In unconsolidated rock, water is stored and

moves through the intergranular openings in these deposits. In consolidated rock aquifers, water moves primarily through fractures, joints and along bedding planes. Most of the annual recharge is transmitted through local flow paths and is discharged to nearby streams and lakes, while only a small amount reaches the deeper flow systems. Ground water levels fluctuate in response to precipitation, evapotranspiration, groundwater discharge to streams and water withdrawals.

The hydrologic cycle can be described as follows (See Figure III-4, Hydrologic Cycle): *The continuous circulation of water from the oceans to the atmosphere to the land surface and back to the oceans is called the hydrologic cycle. Water evaporates from the oceans, which cover about three-fourths of the surface of the earth, and is carried by the atmosphere until it falls as some form of precipitation. Some precipitation that falls on land flows over the surface to streams and back to the oceans. This portion is called direct runoff. Another portion of the precipitation evaporates and returns directly to the atmosphere. The remaining precipitation infiltrates the ground. Some of the infiltrated water is transpired by plants. The remaining water percolates downward under gravity from the zone of aeration, or soil moisture, into the zone of saturation, or the groundwater reservoir. If the water-bearing materials yield water of usable quantity and quality to a well or spring, the materials are called an aquifer. Groundwater moves slowly under the prevailing hydraulic conditions for various distances until it is discharged in the form of springs and seepage to streams, lakes, and the ocean. The cycle then repeats. Man interrupts this cycle in different ways; one way is pumping groundwater from wells.*⁵

In Falls Township groundwater is the sole source of potable water. Simply put, all residential and commercial development equates to an increasing demand for groundwater. According to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey average annual precipitation in Wyoming County is about thirty-five inches. The amount of rainfall, coupled with the rate of aquifer recharge

⁴Report 65, *Groundwater Resources of Pike County, Pennsylvania*, Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, D. K. Davis, 1989.

⁵Ibid.

The Hydrologic Cycle in Pennsylvania

Each year on an average, 41, inches of precipitation falls in Pennsylvania. Six inches of that enters streams and lakes directly either as surface runoff or as flow that enters streams from the unsaturated zone under the land surface. Twenty inches returns to the atmosphere through evaporation and transpiration. The remaining fifteen inches infiltrates the soil and moves downward to the zone of saturation to recharge groundwater, a recharge rate of about thirty-seven percent.

determines the volume of groundwater. Recharge is dependent on consumptive water use, evapotranspiration and runoff.

Much of the water falling on the land surface returns to the atmosphere or reaches the streams as overland runoff. The remainder infiltrates through the soil and through fractures and other voids in the underlying rock. (See the Hydrologic Cycle in Pennsylvania sidebar for typical recharge rates.) Its downward movement continues until it reaches the zone of saturation, a zone below which all interconnected voids are filled with water. After reaching the zone of saturation, the water moves downward and laterally toward lower elevations and eventually returns to the surface, either naturally from springs and seeps, or from wells. Ground water . . . occurs under both water-table (free, unconfined) and artesian (confined, under pressure) conditions. Watertable conditions are those in which ground water is unconfined and the upper surface of the water is free to rise or fall. Artesian conditions exist where the ground water is confined in a permeable (having interconnected openings) formation that is overlain by a relatively impermeable formation. The upper surface is not free to rise or fall, and the water is under enough pressure to rise above the containing aquifer in wells that penetrate it. The imaginary surface to which water will rise in wells tapping an artesian aquifer is called the potentiometric surface.

The water table fluctuates according to the relative amounts of recharge (additions to the aquifer) and discharge (losses to springs and wells). Because of the heavy evapotranspiration through the growing season (April to October), very little recharge reaches the zone of saturation, and water levels decline; water levels generally rise throughout the rest of the year.

Water levels in the county are at or near the land surface in the valleys and rise toward the drainage divides. The rate of water-level rise, however, is less than that of the land surface, so wells at higher altitudes must be drilled deeper than those in the valleys to reach the water table. The occurrence and movement of ground water is in and through interconnected openings (See Figure III-5, Rock Openings, and Figure III-7, Rock Types), either primary or secondary in nature. Primary openings are voids between the individual grains of material, such as in sandstone and shale. In a coarse-grained sandstone the openings are relatively large. In a shale the grains and openings are very small. The larger interconnecting openings allow much more ground-water movement than the smaller ones.

Secondary openings are those formed after the deposition and consolidation of the formation . . . they result from the fracture or solution of rock. The fractures are the result of external forces that caused rupture of the rock. Solution cavities are formed by the solution and removal, by water, of parts of rocks, such as limestone. Large quantities of water move through connected fractures and solution cavities.

Ground water . . . is found in both artesian and water table aquifers. These aquifers yield water to wells at rates that vary over a wide range from one geologic formation to another and within the same geologic formation. Well yields range from a fraction of a gallon per minute to over 1,000 gpm.

When precipitation has reached the zone of saturation it moves by gravity down the hydraulic gradient toward points of discharge. The direction of movement is determined by the slope of the water table or potentiometric surface. The movement of ground water is through interconnected openings in the rock, and, as these openings are normally small, they do not allow rapid movement of water.

The aquifers . . . are composed of both unconsolidated and consolidated rock, and water occurs in pore spaces of the unconsolidated material and in fractures, bedding planes, or solution openings in the consolidated rocks (Figure III-5). Wells drilled into either type of rock will yield water if they intersect saturated openings. The more and the larger the saturated openings penetrated by a well, the higher

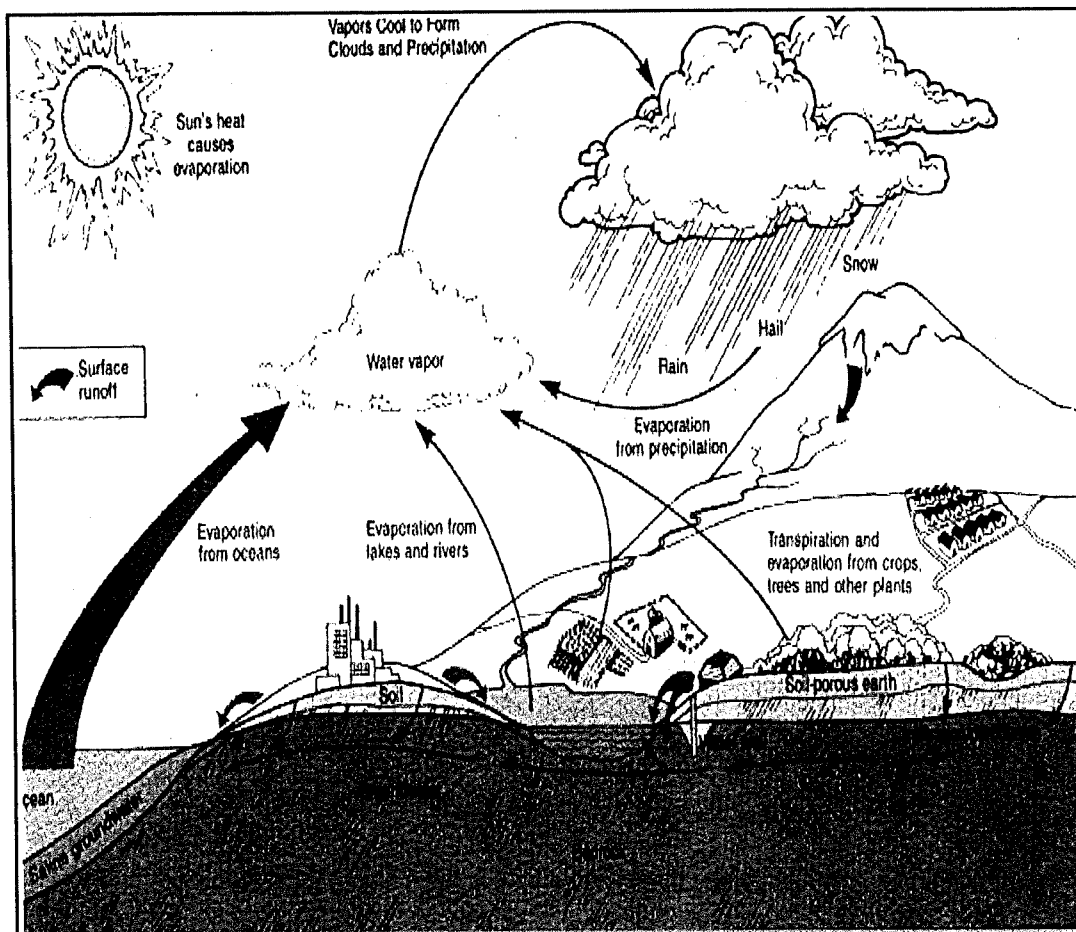


Figure III-4, Hydrologic Cycle

the yield will be. This is illustrated for consolidated rocks in Figure III-6, Fracture Cross Section. Well no. 1 intersects only one fracture below the water table; the yield of this well would be less than the yield of well no. 2 because the latter well intersects several fractures below the water table. In this example it is assumed that all the water-bearing fractures are the same size.⁶

Although not specific to Wyoming County, the Pennsylvania Geological Survey Water Resources Report 65, *Groundwater Resources of Pike County, Pennsylvania*, provides an idea of the amount of ground water recharge that can occur. The report indicates that the average groundwater recharge rate in

Pike County is 992,000 gallons per day per square mile. It appears that the issue related to groundwater in the County and the Township is more related to quality than supply. Only nineteen of 870 community survey respondents reported that their well had gone dry, and some of these may have been reported twice given that two members of one household responded individually to the survey. Based on the level of development in Wyoming County, along with the densities expected in the future, the quantity of groundwater available should be adequate to sustain development and meet the needs of the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, over development and periods of below normal rainfall can combine to create water supply problems.

Proper siting, design, installation and maintenance of on-site sewage disposal systems and water supply wells, and groundwater quality, must continue to be a

⁶Summary Ground-water Resources of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Topographic and Geologic Survey, T. G. Newport, 1977.

How Groundwater Moves

Groundwater, like surface water, is constantly on the move. However, groundwater moves much slower-at rates ranging from feet per day to inches per year depending on the type of soil or rock through which it is moving. The natural movement of groundwater is from upland recharge areas to lowland discharge areas -- points where the water table meets the land surface, such as springs, lakes, streams, and wetlands. Most water seeping into the soil moves only a few miles to the point where it is discharged; in most instances it stays within the same watershed. Groundwater discharging into streams provides the water that keeps streams flowing year round. Except for a short time during and after rain storms and snow melt, all the water in a stream is provided by groundwater seeping through stream banks and stream beds. This is called base flow. From points of recharge to points of discharge, groundwater moves slowly through small openings in rocks and soil and usually in parallel paths (i.e., layers). Generally there is little mixing of the water in these layers because the slow movement of groundwater does not create sufficient turbulence for mixing to occur.

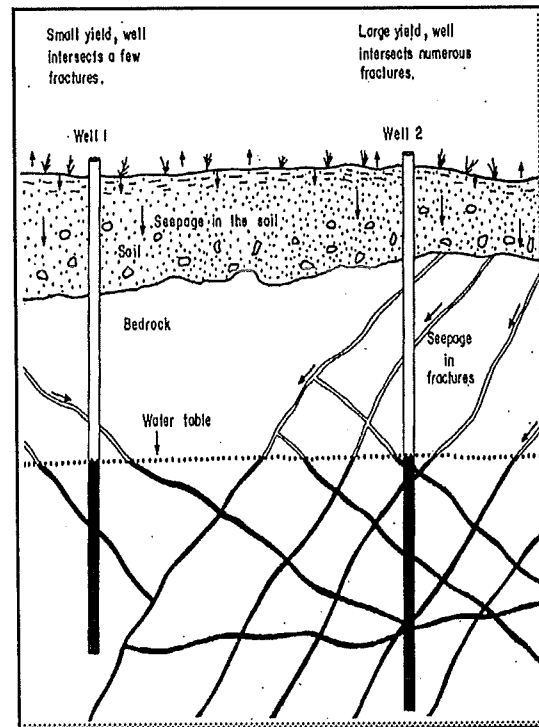


Figure III-6, Fractures Cross Section

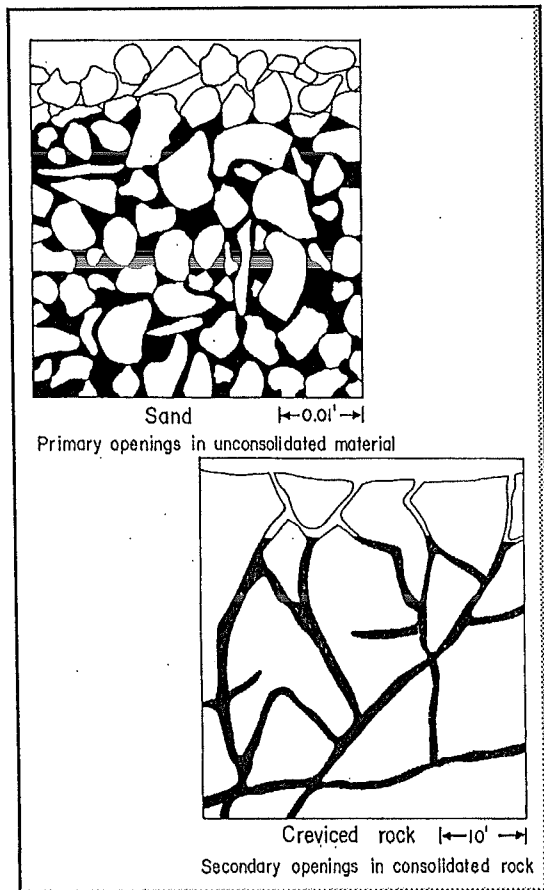


Figure III-5, Rock Openings

municipal concern and proper land use controls must be applied to protect groundwater recharge areas. Eleven survey respondents reported well contamination with only a few related to fecal or nutrient contamination. In short, there have been no reports of widespread or chronic bacterial contamination. Nevertheless, the potential for groundwater contamination is real in the Township where on-site sewage disposal is used in areas with less than ideal soils, and fertilizer and pesticide is applied to thousands of acres of farmland. In addition, nitrate and pesticide levels in groundwater should also be monitored given the use of fertilizers for agriculture. Nitrate levels which exceed ten milligrams per liter are considered a health hazard and can cause *blue baby* disease which interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen. This is particularly a concern in the highly permeable flood plain soils.

The Township's reliance on groundwater for domestic purposes, in combination with the use of on-site disposal systems and the extent of agriculture, demands that groundwater quality be carefully monitored. Almost ninety percent of survey respondents agree that the Township should adopt rules and regulations aimed at preventing contamination of wells and should encourage water conservation.

Land Use and Water Quality and Quantity

Surface water and groundwater quality and quantity can be affected by land use in the following ways:

- Large amounts of sediment can enter streams from farms and construction sites, and pollutants can wash off lawns, parking lots, and industrial properties.
- Removing vegetation adjacent to streams (riparian buffers) can increase stream bank erosion, raise water temperature, and allow non-point source pollutants to enter the stream.
- Channelizing streams during development can result in stream bank erosion and increase flooding and siltation problems downstream.
- Solvents and other liquids associated with non-residential development can leak or be spilled onto the ground, and eventually reach the groundwater.
- Homeowners who dispose of toxic household cleaners, pesticides, oil and other similar products can cause surface water and groundwater contamination as well.
- Failing on-lot sewage disposal systems can allow partially treated sewage to reach surface or ground water.
- Groundwater recharge can be hindered as impervious surfaces increase with development.
- Stormwater systems that remove stormwater quickly from a site and direct it into nearby streams reduce the amount of precipitation that infiltrates the ground (and eventually the underlying aquifers) and increases stream bank erosion and downstream flooding.

Source: *Upper Hanover Township Comprehensive Plan, 1994, Montgomery County Planning Commission*

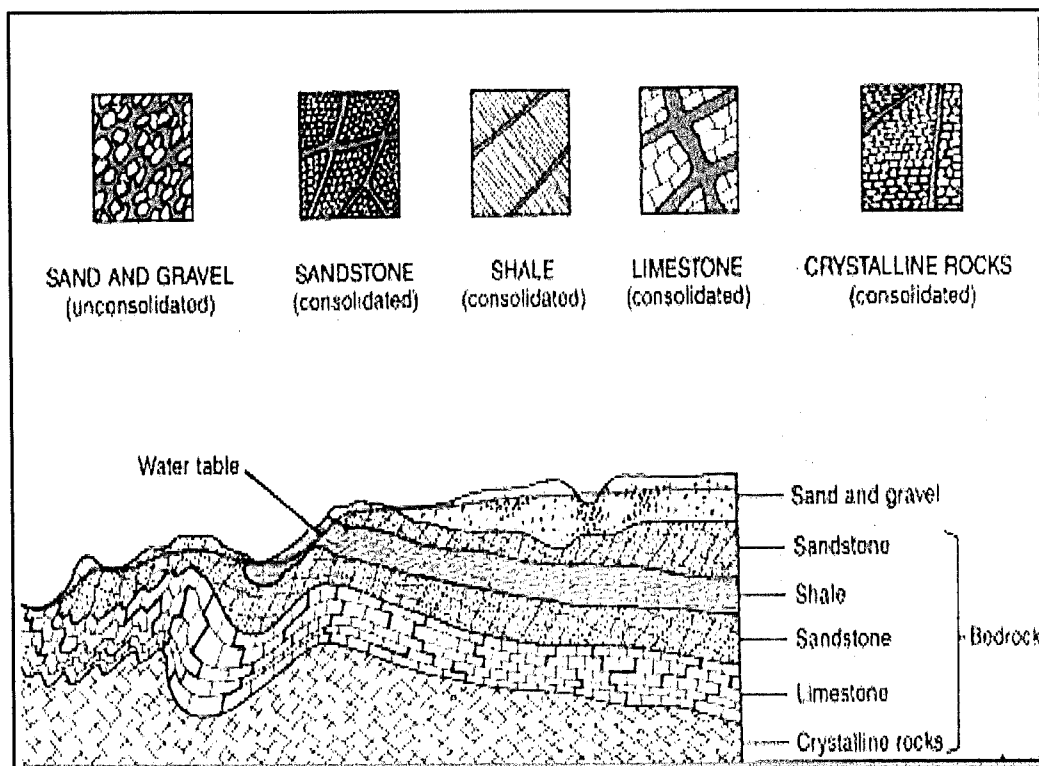


Figure III-7, Rock Types

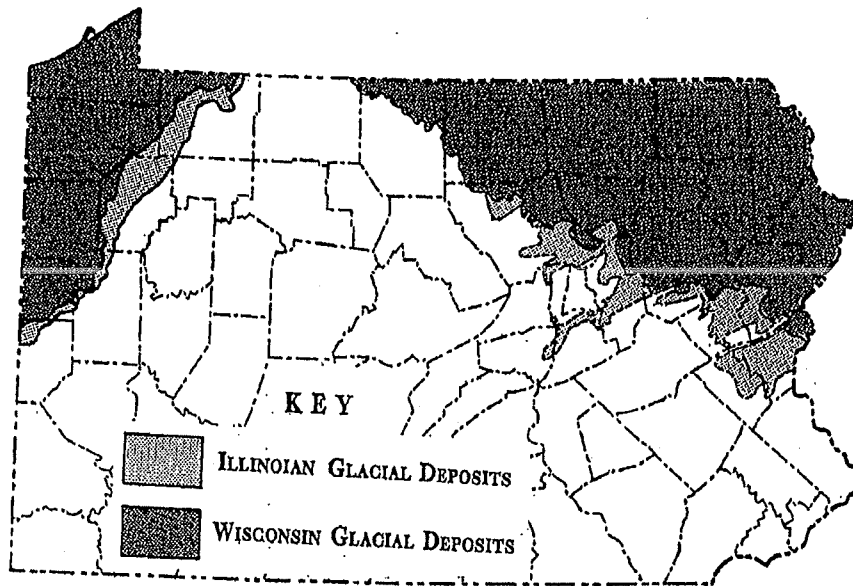


Figure III-8, Glacial Deposits in Pennsylvania

Soils

The geologic past of Falls Township and Wyoming County, especially the glaciation of the area, has defined the soils that would be formed, or in many cases, not formed. Variables in the formation of soils include climate (precipitation and temperature affecting weathering), biological activity and accumulation of organic material in the forming soil, the parent material (e.g., bedrock vs. glacial material) and formation and movement of clay minerals, topography (e.g., steep slopes vs. flood plain), and time. The most recent glacier to affect the Township, called the, Wisconsin glacier, retreated about 12,000 to 14,000 years ago, after having formed some 70,000 years ago). (See Figure III-8, Glacial Deposits in Pennsylvania.)

The effect of the glaciers cannot be overemphasized. *Because of their great thickness, the pressure at the base of the ice sheets was very great. As the ice moved along with pieces of rock it had picked up, it scraped the soil off the bedrock, scoured and scratched the exposed rock, and pressed itself down into valleys, cutting them sometimes to great depths. The material picked up and carried or pushed along by the ice, later to be deposited as till or outwash, was moved in some cases for hundreds of miles. Rocks picked up in Canada were mixed with rocks picked up in New York State and these in turn were mixed with rocks picked up in Pennsylvania. In deposits of glacial material in Pennsylvania, you will find many different kinds of rock and many types which do not*

*occur in Pennsylvania. Igneous rocks, such as granite, that have come great distances, may be found. Pieces of copper ore, nickel ore, and even diamonds have been found in glacial deposits and none of these occur in the bedrock near where they were found in the glacial deposits. The ice, in moving south, overrode forests in some places and it is not unusual to find fossil wood mixed with the base of the till. Pieces of copper ore, nickel ore, and even diamonds have been found in glacial deposits and none of these occur in the bedrock near where they were found in the glacial deposits. The ice, in moving south, overrode forests in some places and it is not unusual to find fossil wood mixed with the base of the till.*¹

Although this explanation is somewhat simplified, it is obvious that the formation of soil is a long-term, highly complex process. Given this complexity, it is understandable that a number of soil series (i.e., groups of soils formed from a particular parent material and exhibiting similar soil horizons) and many different soil types are found in the Township. Three of the six major soil associations identified in Wyoming County are found in the Falls Township and the extent of each is shown on Figure III-9, Soil Associations, and each is described in Table III-1, Soil Associations.

¹*Pennsylvania and the Ice Age*, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1962, p. 16.

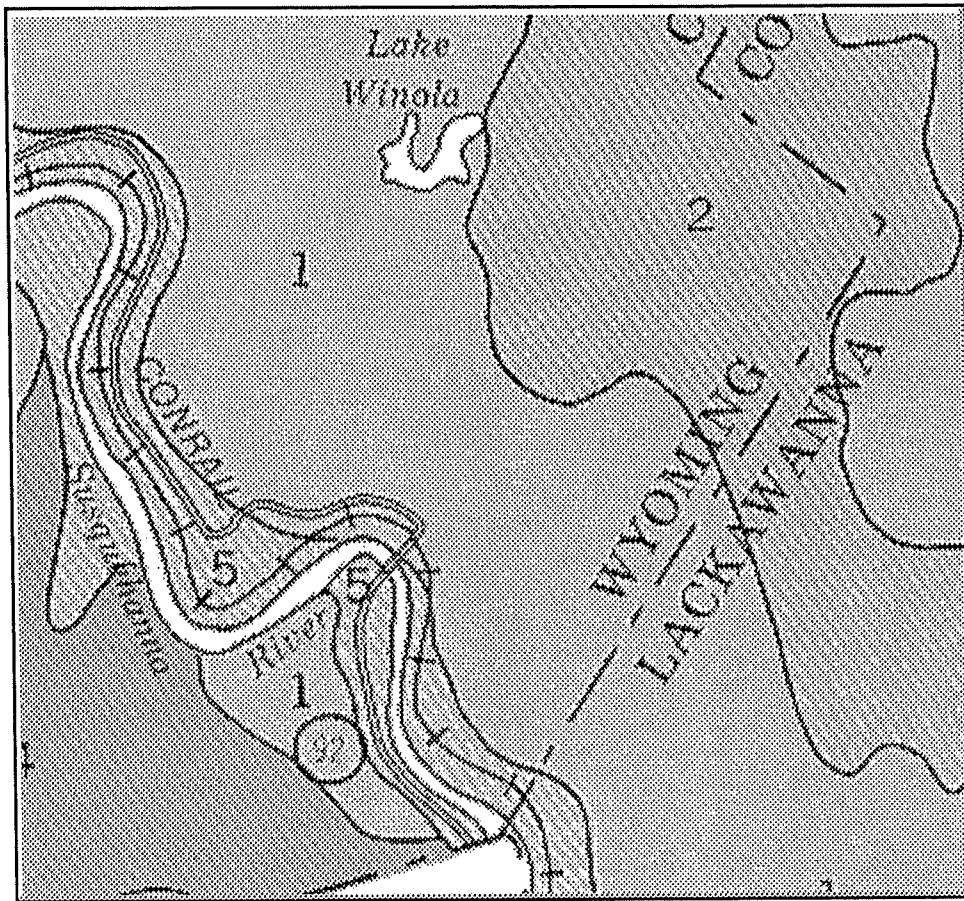


Figure III-9, Soil Associations (See Table III-1 for descriptions)

TABLE III-1 – SOIL ASSOCIATIONS

Association 1 -- Wellsboro-Morris-Oquaga

(See Figure III-10)

- found on broad rolling uplands
- deep and moderately deep
- development limited by seasonal high water table, depth to bedrock, restricted permeability and stoniness
- Wellsboro - 25% of association, deep and moderately well drained, slowly permeable fragipan
- Morris - 20% of association, deep and somewhat poorly drained, slowly permeable fragipan
- Oquaga - 20% of association, moderately deep and somewhat excessively drained, 20 to 40 inches to bedrock
- 35% of association - Lackawanna on knolls, Norwich and Chippewa in depressions, Arnot on ridge tops
- formed in glacial till derived from sandstone and shale
- nearly level to steep

Association 2 -- Mardin-Lordstown-Volusia

(See Figure III-11)

- found on uplands
- nearly level to moderately steep
- development limited by stoniness, steep slopes, restricted permeability, depth to bedrock and seasonal high water table
- Mardin - 25% of association, deep and moderately well drained, slowly permeable fragipan
- Lordstown - 20% of association, moderately deep and well drained, 20 to 40 inches to bedrock
- Volusia - 20% of association, deep and somewhat poorly drained, slowly permeable fragipan
- 35% of association - Norwich and Chippewa in depressions and swampy areas, Arnot on ridge tops, Bath on knolls
- formed in glacial till
- much have been left wooded because of many limitations

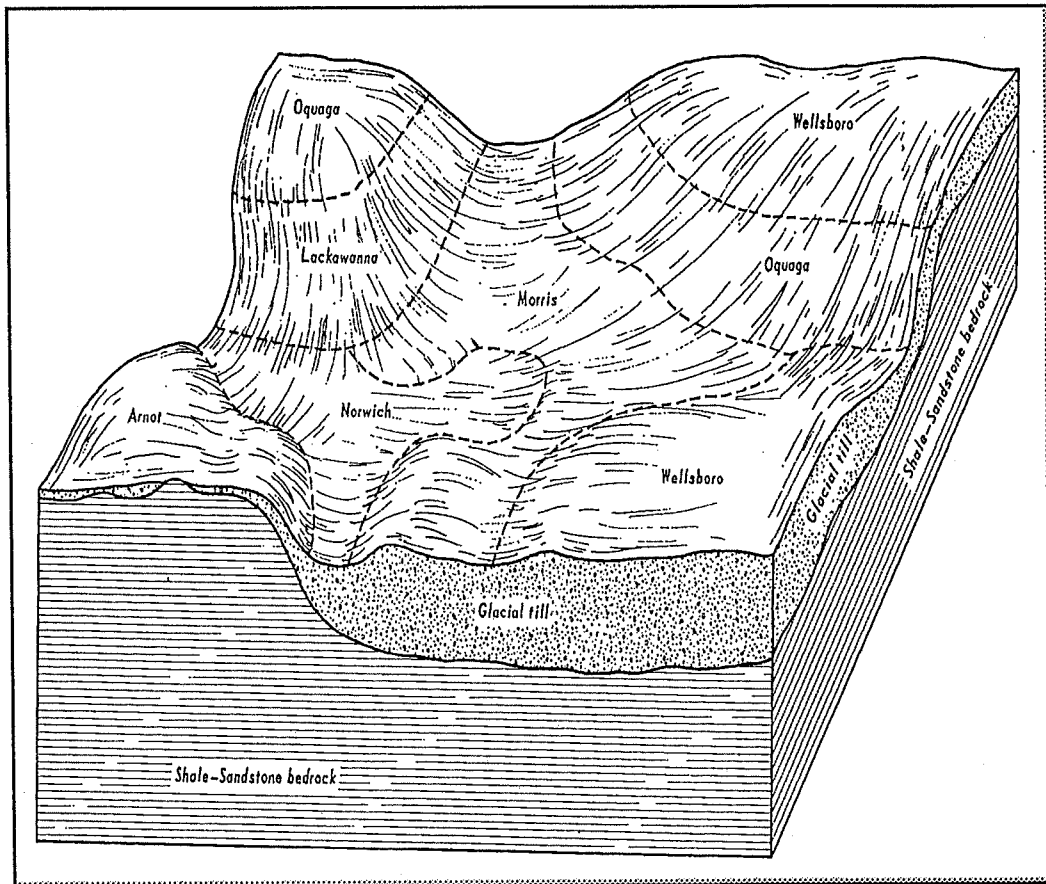


Figure III-10, Typical Pattern of Wellsboro-Morris-Oquaga Association

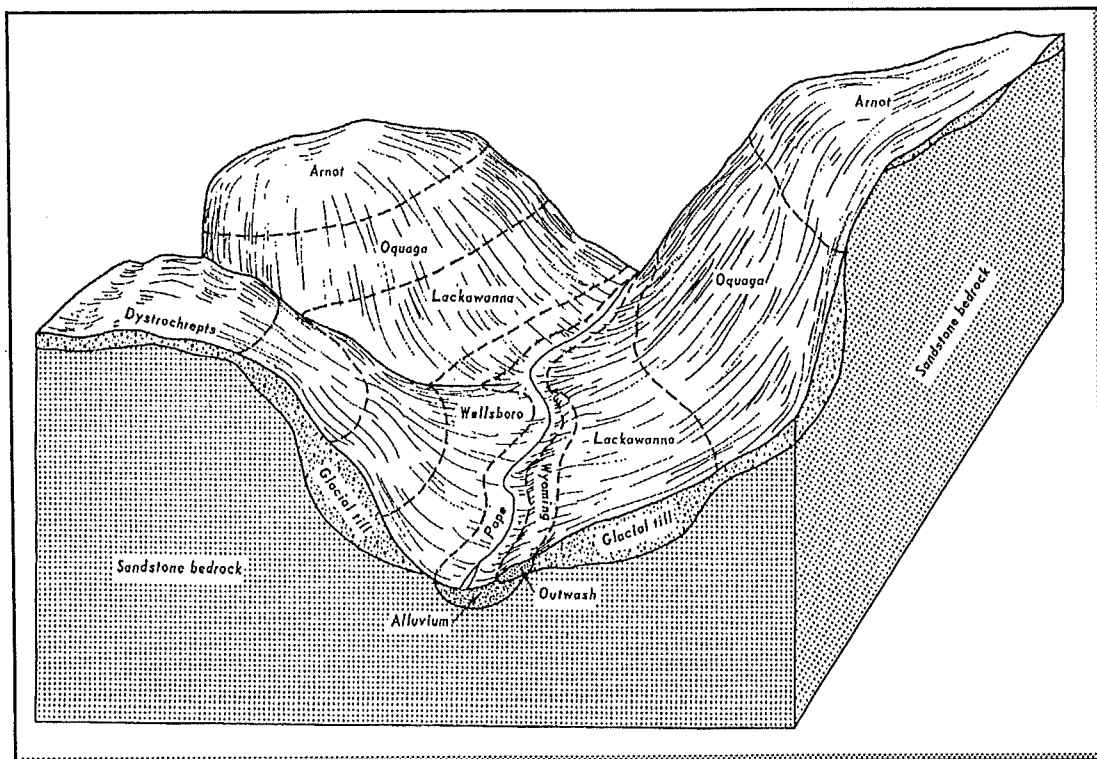


Figure II-11, Typical Pattern of Oquaga-Lackawanna-Arnot Association

TABLE III-1 – SOIL ASSOCIATIONS

Association 5 -- Wyoming-Pope

(See Figure III-12)

- found on terraces and flood plains
- nearly level to steep
- somewhat excessively drained
- **major limitations: flooding, low available water capacity, hazard of groundwater contamination**
- Wyoming - 50% of association, deep, gravelly, somewhat excessively drained, on terraces above flood plains
- Pope - 15% of association, deep, well drained, on flood plains
- 35% of association - Unadilla, Braceville and Atherton on terraces, Holly, Fluvents and Fluvaquents on flood plains

Source: *Soil Survey of Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties, Pennsylvania*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1982.

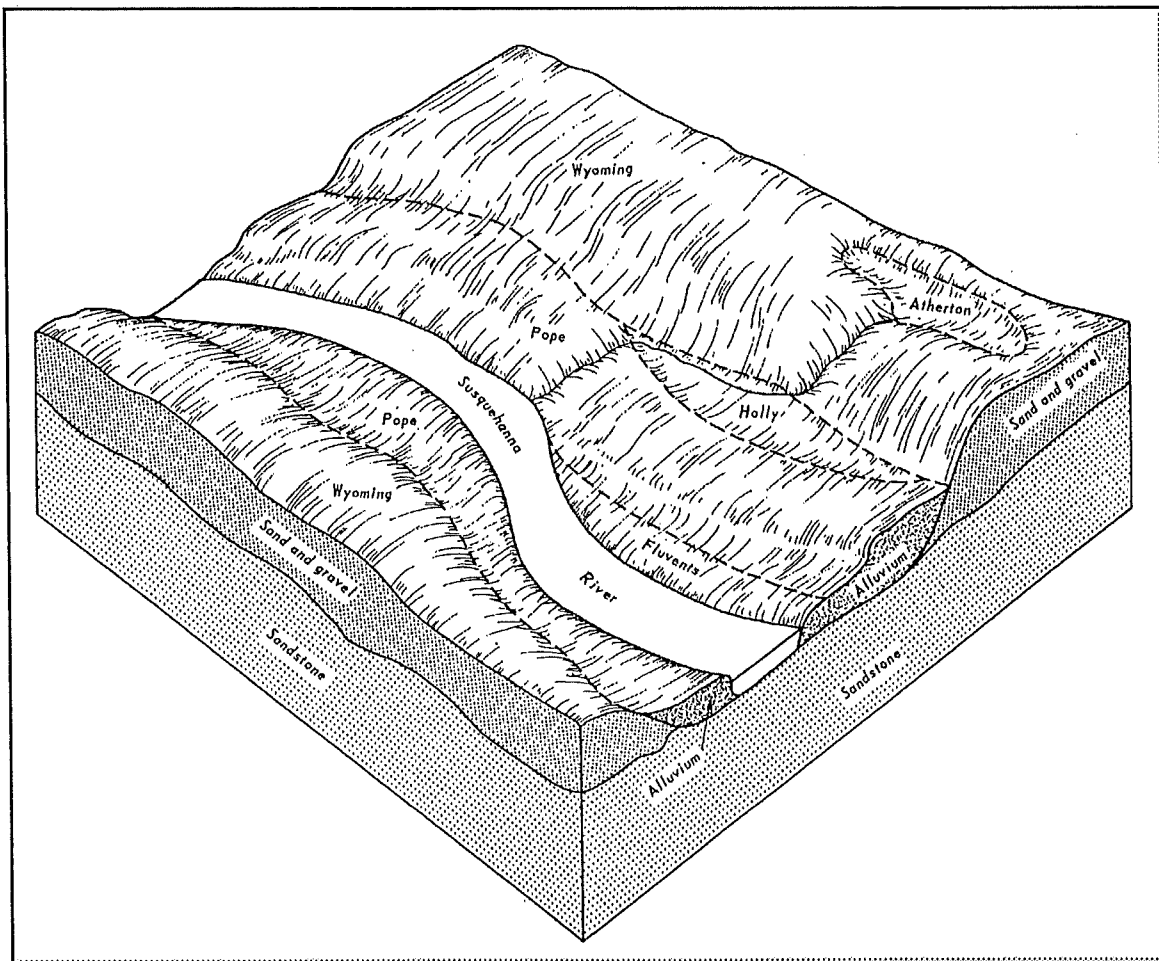


Figure III-12, Typical Pattern of Wyoming-Pope Association

Soil characteristics are one of the major determinants in the development process in rural areas like Falls Township. Because on-lot disposal is the primary means of sewage disposal in the Township, careful, site specific soils evaluations are needed in order to prevent possible groundwater contamination. The soils in the Township have been evaluated by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) for suitability for such uses as agriculture, community development, recreation, and sewage disposal, which is important to the planning area given the extent of agriculture and expected pressure for residential development. Soils which are most suitable for agriculture are also generally the most suitable for development. This detailed information is reported in the *Soil Survey of Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties, Pennsylvania*, which should be consulted for site specific information.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) classifies soils according to their on-lot sewage limitations in the following categories: none to slight, moderate, severe, and hazardous. Table 8, Sanitary Facilities, in the *Soil Survey* identifies almost all soils in the County as *severe* for septic tank absorption fields based on a variety of limiting factors including shallow depth to rock, rock outcrops, presence of large stones, slope, wetness, slow percolation, and flooding. The two exceptions are Unidilla soils with slight limitations and the more level Wyoming soils with slight to moderate limitations. In short, based on the soils mapping, few places would be suitable for on-lot disposal systems. This is obviously not the case given the construction of new homes and sewage systems. Areas of suitable soils exist within the larger classifications given the variability of soil formation and site characteristics.

Soils with no limitations are considered uniform, well-drained, sandy loam soils. Soils with slight limitations are also considered fairly uniform, well-drained to moderately well-drained soils of varying thickness, and generally well-suited for the use of standard methods of on-lot sewage disposal. However, many soils with moderate limitations can be used for the alternate methods of on-lot sewage disposal. These soils are suitable for elevated sand mounds, sand-lined trenches and beds, shallow placement areas and spray irrigation systems. Soils categorized as having severe limitations are generally moderately to poorly drained soils with a

limiting zone at a depth of twenty inches or less, either a fragipan layer, a seasonal high water table or shallow bedrock, or which are located in swampy areas or in flood plain adjacent to streams. For these reasons, these soils would be unsuitable for conventional on-site sewage disposal systems, but may be suitable for alternative methods depending upon the soil profile and percolation rate. Those soils deemed as hazardous by DEP standards would be extremely well-drained, highly permeable soils with a large content of gravel, stones and boulders, which would allow the rapid infiltration of water, and, therefore, would not provide adequate treatment of infiltrating sewage effluent.

Site-specific field investigation by the sewage enforcement officer are necessary to identify more areas suitable for standard methods. In addition, the slightly to moderately suitable soils with limiting zones at depths of twenty inches or more may be suitable for alternate methods as determined by field investigations. As more research is conducted on on-lot sewage disposal and new types of systems are permitted by DEP, these areas may become suitable for on-lot sewage which relies on soils. In short, Falls Township contains many soils which can easily accommodate on-lot sewage disposal systems, and, thus, are available for development.

In the *Soil Survey*, the NRCS has also classified soils into eight Capability Classes to generally show the suitability of soils for field crops, the risk of damage when cultivated, and the extent of management required. Class I soils are the most productive and have few limitations. Limitations and management requirements increase from Class II through Class IV soils, but these soils can be used productively for field crops. Some soils within Class I through IV may not be considered prime agricultural soils due to specific limitations such as slope. Class V through Class VIII have severe limitations that should preclude cultivation and limit use to pasture, woodland or wildlife habitat. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) was recently amended to include a definition of *prime agricultural land* which includes soils identified by NRCS as Class I, II and III. This is generally important because the local land use controls used to protect agriculture are adopted under the authority of the MPC. Unfortunately, this is not consistent with the Agricultural Security Law which includes lands in Capability Classes I through IV, excluding Class IV-e

which is a subclass susceptible to erosion.

Prime agricultural lands have the soil qualities, are situated in an area with an adequate growing season, and have the moisture supply needed to economically sustain high yields of crops when treated and managed in accord with modern farming methods. Prime agricultural soils exhibit the following characteristics:

- adequate moisture supply
- a suitable soil temperature regime - a mean annual temperature higher than 32° F at a depth of 20 inches
- pH between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1 meter) or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep. This range of pH is favorable for growing a wide variety of crops without adding large amounts of supplements
- no water table or a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth during the growing season
- lack excessive soluble salts that inhibit plant growth
- not flooded frequently during the growing season (less often than once in two years)
- do not have a serious erosion hazard
- a permeability rate of at least 0.06 inches per hour in the upper 20 inches
- less than 10 percent of the surface layer consists of rock fragments coarser than 3 inches

When compared to the total land area, relatively little of the Township is comprised of prime agricultural soils. These soils, given the location on moderate slopes and floodplain, were the first to be cleared and farmed. Most prime soils remain in agriculture, however, as noted earlier, these soils are also generally the most suitable for development, and more and more have been converted to residential and commercial use.

Minerals

The primary minerals of potential use extant in Falls Township, and the County as a whole, are bluestone and quarry stone associated with the underlying sandstone bedrock, and sand and gravel deposited by the glaciers and the movement of the Susquehanna River. Although bluestone quarries have long been a part of the County economy, no commercial bluestone cutters operate in the Township. However, stone is quarried by Wyoming Sand and Stone at Hilltop Quarry off Route 307, and two sand and gravel pits operate in the Township -- Geary's Enterprises and

American Asphalt. The geology and mineral extraction activities in the Township and other parts of the County suggest potential for additional mineral extraction operations.

Slopes

Another land suitability feature which limits the use of soils in Falls Township for agriculture, development and sewage disposal is slope. Slope is a measure of the vertical change in elevation over a given distance and is usually expressed as a percentage of the change of elevation over a horizontal distance of one-hundred feet. For example, if the ground elevation rises fifteen feet over a horizontal distance of one-hundred feet, the slope is fifteen percent. Given the geologic and physiographic character of the Township, many areas are precluded from agriculture and development by steep slopes. Steep slopes in the Township are shown on the *Steep Slopes Map* included with this *Plan*, and are found along mountainsides and hill tops, and along drainage and stream corridors and the Susquehanna River. Although, development on slopes in excess of fifteen percent is technically feasible, development costs increase dramatically as the slope increases, and the environmental concerns also escalate. For example, soil erosion control and storm water management are more difficult on steep slopes because rainfall run-off volume and velocity increase. In addition, on-site, subsurface sewage disposal systems require special engineering design on slopes over eight percent and are entirely prohibited if the slope exceeds twelve percent. However, most of the Township area falls below the steep slope threshold, and steep slopes are not significant in terms of limiting development.

Wetlands

Wetlands have in past times been considered wastelands, and, as a result, it is estimated that over half of all wetlands in the nation have been lost to development. In recent years the identification and protection of wetlands have surfaced as key elements of environmental protection. Three types of wetlands have been identified in Pennsylvania - emergent, scrub-shrub, and forested - which are classified according to vegetation type. Vegetation in emergent wetlands includes freestanding, non-woody plants such as cattails, reed canary grass, and rushes. Scrub-shrub wetlands are characterized by woody plants less than twenty feet in height. The presence of trees such as red maple, hemlock, yellow and river birch, pin oak and

ash over twenty feet tall, indicate a forested wetland. Standing water, or even saturated soil, need not be present to qualify an area as a wetland. A wetland, as defined by the *Federal Manual For Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands* is any area which supports hydrophytic plants (adapted to growth in saturated soil), contains hydric soils (wet soils) or where water is present at or near the surface of the soil at some time during the growing season. Site specific investigations must be conducted by trained individuals to accurately delineate wetlands. Given the national interest in wetland conservation, and the overlapping jurisdiction of federal and state agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection) wetland delineation and protection has evolved into a complex regulatory process. The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Maps, published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are the best tools for the preliminary identification of wetlands. Wetlands are superimposed over USGS 1:24,000 scale topographic maps and are identified and classified based on vegetation, visible hydrology, and geography. The accuracy of the maps is described as being at the ninety-five percent confidence level, but local experience indicates that the maps are not accurate for detailed site planning and site specific investigations are necessary for a final wetlands determination. In addition to the NWI maps, hydric soils descriptions found in the *Lackawanna and Wyoming Counties Soil Survey* provide a good indication of wetland locations in the Township.

Falls Township contains a number of wetlands, which are shown on the *Wetlands Map* included with this *Plan*. Wetlands have been identified with three ecological systems; lucastrine (associated with lakes), palustrine (upland) and riverine (associated with rivers or streams) wetlands. Palustrine wetlands predominate, with only localized areas of lucastrine associated with ponds and lakes and riverine wetlands. All three typical Pennsylvania upland wetland types, emergent, scrub-shrub and forested, have been identified in the planning area, along with a small number of limited *open water, unknown bottom* wetlands. Although the extent of wetland areas in the Township does not approach the proportion found in many other areas of Northeastern Pennsylvania, the environmental value of wetlands is substantial. In any case, the presence of wetlands will not limit the overall development of the

Townships. However, the development which does occur must provide for the conservation of wetlands which are an integral part of the environment and provide such benefits as groundwater recharge, storm water control, surface water quality improvement and wildlife habitat.

Surface Waters

Falls Township and all of Wyoming County lie in the Susquehanna River Watershed with the Susquehanna flowing to the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. Most of the Township falls within the Buttermilk Creek Watershed. (See the *Watersheds Map* included with this *Plan*.) Buttermilk Creek flows into the Susquehanna River at Falls and flowing along Route 307 for much of its course, from its origin at Fords Pond in Glenburn and Newton Townships, Lackawanna County. Beaver Creek, which flows south from Lake Winola and Falls Creek which flows west from Newton Township feed Buttermilk Creek, joining it south of Mill City. Keeler Creek drains the southern section of the Township, and the Post Hill area drains to Fitch Creek, both creeks emptying directly into the Susquehanna.

While no critical water quality problems have been reported in any of the streams, no extensive water quality monitoring has been conducted. The watersheds in Falls Township are relatively small when compared to others in the County so such monitoring would not be a daunting task. For example, Eaton Township lies at the downstream end of the Bowman's Creek Watershed. *The Bowman's Creek Watershed is an area of 120 square miles, all within Wyoming and Luzerne Counties. At a glance, the watershed contains some 20 tributary streams, forested state game lands, a part of Ricketts Glen State Park, 12 municipalities, farmland, and a handful of small lakes.*² The Bowman's Creek Watershed Association, (see the adjoining sidebar) with funding provided by the State Growing Greener Grant Program is preparing a Rivers Conservation Plan which will detail the resources and problem areas in the entire watershed, and make the Association eligible for additional grants for the correction of identified problems. A number of problems have been identified. Low stream pH (high acidity) from acid rain, which falls on the area soils

²Bowman's Creek Watershed Association
Brochure

with little buffering capacity, results in loss of fish and other aquatic life. Stream bank erosion, land development, and poor agricultural practices all contribute to the non-point pollutant loading.

The Bowman's Creek Watershed Association is a group of citizens working to ensure the long term health of the environment in the area of Bowman's Creek in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The word "Watershed" in our name indicates how the BCWA approaches this work. The group views the area's environment, not as parcels of land or wildlife species independent of their surroundings, but existing in a larger framework called a watershed.

A watershed is an area of land from which all rain or snowmelt runs off to a common stream or body of water Bowman's Creek is the common stream in the area that "collects" all of the small tributary streams, whose origins on top of the surrounding mountains and hilltops mark the boundaries of the watershed. In this way, the creek ultimately drains an entire area of land. The BCWA employs the scientific approach that says the earth's forests, streams, wildlife and other resources are best managed at the level of whole watersheds.

The Association is a local group at heart, led by watershed residents. Our strong point is how we're made up of partnerships by various groups and agencies from local, state and national levels, where the focus is the health of the watersheds environment. The Association consists of partnering conservation groups, businesses, municipalities, state agencies and schools.

The BCWA works to monitor, restore and conserve the watersheds resources, such as water quality, forested land, and fish and wildlife. The group also promotes work to preserve and protect local resources like wetlands, open space, farmland and scenic areas. The Association seeks a balance between the economic health and environmental health of the watershed.

The BCWA is a non-profit, member-supported organization. . . Members are local business people, municipality officials, watershed residents, and many watershed friends. The BCWA was formed April 26, 1998 by a joint effort of the Noxen-Monroe Sportsman~Association and the Stanley Cooper Sr Chapter of Trout Unlimited.³

An association to focus on the Buttermilk Creek

Watershed and smaller watersheds in the Township would be an invaluable asset in terms of initiating a water quality monitoring program, educating the public, and working to solve any water quality issues in the watershed.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regulates surface water quality and has developed water quality standards for all surface waters in the Commonwealth. These standards, which are designed to safeguard the streams, rivers, and lakes throughout Pennsylvania, include water quality designations and associated water quality regulations necessary to protect the water bodies and their use for water supplies and recreation. The role of the Township in surface water quality protection is two-fold. The Townships should encourage the formation of a local Watershed Association to work toward good water quality. In addition, development in general must be carefully managed to ensure compliance with any Township zoning, subdivision and sewage regulations. The balance between good water quality and future growth and development will require meticulous consideration to weigh the impact on water quality against the need for economic growth, and the added expense for water quality protection technology against the need to protect water quality.

Such local efforts will support the efforts of the Chesapeake Bay Program which is aimed at improving water quality throughout the 64,000-square mile watershed area with the ultimate goal of protecting the Bay ecosystem. Major concerns for the Susquehanna River in Wyoming County include soil erosion and sedimentation, agricultural run-off and industrial pollutants from upstream.

Floodplain

During the period of early settlement and later development of most regions, waterways played a key role as transportation routes and later as a source of power for operating grain mills, sawmills, and other industries. In addition, the land located along streams and rivers was conducive to development - soils are generally fertile for agriculture and the terrain relatively level, facilitating the construction of roads and buildings. Those stream-side areas often developed into settlements and then expanded as the population grew. However, an often unanticipated problem with river/stream valley settlement is flooding. As

³Bowman's Creek Watershed Association
Brochure

development continued and natural drainage patterns were altered, increases in stormwater run-off heightened the potential for flooding and property damage. Both the state and federal government now administer programs for flood control and flood plain development and provide certain regulatory standards which local municipalities must adopt in order for property owners to be eligible for flood insurance.

The lowlands along the Susquehanna River encompass the majority of floodplain in Falls Township. (See the *Floodplain Map* included with this *Plan*.) Less extensive floodplain is found along Buttermilk Creek and Beaver Creek. A number of homes are located in the floodplain along Route 92 upstream of St. Michael's School towards Whites Ferry and these are the only homes in the Township to have sustained any flood damage.

However, the Township has, when compared with other municipalities, relatively few areas where flooding is a significant threat to large numbers of improved properties. (As compared to, for example, urban communities along the Susquehanna River in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.) Nevertheless, flooding is a very real problem and must be considered in any land use planning process. The Township has adopted floodplain regulations which comply with state and federal requirements.

State and federal laws mandate the participation of local governments in the flood plain management program as a prerequisite to the purchase of flood plain insurance by individual property owners. The National Flood Insurance Program is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which also has prepared and issued the maps which identify flood prone areas throughout the Country. The Pennsylvania Flood plain Management Act (Act 166 of 1978) requires local municipal participation in the flood plain management program, or state funding allocations such as Liquid Fuel Funds can be withheld. Local municipal regulations range from a total prohibition of flood plain development to requirements for flood-proofing and the elevation of buildings. Flood hazard areas are identified for the *100-year flood* which is a flood event of a magnitude which is expected to be equaled or exceeded once on the average during any 100-year period. This is a long term average period between such floods; and such floods can occur at

shorter intervals or conceivably in the same year.

Sewage Disposal

The disposal of wastewater must be addressed by all communities, but especially by a community that is experiencing or anticipates growth and development. The volume of wastewater generated is directly related to a community's population and the extent and nature of commercial and residential development. In Falls Township, wastewater is comprised of sewage, that is, human wastes associated with residential and retail/service types of commercial development. Industrial wastewater disposal is not an issue in the Township. Sewage disposal is one of the most critical factors affecting the future growth and development of the planning area. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regulations allow for two basic types of sewage treatment and effluent disposal - soil based disposal of effluent including individual, subsurface disposal and spray irrigation; and the discharge of treated effluent to surface waters (i.e. lakes and streams). Solids, following treatment, are either applied to agricultural lands or are disposed of in an approved solid waste landfill. Sewage disposal is critical because without a cost-effective and environmentally sound method, the area's growth and development will be limited.

As discussed in previous sections, many soils in the Township have severe limitations for extensive use for land based sewage effluent disposal, both in terms of physical characteristics and the cost of land if proposed for spray irrigation or large disposal beds. At the same time, surface water quality protection is paramount to maintaining the area's rural/recreational character and quality of life. Finding a sensible solution within the bounds of current Department of Environmental Protection regulations and the reluctance to rely on a proliferation of treatment plants with stream discharges is a perplexing problem. It is clear that cost-effective and environmentally sound alternatives for sewage disposal must be identified by the scientific community and then must be legitimized by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) via their regulatory process.

With the exception of a package sewage treatment plant serving the St. Michael's School for Boys, homes, businesses and institutional uses in the Township rely on the use of a septic tank and subsurface soil disposal

of the effluent, which includes both in-ground seepage beds and elevated sand mounds. In some cases, such as the two Wyoming County Housing Authority Projects and the Elementary School, the systems are very large. Soil conditions in the area dictate that most new systems are elevated sand mounds. It is also important to remember that many of the housing units in Falls Township were constructed prior to the 1969 state enactment of sewage regulations, implying that many of the sewage disposal systems do not meet current DEP standards. Fortunately, many of these homes are situated on larger lots where the effects of malfunctions are less critical. In any case, no widespread sewage system malfunctions have been identified in the Township. Any reported malfunctions are investigated by the Township Sewage Enforcement Officer with corrections ordered in accord with DEP regulations.

Land application (spray irrigation) has found only limited use in the region for larger systems due to the need for large spray areas and the winter storage of effluent. Spray systems and greenhouse systems for individual homes are now permissible under new DEP regulations and may, given that the soil requirements are less stringent, allow the development of certain areas which were previously precluded due to poor soils. In addition to the need to identify land-based alternatives for sewage disposal to assure protection of ground and surface water, is the need to improve existing or develop new institutional arrangements for the monitoring and possible operation of sewage disposal systems. Some communities have initiated municipally-operated on-site sewage disposal management programs, sewage treatment plant inspection and monitoring, and in some cases, municipal acquisition and operation of private sewage treatment plants. Local municipal officials should encourage the Department of Environmental Protection to actively investigate the use of alternative sewage disposal methods to meet the needs of rural municipalities and other areas of the state.

Stormwater and Soil Erosion and Sedimentation

As is the case with sewage disposal, proper stormwater and soil erosion and sedimentation control are vital to maintaining water quality and minimizing flooding. The water that runs off the land into surface waters during and immediately following a rain storm is referred to as stormwater. In an area undergoing development, the volume of stormwater resulting from

a particular rainfall event increases because of the reduction in pervious land area; that is, land not covered by pavement or buildings, or other surfaces which prevent or restrict the percolation of water into the soil. Although many factors interact to affect this segment of the hydrologic cycle, the most significant that influence the volume of stormwater are amount and intensity of the precipitation, surface depression storage, and infiltration into the soil.

The alteration of native cover and topography for residential, commercial, and industrial uses results, in almost all cases, in decreased infiltration and increased run-off of rainfall. This can result in an increase in both the volume and flow rate of stormwater. As development in the Township increases, so too will the problem of dealing with the increasing quantity of stormwater from building sites, roads, parking areas and other impervious surfaces. Poor agricultural and forest management practices also can contribute to stormwater and soil erosion problems. Failure to properly manage increased or accelerated runoff has resulted in increased flooding and stream channel erosion and siltation and reduced groundwater recharge. Silt and sediment washed into streams and lakes carries nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, that can result in water quality degradation resulting in algae blooms and deterioration of aquatic habitats, for example. Stormwater management involves the planning for and implementation of structural and non-structural control methods to mitigate the adverse impacts that can result from the land alteration and development processes.

In June of 1972, in the form of Hurricane Agnes, Pennsylvania received a resounding message that stormwater runoff demanded regulation. The scope of damage that storm inflicted caused lawmakers to pause. Although there is little anyone can do to prevent damage from a storm of that magnitude, damage from other, more frequent, storms can be minimized. Future stormwater problems from increased development can be addressed with watershed stormwater plans developed under Act 167, the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act, which also incorporates soil erosion and sedimentation controls. In 1978, the Pennsylvania General Assembly approved the Stormwater Management Act, P.L. 864, No. 167. Act 167 was adopted based on the statewide recognition of the adverse effects of inadequate management of excessive

rates and volumes of stormwater resulting from development. A statement of findings in Act 167 points out that inadequate management of accelerated runoff of stormwater resulting from development throughout a watershed increases runoff velocities and flood levels. This increased flood flow and velocity contributes directly to erosion and sedimentation, overtaxes the carrying capacity of streams and storm sewers, greatly increases the cost of public facilities to carry and control stormwater, undermines flood plain management and flood plain control efforts in downstream communities, and reduces groundwater recharge, thus threatening public health and safety. The Act states that a comprehensive program of stormwater management is fundamental for the protection of the people of the Commonwealth, their resources and their environment. Act 167 requires all Pennsylvania counties to prepare and adopt stormwater management plans for each watershed located in the County. Stormwater planning under Act 167 is the responsibility of the counties in Pennsylvania; the implementation of stormwater controls, via a local ordinance, rests with the local municipality and is mandated by the Act for each municipality in the watershed where a plan has been adopted. The plans are to provide for uniform standards and criteria throughout a watershed for the management of stormwater flowing from development sites. The types and degree of controls are based on the expected development patterns and hydrologic characteristics of each individual watershed; and can include such controls as detention basins, infiltration pits, parking lot storage and porous pavement.

An Act 67 Stormwater Management Plan has not been completed for any of the watersheds in the Township, owing largely to the fact, as noted earlier, that the watersheds are relatively small. Once a stormwater plan is completed for a particular watershed, a model ordinance is drafted at the county level and local municipalities must adopt an ordinance, using the model to implement the recommendations of the plan. The application of the ordinance can be best summarized by Section 13 of Act 167, which defines the duties of a developer of land:

Any landowner and any person engaged in the alteration or development of land which may affect stormwater runoff characteristics shall implement such measures consistent with the provisions of the applicable watershed stormwater plan as are reasonably necessary to prevent injury to

health safety, or other property. Such measures shall include such actions as are required:

1. *To assure that the maximum rate of stormwater runoff is no greater after development than prior to development activities; or,*
2. *To manage the quantity, velocity, and direction of resulting stormwater runoff in a manner which otherwise adequately protects health and property from possible injury.*

It is unlikely that a state-sponsored stormwater plan will be completed for the watersheds in the Township any time soon. State funding is limited and is generally targeted to larger watersheds. Nevertheless, the Township can include stormwater management standards in the subdivision and land development ordinance to accomplish the stated purposes of Act 167.

All activities which involve earth disturbance are required by DEP regulations to provide for the control of soil erosion. In addition, most municipalities have provisions for erosion and sedimentation control in their subdivision and land development ordinances, as does Wyoming County. The Wyoming County Conservation District, a County agency under delegation agreement with the DEP, provides technical assistance for the preparation of soil erosion and sedimentation control plans. The District is also responsible for approving soil erosion plans and also monitors land development projects for conformance to approved plans and compliance to DEP regulations. Although, the District does inspect for compliance, actual enforcement and any legal action remains the responsibility of DEP.

Flora and Fauna

Falls Township's extensive woodlands and open spaces provide a broad range of habitat for vegetation and wildlife. The forested area of Township is primarily comprised of hardwoods with smaller areas of hemlock and white pine scattered throughout the area. The diversity of these habitats and the wetland and aquatic ecosystems give Falls Township and all of Wyoming County a unique blend of natural areas and fragile ecosystems where an abundant population of wildlife and mix of vegetation typical to eastern Pennsylvania thrive. Township efforts to preserve open space and protect floodplain and wetlands will also serve to maintain wildlife habitats.

DEMOGRAPHICS and ECONOMIC BASE

Demographics

Why is the understanding of population demographics important to planning for the growth and development of a community? The demographic composition of a community's population is affected by the geographic, physical and economic character of the community. At the same time, the demographic composition is largely responsible for the manner in which a community develops and grows (or declines) in terms of demand for community facilities and services to meet the specific needs of the changing population, thereby altering the very character of the community. In short, by gaining an understanding of the demographic character of a community and forecasting how the population is likely to change, both in number and composition, local officials can assess the need for additional or different types of public and private facilities and services required to meet the demands of the changing population.

Take for example the suburbs of New York City and Newark, New Jersey. These two cities, given their location with access to the Atlantic Seaboard and inland areas, historically functioned as the focus for trade and industry for much of the Northeast United States. As the population became more mobile with increased automobile ownership and improved highways, more and more urbanites moved from the city to nearby residential areas and commuted daily to their jobs in the city. As once rural areas developed into suburbs, the demands placed on local governments changed as the population changed. More highways, public water supplies, and public sewage disposal systems were needed. Along with the increasing population came the demand for commercial facilities to meet the retail and service needs of the changing population. In more recent years, the growing suburban areas have witnessed the development of industry and business, which followed the population shift from the cities.

This scenario is, of course, a simple explanation of a complex urban development process that has occurred over the past century. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate that differing and changing populations demand different public and private facilities and services, and the change itself can be initiated and amplified by the specific character of the community

undergoing the population change. The example is especially appropriate for Falls Township and the other rural communities near the ever-expanding metropolitan areas of Pennsylvania, and to a lesser extent New Jersey and New York, where population characteristics and land development have been so closely linked to residents leaving metropolitan areas for recreation and relaxation, construction of vacation homes, and in many cases, permanent residency, in the more rural nearby municipalities.

Historic Population and Recent Trends

Falls Township is situated in the southeast section of Wyoming County lying just north of the Wilkes-Barre metropolitan area and west of the Scranton metropolitan area. From the beginning of its early settlement, the Township's demographic composition and community character have been closely linked to these two metropolitan areas which served as a market for agricultural products, and in later years as a place to find employment and a transportation hub. In more recent times, agriculture has declined, with the Township developing into a bedroom community of residents who are employed in nearby communities.

Table IV-1, Historical Population, provides U. S. Census data from 1960 to 2000 for Wyoming County, its twenty-three local municipalities, and the State, and Figure IV-1 presents a graphic representation of Falls Township population growth since 1960. The population in Wyoming County has historically been concentrated in the five boroughs.. However, in more recent times, while the higher density population remains concentrated in these historic population centers, most of the population growth is occurring in the Townships in the County. In fact, while most township populations have increased since 1960, the population of all the boroughs except Factoryville in the have declined in population or at most, have experienced slight increases.

The population of the Township increased steadily between 1960 and 1990 from 1,331 persons to 2,055. However, the 2000 Census report a small decrease in population, with the count falling to 1,997 persons. This seems somewhat counterintuitive given the

TABLE IV-1
HISTORICAL POPULATION AND GROWTH RATES
U.S. CENSUS

MUNICIPALITY	1960	1970	1980	% 70-80	1990	% 80-90	2000	# 90-00	% 90-00	% 60-00
Braintree Township	334	351	396	12.8%	465	17.4%	508	43	9.2%	52.1%
Clinton Township	420	658	1,099	67.0%	1,063	-3.3%	1,343	280	26.3%	219.8%
Eaton Township	861	1,163	1,636	40.7%	1,600	-2.2%	1,644	44	2.8%	90.9%
Exeter Township	503	601	640	6.5%	763	19.2%	748	(15)	-2.0%	48.7%
Factoryville Borough	991	922	924	0.2%	1,310	41.8%	1,144	(166)	-12.7%	15.4%
Falls Township	1,331	1,473	1,924	30.6%	2,055	6.8%	1,997	(58)	-2.8%	50.0%
Forkston Township	205	223	249	11.7%	316	26.9%	386	70	22.2%	88.3%
Laceyville Borough	468	452	498	10.2%	436	-12.5%	396	(40)	-9.2%	-15.4%
Lemon Township	567	701	856	22.1%	1,264	47.7%	1,189	(75)	-5.9%	109.7%
Mehoopany Township	600	677	878	29.7%	888	1.1%	993	105	11.8%	65.5%
Meshoppen Borough	470	482	571	18.5%	439	-23.1%	459	20	4.6%	-2.3%
Meshoppen Township	387	452	786	73.9%	879	11.8%	877	(2)	-0.2%	126.6%
Monroe Township	1,024	1,045	1,813	73.5%	1,802	-0.6%	1,836	34	1.9%	79.3%
Nicholson Borough	942	877	945	7.8%	857	-9.3%	713	(144)	-16.8%	-24.3%

TABLE IV-1
HISTORICAL POPULATION AND GROWTH RATES
U.S. CENSUS

MUNICIPALITY	1960	1970	1980	% 70-80	1990	% 80-90	2000	# 90-00	% 90-00	% 60-00
Nicholson Township	686	737	1,244	68.8%	1,287	3.5%	1,361	74	5.8%	98.4%
North Branch Township	118	126	156	23.8%	168	7.7%	197	29	17.3%	66.9%
Northmoreland Township	720	767	1,162	51.5%	1,462	25.8%	1,463	1	0.1%	103.2%
Noxen Township	966	822	1,048	27.5%	961	-8.3%	951	(10)	-1.0%	-1.6%
Overfield Township	644	913	1,338	46.6%	1,466	9.6%	1,532	66	4.5%	137.9%
Tunkhannock Borough	2,297	2,251	2,144	-4.8%	2,251	5.0%	1,911	(340)	-15.1%	-16.8%
Tunkhannock Township	1,389	2,200	4,399	100.0%	4,371	-0.6%	4,298	(73)	-1.7%	209.4%
Washington Township	459	614	1,031	67.9%	1,212	17.6%	1,306	94	7.8%	184.5%
Windham Township	431	575	696	21.0%	778	11.8%	828	50	6.4%	92.1%
Wyoming County	16,813	19,082	26,433	38.5%	28,076	6.2%	28,080	4	0.0%	67.0%

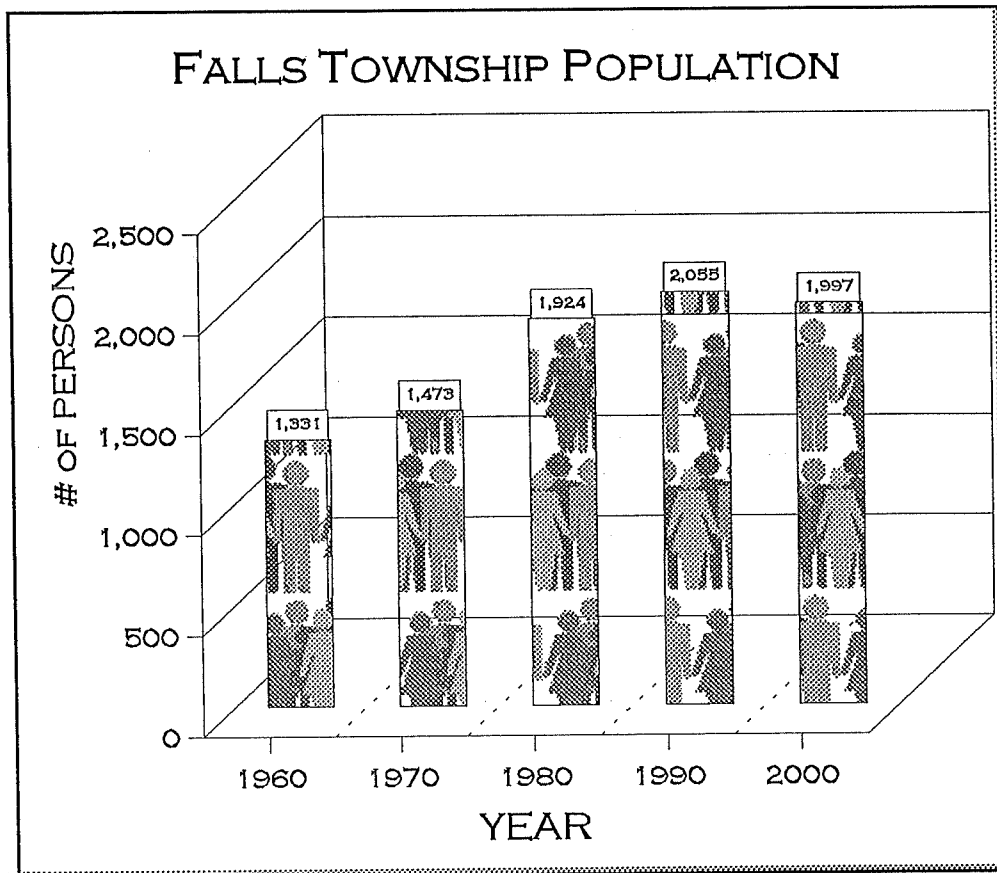


Figure IV-1

historically increasing population and the construction of sixty-five housing units between 1990 and 2000 (see Table IV-9). The possibility of incorrect Census counts must also be considered when such anomalies occur in the data. In any case, the Falls Township growth rate since 1960 has been a robust fifty percent, an increase of almost 670 residents.

Growth rates have varied considerably among the municipalities in the County, with Clinton Township experiencing the highest rate and number increase between 1990 and 2000, with Nicholson Borough seeing the greatest proportionate decrease and Tunkhannock Borough undergoing the largest decrease in the number of residents. Overall, the County lost a total of four residents in the 1990-2000 decade. Some of the highest ten-year growth rates in the County occurred between 1970 and 1980, a time when Proctor and Gamble employees were settling in the area. Proctor and Gamble, a paper product manufacturer which started production in 1966, employs some 2,500 workers from a seven-county area. Concurrently, many victims of the 1972 Agnes Flood relocated out of the

Susquehanna floodplain into Wyoming County. Another factor affecting individual municipal population is proximity to the Scranton and Wilkes-Barre metropolitan areas. For example, the number of residents in Clinton Township, situated close to the Abingtons and Scranton in Lackawanna County increased by more than one-fourth between 1990 and 2000. Similarly, Northmoreland Township's 1980-1990 strong growth may be attributed to its proximity to the expanding Dallas/Back Mountain area of Luzerne County.

In any event, the population of Falls Township and Wyoming County as a whole remains rural, and despite the reported population decrease between 1990 and 2000, the Township is expected to increase modestly into the future. Given the relatively small base population, it is obvious that most of the historical population increase in the Township resulted from people moving into the community rather than from natural increase, that is more births than deaths. This population growth and anticipated growth stimulated by nearby metropolitan areas has highlighted many of

TABLE IV-2
RECENT POPULATION GROWTH IN NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA
2010 PROJECTIONS - CENTER FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

	1980	80-90	1990	90-00	2000	00-10	2010
Falls Township	1,924	6.8%	2,055	-2.8%	1,997	--	--
Bradford Co.	62,919	-3.1%	60,967	2.9%	62,761	0.0%	62,760
Carbon Co.	53,285	6.7%	56,846	3.4%	58,802	9.4%	64,310
Columbia Co.	61,967	2.0%	63,202	1.5%	64,151	-4.5%	61,280
Lackawanna Co.	227,908	-3.9%	219,039	-2.6%	213,295	-0.9%	211,360
Luzerne Co.	343,079	-4.4%	328,149	-2.7%	319,250	1.7%	324,520
Monroe Co.	69,409	37.9%	95,709	44.9%	138,687	24.1%	172,170
Pike Co.	18,271	53.1%	27,966	65.6%	46,302	29.7%	60,060
Sullivan Co.	6,349	-3.9%	6,104	7.4%	6,556	9.2%	7,160
Susquehanna Co.	37,876	6.6%	40,380	4.6%	42,238	8.8%	45,970
Wayne Co.	35,237	13.4%	39,944	19.5%	47,722	4.3%	49,750
Wyoming Co.	26,433	6.2%	28,076	0.0%	28,080	25.3%	35,190
PA (1,000's)	11,865	0.1%	11,882	3.4%	12,281	1.0%	12,408

the growth and development issues now being discussed by area local officials – loss of open land, traffic, increased numbers of school children, and demand for recreation, police protection and other public facilities and services.

Certainly, national and regional economic conditions can also be expected to either stimulate or inhibit the short term development patterns of the region. In short, the population dynamics of a community are dependent on a number of interrelated factors including location, relationship to the region, the economy, community character, the availability of community facilities such as sewage disposal and the transportation network. Given the Township's geographic locations in close proximity to the greater Wilkes-Barre and Scranton metropolitan economic trading areas, the rural character appeal for residential development, and the regional highway network, continued long term growth appears inevitable.

Table IV-2, Recent Population Growth in Northeast Pennsylvania, provides details on the recent population growth of Falls Township compared to Wyoming County, surrounding counties and the Commonwealth. With the exception of Wyoming County, the rural counties increased dramatically in population between 1990 and 2000 and are expected to increase through the next decade. In fact, owing to the attraction of the Poconos to nearby metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, Pike, Monroe and Wayne Counties had the highest rates of growth in the Commonwealth. By contrast, the population of the more densely populated counties, Lackawanna and Luzerne, has declined with the same trend expected through the Year 2010 for Lackawanna County. By comparison, the Commonwealth as a whole has been increasing slightly in population since 1980, and a five percent increase is expected over the next ten years. These trends suggest continued population growth for rural areas as individuals and families leave more urbanized areas seeking suburban and rural lifestyles.

TABLE IV-3 - PERCENT OF COUNTY AND POPULATION DENSITY
U.S. CENSUS

	1990	1990 % of County	2000	2000 % of County	Area (sq mi)	Area % of County	Population Density (persons per sq mi)
Braintrim Township	465	1.7%	508	1.8%	6.0	1.5%	84.7
Clinton Township	1,063	3.8%	1,343	4.8%	12.2	3.1%	110.1
Eaton Township	1,600	5.7%	1,644	5.9%	35.9	9.0%	45.8
Exeter Township	763	2.7%	748	2.7%	3.1	0.8%	241.3
Factroyville Borough	1,310	4.7%	1,144	4.1%	0.7	0.2%	1,634.3
Falls Township	2,055	7.3%	1,997	7.1%	20.7	5.2%	96.5
Forkston Township	316	1.1%	386	1.4%	70.8	17.8%	5.5
Laceyville Borough	436	1.6%	396	1.4%	0.2	0.1%	1,980.0
Lemon Township	1,264	4.5%	1,189	4.2%	15.9	4.0%	74.8
Mehoopany Township	888	3.2%	993	3.5%	17.2	4.3%	57.7
Meshoppen Borough	439	1.6%	459	1.6%	0.7	0.2%	655.7
Meshoppen Township	879	3.1%	877	3.1%	15.5	3.9%	56.6
Monroe Township	1,802	6.4%	1,836	6.5%	20.7	5.2%	88.7
Nicholson Borough	857	3.1%	713	2.5%	1.2	0.3%	594.2
Nicholson Township	1,287	4.6%	1,361	4.8%	22.8	5.7%	59.7
North Branch Township	168	0.6%	197	0.7%	22.3	5.6%	8.8
Northmoreland Township	1,462	5.2%	1,463	5.2%	19.8	5.0%	73.9
Noxen Township	961	3.4%	951	3.4%	28.5	7.2%	33.4
Overfield Township	1,466	5.2%	1,532	5.5%	9.9	2.5%	154.7
Tunkhannock Borough	2,251	8.0%	1,911	6.8%	0.9	0.2%	2,123.3
Tunkhannock Township	4,371	15.6%	4,298	15.3%	31.1	7.8%	138.2
Washington Township	1,212	4.3%	1,306	4.7%	18.7	4.7%	69.8
Windham Township	778	2.8%	828	2.9%	22.3	5.6%	37.1
Wyoming County	28,076	100.0%	28,080	100.0%	397.2	100.0%	70.7
PA (1,000's)	11,882	-	12,281	-	44.8		274.1

TABLE IV-4 - 2000 MIGRATION
U. S. CENSUS

	Falls Township	
	#	%
persons 5 years and over	1,878	100.0%
Residence in 1995		
same house in 1995	1,379	73.4%
different house in U.S.	497	26.5%
same county	194	10.3%
different county in PA	247	13.2%
different state	56	3.0%
elsewhere in 1995	2	0.1%

Population Density and Distribution

Based on a 20.7-square mile land area and the Census 2000 population of 2,055, Falls Township’s population density in 2000 was 96.5. Population density for the municipalities in the County ranged from a high of 2,123 persons per square mile in Tunkhannock Borough to a low of about six persons per square mile in Forkston Township. The land area of all County municipalities ranges from Laceyville Borough’s compact area of 0.2 square mile to Forkston Township’s 70.8 square miles. Falls Township includes 5.2 percent of the total area of the County. Population density and distribution for the County and local municipalities, and the Commonwealth is presented in Table IV-3, Percent of County and Population Density. In 2000, the Township comprised twenty-one percent of the County population, about on par with the 1990 proportion. As the population continues to increase, the density will, obviously, also continue to increase. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the population of Falls Township will remain rural for many years into the future. One way of addressing increased population while maintaining rural character is to promote land conservation programs and adopt zoning and subdivision regulations which require open land as part of residential development.

Migration

As reported in the 2000 Census, see Table IV-4 200 Migration, most people in Falls Township lived in the same home in 2000 as in 1995. However, almost

twenty-seven percent did live in a different residence five years before the 2000 Census, with about ten percent having moved into Falls Township from a different location in Wyoming County, thirteen percent from other areas of Pennsylvania, and three percent from out-of-state. While this proportion is not significant when compared to the migration occurring in the Pocono Mountains, it does point to the potential volatility of rural populations subject to influences of migration from nearby metropolitan areas.

TABLE IV-5
FALLS TOWNSHIP
POPULATION PROJECTIONS

2000 Census Population		1,997		
10-Year Projected Growth Rate	Projected Population			
	Year 2005	Year 2010	Year 2020	
5%	2,047	2,098	2,149	
10%	2,097	2,202	2,307	
15%	2,147	2,308	2,469	

Population Projections

Table IV-5, Falls Population Projections, provides a forecast of population based on five, ten and fifteen percent growth rates. As noted earlier, the Falls Township growth rate in the past forty years was fifty percent, or an average of about twelve percent per decade. Given the recent history of slower and declining population growth, near term growth rates approaching the fifteen percent rate are not expected. Based on a five percent growth rate, the population would reach about 2,100 by 2010 and 2,150 by 2020. In 2010, the Township population density, while increasing from ninety-seven to 101 persons per square mile, would remain far less than that of the Boroughs in the County, and the Township would continue to be rural in character, although many new lots and housing units will be required to meet the demands of the population. In any case, the population is expected to increase and this will place more and more demand for housing with the associated decrease in agricultural land and open space. In terms of future planning at the Township level, the increase in population, while not that significant in the actual number of new residents in

the Township, can be expected to result in the platting of new lots given the land ownership patterns in the Township. That is, unlike many growing municipalities, relatively few undeveloped lots in already existing residential subdivisions are available in the Township. Township conservation design subdivision standards and conservation easement acquisition, are two examples of land use management tools which can be used to preserve open land.

Age of Population

The age of a community's population is important in terms of the types of community facilities and services which must be provided. Many of the services which are age dependant are provided by public entities other than the Township. For example, the number of children determines the size and type of educational facilities and services provided by the school district, while an aging population will require more social services from county and state agencies. Table IV-6, Population Age Distribution, includes age data for the Township for the Year 2000 and Figure IV-2 provides an illustration. Table IV-7, Age Cohorts Comparison, provides a comparison with Wyoming County and the State, and reports the changes between 1990 and 2000, with Figure IV-3 illustrating the comparison.

The age distribution of the Township, County and Commonwealth are generally similar, with the most noticeable difference found in the older school age groups. In 2000, the Township had a higher proportion 10-14 and 15-19 year-olds than the County and State, while the proportion of young adults, was two points lower than the State. This may reflect the emigration of college students and younger workers seeking employment. As shown on Table IV-7, the decrease in the proportion of children in the Township between 1990 and 2000 was significant, almost seventeen percent compared to an overall increase of almost five percent state-wide. The proportion of working age residents and senior citizens increased slightly in the Township, as each did in the County and Commonwealth.

Although the Township population decreased since 1990, especially in the proportion of children, longer term growth is expected. In addition to the demand for more dwelling units and building lots created by an increase in total population, an increase in the number of younger families and children in the population results in more demand on the school system and for such community facilities as recreation parks and playgrounds. However, while the proportions of age groups in the Township has changed somewhat over the past ten years, the actual change in numbers has not been so great that the demand for services will change significantly in the near term. In any case, local officials must continue to assess the range of community facilities and services required to meet the needs of its changing population.

TABLE IV-6
TOWNSHIP, COUNTY AND STATE
2000 AGE DISTRIBUTION - U.S. CENSUS

Age	Falls Township		Percent	
	#	%	Wyo Co	PA
< 5	122	6.1%	5.8%	5.9%
5-9	126	6.3%	7.1%	6.7%
10-14	176	8.8%	7.7%	7.0%
15-19	185	9.3%	7.9%	6.9%
20-24	80	4.0%	5.0%	6.1%
25-34	231	11.6%	12.3%	12.7%
35-44	332	16.6%	15.7%	15.9%
45-54	289	14.5%	15.0%	13.9%
55-59	125	6.3%	5.9%	5.0%
60-64	81	4.1%	4.3%	4.2%
65-74	141	7.1%	7.0%	7.9%
75-84	88	4.4%	4.7%	5.8%
85+	21	1.1%	1.5%	1.9%
Total	1,997	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
18+	1,433	71.8%	74.5%	76.2%
21+	1,370	68.6%	70.3%	72.0%
62+	291	14.6%	15.6%	18.1%
65+	250	12.5%	13.2%	15.6%
Male	1,050	52.6%	49.6%	48.3%
Female	947	47.4%	50.4%	51.7%
Median age	37.4	—	37.8	38.0

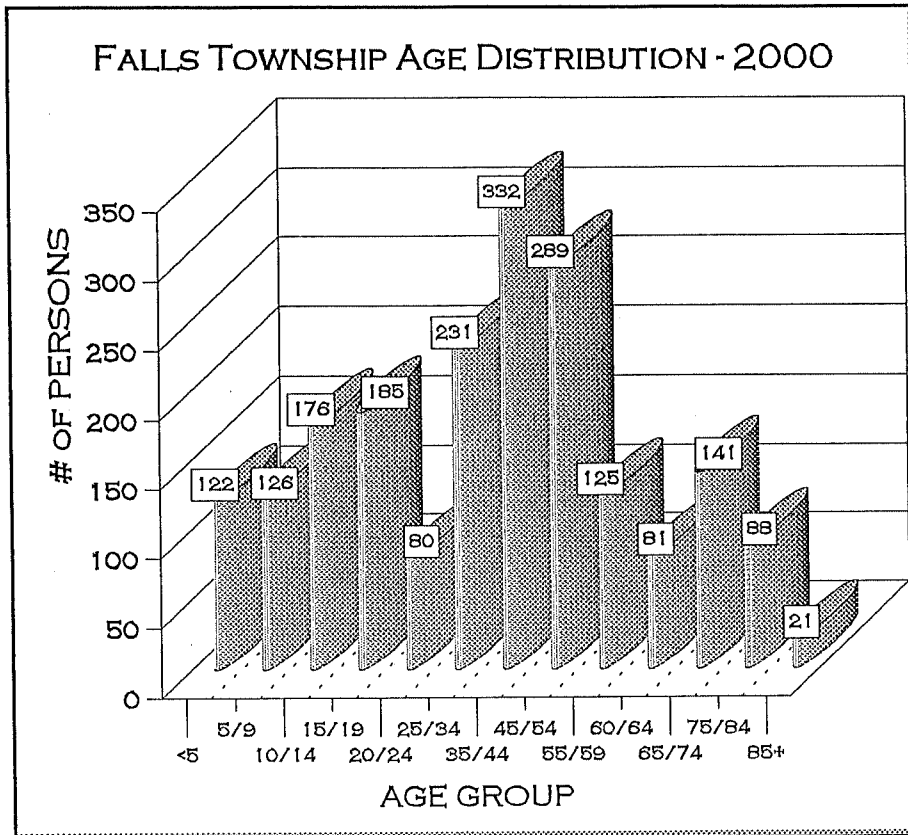


Figure IV-2

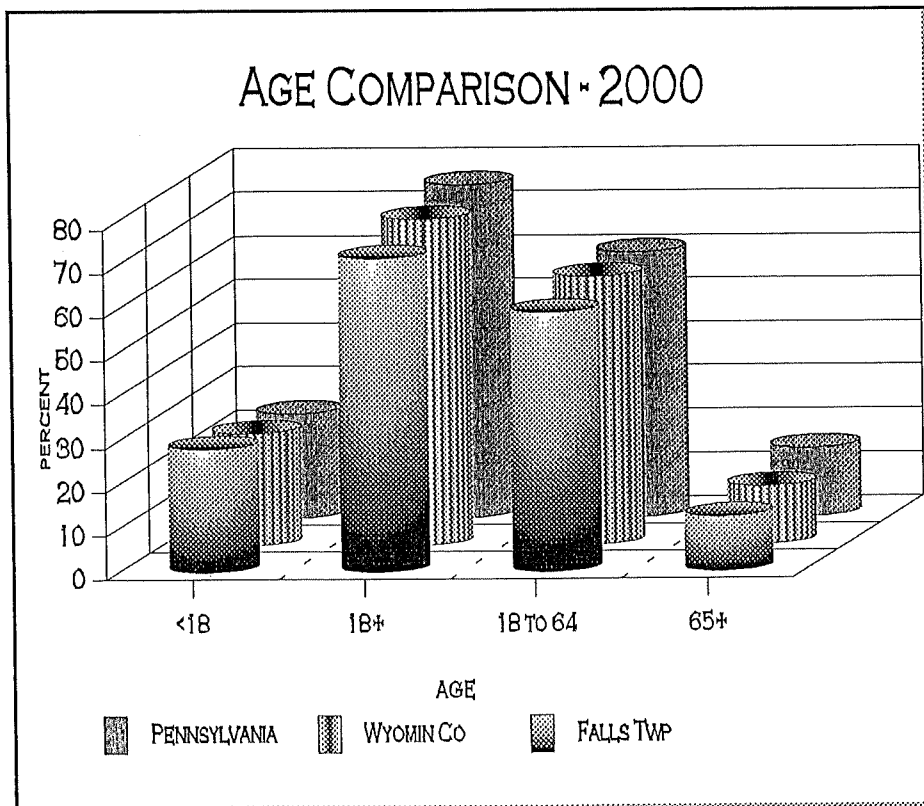


Figure IV-3

TABLE IV-7 - AGE COHORTS COMPARISON
U.S. CENSUS

AGE GROUP	2000		
	Falls Township	Wyo Co	PA
under 18 yrs	28.2% 554 persons	25.5%	23.8%
18 years and over	71.8% 1,433 persons	74.5%	76.2%
18 to 64 years	59.3% 1,183 persons	61.3%	60.6%
65 years and over	12.5% 250 persons	13.2%	15.6%
% change in persons	Falls Township	Wyoming County	PA
under 18 yrs	-16.6%	-7.2%	4.6%
18-64 years	3.7%	2.6%	2.5%
65 years and over	5.0%	5.2%	4.9%
Median Age			
1990	30.9	35.1	33.1
2000	37.4	38.0	37.8

Housing Units

In 2000, the Census counted 767 housing units, with fifty-two percent, or 399 of the existing housing units, having been constructed since 1970, the approximate date when state on-site sewage regulations were instituted. This is important in terms of the age of on-lot disposal systems, compliance with DEP standards, and effect on water quality. More than one-quarter of the homes were constructed prior to 1940, providing the base for the unique rural and historic character of the Township. Table 8, Rate of Housing Development, compares the Township rate of housing construction to the County as a whole, showing varying proportions from decade to decade when comparing the Township and County, but a similar proportion from the 1969 date. This data also provides a good measure of the age and condition of housing, and most dwellings in the Township are relatively new and in good condition. (More discussion on housing conditions and needs is found in the *Housing Plan* section.)

TABLE IV-8
RATE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
U.S. CENSUS

Age	Falls Twp		Wyo Co
	#	%	%
1999 to March 2000	4	0.5%	2.0%
1995 to 1998	26	3.4%	6.1%
1990 to 1994	51	6.6%	7.4%
1980 to 1989	108	14.1%	13.5%
1970 to 1979	210	27.4%	20.7%
1960 to 1969	48	6.3%	8.9%
1940 to 1959	82	10.7%	10.9%
1939 or earlier	238	31.0%	30.4%
Total	767	100.0%	100.0%
1969 or earlier	368	48.0%	50.2%

As discussed earlier, an increasing population and the housing it demands can be expected to have a direct impact on the amount of agricultural land and open space in the Township. Each new house requires a minimum of one acre, and given the relatively small number of existing undeveloped lots in the Township, these new lots must be taken either from farmland or woodland. Table IV-9, Housing Units, includes data for the County, its municipalities and the State. In 1990, Falls Township contained 702 housing units, an increase of some fifteen percent or 89 units from 1980. By 2000, the number increased by another sixty-five units, reaching 767 units, a ten-year growth rate of some nine percent and a rate of twenty-five percent between 1980 and 2000. Rates of change in housing units throughout the County between 1990 and 2000 ranged from a loss of sixty-nine units in Nicholson Borough to an increase of 164 units in Eaton Township. The loss in Nicholson Borough could have occurred due to the removal of homes and multi-family units or could be a Census counting error.

Table IV-10, Housing Structural and Vacancy Characteristics shows in 2000 most of the dwellings in the Township, and all of Wyoming County were single-family detached dwellings, seventy-seven and seventy-

TABLE IV-9 – HOUSING UNITS - U.S. CENSUS

MUNICIPALITY	1980 Total Units	Number 80-90	Percent 80-90	1990 Total Units	Number 90-00	Percent 90-00	2000 Total Units	Percent 80-00
Braintrim Township	171	78	45.6%	249	24	9.6%	273	59.6%
Clinton Township	378	6	1.6%	384	112	29.2%	496	31.2%
Eaton Township	578	100	17.3%	678	164	24.2%	842	45.7%
Exeter Township	248	114	46.0%	362	37	10.2%	399	60.9%
Factroyville Borough	351	4	1.1%	355	8	2.3%	363	3.4%
Falls Township	613	89	14.5%	702	65	9.3%	767	25.1%
Forkston Township	121	128	105.8%	249	84	33.7%	333	175.2%
Laceyville Borough	212	-28	-13.2%	184	(4)	-2.2%	180	-15.1%
Lemon Township	328	273	83.2%	601	20	3.3%	621	89.3%
Mehoopany Township	290	77	26.6%	367	53	14.4%	420	44.8%
Meshoppen Borough	236	-39	-16.5%	197	12	6.1%	209	-11.4%
Meshoppen Township	281	164	58.4%	445	10	2.2%	455	61.9%
Monroe Township	607	81	13.3%	688	97	14.1%	785	29.3%
Nicholson Borough	366	6	1.6%	372	(69)	-18.5%	303	-17.2%
Nicholson Township	452	87	19.2%	539	110	20.4%	649	43.6%
North Branch Township	75	42	56.0%	117	(7)	-6.0%	110	46.7%
Northmoreland Township	412	142	34.5%	554	46	8.3%	600	45.6%
Noxen Township	345	29	8.4%	374	45	12.0%	419	21.4%
Overfield Township	532	355	66.7%	887	(35)	-3.9%	852	60.2%
Tunkhannock Borough	903	13	1.4%	916	(28)	-3.1%	888	-1.7%
Tunkhannock Township	1,457	361	24.8%	1,818	4	0.2%	1,822	25.1%
Washington Township	363	68	18.7%	431	94	21.8%	525	44.6%
Windham Township	262	123	46.9%	385	20	5.2%	405	54.6%
Wyoming County	9,581	2,276	23.8%	11,857	856	7.2%	12,713	32.7%
PA (1,000's)	4,509	429	9.5%	4,938	312	6.3%	5,250	16.4%

TABLE IV-10
2000 HOUSING STRUCTURAL AND VACANCY
CHARACTERISTICS
U. S. CENSUS

Falls
Township

2000 Housing units in structure

	Number	Percent	Wyo Co	PA
1 unit detached	593	77.3%	71.8%	55.9%
1 unit attached	9	1.2%	1.4%	17.9%
multi-family	49	6.4%	9.5%	21.1%
mobile home, trailer, other	116	15.1%	16.8%	5.0%
Total	767	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

2000 Average household size	2.63 persons	2.55	2.48
2000 Average family size	3.05 persons	3.02	3.04

2000 occupied housing units

	Number	Percent	Wyo Co	PA
total occupied units	724	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
owner occupied units	584	80.7%	78.9%	71.3%
renter occupied units	140	19.3%	21.1%	28.7%

2000 vacant housing units

	Number	Percent	Wyo Co	PA
total vacant units	39	5.1%	15.3%	9.0%
seasonal/recreation use	5	0.7%	10.4%	2.8%

two percent respectively, compared to about fifty-six percent statewide. The 2000 Census found only nine (1.2%) two-family and forty-nine (6.4%) multi-family dwellings in the Township, while in the County as a whole, 1.4 percent of all units were two-family and 9.5 percent were multi-family dwellings, with the Commonwealth at eighteen percent and twenty-one percent, respectively. Many rural municipalities have even lower proportions of multi-family dwellings, the County -owned multi-family dwelling project adding to the number in Falls Township. Additionally, higher proportions of *mobile homes, trailers and other* dwelling types were reported in the Township and

County, compared to about seventeen five percent in the State. At 19.3 percent, the proportion of rental units is somewhat lower than County-wide but significantly lower than the State's twenty-nine percent.

This is not unexpected in a rural area with higher proportions of single-family dwellings and lower proportions of multi-family dwellings.

As shown in Table IV-11 Median Housing Value Owner Occupied Units, Census 2000 median value of owner-occupied homes in Wyoming County ranged from a high of \$107,000 in Eaton Township to a low of \$73,800 in Braintrim Township. Falls Township's

TABLE IV-11
MEDIAN HOUSING VALUE
OWNER OCCUPIED UNITS
U.S. CENSUS - 2000

	2000 Value	% increase 1990-2000 inflation adjusted
Braintrim Township	\$73,800	-2.4%
Clinton Township	\$119,800	3.9%
Eaton Township	\$107,600	19.7%
Exeter Township	\$88,900	13.4%
Factroyville Borough	\$88,800	1.0%
Falls Township	\$95,300	8.3%
Forkston Township	\$78,200	14.1%
Laceyville Borough	\$77,200	22.3%
Lemon Township	\$106,000	11.4%
Mehoopany Township	\$84,100	7.5%
Meshoppen Borough	\$70,600	14.5%
Meshoppen Township	\$86,000	3.9%
Monroe Township	\$91,400	9.8%
Nicholson Borough	\$83,800	9.9%
Nicholson Township	\$96,700	14.0%
North Branch Township	\$81,300	11.0%
Northmoreland Township	\$107,500	15.2%
Noxen Township	\$78,400	42.0%
Overfield Township	\$97,900	-5.3%
Tunkhannock Borough	\$88,800	-7.2%
Tunkhannock Township	\$105,300	7.0%
Washington Township	\$95,300	2.0%
Windham Township	\$84,000	10.1%
Wyoming County	\$93,900	5.4%
Pennsylvania	\$97,000	5.6%

\$95,300 value, the second highest in the County was in between the County-wide \$93,900 value and the \$97,000 statewide value. In short, given the mix of single-family dwellings and mobile homes, housing values obviously vary widely in the Township and throughout Wyoming County, and are directly linked to household income. While high values are positive in terms of housing condition and real estate tax revenue, it may indicate the need to evaluate the affordability of housing for younger couples and older residents. This is balanced by the availability of mobile homes which often serve as starter homes for young rural couples.

Seasonal Housing and Population

In terms of future planning, seasonal population effects on Falls Township are not significant compared to the proportion of vacation homes in areas such as the Pocono Mountains where such homes are being converted to permanent residences with working members of the household commuting to nearby New Jersey and New York. In Pike County for example, the population increased by sixty-five percent between 1990 and 2000, with some townships increasing by more than 100 percent. In 2000, the U. S. Census counted only five housing units in the Township which were used seasonally or for recreational use, less than one percent of the total 767 units.

Economic Base

This section focuses on defining with the best available information, the economic base of Falls Township, how it differs from the regional economy, and what can be expected in the future. Clearly, the economy of the Township is inextricably linked with the economy of the County and region, as evidenced by the data in Table IV-12, 2000 Employment Classification, and Table IV-13, Commuting to Work. (See also Figure IV-4.) It is important to note the data reflects where residents work and not the types of jobs available in the Township. This provides further documentation of the importance of the County and region. Working residents of Falls Township have the opportunity to be employed in a wide variety of fields, although employment opportunities within the Township are limited. Although the proportion of employment in the various sectors will likely shift somewhat in the next ten years as the regional employment market changes, the continued absence of any large employers within the Township, as compared to Proctor and Gamble in Washington Township, suggests the same conclusion

TABLE IV-12
2000 EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION - U. S. CENSUS

	Falls Township		Wyoming Co	PA
# employed persons 16 years +	910			
INDUSTRY	#	%	%	%
Ag, forestry, mining	38	4.2%	3.7%	1.3%
Construction	99	10.9%	8.3%	6.0%
Manufacturing	166	18.2%	18.8%	16.0%
Wholesale	8	0.9%	2.5%	3.6%
Retail	102	11.2%	12.8%	12.1%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	44	4.8%	6.5%	5.4%
Information	21	2.3%	3.0%	2.6%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	70	7.7%	4.9%	6.6%
Professional, scientific, mngt, admin, waste mngt	49	5.4%	6.2%	8.5%
Education, health, social services	183	20.1%	17.7%	21.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, food	72	7.9%	7.0%	7.0%
Other services	30	3.3%	4.9%	4.8%
Public administration	28	3.1%	3.6%	4.2%
OCCUPATION				
Management, professional and related	271	29.8%	25.9%	32.6%
Service	140	15.4%	15.5%	14.8%
Sales and office	192	21.1%	23.2%	27.0%
Farming, fishing, forestry	17	1.9%	1.1%	0.5%
Construction, extraction, maintenance	127	14.0%	13.4%	8.9%
Production, transportation, material moving	163	17.9%	20.9%	16.3%
CLASS OF WORKER				
Private wage and salary	726	79.8%	80.7%	82.4%
Government	101	11.1%	9.8%	11.3%
Self-employed (not incorporated)	77	8.5%	8.9%	6.0%
Unpaid family workers	6	0.7%	0.5%	0.3%

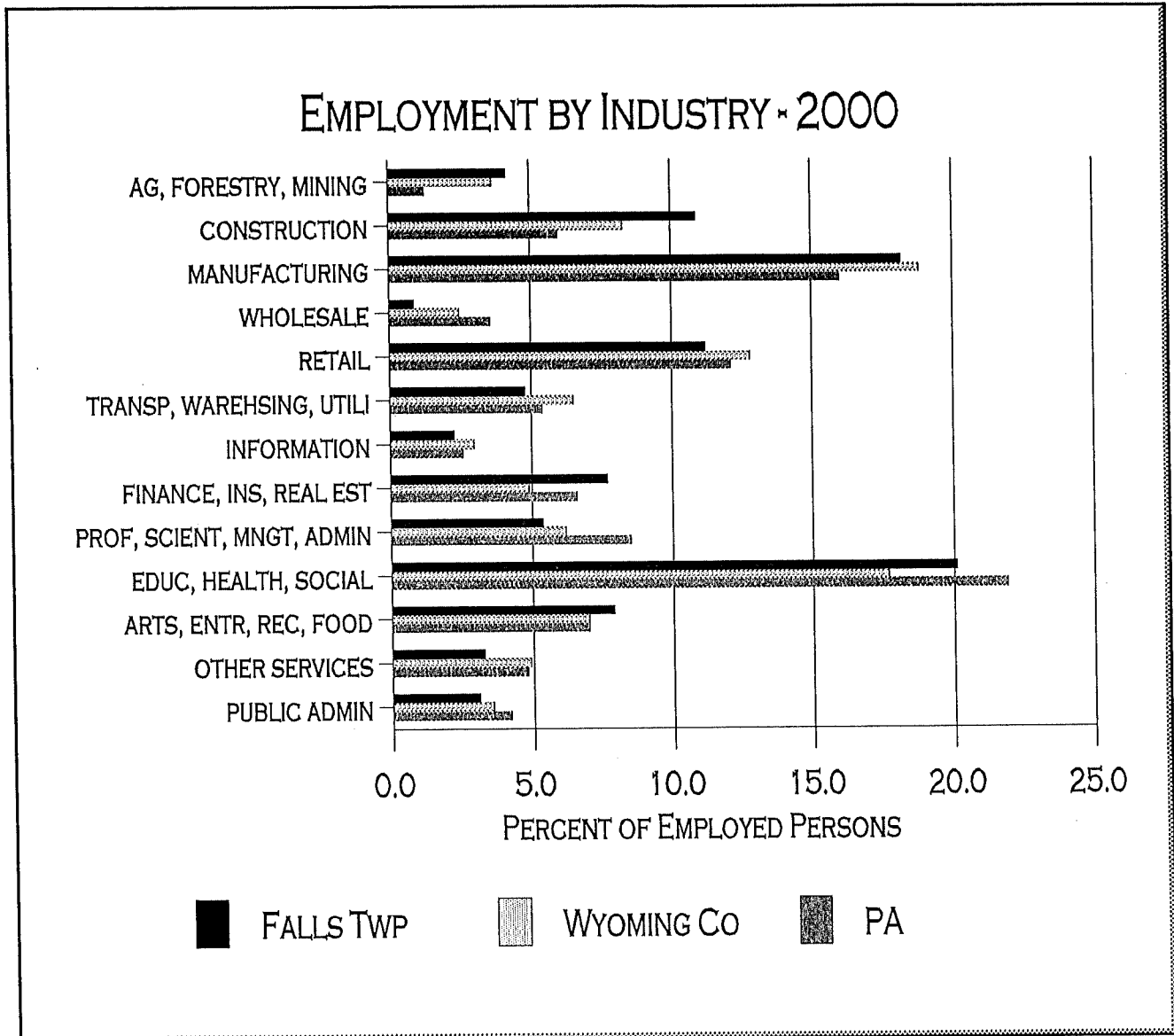


Figure IV-4

TABLE IV-13 - COMMUTING TO WORK - 2000 U. S. CENSUS

	Falls	Wyo Co.	PA
# of workers 16 years +	877	12,464	5,556,311
worked at home	3.0%	3.6%	3.0%
average travel time to work (minutes)	26.9	26.2	25.2
% change avg travel time to work 1990-2000	19.9%	22.3%	16.6%

that most workers will continue to be employed outside their home municipality. This conclusion is supported by the fact that only twenty-seven of 517 respondents of the community survey conducted by the Township in 2001 reported being employed within the Township.

The extent of the local economy can be considered in terms of production units, that is those businesses, industries, service establishments, home occupations and other concerns which generate income and provide employment. Institutional and government employment, although not generating income in terms of production because tax dollars fuel their operation, can also be important employers in a rural economy. The predominate *industry types* for workers from Falls Township are *education, health and social services; manufacturing; retail; and construction*. (See Table IV-12.) As illustrated in Figure 4, the *education, health and social services* sector employs a greater proportion of Falls Township than Wyoming County but less than state-wide. *Manufacturing* in the Township and County is somewhat more important for employment than in the Commonwealth as a whole, owing in part to the proximity of the Proctor and Gamble plant. When compared to the state, the Township and Wyoming County also have higher proportions of *construction, extraction and maintenance* workers and *production, transportation and material moving* workers than does the Commonwealth, again perhaps reflecting the influence of Proctor and Gamble and the many local trucking firms which haul raw materials and finished products. In 2000 only seventeen residents of the Township were employed in *farming, fishing and forestry*. Although agricultural and forest land remain an important part of the local landscape, the employment data is stark evidence agriculture is in decline in the County and region. The largest employers in the Township are Ronco, Wyoming Sand and Stone, St Michaels School and the Mill City Elementary School.

In addition, one must also consider home occupations which, in this era of increasing service business and electronic information transfer, often play a hidden yet significant role in rural economies. Although the number of home occupations cannot be determined with any accuracy, many inconspicuous home occupations are obviously being conducted in the area. The 2000 Census reported seventy-seven self-employed workers and six unpaid family workers in the Township and

twenty-six who worked at home. Unfortunately, the specific economic impact of those *hidden* employees is difficult to assess, but income generated in the home does add to the local economy.

Income Levels

Income levels reported by the 2000 Census for Falls Township residents are compared to County and State levels in Table IV-14, Income Levels and Figure IV-5. Residents in the Township, and the County as a whole, had substantially lower per capita income levels than the Commonwealth. Per capita income is derived by dividing total income in the jurisdiction of concern by total population. At \$20,707 Tunkhannock Borough registered the highest per capita income in Wyoming County, with Meshoppen Borough the lowest at \$13,408. Although still lagging behind the County and State, per capita income increased by almost thirty percent, adjusted for inflation, between 1989 and 1999, compared to six percent and almost eleven percent for Wyoming County and Pennsylvania respectively. Median household income followed a similar pattern, with the median household income reported for the Township and the County much lower than the State. At \$45,234 the median income of Clinton Township, lying just west of the affluent *Abingtons* of Lackawanna County, was the highest in the County, while Meshoppen Borough had the lowest at \$26,234.

Poverty Status

Poverty status is another good indicator of the viability of an area's economy. Table IV-14, Poverty Status, provides details on the poverty status of Falls Township, the County and State. The 2000 Census reported a total of 187 Township residents, almost ten percent, living below the poverty level. The number declined substantially since 1990 to a rate below that of the County and State. With rising incomes, hopefully this trend will continue through this decade.

TABLE IV-14 - INCOME LEVELS - U. S. CENSUS

	Falls	Wyo Co	PA	
Per capita - 1999	\$16,392	\$17,452	\$20,880	
% change adjust per capita 89-99	28.8%	6.2%	10.5%	
Median household - 1999	\$35,571	\$36,365	\$40,106	
% change adjust med household 89-99	3.8%	--	2.7%	
Households with income of	#	%	%	%
less than \$10,000	55	7.6%	9.6%	9.7%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	62	8.6%	8.0%	7.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	112	15.5%	15.4%	13.8%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	124	17.2%	15.1%	13.3%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	122	16.9%	18.0%	16.9%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	133	18.4%	19.5%	19.5%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	75	10.4%	8.0%	9.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	30	4.2%	4.6%	6.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5	0.7%	1.2%	1.8%
\$200,000 or more	4	0.6%	0.6%	1.9%
# reporting households	722	10,822	4,779,186	

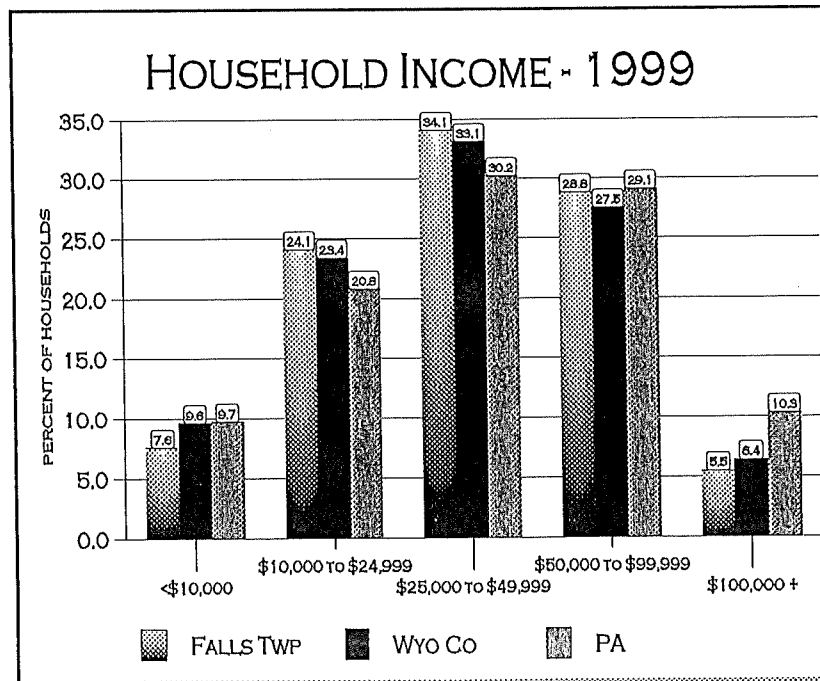


Figure IV-5

TABLE IV-15 - POVERTY STATUS - U. S. CENSUS

	1979 Persons Below Poverty Level		1989 Persons Below Poverty Level		1999 Persons Below Poverty Level	
	#	rate	#	rate	#	rate
Falls Township	237	12.8%	272	14.3%	187	9.8%
Wyoming County	2,784	10.7%	3,030	11.1%	2,789	10.2%
Pennsylvania (1,000's)	1,210	11.4%	1,284	11.1%	1,304	11.0%

Regional Economy and Tax Consequences

Similar to most other rural/residential communities situated within commuting distance of urban centers, Falls Township residents rely to a great extent on the regional market for employment. A concern raised by this reliance on employment outside the Township is the effect on the local tax base. Typically, industry and business pay a significant proportion of local taxes which support local facilities and services required to meet the needs of the entire community. As local land use evolves more and more to residential, without an increase in commercial uses, the tax burden on the individual residential property owner grows because the demand and cost for services increases. An expansion of the commercial base can help relieve the burden on residential properties of the cost of needed facilities and services. In addition, as more commercial facilities are developed in the Township, residents will purchase more of their consumer goods at local businesses. Another means of minimizing costs of community services and facilities is to preserve agricultural, forest and other open land. These lands generate little demand for services and make a positive net contribution to tax coffers. Fortunately, in terms of services provided by Wyoming County and the school district, the tax burden is spread beyond the boundaries of the Township across the greater market area where business and industry comprise a larger part of the land use mix.

Future Considerations

A number of questions are key to the future economic base of Falls Township. Should Township officials and residents be content with the level of commercial development in the community, encourage more residential development in the place of commercial development, and rely more on the regional economy? What are the tax consequences of residential

development and associated demand for facilities and services without commercial development to broaden the tax base? Should Township officials encourage economic development to improve the tax base and what are the environmental and community character consequences of economic development? If economic development is important to Township residents, what type of development is desired -- retail and service establishments, attraction of industry, self-reliant (home occupations, cooperatives), or a combination of strategies? If internal economic development is not the priority, what can Township officials and residents do to strengthen the regional economy and reinforce the tax base which supports services provided to residents by the school district and County?

In recent years the economic development community has posited the idea of "sustainable" economic development. The authors of *Rural Environmental Planning For Sustainable Communities* suggest that:

A sustainable local economy is one that maintains mutually beneficial and equitable relationships internally, that is, within the community, and externally, with the larger society and economy. A healthy rural economy is able to change and renew itself through expansion and through spinoff activities based on existing resources and production. As the economy becomes more sustainable, investment funds increase along with local control of technology.

Because each rural region is unique, development strategies differ. The distinctive attributes and comparative advantages of rural communities provide starting points for people to gain fresh perspective on the kinds of goods and services that could be produced to create unique economic roles for their own communities.

Rural communities have what most people value - a cleaner environment, scenic vistas, distinctive ethnic cultures and lifestyles, folk arts and folkways - and herein lies the opportunity for rural residents to improve their economies. Exploiting the differences between rural and urban communities means applying rural standards to growth, land use, commercial zoning, and conservation. It also means applying rural standards to the selection of economic development strategies. For example, when a community adopts a plan advocating more beds for tourists, the plan may recommend the development of a network bed and breakfasts rather than supporting the recruitment of a national motel chain. If recreational tourism is part of an adopted plan, one strategy could be to implement low-impact recreational development, leaving scenic and wild areas undisturbed rather than encouraging large-scale resorts and condominiums with their accompanying commercial centers.

Creating an economic development strategy with the potential to conserve resources, increase local productivity, and equitably distribute the benefits is an art as well as a science. The science lies in inventorying basic building materials and designing the appropriate strategy. The art involves creativity incorporating the elements of sustainable economic development in the design. These elements are as follows:

- 1. Emphasizing human development. Development of human skills and talent fosters a competitive economy through the creation of new products, services, and production technologies.*
- 2. Expanding local control of resources. The human community depends on sustainable use of land, water, and natural resources.*
- 3. Increasing internal investment capacity. Residents need capital to underwrite business start-ups and expansions.*
- 4. Changing economic and social structures to increase opportunity and reduce dependency. An economy cannot develop with social and economic structures that prolong poverty and underemployment.*

These four elements are not only key components in a development strategy, they are also an evaluation tool - a way to measure a proposed strategy or to assess an

economy moving toward sustainability.

As is the case with most growth and development issues facing Falls Township, taking a regional approach to economic development will provide the greatest opportunity for sustaining the Township and regional economic well-being. Local officials should monitor and participate in County economic development efforts and make economic considerations one of the key elements of cooperation.

Demographic Profiles

The following demographic profiles are taken from the Year 2000 Census and are intended to provide the full details about permanent population characteristics.

Important Note: The *Center for Rural Pennsylvania* provided invaluable assistance in compiling Census data, particularly the comparisons between various Census years.

Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Geographic area: Falls township, Wyoming County, Pennsylvania

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population	1,997	100.0	HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
SEX AND AGE			Total population	1,997	100.0
Male.....	1,050	52.6	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	25	1.3
Female.....	947	47.4	Mexican.....	2	0.1
Under 5 years.....	122	6.1	Puerto Rican.....	13	0.7
5 to 9 years.....	126	6.3	Cuban.....	-	-
10 to 14 years.....	176	8.8	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	10	0.5
15 to 19 years.....	185	9.3	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	1,972	98.7
20 to 24 years.....	80	4.0	White alone.....	1,919	96.1
25 to 34 years.....	231	11.6	RELATIONSHIP		
35 to 44 years.....	332	16.6	Total population	1,997	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	289	14.5	In households.....	1,905	95.4
55 to 59 years.....	125	6.3	Householder.....	724	36.3
60 to 64 years.....	81	4.1	Spouse.....	473	23.7
65 to 74 years.....	141	7.1	Child.....	605	30.3
75 to 84 years.....	88	4.4	Own child under 18 years.....	446	22.3
85 years and over.....	21	1.1	Other relatives.....	66	3.3
Median age (years).....	37.4	(X)	Under 18 years.....	21	1.1
18 years and over.....	1,433	71.8	Nonrelatives.....	37	1.9
Male.....	708	35.5	Unmarried partner.....	22	1.1
Female.....	725	36.3	In group quarters.....	92	4.6
21 years and over.....	1,370	68.6	Institutionalized population.....	92	4.6
62 years and over.....	291	14.6	Noninstitutionalized population.....	-	-
65 years and over.....	250	12.5	HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE		
Male.....	112	5.6	Total households	724	100.0
Female.....	138	6.9	Family households (families).....	559	77.2
RACE			With own children under 18 years.....	253	34.9
One race.....	1,986	99.4	Married-couple family.....	473	65.3
White.....	1,932	96.7	With own children under 18 years.....	203	28.0
Black or African American.....	41	2.1	Female householder, no husband present.....	62	8.6
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	1	0.1	With own children under 18 years.....	40	5.5
Asian.....	8	0.4	Nonfamily households.....	165	22.8
Asian Indian.....	1	0.1	Householder living alone.....	150	20.7
Chinese.....	-	-	Householder 65 years and over.....	63	8.7
Fillipino.....	-	-	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	266	36.7
Japanese.....	3	0.2	Households with individuals 65 years and over ..	176	24.3
Korean.....	-	-	Average household size.....	2.63	(X)
Vietnamese.....	3	0.2	Average family size.....	3.05	(X)
Other Asian ¹	1	0.1	HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-	Total housing units	763	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	-	-	Occupied housing units.....	724	94.9
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	-	-	Vacant housing units.....	39	5.1
Samoan.....	-	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander ²	-	-	occasional use.....	5	0.7
Some other race.....	4	0.2	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	1.4	(X)
Two or more races.....	11	0.6	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	2.1	(X)
<i>Race alone or in combination with one or more other races:</i> ³			HOUSING TENURE		
White.....	1,943	97.3	Occupied housing units	724	100.0
Black or African American.....	48	2.4	Owner-occupied housing units.....	584	80.7
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	3	0.2	Renter-occupied housing units.....	140	19.3
Asian.....	8	0.4	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.69	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	2.37	(X)
Some other race.....	6	0.3			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹ Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

² Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

³ In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Table DP-2. Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000

Geographic area: Falls township, Wyoming County, Pennsylvania

[Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
SCHOOL ENROLLMENT			NATIVITY AND PLACE OF BIRTH		
Population 3 years and over enrolled in school.....	532	100.0	Total population.....	2,000	100.0
Nursery school, preschool.....	40	7.5	Native.....	1,978	98.9
Kindergarten.....	22	4.1	Born in United States.....	1,968	98.4
Elementary school (grades 1-8).....	206	38.7	State of residence.....	1,725	86.3
High school (grades 9-12).....	209	39.3	Different state.....	243	12.2
College or graduate school.....	55	10.3	Born outside United States.....	10	0.5
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			Foreign born.....	22	1.1
Population 25 years and over.....	1,316	100.0	Entered 1990 to March 2000.....	7	0.4
Less than 9th grade.....	48	3.6	Naturalized citizen.....	12	0.6
9th to 12th grade, no diploma.....	161	12.2	Not a citizen.....	10	0.5
High school graduate (includes equivalency).....	589	44.8	REGION OF BIRTH OF FOREIGN BORN		
Some college, no degree.....	202	15.3	Total (excluding born at sea).....	22	100.0
Associate degree.....	112	8.5	Europe.....	6	27.3
Bachelor's degree.....	131	10.0	Asia.....	14	63.6
Graduate or professional degree.....	73	5.5	Africa.....	-	-
Percent high school graduate or higher.....	84.1	(X)	Oceania.....	-	-
Percent bachelor's degree or higher.....	15.5	(X)	Latin America.....	2	9.1
MARITAL STATUS			Northern America.....	-	-
Population 15 years and over.....	1,585	100.0	LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME		
Never married.....	350	22.1	Population 5 years and over.....	1,878	100.0
Now married, except separated.....	1,025	64.7	English only.....	1,814	96.6
Separated.....	16	1.0	Language other than English.....	64	3.4
Widowed.....	97	6.1	Speak English less than "very well".....	21	1.1
Female.....	82	5.2	Spanish.....	20	1.1
Divorced.....	97	6.1	Speak English less than "very well".....	10	0.5
Female.....	54	3.4	Other Indo-European languages.....	35	1.9
GRANDPARENTS AS CAREGIVERS			Speak English less than "very well".....	5	0.3
Grandparent living in household with one or more own grandchildren under 18 years.....	35	100.0	Asian and Pacific Island languages.....	4	0.2
Grandparent responsible for grandchildren.....	10	28.6	Speak English less than "very well".....	4	0.2
VETERAN STATUS			ANCESTRY (single or multiple)		
Civilian population 18 years and over ..	1,446	100.0	Total population.....	2,000	100.0
Civilian veterans.....	215	14.9	Total ancestries reported.....	2,199	110.0
DISABILITY STATUS OF THE CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATION			Arab.....	-	-
Population 5 to 20 years.....	406	100.0	Czech ¹	12	0.6
With a disability.....	28	6.9	Danish.....	4	0.2
Population 21 to 64 years.....	1,129	100.0	Dutch.....	64	3.2
With a disability.....	197	17.4	English.....	257	12.9
Percent employed.....	41.1	(X)	French (except Basque) ¹	51	2.6
No disability.....	932	82.6	French Canadian ¹	15	0.8
Percent employed.....	80.3	(X)	German.....	441	22.1
Population 65 years and over.....	250	100.0	Greek.....	2	0.1
With a disability.....	63	25.2	Hungarian.....	8	0.4
RESIDENCE IN 1995			Irish ¹	285	14.3
Population 5 years and over.....	1,878	100.0	Italian.....	177	8.9
Same house in 1995.....	1,379	73.4	Lithuanian.....	52	2.6
Different house in the U.S. in 1995.....	497	26.5	Norwegian.....	2	0.1
Same county.....	194	10.3	Polish.....	269	13.5
Different county.....	303	16.1	Portuguese.....	2	0.1
Same state.....	247	13.2	Russian.....	45	2.3
Different state.....	56	3.0	Scotch-Irish.....	22	1.1
Elsewhere in 1995.....	2	0.1	Scottish.....	49	2.5
			Slovak.....	51	2.6
			Subsaharan African.....	-	-
			Swedish.....	12	0.6
			Swiss.....	8	0.4
			Ukrainian.....	49	2.5
			United States or American.....	93	4.7
			Welsh.....	119	6.0
			West Indian (excluding Hispanic groups).....	-	-
			Other ancestries.....	110	5.5

-Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹The data represent a combination of two ancestries shown separately in Summary File 3. Czech includes Czechoslovakian. French includes Alsatian. French Canadian includes Acadian/Cajun. Irish includes Celtic.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

Table DP-3. Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000

Geographic area: Falls township, Wyoming County, Pennsylvania

[Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			INCOME IN 1999		
Population 16 years and over	1,505	100.0	Households	722	100.0
In labor force	943	62.7	Less than \$10,000	55	7.6
Civilian labor force	943	62.7	\$10,000 to \$14,999	62	8.6
Employed	910	60.5	\$15,000 to \$24,999	112	15.5
Unemployed	33	2.2	\$25,000 to \$34,999	124	17.2
Percent of civilian labor force	3.5	(X)	\$35,000 to \$49,999	122	16.9
Armed Forces	-	-	\$50,000 to \$74,999	133	18.4
Not in labor force	562	37.3	\$75,000 to \$99,999	75	10.4
Females 16 years and over	766	100.0	\$100,000 to \$149,999	30	4.2
In labor force	430	56.1	\$150,000 to \$199,999	5	0.7
Civilian labor force	430	56.1	\$200,000 or more	4	0.6
Employed	413	53.9	Median household income (dollars)	35,571	(X)
Own children under 6 years	141	100.0	With earnings	569	78.8
All parents in family in labor force	81	57.4	Mean earnings (dollars) ¹	45,571	(X)
COMMUTING TO WORK			With Social Security income	224	31.0
Workers 16 years and over	877	100.0	Mean Social Security income (dollars) ¹	10,998	(X)
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	740	84.4	With Supplemental Security Income	31	4.3
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	97	11.1	Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars) ¹	9,124	(X)
Public transportation (including taxicab)	3	0.3	With public assistance income	16	2.2
Walked	9	1.0	Mean public assistance income (dollars) ¹	2,525	(X)
Other means	2	0.2	With retirement income	152	21.1
Worked at home	26	3.0	Mean retirement income (dollars) ¹	12,831	(X)
Mean travel time to work (minutes) ¹	26.9	(X)	Families	560	100.0
Employed civilian population 16 years and over	910	100.0	Less than \$10,000	20	3.6
OCCUPATION			\$10,000 to \$14,999	33	5.9
Management, professional, and related occupations	271	29.8	\$15,000 to \$24,999	72	12.9
Service occupations	140	15.4	\$25,000 to \$34,999	101	18.0
Sales and office occupations	192	21.1	\$35,000 to \$49,999	110	19.6
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	17	1.9	\$50,000 to \$74,999	125	22.3
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	127	14.0	\$75,000 to \$99,999	68	12.1
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	163	17.9	\$100,000 to \$149,999	25	4.5
INDUSTRY			\$150,000 to \$199,999	5	0.9
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	38	4.2	\$200,000 or more	1	0.2
Construction	99	10.9	Median family income (dollars)	39,886	(X)
Manufacturing	166	18.2	Per capita income (dollars) ¹	16,392	(X)
Wholesale trade	8	0.9	Median earnings (dollars):		
Retail trade	102	11.2	Male full-time, year-round workers	35,091	(X)
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	44	4.8	Female full-time, year-round workers	20,650	(X)
Information	21	2.3			
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	70	7.7			
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	49	5.4			
Educational, health and social services	183	20.1			
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	72	7.9			
Other services (except public administration)	30	3.3			
Public administration	28	3.1			
CLASS OF WORKER					
Private wage and salary workers	726	79.8			
Government workers	101	11.1			
Self-employed workers in own not incorporated business	77	8.5			
Unpaid family workers	6	0.7			
				Number below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
			POVERTY STATUS IN 1999		
			Families	42	7.5
			With related children under 18 years	26	10.1
			With related children under 5 years	11	11.3
			Families with female householder, no husband present	4	7.4
			With related children under 18 years	4	13.8
			With related children under 5 years	2	33.3
			Individuals	187	9.8
			18 years and over	131	9.1
			65 years and over	26	10.4
			Related children under 18 years	56	12.3
			Related children 5 to 17 years	35	10.4
			Unrelated Individuals 15 years and over	39	20.2

-Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹If the denominator of a mean value or per capita value is less than 30, then that value is calculated using a rounded aggregate in the numerator. See text.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

Table DP-4. Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000

Geographic area: Falls township, Wyoming County, Pennsylvania

[Data based on a sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total housing units	767	100.0	OCCUPANTS PER ROOM		
UNITS IN STRUCTURE			Occupied housing units	725	100.0
1-unit, detached	593	77.3	1.00 or less	723	99.7
1-unit, attached	9	1.2	1.01 to 1.50	2	0.3
2 units	30	3.9	1.51 or more	-	-
3 or 4 units	6	0.8			
5 to 9 units	8	1.0	Specified owner-occupied units	371	100.0
10 to 19 units	5	0.7	VALUE		
20 or more units	-	-	Less than \$50,000	33	8.9
Mobile home	116	15.1	\$50,000 to \$99,999	174	46.9
Boat, RV, van, etc	-	-	\$100,000 to \$149,999	118	31.8
			\$150,000 to \$199,999	36	9.7
			\$200,000 to \$299,999	6	1.6
YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT			\$300,000 to \$499,999	4	1.1
1999 to March 2000	4	0.5	\$500,000 to \$999,999	-	-
1995 to 1998	26	3.4	\$1,000,000 or more	-	-
1990 to 1994	51	6.6	Median (dollars)	95,300	(X)
1980 to 1989	108	14.1			
1970 to 1979	210	27.4	MORTGAGE STATUS AND SELECTED		
1960 to 1969	48	6.3	MONTHLY OWNER COSTS		
1940 to 1959	82	10.7	With a mortgage	222	59.8
1939 or earlier	238	31.0	Less than \$300	2	0.5
			\$300 to \$499	12	3.2
ROOMS			\$500 to \$699	31	8.4
1 room	-	-	\$700 to \$999	91	24.5
2 rooms	6	0.8	\$1,000 to \$1,499	74	19.9
3 rooms	37	4.8	\$1,500 to \$1,999	9	2.4
4 rooms	75	9.8	\$2,000 or more	3	0.8
5 rooms	198	25.8	Median (dollars)	929	(X)
6 rooms	162	21.1	Not mortgaged	149	40.2
7 rooms	147	19.2	Median (dollars)	273	(X)
8 rooms	68	8.9			
9 or more rooms	74	9.6	SELECTED MONTHLY OWNER COSTS		
Median (rooms)	5.9	(X)	AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD		
			INCOME IN 1999		
Occupied housing units	725	100.0	Less than 15.0 percent	140	37.7
YEAR HOUSEHOLDER MOVED INTO UNIT			15.0 to 19.9 percent	64	17.3
1999 to March 2000	51	7.0	20.0 to 24.9 percent	54	14.6
1995 to 1998	111	15.3	25.0 to 29.9 percent	33	8.9
1990 to 1994	103	14.2	30.0 to 34.9 percent	17	4.6
1980 to 1989	131	18.1	35.0 percent or more	63	17.0
1970 to 1979	183	25.2	Not computed	-	-
1969 or earlier	146	20.1			
			Specified renter-occupied units	121	100.0
VEHICLES AVAILABLE			GROSS RENT		
None	25	3.4	Less than \$200	15	12.4
1	247	34.1	\$200 to \$299	14	11.6
2	277	38.2	\$300 to \$499	52	43.0
3 or more	176	24.3	\$500 to \$749	22	18.2
			\$750 to \$999	-	-
HOUSE HEATING FUEL			\$1,000 to \$1,499	-	-
Utility gas	6	0.8	\$1,500 or more	-	-
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	87	12.0	No cash rent	18	14.9
Electricity	136	18.8	Median (dollars)	401	(X)
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc	424	58.5			
Coal or coke	32	4.4	GROSS RENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF		
Wood	40	5.5	HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 1999		
Solar energy	-	-	Less than 15.0 percent	43	35.5
Other fuel	-	-	15.0 to 19.9 percent	15	12.4
No fuel used	-	-	20.0 to 24.9 percent	14	11.6
			25.0 to 29.9 percent	8	6.6
SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS			30.0 to 34.9 percent	6	5.0
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	-	-	35.0 percent or more	15	12.4
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	2	0.3	Not computed	20	16.5
No telephone service	6	0.8			

-Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

This section of the *Plan* evaluates the recent budgetary information of the Township to identify financial trends, strengths and weaknesses and to assess overall financial condition.

Taxing Authority

The broadest indicator of a municipality's financial position is the net balance of annual revenues and expenditures considered in terms of additional available taxing power. The Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code establishes the maximum rate for real

estate taxes which may be levied by townships, setting the maximum annual rate at fourteen mills. A mill equals one dollar of property tax on one thousand dollars of assessment. Upon petition of the County Court, a township may increase the millage as much as five mills for general purposes. The Code also permits townships to assess additional real estate tax millage for special purposes such as fire protection, municipal building construction, road maintenance equipment, recreation and street lighting. Municipalities in Pennsylvania were also authorized, under the Local Tax Enabling Act (Act 511) to levy a number of other

TABLE V-1
TAX RATES 2002

	Real Estate (mills)	Resident Earned Inc (%)	Non-Res Earned Inc (%)	Occupation Privilege (\$)	Real Estate Transfer (%)	Occupation Privilege (mills)	Per Capita (\$)
Braintrim Twp	1.2	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	2
Clinton Twp	2.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0
Eaton Twp	5.23	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	5
Exeter Twp	2.9	0.5	0	5	0.5	0	5
Factoryville Boro	10	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	5
Falls Twp	3.4	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	5
Forkston Twp	3.75	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	0
Laceyville Boro	19	0.5	0	0	0.5	20	5
Lemon Twp	3.2	0.5	0	5	0.5	0	5
Mehoopany Twp	2.7	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	5
Meshoppen Boro	7.13	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	5
Meshoppen Twp	2	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	5
Monroe Twp	4	0.5	0	5	0.5	0	5
Nicholson Boro	16	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	10
Nicholson Twp	2.8	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	0
North Branch Twp	2.49	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	3	0
Northmoreland Twp	3	0.5	0	5	0.5	0	5
Noxen Twp	6	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	5
Overfield Twp	3.3	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	0
Tunkhannock Boro	11.81	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	5
Tunkhannock Twp	4.5	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	0
Washington Twp	2.5	0.5	1	5	0.5	0	0
Windham Twp	2.95	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	3

taxes including income, per capita, real estate transfer, mercantile license, business privilege, amusement, occupation privilege, occupation, and mechanical devices, and Table V-1, Tax Rates shows the types of taxes collected by the municipalities in Wyoming County in 2002. The Township real estate tax rate in 2002 was 3.4 mills, the County was 16.348 mills and the Tunkhannock School District was 52.4 mills, for a total of 72.148 mills. Falls Township and the School District also each collects 0.5% earned income tax, 5% realty transfer tax, \$5 per capita tax, and the occupational privilege tax (Township - \$5, School - \$10).

In addition to the funds generated by local taxes, municipalities receive a variety of funds from the state, including for example, various grants such as the Dirt and Gravel Road Program, payments in-lieu of taxes on state forest and game lands, Public Utility Realty Tax Act funds, alcoholic beverage license receipts, certain fines collected by the State Police, and State Liquid Fuels Highway Aid Fund allocations. The Liquid Fuels allocation, based on the township population and road miles, is generally the largest annual amount of state funds received by a township, and the funds must be used for road maintenance and construction, and must also be maintained in an account separate from the Township's general funds.

Falls Township

Set at 3.4 mills since 1998, the real estate tax rate in Falls Township falls about in the middle of the other municipalities in Wyoming County, and in the highest third when only townships are considered. The millage is divided at 3.2 mills for general purposes and 0.2 mills for the Lake Winola Fire Company. In 2002, millages for second-class townships taxing real estate in Wyoming County ranged from a low of 1.2 mills in Braintrim Township to a high of six mills in Noxen Township, where four mills are four general purposes and two for emergency services. The highest rate was in the Laceyville Borough at nineteen mills.

Revenue and expenditures as reported in the *Annual Audit and Financial Report* for 1998 through 2001, are detailed in Table V-2, Falls Township General Fund Report. Budget projections for 2003 for all funds are not significantly different than 2001 revenues and expenditures. In terms of revenue available for meeting general operating expenses, the earned income tax,

assessed at 0.5 percent (the school district also collects 0.5 percent), continues to be the largest revenue source, with the real estate tax of second importance. (See Table V-2, Tax Revenues - Year 2000.) All other municipalities in the County also levy an earned income tax. In 2001, the last audit year, earned income tax revenues represented sixty-two percent of all general fund taxes collected and forty-seven percent of all revenue. Given any increases in the real estate tax millage, the ratio of earned income tax to real estate tax will fall somewhat, but the income tax will continue to dominate. Given the anticipated increase in Township population, a long-term increase in income tax generation is anticipated. The 3.4 mill real estate tax generated about twenty-nine percent of total tax revenue, and the realty transfer tax about five percent. Increased revenues from real estate related depend on increased assessed valuation from new construction and an active sales market. Another higher revenue source is the public safety item which represents payment for police services provided to Overfield Township. Of course, this revenue is expended to provide the associated services. The miscellaneous revenue category includes Foreign Fire Insurance payments from the state which are passed on to the Lake Winola Fire Company.

On the expenditure side of the general fund (See Table V-2), road maintenance accounts for the highest proportion of spending, about thirty-six percent of the total in 2001. In addition, the Township receives almost \$70,000 per year in Liquid Fuels Funds from the Commonwealth which are spent on road improvements and maintenance. This and higher levels of spending on roads is not uncommon in small townships where road maintenance and improvement have historically been a principal governmental responsibility. Police and fire protection, included in the public safety category, account for another twenty-five percent of expenditures. Costs of building maintenance and employees account for most of the balance of expenditures.

TABLE V-2 FALLS TOWNSHIP GENERAL FUND REPORT, 1998 - 2001				
audit reports for →→→	1998	1999	2000	2001
Assessed valuation	\$17,948,300	\$17,942,655	\$18,068,653	\$18,570,800
Real estate tax rate	3.4 mills	3.4 mills	3.4 mills	3.4 mills
Occupation privilege tax rate	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5
Per capita tax rate	\$5	\$5	\$5	\$5
Real estate transfer tax rate	0.5 %	0.5 %	0.5 %	0.5 %
Earned income tax rate - resident/nonresident	0.5 % / 1%	0.5 % / 1%	0.5 % / 1%	0.5 % / 1%
Liabilities/Credits (payroll taxes and withholdings)	\$0	\$29,160	\$34,685	\$28,655
Cash available at beginning of year	\$79,370	\$79,370	\$0	\$0
REVENUE				
real estate tax	\$62,790	\$61,715	\$60,420	\$61,315
occupation tax	\$2,575	\$500	\$1,945	\$2,575
per capita taxes	\$5,165	\$5,810	\$5,340	\$5,460
real estate transfer tax	\$8,885	\$8,695	\$9,850	\$10,420
earned income tax	\$129,110	\$124,545	\$125,790	\$132,550
Taxes - Total	\$208,525	\$201,265	\$203,345	\$212,320
Licenses and Permits	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Fines and Forfeits (motor vehicle fines)	\$8,885	\$5,900	\$8,200	\$6,165
interest earnings	\$1,555	\$1,210	\$440	\$475
rents and royalties	\$15,640	\$0	\$15,345	\$17,145
Interest and Rents - Total	\$17,195	\$1,210	\$15,785	\$17,620
federal grant	\$11,715	\$0	\$0	\$0
alcoholic beverage licenses	\$600	\$200	\$600	\$400
Intergovernmental - Total	\$12,315	\$200	\$600	\$400
Charges for Services (public safety)	\$25,735	\$30,310	\$36,155	\$24,845
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$36,665	\$49,665	\$20,570	\$22,210
Other Sources (interfund operating transfer)	\$69,130	\$16,490	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$378,450	\$305,040	\$284,655	\$283,560
Total Available Funds (Cash + Revenue)	\$457,820	\$384,410	\$284,655	\$283,560

TABLE V-2 FALLS TOWNSHIP GENERAL FUND REPORT, 1998 - 2001				
audit reports for →→→	1998	1999	2000	2001
EXPENSES				
salaries - elected officials	\$4,880	\$5,005	\$4,555	\$5,725
financial administration - auditing services	\$450	\$775	\$830	\$695
tax collection	\$7,185	\$6,415	\$6,945	\$6,775
solicitor / legal services	\$3,410	\$2,250	\$2,215	\$850
secretary/clerk	\$24,580	\$19,890	\$17,340	\$20,445
other general government administration	\$0	\$0	\$2,045	\$1,940
buildings & plant	\$49,315	\$18,190	\$9,325	\$6,350
General Government - Total	\$89,820	\$52,525	\$43,255	\$42,780
police	\$56,840	\$38,325	\$50,220	\$39,090
fire protection	\$23,510	\$16,785	\$23,220	\$31,470*
planning and zoning	\$3,095	\$3,290	\$5,020	\$4,185
Public Safety - Total	\$83,445	\$58,400	\$78,460	\$74,745
Public Works (solid waste collection and disposal)	\$2,000	\$2,230	\$0	\$0
general services	\$13,705	\$0	\$26,860	\$13,140
snow and ice removal	\$1,120	\$740	\$3,805	\$2,050
repairs of tools and machinery	\$7,980	\$9,695	\$4,330	\$5,615
road and bridge maintenance	\$86,615	\$104,890	\$104,370	\$79,440
Highways - Total	\$109,420	\$115,325	\$139,365	\$100,245
Culture/Recreation - Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Debt Service	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Misc. (employee benefits, insurance, wk comp, etc.)	\$70,380	\$61,110	\$42,835	\$43,150
Other Financing Uses (interfund transfer)	\$0	\$19,920	\$5,000	\$15,500
Total Expenses	\$355,065	\$309,510	\$308,915	\$276,420
Excess/Deficit (total rev - total exp)	\$23,385	(\$4,470)	(\$24,260)	\$7,140
Year End Balance (total available funds - total expenses)	\$102,755	\$74,900	(\$24,260)	\$7,140

* The actual amount is approximately \$16,000. The higher amount reflects that the payment was entered twice into the accounts.

Municipality Name	Total Taxes	Real Estate	Earned Income	Realty Transfer	Occptnl Privilege	Per Capita
Braintrim Twp	\$33,146	\$7,495	\$24,895	\$756	\$0	\$0
Clinton Twp	\$126,516	\$38,040	\$72,880	\$15,596	\$0	\$0
Eaton Twp	\$243,809	\$119,191	\$79,074	\$34,119	\$6,493	\$4,932
Exeter Twp	\$63,287	\$24,973	\$33,649	\$4,390	\$0	\$275
Factoryville Boro	\$189,645	\$63,086	\$119,562	\$4,622	\$0	\$2,375
Falls Twp	\$203,340	\$60,421	\$125,789	\$9,852	\$0	\$5,341
Forkston Twp	\$36,426	\$20,626	\$12,066	\$3,734	\$0	\$0
Laceyville Boro	\$47,068	\$22,840	\$18,235	\$4,665	\$0	\$1,176
Lemon Twp	\$113,385	\$37,756	\$64,494	\$7,012	\$0	\$3,803
Mehoopany Twp	\$86,801	\$12,116	\$67,463	\$2,751	\$1,679	\$2,792
Meshoppen Boro	\$52,235	\$21,936	\$2,927	\$2,057	\$0	\$0
Meshoppen Twp	\$94,319	\$17,488	\$64,510	\$8,264	\$0	\$1,809
Monroe Twp	\$177,468	\$65,329	\$96,944	\$9,035	\$440	\$5,720
Nicholson Boro	\$104,809	\$39,916	\$55,574	\$5,000	\$0	\$3,401
Nicholson Twp	\$112,458	\$23,021	\$83,514	\$5,923	\$0	\$0
North Branch Twp	\$18,466	\$7,173	\$7,486	\$3,782	\$0	\$0
Northmoreland Twp	\$120,991	\$23,969	\$87,487	\$4,275	\$572	\$4,688
Noxen Twp	\$84,285	\$25,954	\$51,753	\$3,665	\$0	\$2,913
Overfield Twp	\$182,034	\$71,409	\$99,414	\$11,211	\$0	\$0
Tunkhannock Boro	\$501,770	\$206,289	\$190,638	\$12,412	\$10,119	\$5,564
Tunkhannock Twp	\$581,877	\$191,807	\$345,452	\$35,052	\$0	\$0
Washington Twp	\$223,231	\$69,402	\$122,580	\$15,484	\$15,765	\$0
Windham Twp	\$67,415	\$14,746	\$36,498	\$6,919	\$0	\$1,643

Until the beginning of 2000, the Township typically carried a relatively substantial fund balance forward to the next year's budget. However, given the purchase of needed road maintenance vehicles and equipment, and the replacement of underground storage tanks, the balance was depleted to under \$10,000 by the end of 2001. The Board of Supervisors should consider means of again building a fund balance to meet unexpected expenditures.

Municipal Comparisons

Comparing Falls Township to the other municipalities in the County is another means of assessing financial condition. Table V-4, Financial Statistics - Year 2000,

presents per capita financial data for all municipalities in Wyoming County. The data was obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, with 2000 the most recent reporting year. While this data is useful to compare municipalities, it does not necessarily rank the financial management abilities of individual townships and boroughs. The level of facilities and services provided by each jurisdiction varies considerably and directly affects expenditures and the amount of revenue required. For example, the police and debt service costs accrued in some municipalities are not a factor in the budgets of many other townships in the County, and the road miles maintained vary from municipality to municipality.

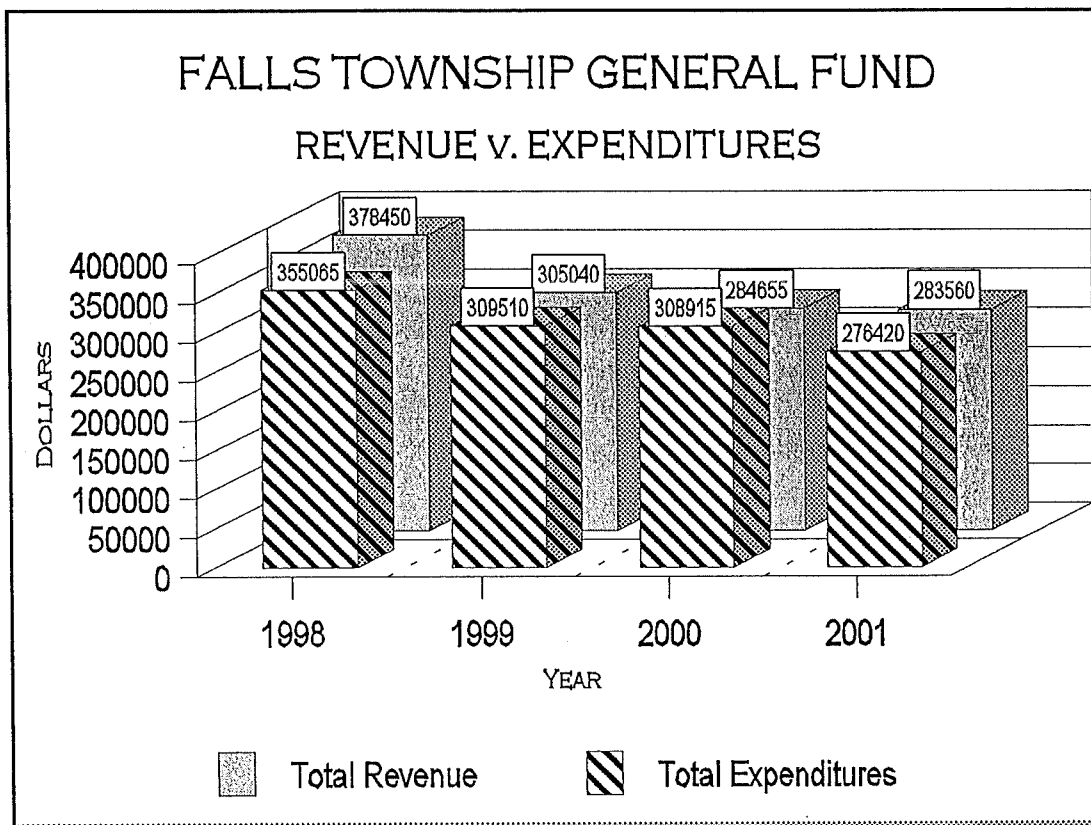


Figure V-1

In 2000, Falls Township ranked the sixth lowest of the County’s municipalities in market value of property per capita, giving the Township a disadvantage in terms of ability to generate revenue from real estate taxes. The tax rate must be set higher to generate an equal amount of revenue. In terms of taxes per capita, the Township fell just below the middle, which in addition to the real estate tax, is related to the population which pays the per capita tax, the income levels of the population which translates into the amount of earned income tax, and the amount of grant funds obtained. Falls Township fell in the lower third for revenue per capita and expenditures per capita.

Future Considerations

As noted earlier, the fund balances of earlier years have been recently depleted by necessary expenditures. Should the Township need to raise additional funds for large unanticipated expenditures or for increased levels of normal facilities and services, which would likely be required only in association with a dramatic increase in residential development, there is considerable room for a real estate tax rate increase given the current millage.

Raising real estate taxes would be the only realistic means of raising additional tax revenues given that the Township already assesses the earned income tax. Increased development would result in an increased assessed valuation which could offset the need for an increase in millage, and an increasing population would generate additional earned income tax. However, an increase in population would likely result in increased costs because residential development typically generates more public expenditures than tax receipts.

Fortunately, the Township has no debt and revenues are expected to cover expenditures, and any immediate emergency spending could be covered by borrowing. However, it would be prudent to begin the process of building a fund balance. In addition, no formal capital budgeting has been undertaken. A capital budget with earmarked reserve funds is an invaluable tool for anticipating and funding large expenditures such as equipment, buildings and parks, and the Townships should develop a budget for any such expenditures.

	Mkt Val/Capita	Taxes per Capita	Revenue per Capita	Expend per Capita	Total Debt	Debt Per Capita
Braintrim Twp	\$48,000	\$71	\$131	\$151	\$7,124	\$0
Clinton Twp	\$49,973	\$119	\$181	\$187	\$0	\$0
Eaton Twp	\$50,059	\$152	\$233	\$184	\$0	\$0
Exeter Twp	\$38,948	\$83	\$189	\$218	\$55,201	\$44
Factoryville Boro	\$17,111	\$145	\$443	\$460	\$1,163,975	\$0
Falls Twp	\$31,179	\$99	\$173	\$177	\$0	\$0
Forkston Twp	\$72,211	\$115	\$304	\$320	\$0	\$0
Laceyville Boro	\$25,081	\$108	\$238	\$228	\$0	\$0
Lemon Twp	\$38,000	\$90	\$147	\$159	\$0	\$0
Mehoopany Twp	\$34,506	\$98	\$389	\$327	\$1,107,732	\$58
Meshoppen Boro	\$27,965	\$119	\$2,408	\$2,641	\$960,976	\$1,961
Meshoppen Twp	\$39,630	\$107	\$296	\$292	\$16,750	\$0
Monroe Twp	\$32,009	\$45	\$95	\$148	\$0	\$0
Nicholson Boro	\$26,138	\$122	\$173	\$162	\$21,535	\$0
Nicholson Twp	\$36,934	\$87	\$182	\$185	\$0	\$0
North Branch Twp	\$66,886	\$110	\$512	\$416	\$0	\$0
Northmoreland Twp	\$36,345	\$83	\$156	\$166	\$51,900	\$0
Noxen Twp	\$25,542	\$89	\$215	\$206	\$0	\$0
Overfield Twp	\$52,375	\$124	\$258	\$228	\$0	\$0
Tunkhannock Boro	\$31,916	\$223	\$313	\$342	\$71,888	\$0
Tunkhannock Twp	\$45,459	\$133	\$260	\$254	\$0	\$0
Washington Twp	\$82,161	\$184	\$332	\$299	\$0	\$0
Windham Twp	\$37,657	\$87	\$256	\$238	\$61,515	\$10

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Overview

Community facilities and services, as provided by local, county and state government, and by quasi-public institutions such as volunteer fire departments, hospitals and libraries, are most often considered in terms of government or institutional response to meet the needs and demands of the community's residents. As the Township and regional population continues to increase, the demand for facilities and services will also increase -- more classroom space, police protection, social services, recreation facilities, etc. will be needed. Public community facilities and services in the Township are provided on several levels, and the provision of these facilities and services is dependent on tax dollars, whether in the form of state aid, county supported programs or locally funded facilities and services. Both public and private funds support institutional facilities and services.

Community facilities and services can also serve as a tool, or as an unexpected trigger, to guide or stimulate community growth and development. Provision of a public water supply or sewage disposal system can be used to attract industry, but unexpected (and perhaps undesired) associated commercial and residential development can result in the area where such facilities are provided. The construction or improvement of highways, often to solve traffic congestion, can have similar effect resulting in even more traffic and a change in community character.

In short, the planning and provision of community facilities and services must be undertaken in the overall context of the *Comprehensive Plan* and the community's long-term growth and development goals and objectives. More importantly, the Townships should not act as an island when considering facilities or services, but should cooperate with other local municipal jurisdictions, the school districts, the County and community associations to provide and improve facilities and services which are best provided regionally.

This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* focuses on those facilities and services which are provided by the Townships and the quasi-public institutions serving the area. Given the historical population growth of the Township, the demand for services and facilities

provided directly by the Township has been continually increasing. For many years in the early history of the Townships, the main responsibility of Township officials was maintaining Township roads. In more recent years, state and federal mandates such as sewage disposal regulations, floodplain development requirements, and stormwater management planning, along with the local desire to manage development, the Townships are considering land use planning and environmental protection programs.

Certainly, the facilities and services provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Wyoming County are vital to Township residents, but are somewhat beyond the scope of this *Plan*. Should residents of Falls Township find that state or county facilities or services are inadequate, Township officials can serve as a conduit for communication with responsible state and county officials to effect facility and service improvements. In order to provide an overview of the range of facilities and services available in a community, Table VI-1, Facilities and Services Providers, includes a matrix of typical facilities and services which can be provided by various jurisdictions.

Schools

The public school system not only provides education for a community's children, but also provides adult/community education, library facilities, cultural/social activities and recreational/sport activities for the surrounding community. The 2000 Census reported almost 490 school age children living in the Township, with an additional 120 children under the age of five. (See Table IV-6 for individual Township details.) Local schools account for the largest expenditure of local tax dollars and Falls Township is served by the Tunkhannock Area School District. The District enrolls some 3,400 students in six school buildings -- three primary, two intermediate, one middle and one high school. The Mill City Elementary School is the only Tunkhannock District school in the Township and it has an enrollment of some 300 students in kindergarten through fourth grade with a professional staff of eighteen. The Pennsylvania Department of Education projects Tunkhannock Area School District enrollment to decline and no additional buildings are planned at this time.

TABLE VI-1
 TYPICAL FACILITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDERS
 (not specific to Falls Township or Wyoming County)

Service	Local	School	County	State	Quasi-Pub
Social Programs					
Aging			D	S, D	
Domestic Relations			D	S, D	
Children & Youth			D	S, D	
Welfare, etc.				D	
Education		D		S	
Parks & Recreation	S, D	D	S, D	S, D	D
Judicial			D	S, D	
Criminal Justice			D	S, D	
Police Protection	D		D	D	
Emergency Mngt	D		S, D	S, D	D
Roads/Highways	D		S, D	S, D	
Tax Assessment			D		
Elections	D		D	S, D	
Land records			D		
Libraries, museums	S, D	D	S, D	S	D
Fire & Rescue	S, D		S	S	D
Health Care			D	S, D	D
Utilities	D		D		D
Land Use Control	D		D	S, D	
Environ Protection	D		D	S, D	
Solid Waste Disposal	D		S, D		

S - provides financial support to other jurisdiction or quasi-public entity
 D - provides directly to public

Township Facilities and Services

Townships in Pennsylvania are responsible for a variety of public facilities and services. One of the primary functions is the construction, improvement and maintenance of roads, which is addressed in Section VII of this *Comprehensive Plan*. Townships, via the elected Township Supervisors, are also responsible for, and in some cases are mandated by state and federal

regulations, a variety of other facilities, services and programs. These include, among others, land use controls; environmental protection; police protection; water, sewer and storm water facilities; parks and recreation, and solid waste disposal. The level of service is typically dictated by the density and demographic character of the Township population, and its tax base.

TABLE VI-2 FALLS TOWNSHIP FACILITIES AND STAFF	
EATON TOWNSHIP	
Township Building	-located on SR 2017, about one mile north of Falls -constructed in 1977 on approximately 2 acres -houses administrative and meeting facilities, and police department
Other Property	-3 separate garages on Township Building property -salt and cinder shed on rented land
Meetings Conducted at	-Township Building -use Lake Winola Fire Company if larger room required
Records stored at	-Township Building
Employees	-part-time secretary/treasurer -full-time road supervisor (one of elected Supervisors) permit officer -2 full-time road maintenance employees -part-time SEO -full-time chief, part-time sergeant
Vehicles	-1999 International dump, plow -1998 Chevy dump, plow, spreader -1990 Chevy dump, plow, spreader -1990 Chevy pick-up -1989 Chevy dump, plow, spreader -1974 AM General dump -1988 Elite trailer -2002 Dodge Intrepid, police car -1991 Chevy Caprice, police car 1996 Crown Victoria, police car
Recreation Facilities	-lease baseball field on Brides Dr. -no Park and Recreation Board
Comments and Needs	-township building and staff adequate for current and near term needs -plan to replace 1990 pick-up truck

The Township operates under state law as a *Township of the Second Class* (a far better moniker than *second class township*). Based on a population density of 300 persons per square mile, township voters can opt for reclassification to a *Township of the First Class*. None of the Townships in the County have sufficient population density to opt for the *first class* classification. Similar to most Townships of the Second Class, each Township in Wyoming County is governed by a three-member board of supervisors. State statute provides the option of a five-member board under the home rule system following a ballot referendum supported by a majority of voters. However, relatively few townships in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and none in Wyoming County, have gone to five-member boards. The Board of Supervisors of townships appoints residents to the township planning commission which serves an advisory role to the Supervisors. Other boards may include the zoning hearing board, the parks and recreation commission and

the shade tree commission.

Township Buildings and Staff

Table VI-6, Falls Township Facilities and Staff, presents summarized information for the Township. Staffing levels of the Township appear adequate at this time, and meeting and administrative space, and maintenance facilities are also adequate for current and near term needs. Over the longer term, as more facilities are developed by the Township and more services are provided, additional staff will be required. The Township road crews provide all normal winter and summer maintenance, however, contracts for major improvement projects such as paving and shoulder reconstruction. This approach has served well and in terms of cost efficiency is the most prudent given the cost of owning and maintaining road construction equipment. The Township has over the last several years replaced older dump trucks and plans to replace the 1990 pick-up truck.

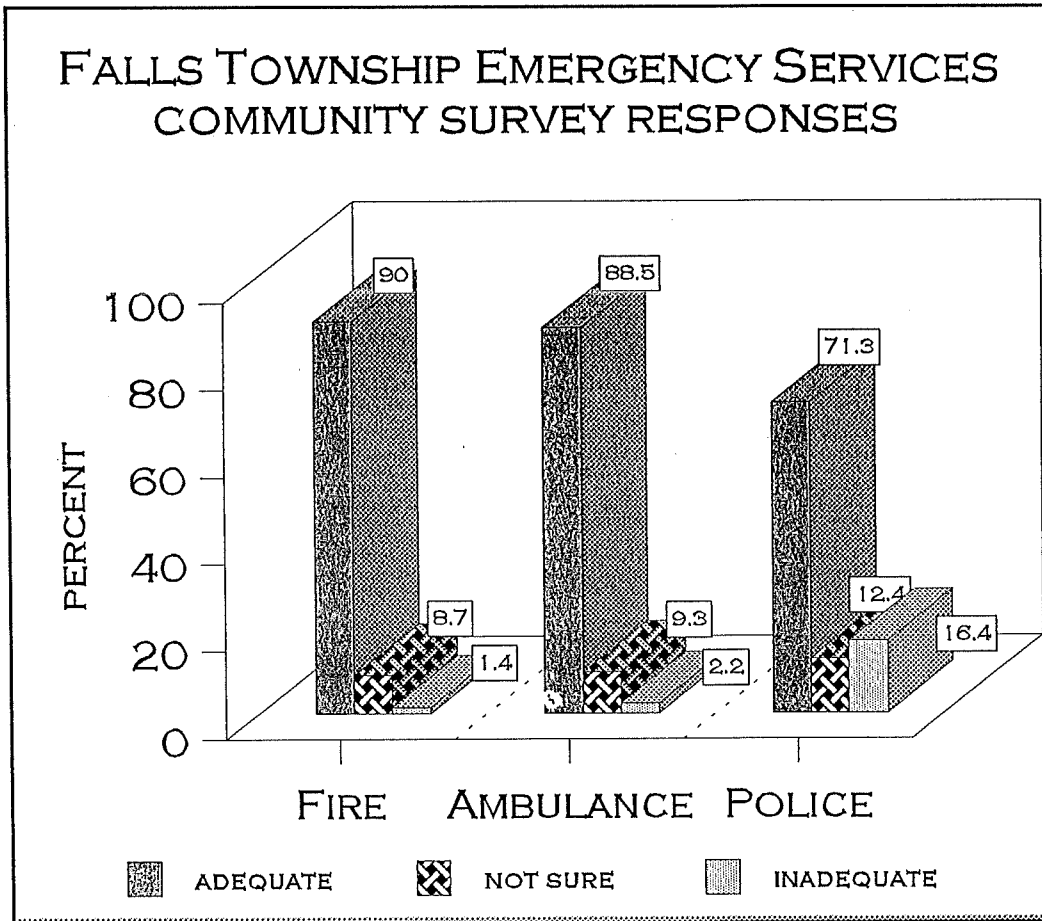


Figure VI-1, Emergency Services

Fire Protection and Emergency Response

As shown in Figure VI-1, Emergency Services, most of the respondents to the community survey conducted by the Township agreed that fire protection and ambulance service is adequate. Relatively few disagreed and those that were not certain likely had not required the service. All emergency services in Falls Township are provided by the volunteers of the Lake Winola Fire Company No. 1, Inc., located in Overfield Township. The Lake Winola Fire Company recently merged with the Falls Hose Company in Exeter Township (Wyoming County) and full facilities are maintained at each location. The combined company membership totals almost 100 with some forty-five active, and about twenty emergency medical technicians, and an active Ladies Auxiliary which plays a key role in fund raising. Unlike many other volunteer companies, recruiting volunteers has not been a problem to date. The Company serves Falls, Exeter and Overfield

Townships, responding to almost 400 calls each year, all of which are dispatched via the Wyoming County 911 System. Equipment is largely up to date, with a new American LaFrance fire truck on order, at a cost of \$240,00, on order to replace the Company's 1970 Ward truck. The Company operates a fully equipped emergency response truck with the *jaws-of-life* and the local *Lionesses* recently raised the necessary funds to purchase two imaging cameras to facilitate rescue in smoke-filled structures. All fire and ambulance companies are organized in a regional mutual aid system, which is a good example of how intermunicipal collaboration can improve both the efficiency and quality of service. Township officials and the Fire Company have historically maintained good working relationships. Falls Township has dedicated 0.4 mills of real estate tax to the Fire Company, transfers the State Fireman's Relief Fund payments, and pays a share of worker's compensation insurance.

Police Protection

Falls Township has maintain a police force since the early 1950's, and currently employs a full-time Chief and a part-time Sergeant. The Township also provides forty hours of contracted services per week to Overfield Township. The practice of shared police services is becoming more common and is a good approach to saving money for all participating municipalities. Back-up and specialized services such as fingerprinting are provided by the Pennsylvania State Police in Tunkhannock, and area local police departments also provide mutual assistance as needed. Police service was reported as adequate by seventy-one percent of community survey respondents, with sixteen percent disagreeing and twelve percent noting their uncertainty. (See Figure VI-1.)

Police protection can be one of the most costly services provided by local government, not only in terms of the number of employees and equipment requirements, but also continuing benefits and pensions, as well as liability insurance. The regionalization of police protection can be a means of providing service at reduced cost to each participating municipality. Savings in manpower, administration, space and equipment costs can be realized by intermunicipal cooperative efforts. The two regional police forces in Monroe County, Pocono Mountain and Stroud, are good examples. As the population of Falls Township increases, this may become a viable option for the Township and adjoining municipalities. Such an approach would be a natural progression of this comprehensive planning process and the current Council of Governments. Funding assistance to study the viability of a regional police force is available from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and neighboring municipalities should consider such a study as the need and demand for police service dictate.

Utilities

As is the case in most areas, electricity, telephone and cable television in the Townships are supplied by private utility companies. Telephone service is provided by Commonwealth Telephone in the entire Township. Electricity is supplied by Penelec and PPL. Cable television service is provided throughout almost all of the Township by Blue Ridge Cable.

Water Supply

Groundwater is the source for all potable water in the Falls Township with supplies provided largely by individual wells, and small community water systems serve the two Wyoming Housing Authority projects. The Township provides no public water service and no such service is anticipated in the near term. Community water systems are regulated by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and any person who plans to construct, operate or substantially modify a water system which provides water to the public for human consumption and serves at least fifteen service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least twenty-five year-round residents must first obtain a public water supply permit from DEP. (See *Groundwater* discussion in Background Studies Section III for quantity and quality issues.)

Sewage Disposal

Adequate sewage disposal is vital to the environmental health of a community, as well as to long-term growth potential. Development in communities without central sewage collection and disposal is limited by the suitability of the existing soils for on-site sewage disposal. Development is limited to areas with suitable soils and sewage flows which can be assimilated are often limited by poor percolation rates. Central sewage and collection broadens the possibilities for development, yet can also stimulate unanticipated and unwanted development. In other words, central sewage collection and treatment not only serves to address environmental concerns, it can also serve to stimulate development. In short, a community must consider carefully the balance between the environmental need for central sewage and its relationship to increased development. A good example of this is nearby Lake Winola where central sewage was installed to protect the water quality of the Lake, which also enabled the development of small lots which could not support on-lot sewage disposal systems.

The Township provides no public sewage disposal service. The only sewage treatment plant operating in the is that which serves the St. Michael's School, and this plant is operated by the School and is regulated by

the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. DEP requires a certified operator for the plant and the submission of monthly Discharge Monitoring Reports to confirm proper plant operations. All other areas of the Townships are served by on-site, sub-surface disposal systems. State environmental regulations governing sewage disposal systems were initiated in 1969 with the passage of the Sewage Facilities Act. All of the on-lot disposal systems installed since that time should be in compliance with state requirements. The 2000 Census reported that some 370 housing units in the Township were constructed prior to 1970. (See Table IV-8 for details.) Given that state sewage system construction regulations went into effect in 1969, a number homes in the Township are served by systems that predate state regulations. In any case, careful on-site sewage planning and system construction and maintenance are critical to protecting surface and groundwater quality.

(See *Sewage Disposal* discussion in Background Studies Section III.)

Solid Waste Disposal

Given the change in solid waste regulations over the past twenty years and the expense involved, it is obvious that a *municipal landfill* or any other type of solid waste disposal facility is not an option for a small municipality such as the Falls Township. County solid waste disposal planning is now a state mandated function and all residents of the Township, via private haulers, have access to County designated disposal facilities. This arrangement of regional landfills and private collection, along with the consistency provided by collection and disposal regulations which can be adopted by individual municipalities, should be adequate to meet the long-term needs of residents and businesses in the Township planning area. State regulations require the more densely populated municipalities in the Commonwealth to recycle, however, each the Township falls well below the threshold. Recycling is available to residents at the Wyoming County Recycling Center located at 440 SR 92 South near the Tunkhannock Township Building, and a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection was just obtained for the placement of four drop-off containers around the County.

Recreation

The baseball field on Brides Drive leased by the Township is the only recreation facility currently

provided by the Township. This is in no way a reflection on past or present Township officials. Simply put, the facilities and programs provided by the School District, and nearby municipalities have served to meet community needs, and providing recreation facilities is another opportunity for municipalities to work cooperatively. The community survey addressed recreation facility and program needs, and as shown on Figure VI-2, Recreation Needs, thirty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that recreation opportunities are adequate, but forty-eight percent disagreed, and thirteen percent were uncertain. The types of recreation facilities and programs identified by survey respondents as needed in the Township are listed in Table VI-3, Recreation Needs.

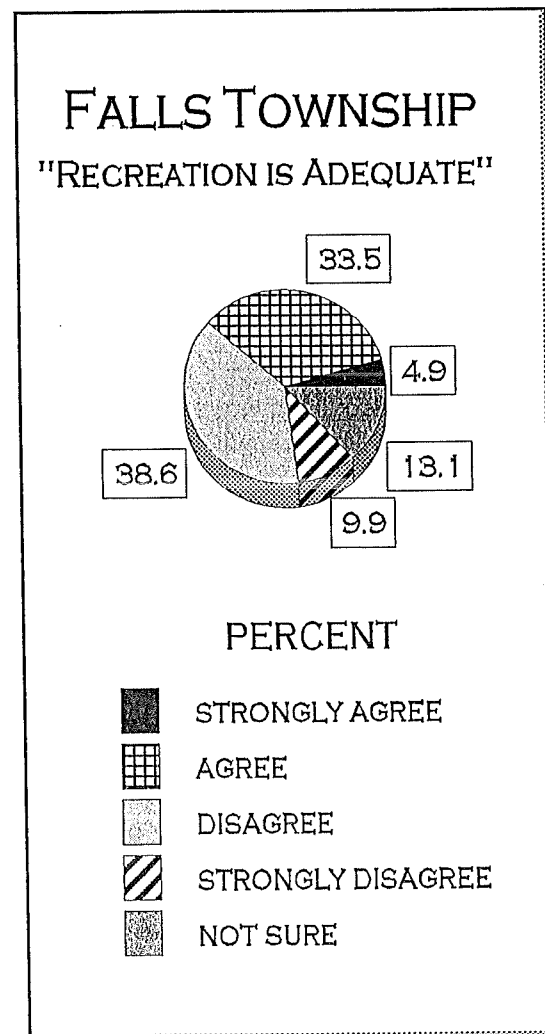


Figure VI-2, Recreation Needs

TABLE VI-3 COMMUNITY SURVEY RECREATION NEEDS	
# of responses	FACILITY/SERVICE
160	Youth recreation program
148	Picnic areas
135	Bicycle routes
133	Playgrounds
118	Pool
110	Trails
110	Community center
108	Adult recreation program
66	Basketball courts
61	Skateboard/skating
58	Baseball fields
44	Tennis courts
39	Soccer fields
19	Football fields

Recreation planning and facility construction are eligible for funding under the Keystone Recreation Grant Program which should be considered for any future recreation improvements. While almost 170 of 517 survey respondents would support a tax increase topay for recreation improvements, finding outside funding sources would help assuage other taxpayer concerns about paying for recreation improvements. Another option for providing recreation facilities is provided by Section 503(11) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which authorizes a municipality to require as part of the subdivision approval process, the public dedication of land for recreation purposes or the payment of fees in lieu of dedication. However, such action can only be taken in accord with a formally adopted recreation plan and specific fiduciary guidelines.

Libraries

Libraries play an important role in the community by making information available to all residents. Libraries supplement school libraries for students, provide life-long learning opportunities for adults, and offer special services such as interlibrary loan, books by mail and children’s reading programs. In recent years, libraries have offer computer services and Internet access. The

primary library in Wyoming County is the Tunkhannock Public Library located on Route 6 in Tunkhannock Township just west of the Borough. *The Tunkhannock Public Library was established in 1890. It moved into the old Triton Hose House on Marion St. in 1911 with just 338 books. In the spring of 1999, the Board of Trustees began a Capital Campaign to raise \$1,500,000. Groundbreaking took place in August of 2000 and a new 12,500 square-foot state of the art building opened for business in May of 2001. The Library has grown over the years to become an important community center that provides free access to information, education, and entertainment for all the residents of Wyoming County. It has over 30,000 catalogued items including books, books on tape, videos, and CD's. It has twelve computers for public use, all with Internet access. It has a Community Room that seats up to 100 and is available to be used by local organizations.*¹

The nearby Abington Community Library and the Dalton Community Library are also used by Township residents, and the Scranton Public Library is the designated state system library for the region.

Community Facilities for New Development

A critical concern for any community is the provision of adequate facilities for new development. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code establishes the authority for local governments to require developers to provide adequate community facilities for their particular project. Via the subdivision and land development ordinance, roads, central water supply, central sewage disposal, storm water control and other facilities, must either be installed or be financially guaranteed prior to the sale of any lots in the development. The Township is currently under the jurisdiction of the Wyoming County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, but intends to adopt its own ordinance which will supercede the County’s. It is critical that the subdivision and land development ordinance be carefully enforced and updated as necessary to ensure that roads, drainage and other community facilities are installed to specifications which will result in quality, durable facilities.

¹Tunkhannock Public Library Web Page, www.tunk.com/library.

HIGHWAYS and TRANSPORTATION

Access - Mobility

A sound transportation system includes adequate and well-maintained roads, available public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle paths. There is a direct correlation between land use and transportation needs. As residential and commercial land is developed, more people utilize automobiles for transportation, and thus the roads become congested for longer periods of time. This is particularly true for rush hours. Also, as new roads are built to address traffic congestion, the adjoining land becomes easier and more lucrative to develop.

Each highway, road or street in a community plays a specific role for the movement of traffic and it is useful for planning purposes to classify roads according to the particular function each serves. In general terms, the functional classification of a road is based largely on two factors -- access and mobility -- and typically, as access declines mobility increases. For example, Interstate Route 81 clearly serves a different function than does a street in a residential subdivision. Although the I-81 and private street example compares streets at the opposite ends of the road classification hierarchy, it clearly depicts the relationship between access and mobility. Traffic on Interstate 80, a limited access highway, travels over long distances at high rates of speed. On the other hand, traffic using a private residential street with unlimited access from individual properties moves at minimum speeds to reach roads that connect the residential community with other areas of the Township and region.

Other Classification Factors

As previously noted, access, how traffic enters the traffic stream; and mobility, the physical capability of the road to carry traffic, are the key determinants of a road's functional classification. However, several other road and network characteristics also affect the functional classification of a road. Traffic volume in relationship to the physical design of the road, including lane and shoulder width, right-of-way alignment and surface treatment, is important to its classification. Generally, as a community develops, roads are improved to meet the increased traffic demands, with specific routes moving higher in the functional classification as they are improved. However, in areas of rapid growth and associated traffic increases, the

amount of traffic carried by specific roads may increase to the point of exceeding the road's capacity. The road, in terms of traffic, may be serving as a principal collector, but may not have been physically upgraded from a minor collector or local road. In urban areas, mass transit and non-capital approaches such as ride sharing and staggered work hours are promoted as a means of reducing traffic congestion as an alternative to upgrading roads.

A road's location and relationship to other roads in the intra-community and inter-regional highway network may also help define the road's classification. Those roads which provide direct and convenient connection to arterial routes and expressways typically develop into roads which carry increasing amounts of traffic. Conversely, interchanges for expressways are normally located to provide connection with those roads in a community which historically have developed into arterials and collectors. Traffic flow problems and declines in level-of-service on routes connecting areas of the Township and routes providing access to the region are directly related to the capacity of collector and arterial roads. As traffic increases on the collectors and arterials, where access to abutting properties has historically not been limited to any significant degree, increasing traffic congestion can be expected. Also resulting from such access by adjoining residential and commercial properties and intersecting streets are the safety problems associated with increased congestion.

Highway Functional Classification

The nomenclature used for a *Highway Functional Classification* also differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction throughout the Commonwealth and the United States. Road classification in metropolitan and suburban areas is often very complex, with the various categories of roads being divided into subcategories based on land use type served and the designation of specific traffic volumes. The nomenclature for classification being used for Falls Township is based on the type and density of the land uses served by the road and the volume of traffic on the road. The relatively small-scale commercial development interwoven with single-family residential development pattern within the rural setting warrants a more simplified highway classification system for the Township. While simplified, this classification will meet the needs for

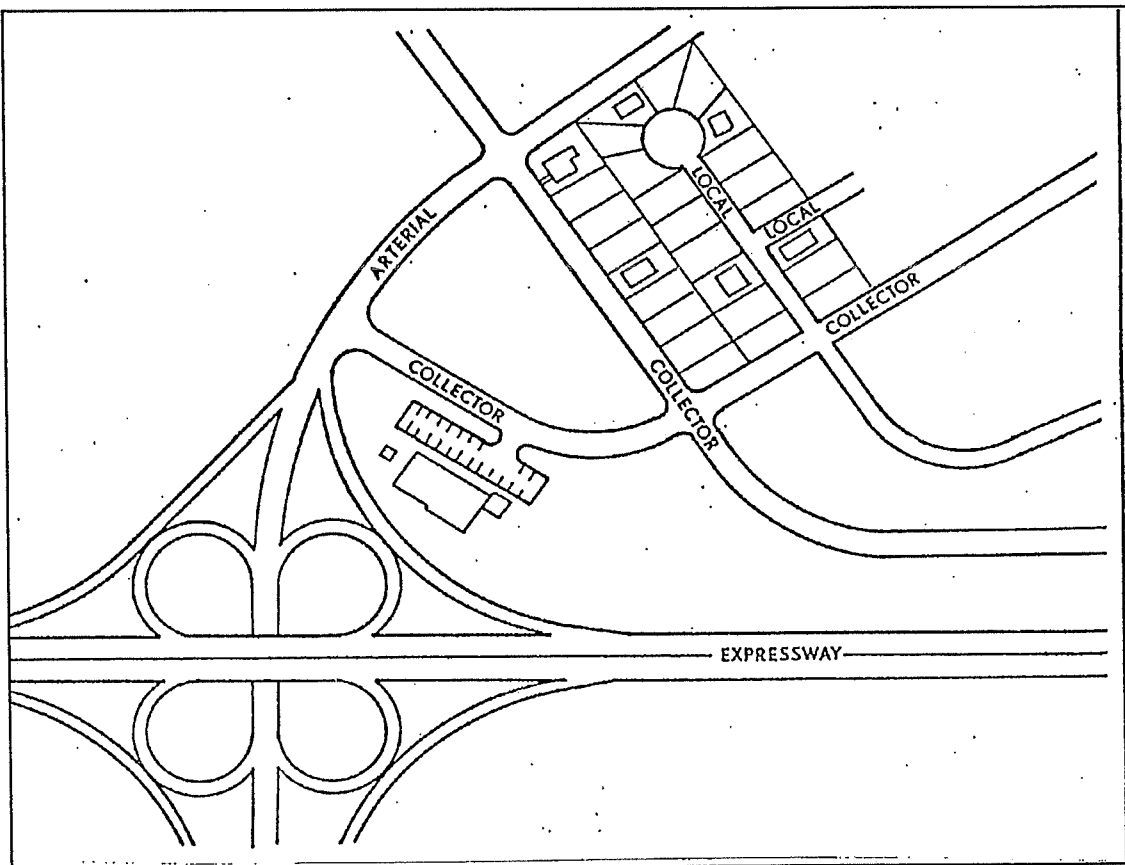


Figure VII-1 - Highway Functional Classification

the identification of problem areas and needed improvements, and for long-range planning. The designation of the Highway Functional Classification for roads serving the Township includes *expressway*, *arterial highway*, *collector road* and *local road*. Figure VII-1-Highway Functional Classification, provides an illustration, and Figure VII-2-Falls Township Highway Classification provides an overview of the road system in the Township. A description of each classification and the classification of the roads in the Township is included in Table VII-1, Falls Township Functional Highway Classification.

Roads in Falls Township

The total length of public roads in Falls Township is 55.15 miles, with 25.43 miles of Township roads and 29.22 miles of state-owned routes. See Table VII-2, Falls Township Road Miles. Local municipal road mileage in Wyoming County ranges from a low of 1.9 miles in Meshoppen Borough to a high of 44.5 miles in Tunkhannock Township. Almost four miles of the Township's roads are paved, with the balance gravel.

All roads owned by the Township are part of the State Liquid Fuels Programs which provides state payments to the Township for road maintenance and reconstruction based on Township population and miles of roads meeting PennDOT specifications.

The balance between state and Township owned roads commonly changes in two ways. Under a state program, a local municipality can assume ownership of a state owned road after improvements are made, and then receive annual payments from the state based on the length of road. Falls Township has not *taken back* any state roads. Townships can also accept for public dedication roads which have been privately constructed to specified standards included in the subdivision and land development ordinance and/or the road dedication ordinance. This typically occurs in residential subdivisions as part of the development process and the streets serving the Milan Davis Subdivision were acquired by the Township in this way.

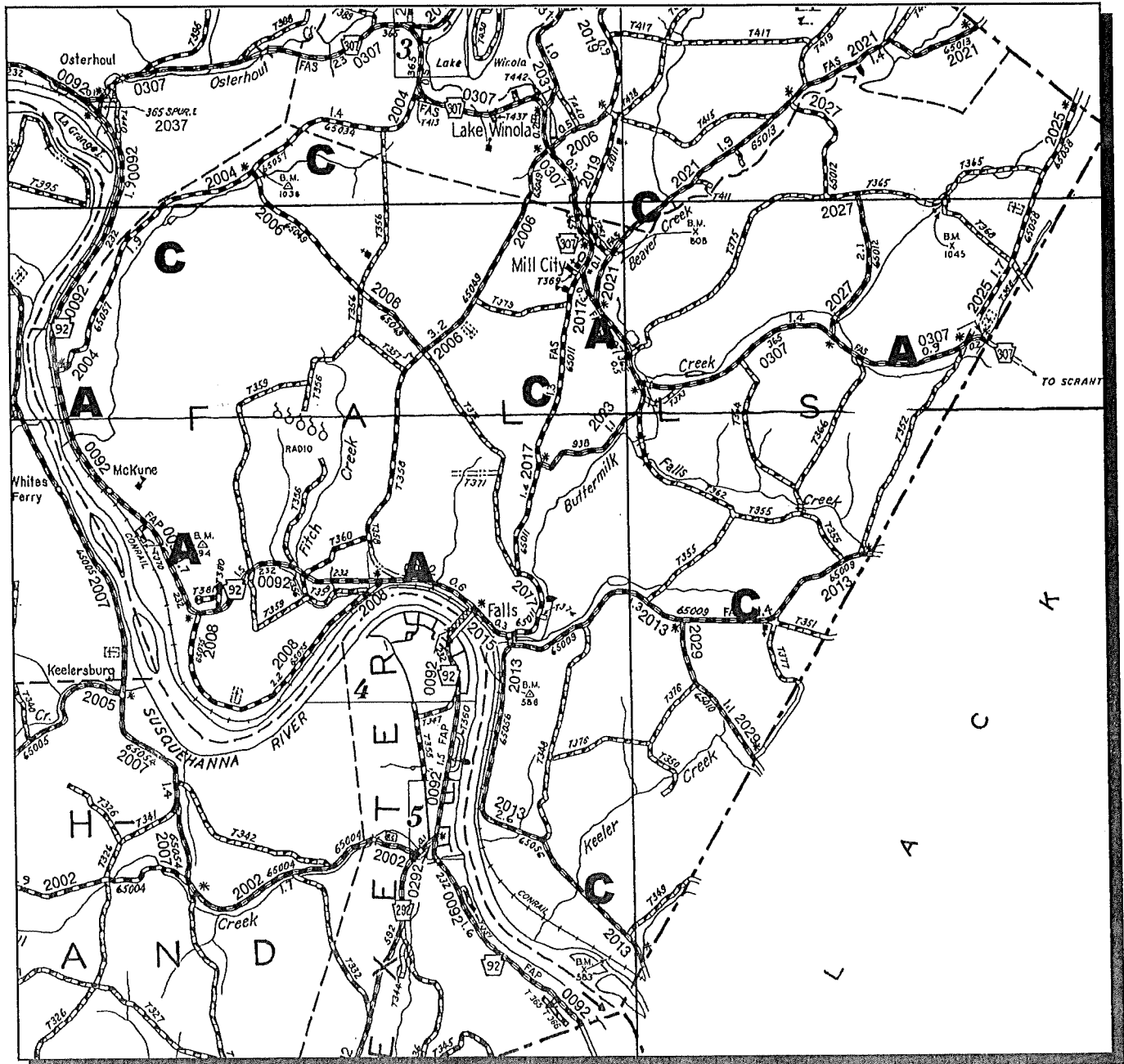


Figure VII-2, Average Annual Daily Traffic, 2001 A = arterial, C = collector

TABLE VII-1
FALLS TOWNSHIP FUNCTIONAL HIGHWAY CLASSIFICATION

FUNCTION	ROADS / COMMENTS
EXPRESSWAY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides interregional and interstate connections - Designed for unrestricted, high speed (55+ mph) mobility of traffic - Limited access only -- no direct access from private property - Provides highest level of mobility - Intersects with selected arterial or collector routes by means of interchanges - Carries highest volumes of automobile and truck traffic with longer trip lengths 	<p>None in Falls Township</p> <p>I-81 and I-476 are the nearest and are accessed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Route 307 and Route 6 east to Clarks Summit -Routes 92 south to Pittston
ARTERIAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides connection between commercial and population centers in the region. - Provides connection between the SE Wyoming and adjoining communities, counties and states - Carries larger volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds (45-55 mph) - Serves a mix of local and through traffic - Carries low volumes of through truck traffic - Provides moderate to high levels of mobility - Access limited only by PennDOT highway occupancy permits and local zoning and subdivision ordinances 	<p>Route 92 - connects Falls Township north to Tunkhannock and Route 6, and south through Exeter Township to Pittston</p> <p>Route 307 - connects Falls Township east to Clarks Summit, and west through Lake Winola to Route 92 north at Osterhout</p>
COLLECTOR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collects traffic from local streets for connection of residential areas to commercial and activity centers and arterials - Serves moderate levels of traffic at reduced speeds (35-45 mph) - Serves more locally oriented traffic and few through trips - Carries primarily only "local delivery" truck traffic - Access from smaller and more numerous properties - Access limited only by local municipal and Penn DOT highway occupancy permits and local zoning and subdivision ordinances - Provides reduced levels of mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SR 2004, Whites Ferry Rd - connects Lake Winola to Route 92 south -SR 2013, Falls Rd - connects Falls to Rt 307 east -SR 2017, Falls-Mill City Rd - connects Mill City and Falls -SR 2021, Lower Mill City Rd - connects Rt 307 just south of Mill City north to Dalton -SR 2006 and paved portion of T-358 Post Hill Road -SR 2025 - Dickinson Road to Dalton
LOCAL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides connection of residential properties and communities and less populated areas to collectors - Serves lowest levels of traffic at slowest speeds (less than 35 mph) - Provides high level of access from smaller residential parcels or areas with little development - Carries local trips only with no through trips - Carries minimal truck traffic making local deliveries 	<p>All other public roads</p>

TABLE VII-2 FALLS TOWNSHIP ROAD MILES (Source: PennDOT Report of Municipal Road Mileage, January 2002.)	
	miles
unimproved	0.00
gravel	22.11
seal coat	0.00
bituminous	3.82
concrete	0.00
turnback	0.00
TOTAL Township	25.93
State	29.22
TOTAL Township and State	55.15

Given the rural-residential nature of the Township which is adequately served by a number of state routes, there is currently no need (and no realistic funding source) for the construction of any new higher volume roads to carry traffic generated from within the Township or to upgrade township-owned roads to collector status. The arterial and collector roads bisecting the Township also serve to carry travelers to and from destination outside the area, and are adequate for this purpose at this time. The Township's interior road network developed to serve the early settlers and later residential and commercial development. As more and more development occurred in the area, roads were extended and improved to carry the additional traffic. Nevertheless, as more traffic is generated by future development, the adequacy of the roads in the Township must be monitored for improvements necessary to maintain adequate levels of service. As development increases and local roads are added in new subdivisions, existing local roads will become the collector roads. One function of zoning setbacks for structures and development is to minimize right-of-way and construction costs of future road widening.

Traffic Volume

Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes are a way to measure increases or decreases in road use to provide

an overview of the traffic flow in the Township for planning purposes. Traffic volumes have historically not been a problem in the Township and traffic counting has not been conducted on Township roads. PennDOT does, however, conduct traffic counts on state roads, and the counts do provide a means of assessing the overall traffic conditions. Traffic counts for 2001 and 1991 for all state roads in the Township, reported as average annual daily traffic (AADT), are shown on Figure VII-3. As would be expected of arterial highways, Route 92 and Route 307 carry higher volumes of traffic, and Falls Road, though not meeting the alignment and construction standards of Routes 92 and 307, carries as much traffic as Route 92. The traffic data confirm that the primary traffic flow is between Tunkhannock, the Abingtons and the Dallas/Wilkes-Barre area. The other state roads in the Township carry only modest amounts of traffic with AADT reported by PennDOT at 850 vehicles or less.

It would seem obvious that traffic on the roads in the Township and Wyoming County as a whole has been increasing steadily as the area has developed. However, the PennDOT data does not confirm this. While some roads show an increase, others show a decrease. The largest increase, 1,400 vehicles per day, occurred between Mill City and Lake Winola, an average annual increase of 140 per day over the ten-year period. The largest decrease in traffic volume since 1991 occurred on Sand Plant Road, probably a result of decreased use of the Wyoming Sand and Stone facility located along the road. In terms of level-of-service, which is discussed in a following section, the changes in traffic volume are not significant.

Another point to remember is that AADT does not reflect daily and seasonal traffic volumes which can far exceed AADT. Although the proportionate increase can be significant and daily and seasonal counts often exceed average counts, the total volume of traffic has not been a problem in terms of traffic congestion given that even the highest volumes do not exceed the carrying capacity of Route 92 and Route 307. (See the following section on road network level-of-service.) In any case, it would be beneficial for the Township to develop with PennDOT and the Wyoming County Planning Commission a systematic traffic counting system. The Township should identify priority areas where future traffic counts can be performed to document traffic volume changes.

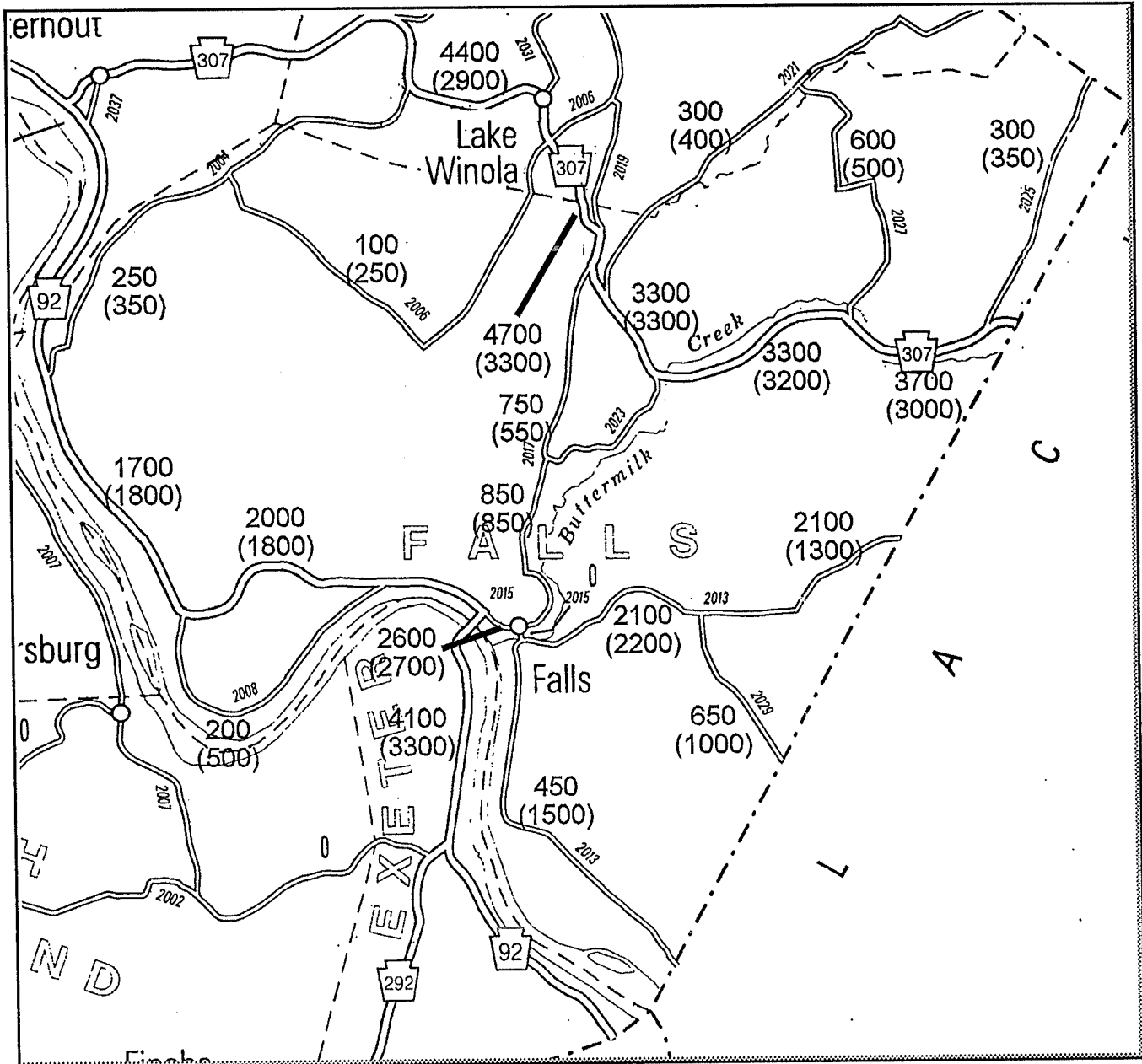


Figure VII-3, Falls Township Highway Classification
numbers = Average Annual Daily Traffic — xxxx = 2001, (xxxx) = 1991

Truck Traffic

Another element of traffic volume important to assessing traffic conditions is the proportion of trucks using a particular route, and PennDOT provides data on vehicle classification for certain locations. The 2000 estimates of the proportion of trucks is seven percent on Route 92 and three percent on Route 307. This modest proportion is typical of rural areas without manufacturing and industrial operations which generate larger volumes of truck traffic, and does not contribute with any significance to level-of-service reductions.

Road Network Level of Service

The traffic carrying capacity of a community's road network, and the intersections associated with the network, to handle the existing and future traffic volumes generated by development is the key element for providing safe and efficient traffic flow. Those land uses which generate larger volumes of traffic should logically be located in the areas of a community served by roads with greater carrying capacity. For example, commercial establishments generate more traffic than a single family residence and should be located on

routes which have sufficient capacity to serve the use. The capacity of a highway or road typically decreases as the service area of the route declines. For example, the capacity of I-81 is obviously significantly greater than arterials, which in turn have a greater capacity than collectors, with the lowest capacity associated with local roads. The capacity of a rural, two lane highway is dependent on a number of design variables; and, the ideal conditions for two-lane highways as defined by the Transportation Research Board of the National Research Council in their *Highway Capacity Manual* are:

1. Design speed greater than or equal to 60 mph.
2. Lane widths greater than or equal to 12 ft.
3. Clear shoulders wider than or equal to 6 ft.
4. No "no passing zones" on the highway.
5. All passenger cars in the traffic stream.
6. A 50/50 directional split of traffic.
- 7 No impediments due to traffic control or turning vehicles.
8. Level terrain.

TABLE VII-3 LEVELS OF SERVICE (LOS) For Ideal Conditions			
LOS	Avg Speed (mph)	Delay Time (%)	Max. Flow Rate (pcph)
A	60	35	420
B	55+	45	750
C	50+	60	1200
D	50+	75	1800
E	25 - 50	75+	2800
pcph = passenger cars per hour, total in both directions			

If all the ideal conditions are satisfied, the capacity of the highway would be 2,800 passenger cars per hour (pcph), total, in both directions. Given the rolling terrain of the Township, the capacity of the arterials and collectors in the area is substantially less than the ideal. Local roads, because of the limited service and low traffic volume area, are not considered in terms of capacity. The quality of traffic service is discussed in terms of level-of-service (LOS) with the highest quality of service occurring if traffic is able to travel at the desired speed of motorists -- up to 60 mph without

strict enforcement. Table VII-3, Levels of Service Description, summarizes the factors associated with the levels-of-service A through E. As LOS moves from A to E speeds decrease, delay time increases and noticeable platoon formation and platoon size increases occur. Maximum capacity is achieved at LOS E where more vehicles are on the route moving at slower speeds. At LOS F, traffic volumes exceed capacity and traffic is bumper to bumper. See Table VII-4, Levels of Service Description.

The *Highway Capacity Manual* provides the methodology to determine the LOS and capacity of two-lane highways. The methodology uses the 2,800 passenger cars per hour (pcph) ideal on a two-mile segment with adjustments for local conditions. The adjustment factors and local road conditions are discussed below.

Terrain - The terrain of the subject Route is one variable affecting capacity and the roads in the Township may be considered as *rolling terrain* defined in the *Manual* as *any combination of horizontal and vertical alignments causing heavy vehicles to reduce their speed substantially below that of passenger cars, but not causing heavy vehicles to operate at crawl speeds for any significant amount of time.*

Passing Zones - The number of passing zones also affects capacity, with capacity increasing as passing opportunities increase. Few passing zones are found on roads in the Township and for discussion purposes ten percent passing zones are assumed.

Directional Distribution - Directional distribution affects capacity since one lane may be carrying the majority of the traffic at any given time. Based on the rural/residential character of the area with residents traveling to and from work, and second homes, at peak periods, the direction distribution can be a ration higher than 50/50.

Cartway Profile - As pavement width and shoulder width narrow, motorists are forced to approach on-coming vehicles closer than optimally desired and objects beyond narrow shoulders are perceived as hazardous. The ideal condition is based on twelve-foot-wide lanes and six-foot-wide shoulders. The cartway profile of the arterial and collector roads in the Township varies, with lane widths of eight to twelve feet and shoulder widths of two to four feet.

TABLE VII-4 LEVELS OF SERVICE DESCRIPTION		
An arbitrary but standardized index of the relative service provided by a transportation facility. For highways, levels include the following:		
Level of Service	Description of Conditions Intersections	Description of Conditions Freeways
A	Free and unobstructed flow, no delays and all signal phases sufficient in duration to clear all approaching vehicles.	Free flow with little or no restriction on speed or maneuverability caused by other vehicles.
B	Stable flow, very little delay, a few phases are unable to handle all approaching vehicles.	Stable flow but speed is beginning to be restricted by other traffic - still negligible restrictions on maneuverability.
C	Stable flow, delays are low to moderate, full use of peak direction signal phase(s) is experienced.	Stable flow but most drivers are becoming restricted in their freedom to select speed, change lanes or pass. Operating speeds are 2/3 to 3/4 maximum.
D	Approaching unstable flow, delays are moderate to heavy, significant signal time deficiencies are experienced for short durations during the peak traffic period.	Approaching unstable flow. Tolerable average speeds are maintained but subject to considerable and sudden variation. Low maneuverability and driver comfort, high accident potential; most drivers consider this level unsatisfactory.
E	Unstable flow, delays are significant, signal phase timing is generally insufficient, congestion exists for extended duration throughout the peak period.	Absolute capacity (maximum flow rate), usually at 35 mph or 1/2 design speed. However, operation is unstable and both speed and flow rate may fall below optimum levels.
F	Forced flow, in urban areas flow may cease or approach "grid-lock."	Forced flow beyond capacity of facility. Speed and flow rate may drop to zero. Generally referred to as "bumper-to-bumper" traffic.

A Note About the Tunkhannock Bypass . . .
 The construction of the Tunkhannock Bypass is a good example of a project undertaken to address a breakdown of level of service. The congestion and long delays through the intersection of Route 29 and Route 6 in Tunkhannock Borough certainly approached LOS F and triggered the planning and construction of the bypass.

Heavy Vehicles - Trucks, recreational vehicles and buses are recognized as heavy vehicles; that is, those vehicles having more than four wheels contacting the pavement. As the proportion of heavy vehicles increases level-of-service and capacity decrease. PA DOT data indicates that trucks comprise about ten percent of the traffic on most state routes in the Townships.

Level-of -service is calculated using peak hour traffic volume. The peak hour is that time when traffic volume is heaviest and this most often occurs on weekends in a rural/recreation area. The peak flow of vehicles during the busiest quarter-hour of the day is compared with the adjusted flow rate standard for each level-of-service. Obviously, the state routes serving as the collector and arterial roads in the Township continue to carry the greatest volumes of traffic, with Township roads serving primarily residences and more remote areas of the community. The roads in Falls Township continue to adequately carry even peak volumes of traffic without serious delays and declines in LOS, with no significant change expected in the near term. Travelers on roads and intersections in the Township typically do not experience any significant

delays. Such delays would indicate that a road is approaching its capacity and reaching an unacceptable level of service. This does not mean, however, that all roads in the Township are in optimum condition, and that particular problem areas and safety concerns need not be addressed. Problem intersections and road segments are discussed in a later section.

Land Use Planning Considerations

The traffic carrying capacity of a community's road network, and the intersections associated with the network, to handle the existing and increasing traffic volumes generated by development is the key element for providing safe and efficient traffic flow. Those land uses which generate larger volumes of traffic should logically be located in the areas of a community served by roads with greater carrying capacity. For example, commercial establishments generate more traffic than a single family residence and should be located on routes which have sufficient capacity to serve the use.

Township Roads -- Condition and Future Plans

As shown in Figure VII-4, Road Conditions in Falls

Township, the community survey conducted as part of this comprehensive planning process found more than three-fourths of survey respondents agreed that *township roads are generally in good condition and are adequate for current levels of traffic*. However, twenty-one percent of respondents disagreed, suggesting room for improvement to Township roads in the opinion of many Township residents. Comments from the community survey suggest that most of the dissatisfaction with the roads is the lack of paving and need for improved maintenance. As noted earlier, the Township owns and maintains a total of almost twenty-six miles of roads, twenty-two miles of which are gravel. Given the rolling terrain of the area, many segments of the Township's roads include sharp curves and steep grades and the surface condition varies. Township roads serve primarily scattered residences so traffic volumes are relatively low, and with only nominal development anticipated, no significant volume increases are expected in the near term. Nevertheless, the Township should continue to upgrade the roads to meet long term needs and correct any existing hazards.

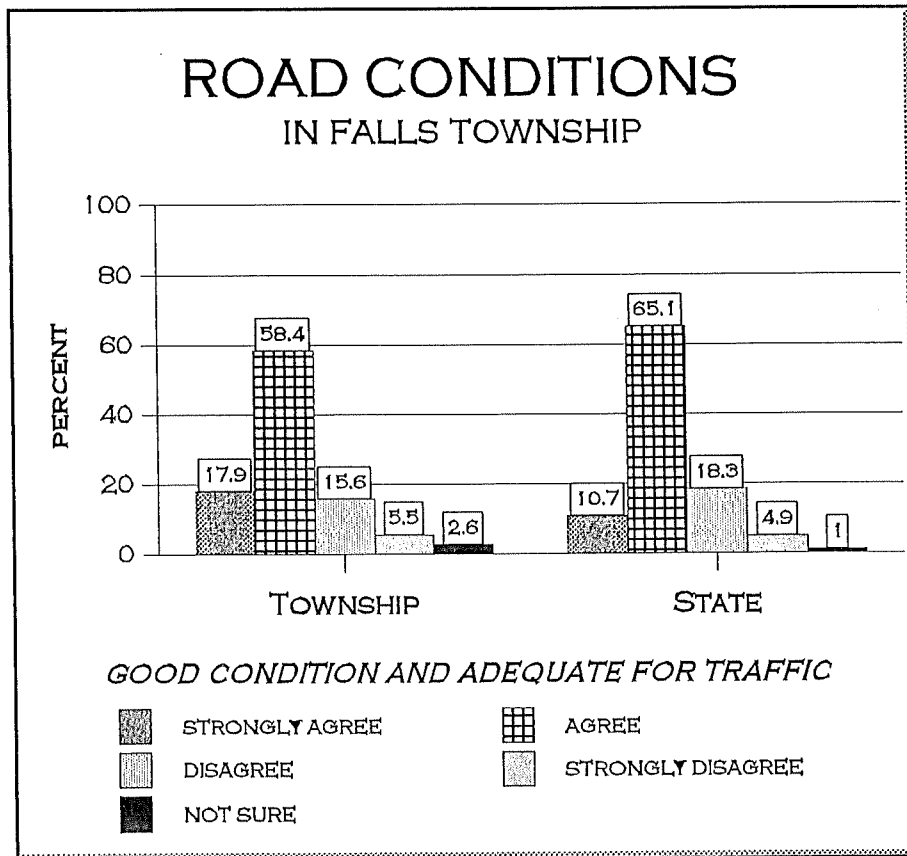


Figure VII-4, Community Survey Responses

Overview of Dirt Road Upgrade Costs (per mile of road, 18 feet wide)	
Preparation - new culverts; clean/scalp ditches; grade, shape and roll road; apply dust control	
assume 4 culverts x 30 ft. =120 lineal ft. @ \$55	\$6,600
clean debris/scalp grass from parallel ditches, 5,280 x 2 = 10,560 lineal ft. @ \$0.45	\$4,750
grade, shape and roll road, 5280 ft. x 18 ft. = 10,560 sq. yds. @ \$0.40/ sq. yd.	\$2,640
TOTAL ESTIMATED PREPARATION COST PER MILE	\$13,990
Bituminous oil and chip surface - double surface treatment	
0.40 gal./sq. yd. E3M asphalt (first coat)	
40 lbs./sq. yd. #67 aggregate	
0.35 gal./sq. yd. Asphalt (second coat)	
20 to 22 lbs./sq. yd. #8 aggregate	
TOTAL ESTIMATED OIL AND CHIP COST PER MILE	\$15,840
Total for Preparation and Oil and Chip per Mile	\$29,830
Oil and chip maintenance - seal coat every 3 years on average, interim pot hole repair not included	
0.40 gal/sq. yd. E3M asphalt	
20 to 22 lbs./sq. yd. #8 aggregate	
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OIL AND CHIP MAINTENANCE PER MILE	\$8,130
Repair oil and chip surface when wheel rutted - using leveling surface, typically after 7 or 8 years of use	
1" thick, 60# leveling surface	\$13,300
1" thick, 120# ID2A or ID3A overlay pavement	\$26,610
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR LEVELING SURFACE PER MILE	\$39,910
Construct new road - 18 feet wide per typical subdivision ordinance	
4" sub base	\$36,960
4" BCBC	\$83,635
1" wearing surface ID2A or ID3A	\$26,610
shoulders (4" thick. x 4 ft. wide)	\$14,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR NEW ROAD PER MILE	\$161,206
miles of unimproved and gravel roads in Falls Township	22.1
cost per mile to oil & chip	\$30,000
total oil & chip cost for 22.1 miles	\$663,300
annual cost on 10-year oil and chip program (approx. 2.2 miles/yr)	\$66,330
cost per mile of oil & chip maintenance - 3-year cycle	\$8,130
miles of 22.1-mile total requiring maintenance each year	7.4
annual cost of oil and chip maintenance when all miles completed	\$60,162
cost per mile of leveling surface to repair oil and chip surface when wheel rutted	\$39,910
total cost for leveling surface on 22.1 miles	\$882,410
annual cost on 10-year leveling program beginning in 9 th year (approx. 2.5 miles/yr)	\$88,241

Road maintenance and improvement comprises the greatest proportion of the Township and given the length of Township roads this level of expenditure is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. Additional road paving must be assessed in terms of initial cost and continued maintenance, and many municipalities use a ten-year re-paving window for budgetary planning. The sidebar on the previous page, prepared using estimates from a large road construction and paving contractor, provides an overview of the cost of improving gravel roads to bituminous oil and chip, with longer term costs of maintenance. The cost per mile to upgrade to oil and chip is \$30,000, or a total of almost \$663,300 for the twenty-two miles of township unimproved and gravel roads, without consideration of inflation and increasing material costs. Under a ten-year completion program, the annual cost would be some \$66,330, and once completed the annual three-year cycle maintenance costs would be some \$60,000. Following seven or eight years, an oil and chip road typically requires a bituminous leveling surface to correct wheel ruts at a cost of about \$40,000 per mile or a total of over \$880,000. Clearly, the financial resources currently available to the townships, or which could be raised with tax increases, are not adequate to upgrade all gravel roads to tar and chip and provide the necessary long term maintenance. The Township Supervisors must carefully plan and prioritize road improvements and a detailed inventory using the *Road Inventory and Evaluation Worksheet* included in the Appendix will provide the foundation for any road improvement program.

The Supervisors have no plans for any major reconstruction or realignment of any Township roads. Paving of additional segments is the highest priority as funds permit. Some segments of Township roads lack adequate shoulders and require drainage improvements, and these deficiencies, along with continued road maintenance, are the focus of the Township road improvement program. The *Road Inventory and Evaluation Worksheet* which will enable the Townships to periodically evaluate the condition of all Township roads and plan and budget for necessary improvements as identified. The intent is to continue to improve the drainage and then maintain the upgraded roads. Falls Township Officials have obtained the required training to participate in the State Dirt and Gravel Road Program via the Wyoming County Conservation District for gravel road improvements. Aimed at protecting water quality, funds allocated to Wyoming

County have been used for water quality protection priority projects but none of the proposed projects in the Township have qualified.

Roads serving new residential developments will be constructed by developers in accord with the applicable county or township standards. These roads can be accepted for public dedication by the township, and provided such roads meet PennDOT standards, the township's State Liquid Fuels Fund allocation would increase. However, the long term cost of the maintenance of public roads falls far short of the funds received from Commonwealth with the annual payment from the state based on the township population and amount road miles maintained. The Supervisors must carefully weigh the long term maintenance costs against the local tax revenues generated by development and increased state funding before accepting private roads for dedication.

Condition of State Roads

The condition of the state roads in the Township is also generally good, with continued maintenance and a number of poorly aligned segments and dangerous intersections the primary concerns. Similar to Township roads, the state roads in the planning area also include segments with sharp curves and steep grades. Again however, given the modest traffic volumes and limited funding available, the upgrading of these roads by the state is obviously not a priority and is unlikely to occur in the near term. Seventy-six percent of community survey respondents agreed that state roads in the are in good condition and are adequate for current levels of traffic. (See Figure VII-4.) Although the Township has no direct control over state roads (the roads that carry the most traffic at higher speeds and present the most critical safety concerns) this *Plan* identifies a number of concerns which must be monitored:

- Correction of dangerous intersections
- Increasing volumes of traffic
- Horizontal and vertical alignment
- Speed limit enforcement
- Adequate maintenance
- Improved signs for hazards and traffic control

Should the condition of these routes deteriorate due to lack of maintenance, or if PennDOT does not make

improvements in anticipation of traffic volume increases over the long term, the capacity and level-of-service could degenerate. The Township should work with the PennDOT and Wyoming County Planning Commission to identify the most critical state route improvement needs in the Township and work to have the improvements programmed by PennDOT.

Specific State Road Problem Areas

Many of the comments about state roads in the community survey were directed at the need for improved winter maintenance, speeding, intersections and increased truck traffic. This *Plan* identifies a number of specific problem areas that must be addressed and/or monitored to assure the long term adequacy of the road network in the Township.

- Poor sight distance at intersections on state roads, particularly along Route 92 and Route 307.
- Route 92
 - sight distance at Post Hill Road
- Route 307
 - Horizontal alignment and uncontrolled access in Mill City
 - sight distance at SR 2019
 - sight distance at SR 2027
 - sight distance at T-373 Brides Drive

County and PennDOT Long Range Planning

The Wyoming County Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission and PennDOT, identifies and prioritizes long-range transportation improvements for Wyoming County, incorporating the projects into PennDOT's 12-Year Transportation Improvements Program. The most current program, 2001 to 2004 includes the following projects in Falls Township:

- SR 2027, Highland Road Bridge, over Beaver Creek, replacement

Township / PennDOT Cooperation

The recently initiated PennDOT Agility Program allows local municipalities throughout the Commonwealth and PennDOT to exchange road maintenance services. The program is intended to

improve efficiency by allowing the municipality to provide services it is most able to and PennDOT to provide those services for which the municipality is not equipped or staffed. Falls Township has not entered into such an agreement with PennDOT.

Bridges

Bridges in Falls Township are owned by the Township, Wyoming County and the Commonwealth. Non-state owned bridges with spans of twenty feet or more must be inspected every two years in accord with PennDOT requirements, and the inspections for local and county bridges are conducted by engineers retained by the Wyoming County Board of Commissioners. The Township-owned bridges are listed in Table VII-5, Township Bridges. The bridge on Stone Ridge Road is in poor condition and the Township is working with the Wyoming County Planning Commission to have it replaced as part of the PennDOT 12-Year Program.

ROAD	CONDITION / COMMENTS
T-366 Stone Ridge Rd	>20 feet, poor condition, listing on 12-Year Program for replacement
T-373 Brides Drive	<20 feet, pressure treated with 99-year warranty, good condition
T-352 Oak Drive	<20 feet, steel deck, good condition
T-384 Sandy Valley Rd	<20 feet, concrete deck, good condition

Bicycle Routes

Community survey respondents identified bicycle routes as the third highest recreation facility need in the planning area. In 2001, the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission published the *Northern Tier Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan*. The *Plan* identified existing designated bicycle routes and proposed a number of new routes. In Overfield Township, Route 307 has been designated by PennDOT with connection to Tunkhannock via Route 92 at Osterhout. Route 92 south of Osterhout is proposed for designation.

Airports, Railroads and Public Transportation

Township residents rely on regional airports in

Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey for major commercial carrier service. The closest commercial airport is the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca, Luzerne County. The Wyoming County Board of Commissioners recently formed an Airport Authority to consider various options for the future of the Skyhaven Airport, located in Eaton Township just south of Tunkhannock. The Airport is addressed by the 1996 *Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan* as follows:

The airfield . . . was constructed several decades ago. A new terminal building and other supporting improvements were constructed in more recent years. These improvements have included T-hangars, aprons, approach ways, etc. These facilities are adequate to meet the air transportation needs of Wyoming County at present but not for the future. It has been estimated that the present amount of air traffic can be accommodated by this existing facility. However, if Wyoming County is to fulfill its industrial/business and development potential, the existing airport must plan an expanding role in the future. The airport has a Ten (10) Year Development Program. As part of this Development Program, improvements and refinements to the airport are made each year. Among those improvements which should be added is an instrument landing system. This instrument landing system will aid substantially in providing increased convenience and safety to airport users.

It is intended to continue the long-range improvement program for the Skyhaven Airport. Within the context of this Improvement Program, it is expected that both the existing and long-range air travel needs of Wyoming County can be met. Those needs outlined in the National Airport Plan, are under study and review to enable their logical and sequential provision.

To enable both existing and future airport facilities to be properly integrated into the community in which they occur and to insure that the operations of the airport will not be hampered by encroaching development, adequate land use controls should be instituted for the communities immediately surrounding the airport. These land use controls, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance should provide for the unrestricted operation of the airport and should only permit the development of land adjacent to the airport in uses which are compatible with its operation.

Township residents rely on regional airports in Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey for major commercial carrier service. The closest commercial airport is the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport in Avoca, Luzerne County.

The freight line which follows the east shore of the Susquehanna River through Falls Township and Wyoming County connects the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area with Towanda and points north in New York, but there are no sidings or freight customers in the Township. The line is operated by the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad to the south of Mehoopany and by the Norfolk Southern Railway Company to the north. The Canadian Pacific Railroad operates the freight line which passes through the northeast corner of Wyoming County connecting the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area with Susquehanna County and north to Binghamton, New York. These lines are critical to many regional industries which provide employment for area residents

Public transportation in rural communities is generally limited by low population density, the cost of providing the service, and uncertainty of public acceptance and use. In short, the cost is too high in relation to the potential revenue from the users of the system, and without public subsidy, it is simply not feasible. In addition, even in areas where the public subsidy has been provided, use of public transport is low given long trips and limited schedules, and the historic reliance on automobiles in rural areas. Public transportation in Wyoming County is associated only with the provision of social services. The Luzerne/Wyoming County Transportation Department currently provides van service to elderly and disabled social service clients.

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES,
WYOMING COUNTY AND THE REGION**

Planning Code

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) dictates, and common sense suggests, that planning and development in contiguous municipalities, the county and the region be considered when a local municipal plan is adopted.

County Planning

A 1988 amendment of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code required all counties to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan. In November 1997 the

County adopted a comprehensive plan. Figure VIII-1, Future Development Areas, Wyoming County Plan, 1997, shows the information for Falls Township included in the *County Comprehensive Plan*, which is intended to provide a ten to twenty-year generalized description of development areas. In Falls Township, the *Wyoming County Plan* designates Mill City as a future development area, and nearby Lake Winola in Overfield Township, and West Falls across the River in Exeter Township.

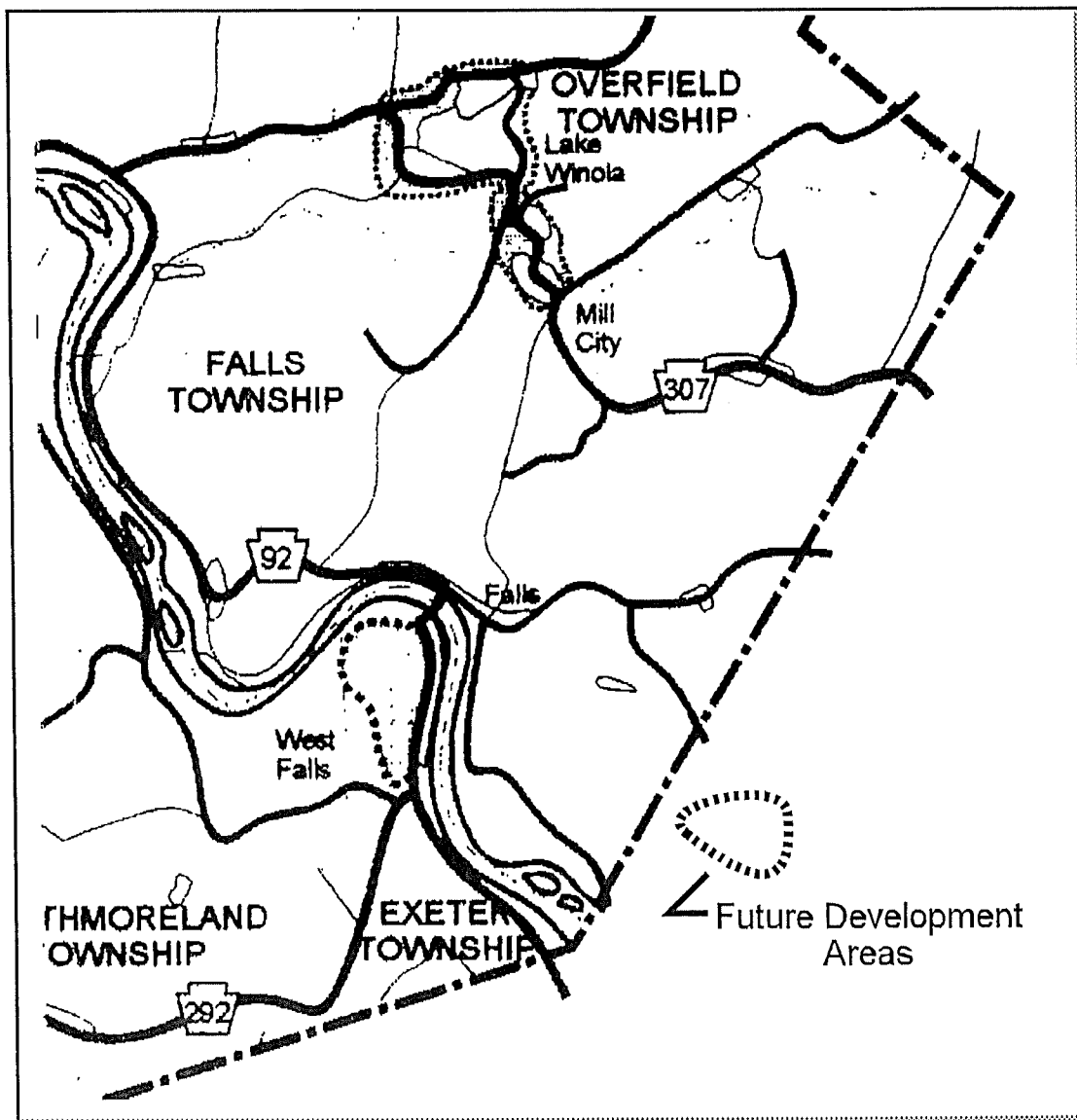


Figure VIII-1, Future Development Areas, Wyoming County Plan, 1997

The *County Plan* goes on to state:

These areas are located in and immediately surrounding the five boroughs and major villages at points of good accessibility along the transportation network so that they may be easily reached and conveniently served. Each is designed to contain a wide range of land use activities, with the exception of heavy industry which should be situated on the periphery along major transportation corridors. Over the next ten to twenty years, intensive varied development would be encouraged within these development areas.

For the most part, the development areas are proposed around existing development concentrations; however, a number of new development concentrations at strategic locations are also proposed. These new development areas can be encouraged to occur through local level zoning, the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, improvements to the transportation network, and the provision of adequate public infrastructure, particularly water and sewer.

A variety of housing types will be encouraged in each of the development areas including low-density (one to three per net residential acre), and medium-density (five to ten per net residential acre). A variety of housing is conducive to growth in the County by attracting residents with diverse backgrounds, preferences, and abilities who seek diversity in their choices of housing.

There exists a significant relationship between residential density and open space in the Centers Concept of land use. As the population continues to increase, there is a greater pressure to develop remaining vacant land to the extent that residential growth is dispersed. The amenities and efficiency of the total concept is decreased. By limiting spatial spread of residential development, the Centers Concept encourages the construction of some multi-family dwellings and the restoration and continued maintenance of the existing housing inventory. The "cluster" technique in the development of new housing areas should be strongly encouraged throughout Wyoming County.

As residential growth is encouraged within the various

development areas, commercial and industrial growth should be encouraged to locate in close proximity. In addition, the concentration of population in a relatively small area tends to encourage a wider range of cultural and social activities. Another advantage of concentrating residential, commercial, and industrial development is that locally provided utilities, such as water, sewer and solid waste disposal, can be more economically provided and efficiently operated within the growth area.

The MPC, at §301.4, requires general consistency between local municipal comprehensive plans and a county comprehensive plan. Given that the *Village Concept* used by the County in designating future development areas is similar to the approach of this *Falls Township Comprehensive Plan*, consistency between the two plans is not anticipated to be an issue. In any case, the Wyoming County Planning Commission will, in accord with the MPC, have the opportunity to review the *Township Comprehensive Plan* and provide comments on any inconsistencies. In short, the *Township Comprehensive Plan* will serve to be more specific than the *County Plan* in terms of growth and development in the Township.

Regional Planning

Regional planning in the area of Pennsylvania encompassing Wyoming County is not formalized in any municipally organized body. Each county planning agency is responsible for review and coordination of planning within its jurisdiction. The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC), located in Towanda, Bradford County, serves as a community and economic planning and development coordinator and information source, and conduit for grants and special projects for Bradford, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga and Wyoming Counties, but has no municipally authorized regional planning power. NTRPDC is a key coordinator in regional transportation planning and economic development and provides technical assistance to the counties and local municipalities in the designated region.

Planning and Zoning in Contiguous Municipalities

Table VIII-1, Planning in Contiguous Municipalities, provides an overview of the extent of planning and zoning in the municipalities adjoining Falls Township. The public review and adoption process for this *Comprehensive Plan* will enable municipal officials of

TABLE VIII-1 PLANNING IN CONTIGUOUS MUNICIPALITIES			
Municipality	Sub. Ord.*	Comp Plan	Zoning Ord.
Wyoming County			
Eaton Twp	county	no	no
Exeter Twp	county	no	yes
Northmoreland Twp	county	no	no
Overfield Twp	yes	no	yes
Tunkhannock Twp	county	no	no
Lackawanna County			
Newton Twp	yes	yes	yes
West Abington Twp	yes	no	yes
*subdivision and land development ordinance county = governed by county ordinance			

municipalities along the borders common to Falls Township are generally similar in character, that is, largely agricultural and forest land with scattered residential development. As the Township develops and revises its future land use plan and any implementing ordinances, the existing zoning and land uses in all adjoining municipalities must be considered to minimize, and avoid if possible, any conflict. For example, it would be inappropriate for one township to designate an industrial or heavy commercial area adjacent to an existing residential development or residential zoning district in an adjoining municipality. The future land use plan suggested by the *Wyoming County Comprehensive Plan* should also serve as a guideline for local municipalities in assuring compatibility of land uses along municipal borders.

the contiguous municipalities to identify any potential inconsistencies. None of the adjoining municipalities in Wyoming County have adopted a comprehensive plan. Newton Township in Lackawanna County has adopted a comprehensive plan and West Abington Township has not. Eaton and Northmoreland Townships are preparing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan with Monroe and Noxen Townships. In this case, the Susquehanna River essentially separates Falls Township from Eaton, Northmoreland and Exeter Townships, and the steep terrain along much of both sides of the River, similar land uses, and relatively limited development potential, suggest planning inconsistencies are not a real issue. Tunkhannock Township is working with Lemon Township on a plan which must consider the steep terrain of Greenwood Hill along the Falls Township border as a major limitation to development, again suggesting no planning inconsistencies. The Newton Township *Plan*, in addressing proposed land uses along the border with Falls Township, where forest and agricultural land predominate, provides for no high intensity development, which is consistent with the approach of this *Falls Township Comprehensive Plan*.

Newton Township and West Abington Township have adopted zoning ordinances. The areas of these zoned



APPENDIX

FALLS TOWNSHIP ROAD INVENTORY and EVALUATION

TR # _____ Road name: _____

Date of inspection: _____

SEGMENT Length: _____
Beginning: _____ End: _____

WIDTH
Travelway: _____ feet Notes: _____

Shoulders: _____ feet Material: _____ Notes: _____

SURFACE TREATMENT gravel paved

---Gravel Road Problem Severity:

- Low** - Good crown, little water ponding or evidence of the same; corrugations less than 1 inch deep; pot holes less than 2 inches deep and 1 foot in diameter; ruts less than 1 inch deep.
- Medium** - Little crown or a bowl shaped surface, moderate water ponding or evidence of the same; corrugations 1-3 inches deep; pot holes 2-4 inches deep and 2+ feet in diameter; ruts 1-3 inches deep.
- High** - Severe depressions in surface, large amounts of water ponding or evidence of the same; corrugations 3+ inches deep; pot holes 4+ inches deep and 2+ feet in diameter; ruts 3+ inches deep

---Major Problems : _____

---Paved Road Problem Severity:

- Low** - Good crown, little water ponding or evidence of the same; few if any pot holes; little or no alligator, block or transverse cracking; little or no noticeable tire wear rutting; little or no asphalt bleeding; few patches.
- Medium** - Little crown or a bowl shaped surface, moderate water ponding or evidence of the same; pot holes less than 2 inches deep and 1 foot in diameter; some alligator, block or random cracking which can be corrected with normal crack sealing; deteriorated crack sealing; some tire wear rutting; minor asphalt bleeding; some, but not extensive patching.
- High** - Large amounts of water ponding or evidence of the same; pot holes more than 2 inches deep and 1 foot in diameter; alligator, block or random cracking which cannot be corrected with normal crack sealing; severely deteriorated crack sealing; significant tire wear rutting; large areas of asphalt bleeding; extensive patching.

---Major Problems : _____

PARALLEL DRAINAGE

Problem Severity

- Low** - Small amount of ponding water or evidence of the same; little or no vegetation or debris.
- Medium** - Moderate amount of ponding water or evidence of the same; some vegetation or debris; erosion of ditches into shoulders or roadway
- High** - Large amounts of ponding water or evidences of the same; water running across or down road; a large amount of vegetation or debris; significant erosion of ditches into shoulder or roadway.
- Severe** - No parallel ditches along road; erosion has created ditches

CULVERTS, DRAINAGE STRUCTURES and TAIL DITCHES

Note location, size and condition of problem culverts, drainage structures and/or tail ditches.

OVERALL CONDITION RATING

- 5/excellent** - A newly constructed road. Excellent crown, drainage and surface.
- 4/good** - Recently regraded or paved with good crown and drainage and adequate surface layer.
- 3/fair** - Needs routine regrading, patching or crack sealing; or minor ditch maintenance.
- 2/poor** - Needs additional aggregate, chipping or pave; or major drainage maintenance.
- 1/failed** - Complete rebuilding required.

LIGNMENT - HORIZONTAL and VERTICAL

Problem Severity

- Low** - Few if any sharp curves; no grades in excess of 5 percent.
- Medium** - Some sharp curves; some grades in excess of 5 percent, but no severe grades in excess of 10 percent..
- High** - A combination of sharp curves and grades over 10 percent.

TRAFFIC VOLUME

- Low** - Serves less than ten dwellings with little through truck traffic.
- Medium** - Serves between ten and fifty dwellings with little through truck traffic.
- High** - Serves more than fifty dwellings, or carries more through truck traffic .

SPECIAL FEATURES

Notes on any special features such as guiderails, signs, utility poles, etc.

OTHER COMMENTS
