



*Wilmington Area Multi-Municipal
Comprehensive Plan
2009*



Wilmington Area Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

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Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan is the centerpiece of any comprehensive plan. It is the foundation upon which all of the other elements are set. A good Land Use Plan will influence the Transportation Plan (upgrades and improvements to the road system), Community Facilities Plan (where to extend, and more importantly, where not to extend, water and sewer), the Historic and Natural Resources Plan (where to limit development to preserve assets), and even the Economic Development Plan. Strange as it may seem, the Housing Plan is perhaps the least influenced by the Land Use Plan. That element is mainly dealing with how to improve the conditions of land that is already being used for residential purposes.

Land Use Ordinances

As with all law, land use regulation changes over the years. Local land use ordinances are governed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Since first enacted in the 1960s, there have been numerous changes to this enabling legislation. The most recent edition (the eighteenth) was published by the State in 2005. Many of the changes have been administrative in nature, governing the nuts and bolts of how local ordinances are to be used. There also have been several major changes to what communities can actually do. These include such tools as traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs), land use sharing, and specific plans. All of these give local communities more power to control development as well as extending more flexibility to the developers.

There are three land use ordinances at the local level in Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough. The Township has a zoning ordinance while the Borough has both a zoning ordinance and a subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO). In Wilmington Township, subdivisions and land developments are governed by Mercer County's SALDO, which is administered by the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC). Given the relatively few subdivisions and land developments that occur in the Township, and the skills and expertise of the MCRPC staff, it is important the Township continue this relationship.

New Wilmington SALDO

The Borough is currently engaged in updating its subdivision and land development ordinance. While most of New Wilmington's developed areas can no longer be subdivided, there still are several large tracts that can be divided into smaller parcels along the edges of the community. Additionally, one must have modern tools to address large-scale development. Westminster College and the Shenango Home have put forth land development plans in recent years, and it is likely, if not certain, that they will do so in the future as well.

The new ordinance is based upon the Lawrence County Planning Department's model and adapted to deal with the conditions in the Borough. Certain aspects of the model which are unlikely given current conditions in New Wilmington, such as mobile home parks, have been excluded from the proposed ordinance. Lot sizes and coverage have been adjusted to conform to current requirements and existing usages. Additionally, all the procedures in the new ordinance are in compliance with the requirements of the MPC. The proposed SALDO has been presented to the New Wilmington Planning Commission, which will soon be forwarded to the Borough Council for its consideration.

New Wilmington Zoning Ordinance

Over the past several years, changes and updates have been made to the New Wilmington Zoning Ordinance to reflect both changes in the MPC and in the needs of the Borough. However, as always, one finds problems with parts of the ordinance. In this case, the most recent, and accurate, property line map of New Wilmington revealed some small differences between it and the current zoning map. The map was established with the zoning districts primarily being based upon whole parcels. In other words, each unique parcel would only be governed by the rules of one zoning district. In some communities, like Wilmington Township, zoning districts are based upon a set distance from a centerline, such as a road or stream centerline. This leads to situations where the area bordering the road will have one set of zoning regulations while the rear portion of the property will have another set. This works well in more rural communities, but in a denser, small urban community such as New Wilmington, it can cause problems. The parcels that are affected are few and will result in the zoning on the property being restored to the original intent. However, since the zoning map is an official part of the zoning ordinance, it cannot be changed without following the proper procedure, even if the changes are done to correct errors in the map itself. This should be done as soon as practical.

One area that is problematic in New Wilmington is zoning issues concerning Westminster College. Most of the College's land, including the campus, is zoned B Residential. The rest is primarily zoned A Residential, with a small section of B1 Residential. Most, if not all, of Westminster's buildings are non-conforming uses. Any new structures on campus that are in keeping with current style and scale would require a variance or a zoning change to be permitted. And, the area that is being reviewed by the College and Shenango on the Green for a possible senior residential development is zoned primarily for single-family housing, not multi-family units.

To address some of these problems, it is proposed that an Institutional District be created in the Borough. It is intended to permit the large classroom, residential, and other facilities that the College will need in the future. It is primarily intended for the Westminster campus proper, not the extra, undeveloped lands that it also owns. If those are converted to the Institutional District designation, they most likely will need to revert back to a residential designation. The only change in zoning for these lands that would be recommended at this time is that when the Institutional District is incorporated into the zoning ordinance, changes be made to accommodate the needs for the senior developments on those specific tracts. This will ease that development as well as what will occur with Westminster College itself.

One final recommendation for the Institutional District is proposed. Both the Wilmington Area School District and the Overlook Medical Clinic have relatively large campuses, in residentially zoned districts. Again, if they build any new structures, they will in all likelihood not comply with the current zoning regulation. And the existing units are non-conforming in nature. It would be wise to contact these two entities and involve them in the process as well.

The Borough is currently in the early phases of a downtown revitalization study. It is part of a multi-faceted effort to bring in new businesses into downtown New Wilmington; improve the aesthetics; and, in general, make the downtown a more memorable place to be. Pending the results of the study, a traditional neighborhood development (TND) overlay may be practical for the downtown area, particularly if a historic district is recommended for the area as well. A TND

allows for a number of different uses in the district—residential, commercial, business, and others—while also establishing design standards for the district as well. It was once thought that extremely detailed design standards were required of a TND district. However, this currently is not the case. In fact, the community can prepare most, if not all, of design manual themselves by taking photographs of what they deem to be proper standards for the district. By including numerous photos of what the community wants to see in the TND as well as those design features that are not in keeping district, the community can quickly put together a visual language for developers to use when building. It provides a tool for the community to keep development in an area such as downtown New Wilmington consistent, while at the same time giving developers the ability to complete properties that have multiple potential revenue streams.

Wilmington Township Zoning Ordinance

Wilmington Township's zoning ordinance has several unique features, including provisions for multiple residential structures on one property to accommodate the needs of the Amish residents in the municipality. As with any good zoning ordinance, Wilmington Township must be responsive to the needs of its residents, be within the abilities of the municipality to properly administer its provisions, and be compliant to the MPC requirements. While the current ordinance somewhat meets these criteria, a modernization of the ordinance is needed. The changes would not be substantive in the scope of what the ordinance would do. It would mainly be a cleaning up of some of the language associated with usages into more current practices. Things like cell phone towers, wind turbines, and a host of other everyday structures have only exploded on the scene over the past ten to fifteen years. Additionally, making sure that all the most recent procedural requirements of the MPC are incorporated into the ordinance is essential to protect the Township and its citizens.

The Township should also look at revising some of the zoning districts. Some of the residential districts should be decreased in size to more accurately reflect development potential. In the R-2 Multi-Family District, the northern portion along the west branch of the Little Neshannock Creek should be rezoned to the R-1-A Rural Agricultural Residential District. Most of the land around the creek is forested, wetland floodplain. By having it revert back to the R-1-A District, it will remove any temptation to develop multi-family residential units. Similarly, the R-1 Single-Family District, located along PA 158, should be reduced in size from 500 feet from the road centerline to 200 feet from the road centerline. There is not a substantive difference in what one can do in the R-1 District areas that are not sewered to what can be in the R-1-A District. However, because there are different standards in the R-1 District for lots that have public sewer connections, the possibility exists along PA 158 for a developer to want an extension of sewer lines out to their property or to establish their own small flow package plant. While neither scenario is likely in the current climate (costs associated with extending the sewer lines and the Department of Environmental Protection's hesitancy to approving private plants), that does not mean that, in the future, this could change. Remember, if a sewer line is extended north on PA 158, not only will the new development have to tie in, but also the others property owners along that corridor. The new development will be designed to minimize the costs to the individual properties. The existing properties, located on large lots with wide frontages, will be hit with very large frontage fees in addition to tap-in costs.

Joint Land Use Planning

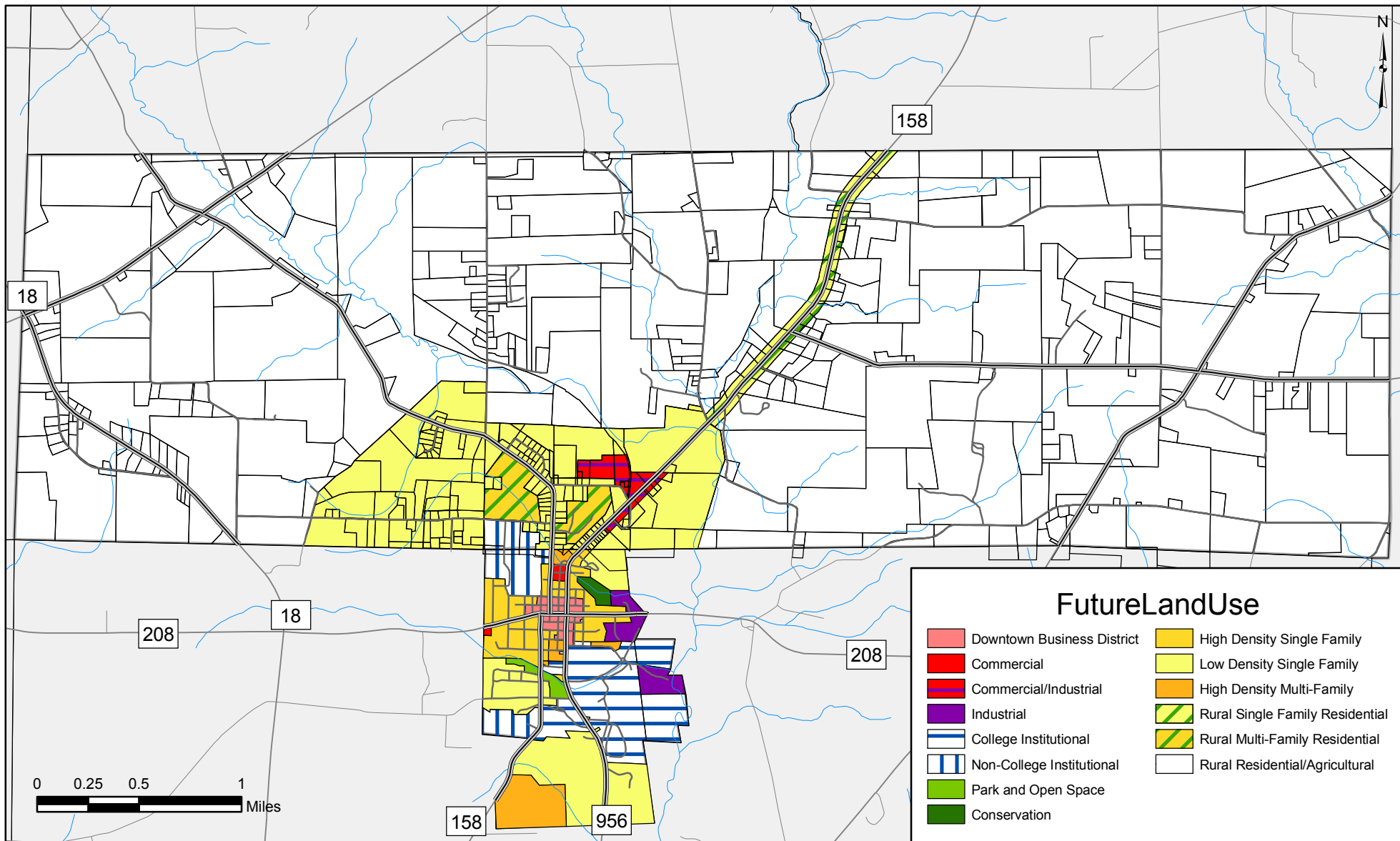
Traditionally, each municipality must allow for all land uses within its borders, regardless of the conditions and existing uses within that municipality. In theory, very rural communities must offer opportunities for multi-family residential uses while urban communities need to have districts where farming can occur. In practice, this does not happen often, but when it does, it can present difficulties for both the municipality and the developer. Recently, Pennsylvania decided that those who engage in multi-municipal comprehensive planning can spread the land uses among the communities participating in the plan.

The two communities are ideally set up for land use sharing. Wilmington Township is an ideal place for low-density, low-intensity rural land uses. New Wilmington has the infrastructure for more intense, higher-density urban uses. In practical terms, the Township should be the community to take agricultural uses, including farming and agricultural services. For the Borough, it is the ideal location for high-density, multi-use downtown commercial as well as high-density, multi-family residential similar to the Shenango on the Green complex. The actual uses need to be worked out between the two municipalities once this Plan is in place, but this represents a basic starting place for the future discussion.

To facilitate land use sharing, similar terms and definitions need to be incorporated into the zoning ordinances of the two municipalities. When updating the Wilmington Township zoning ordinance, care should be used in incorporating such language into the document. Similarly, if there are areas in New Wilmington's ordinance which need to be brought into agreement with Wilmington Township's, then that should be done as well. It should be noted that both municipalities will retain their own zoning ordinances. This Plan does not suggest that a single ordinance govern both municipalities. Each has very different features. But, coordination between terms will assist in the land use sharing process.

A last area with shared land use is that a single zoning officer would administer the applications submitted by the residents. Again, the zoning officer would administer two separate ordinances. However, having one person overseeing both ordinances would help ensure consistency between the two communities. Additionally, it would be ideal if the zoning officer would also be New Wilmington's subdivision and land development administrator. It would provide one place to stop for those looking to develop land in the two communities. This will make the process far friendlier for those wishing to create new development in the region.

Finally, to institute a land-use sharing agreement, there will need to be an intergovernmental agreement that must be adopted by both Municipalities. Such an agreement notes the areas of cooperation, the procedures and responsibilities of the participants and other administrative matters. The county planning agencies or a consultant can assist in preparing the documents if both Communities decide it time to share particular aspects of governance, including land use management.



Plan Map 1 - Future Land Use Plan

Wilmington Township (Mercer County), New Wilmington Borough

Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2006,
 U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005
 Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

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Natural and Historic Resources Plan

People forget the assets that they have at hand, every day, in their community. Things are no different in Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough. We live and work among historic buildings, unique pieces of nature, and multicultural communities and never bat an eye. As with other aspects of this Plan, it is essential to point out the obvious to help emphasize it.

Historic Structures and Districts

One structure in the two municipalities is on the Historic Register: Westminster College's Thompson House, located on South Market Street. It has been used by the College in a variety of different functions, but always associated with the business of education. It receives the best of care and maintenance to insure that it will continue to provide service to the Westminster College community.

In fact, the Thompson House and the other two local nominees to the Historic Register—the main building of the Overlook Medical Clinic and the central campus itself of Westminster College—all benefit from the fact that the buildings are in active use. Though preservation purists may dislike the practice, in many applications, the continued use of a building by an ongoing concern is one of the best ways to preserve the structure. This is particularly true when the owners of the buildings are aware of their significance, as the Overlook and the College obviously are. The best way to ensure the continued success of these buildings is to ensure the continued success of the parent organizations.

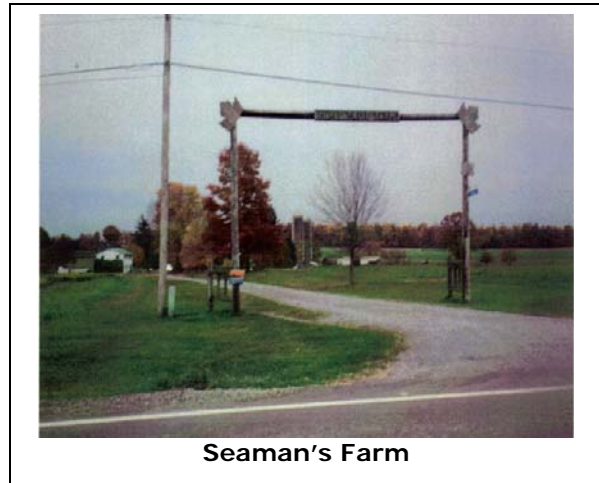
Downtown New Wilmington is currently being studied for a revitalization process. During this process, a look at the historic nature of the downtown should be included. It could very well be an asset worth exploiting. If a historic district is established in downtown New Wilmington, it can be a tool for economic development, particularly in terms of tourism. But, it would also be wise to create a TND overlay (see the Land Use Plan). Since the historic district would be an asset worth preserving, one would want to make sure that new development and redevelopment would be in keeping with the architectural styles that make the downtown noteworthy. While a TND imposes style restrictions on developers, it also provides increased flexibility to them as well. A building or complex of buildings can include numerous different functions, from commercial to business offices to residential uses. This opportunity to bundle uses is frequently a selling point when offering ease of living, working, and shopping options to potential users of the complex. The TND overlay allows new structures and renovated ones a chance to come into existence while preserving what makes the district distinct in the first place.



Thompson House

Agricultural Heritage

Agriculture, in both the English and Amish communities, is still a viable way of life in Wilmington Township. This is not true in some other areas. However, it is a fragile way of life, regardless of which community you belong to. It is a hard way to make a living, especially if one is involved in the dairy industry. Wild swings in prices for grains in recent years have made it difficult to accurately predict the value of a farm's harvest. Therefore, it is prudent to explore all avenues to keep local family farms viable in the near and long term.



Finding ways to increase the value of the crops harvested in the area is discussed in the Economic Development Plan. It is specifically geared for the Amish community, since that is a viable marketing tool for the value-added market. But, the English farms can also use similar tactics, especially with organic and sustainable products. Such practices can boost the current viability of the operations. To help ensure long-term viability, other programs need to be in place.

Currently in Wilmington Township, more than 5,300 acres are in the Agricultural Security Area program. This is a voluntary program to denote lands that are involved in various agricultural fields, including farming, grazing, and timber harvest. This program is geared at making it more difficult for eminent domain seizures of land and preventing nuisance ordinances that would make farming difficult if not impossible to perform. This is the basic phase of the program. There is a second level, where the development rights for the land are sold to prevent future development. Known as the PACE (Pennsylvania Agriculture Conservation Easement) program, the land is to remain in any one of the various active agricultural activities or to lie fallow. However, development of a residential, industrial, or commercial nature is prohibited. In return for the abandonment of these development rights, the landowner is paid an amount based on a per acre valuation. Several local farms have taken advantage of these payouts to help ensure that they will have enough funds to keep the farm operating for years to come.

The limitation to the PACE program is that there are limited funds. Far more people want to sell their development rights than there is money available to buy the rights. An interesting tool that is starting to become more widely used, particularly in the eastern part of Pennsylvania, is the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). The concept is to sell the development rights from properties the community wishes to preserve (nearly always farm or open spaces) and allowing higher development densities in other areas of the community. Initially, the development rights were sold to developers in residential developments to increase density, thus increasing the developer's profits. But as TDR practice has progressed, commercial and industrial lands have also been included. The major drawback of this process is that there needs to be people wanting to buy development rights to increase the intensity of the use of land elsewhere in the community.

With land use sharing, New Wilmington properties can be the target of the increased development density. In fact, given the infrastructure available in the Borough and its relative scarcity in the Township, this is the logical way to orchestrate the program. The question then is first what seems to be the most appropriate place or places in the study area to have increased densities available and in what land uses? Also, one must seriously ask if this process is going to be a viable option locally. The TDR process is very much a free market exercise. It is geared at enabling developers to earn more money on a piece of land than they normally would by selling them an asset they can use. If it makes economic sense, the developer will purchase the development rights. If they can make a similar amount of money elsewhere without going through the TDR process, chances are that most will go that route.

The Little Neshannock Biodiversity Area

From near the confluence of the two main branches of the Little Neshannock Creek to the southern end of Brittain Lake extends the Little Neshannock Biodiversity Area. As the name suggests, it is a stretch of the waterway with a unique set of flora and fauna along its banks and in the stream itself. The creek traverses wooded areas, pasturelands, and developed areas along this relatively short section. Both New Wilmington Borough and Wilmington Township, Mercer County, are included in the biodiversity area as well as a section of Wilmington Township, Lawrence County. The Borough and Township should encourage the preservation of this land as much as possible, preventing development from occurring within the confines of this area. They also should encourage Wilmington Township, Lawrence County, to take similar measures. As stated earlier, we tend to ignore the treasures we have right before us. There are plenty of places to develop in the community. There is no need to build upon these lands. Their value is what they provide in natural beauty.

Housing Plan

Fortunately for both the Borough and Township, there is not a lot of derelict housing in either municipality. But, given current economic conditions, the communities should not rest upon their laurels. Therefore, there are several different programs to put into place to ensure that the quality of housing continues in the study area.

First, even though it would be impractical to put into place a low- to moderate-income housing rehabilitation program, given the income levels in both Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough, there should be information available for various programs at the municipal buildings. Primarily, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a housing rehabilitation program for the elderly and/or persons with low income. This program requires no assistance from local government—it is solely a relationship between the USDA, the homeowner, and the contractor. Additionally, if either the counties of Mercer or Lawrence began a countywide rehabilitation program, the municipalities should have available contact information for their residents.

Both municipalities should adopt the same property management code, based upon the State-mandated standard associated with the Universal Construction Code (UCC). Additionally, the Borough and Township should hire the same outside inspector to enforce the code. The reason for this is not so much consistency between the two communities but being consistent with all residents of the communities. When one has no connection with residents in either municipality, it is much easier to be impartial when it becomes necessary to inspect and possibly site a landowner. With an established pattern of unbiased rulings on property maintenance complaints, the program will work efficiently and effectively.

Finally, New Wilmington Borough has been investigating the “Safeway to Schools” program. While this is not a housing issue, it does address one of the bigger problems in New Wilmington—the quality of sidewalks. As happens often in older urban communities, two factors impact sidewalks. The first is the root systems of street trees that buckle the sidewalks, slowly but surely making the surface very uneven to walk on. The second factor is that when the sidewalks were originally installed, many of the roads and highways were narrower than what is currently required. The result is that the buffer strip between the road and sidewalk has disappeared, creating another unsafe condition. The “Safe Routes to School” program would be used to repair and replace such unsafe sidewalks. By upgrading the sidewalks, the program will also aid in increasing property values of the affected properties and their neighbors.

Community Facilities Plan

As stated in the Background Report, community facilities represent the face of local government to the typical resident. And while the Land Use Plan is arguably the most important part of an overall comprehensive plan, the Community Facilities Plan has a major impact upon fulfilling the land use recommendations. It also is often essential in ensuring the success of the Economic Development Plan. It also contributes significantly in ensuring the type of lifestyle the community attains regardless if it is rural, urban, or suburban. The project proposals in the Community Facilities Plan so often link what happens in the other plan elements together.

Sewage Treatment

There are two separate, yet equal, aspects of sewage disposal that a community needs to be concerned about, both of which are costly. The most visible is the public sewer system with its treatment plant and conveyance system. This is what most people think of when discussing local government's responsibility in proper disposal of wastewater. However, local government is charged with ensuring all wastewater is treated properly, including that from private, on-lot systems. This is mandated by the Commonwealth with the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act of 1965, more commonly referred to as Act 537.

At this time, New Wilmington Borough is in the final approval stages of updating their Act 537 Plan. The plan update was mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)—the administrator for Act 537. It was found that the plant has some issues with biological loading exceeding permitted limits for the design and size of New Wilmington's wastewater treatment plant and was nearing its overall flow capacity of 563,000 gallons per day (GPD). This resulted in not only the need to find a solution to this overload situation but also imposed a moratorium on new tie-ins to the system. Until the situation is resolved to DEP's satisfaction, New Wilmington cannot accept any new sewage system customers. This applies to not only Borough residents but also those within the conveyance system located in Wilmington Township, Mercer County, and Wilmington Township, Lawrence County.

In the submission to DEP for the Act 537 Plan update, it is proposed that the Borough replace the current rotating biological contactors (RBC) treatment system with a trickling filter system. The selected option, 2.b, will be to incorporate twin 43-foot diameter treatment tanks, which will cost approximately \$5.9 million (2008 dollars). It will possess a larger capacity than the old plant, both in terms of total flow (780,000 GPD versus 563,000 GPD) and organic loadings.

Additionally, the Borough is also addressing inflow and infiltration (I&I) concerns for the system. Large amounts of fresh water interfere with the proper operation of treatment plants since they effectively dilute the food source of the microorganisms that digest the organic waste in the raw sewage. At one point in time, down spouting was tied into the sanitary sewer system. There has been an ongoing push to remove this source of fresh water in the wastewater stream. To see the impact of this stormwater on the system, from January 2006 through June 2008, it was calculated that the typical rain event contributed 16,000 gallons of fresh water to the effluent flow, with a peak of 54,700 gallons, roughly 10 percent of the treatment plant's capacity. Also, holes in the sanitary sewer manholes intended to allow easy removal with a pick have been sealed. Though these holes are small, it was calculated that they could add up to nearly 150 gallons per minute (216,000 GPD) to the sewage influent. Though it is not a severe problem

since the conditions needed to achieve this inflow rate are extreme, it is an easily remedied problem.



Once the Act 537 Plan update is accepted and construction of the new facility is completed, new tie-ins to the conveyance system can resume. This means that some projects on hold in Wilmington Township can also be completed, namely the Wynfield Commons development. The Borough currently has an agreement with the Township to accept 24,000 GPD of effluent, of which the one third of this permitted flow is in use. To gauge the exact amount of residential units the remaining 16,000 GPD can serve is a bit problematic. The estimated daily use for Wynfield Commons is at 100 GPD. Other units in the

Township are calculated at 150 GPD. And DEP figures that an EDU (equivalent dwelling unit), the typical single-family usage, is 300 GPD. This means that between 55 and 160 units can reasonably be expected to be added to Wilmington Township. Given the nature of the proposed projects that will tie in to the system, it is reasonable to believe that between 100 and 120 units can be under the current agreement.

This will be sufficient to handle basically what is on the table at present. However, it is probably insufficient to handle the true needs of the Township. Currently, there are approximately 60 to 75 dwelling units along Cowden Road, PA 158, New Wilmington-Bethel Road, Auction Road, and Valley View Road that may need to be put onto the public sewer system. These are traditional single-family homes. So, if they are added, they will probably be calculated at DEP's EDU standard versus the current standard of 150 GPD. Additionally, if the Township actively desires increased commercial and industrial development in I-B zoning district, capacity will need to be reserved for that future development. A detailed analysis of the Township's current and future needs must be made.

The initial phases of this process can be relatively easily made. First, an accurate count of all committed sewage hookups must be completed, including the likelihood of project completion. This will give an accurate picture of what current capacity is actually being used, what will be used once the ban on tap-ins is lifted, what is committed to and possibly would be developed, and then what is remaining of the currently allocated capacity. This should be relatively simple and can be done by the Township's staff. The next step is a survey of on-lot systems along Auction, Cowden, Valley View and New Wilmington-Bethel roads and PA 158. There is antidotal evidence of failed systems in this area. The Township will need to hire its sewage enforcement officer (SEO) to take a look at the lots in question to see if there is any visual evidence of system failures.

The Township has presented the information to an engineer to see what further steps may be needed. There are essentially three options that the engineer will put forward. The first is that not many of the on-lot systems are actually failing. Identify the failing systems and have those addressed be it through maintenance of the system or tying into the sewer system, propose a maintenance program for all on-lot systems to keep the remaining ones from failing and

requesting a relatively small increase in the Township's system allocation in the future if the commercial/industrial development occurs. The second option is similar, but more structured. There are numerous on-lot failures but they can be remedied by a mandatory on-lot maintenance system administered by the Township. This takes advantage of the existing on-lot infrastructure. It also prevents the need for the costly and time consuming process of extending conveyance lines to all affected structures. The final option would be if there is a sufficient level of system failures that groundwater is at risk and the houses need to be tied directly to the current sewer system.

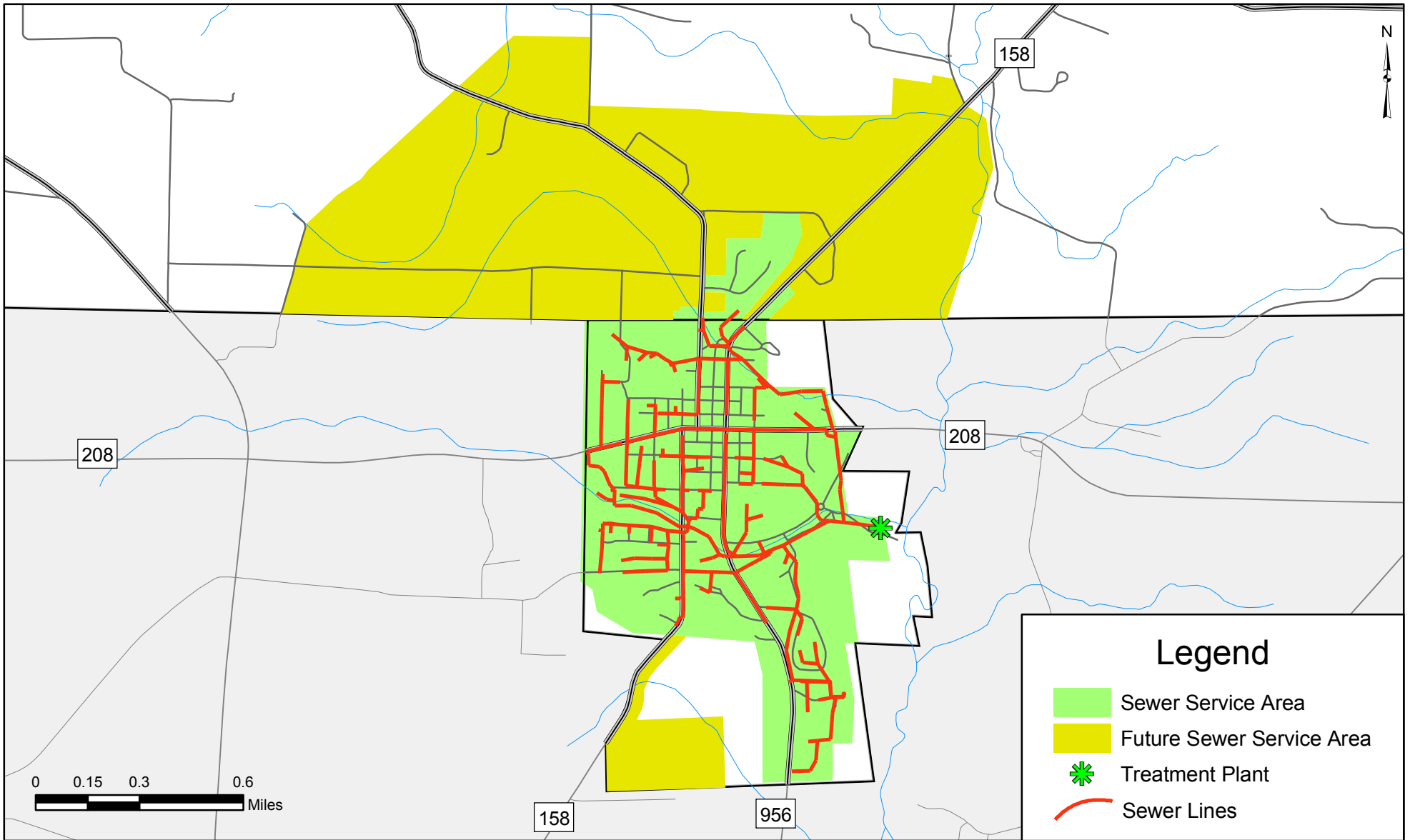
From the SEO's investigation, it is apparent that the final option is the one that will be needed to address the sewage disposal needs of the Township. Not only do a large proportion of lots have either a failing or presumed failing on-lot septic system, but a good number are served by holding tanks. While this system, a closed tank that collects biological wastewater, does not, by itself, present a problem, it is a stop-gap method of sewage disposal at best. Being time for an overall upgrade, it is best not only to bring the on-lot disposal systems into the public disposal grid, but also the holding tanks as well.

During this process, it is important that the Township is very transparent with its residents. Most homeowners who have on-lot sewage systems love them because they are "free." Though this is the practice of many, nothing can be further from the truth. It costs a lot of money to properly maintain a septic system. There should be regular inspections and pumping of the tank to ensure proper treatment of the household wastewater. If this is ignored, the systems backup or otherwise fail, resulting in a large one-time expense to fix the problem. When the engineer reports his findings, the costs of proper maintenance of on-lot systems by the individual homeowner should be explained and included in addition to the costs of the Township doing it in a specific program and the costs of running to public sewer lines to the homes in the study area. After a full consideration of the options that the engineer presents, the Township can make a fully informed decision as to how to proceed.

This Plan cannot make the recommendation to sewer or not to sewer areas in the Township that do not currently have public sewage treatment. It is a concern for the Township and, therefore, it needs to be investigated by professionals versed in this field. This Plan, though, can make recommendations as to limits of where public sewer should be extended to if it is deemed necessary. The Township wishes to retain its rural character. Nothing ruins rural character faster than sewer and water lines extended to undeveloped areas. All of the areas proposed for study have existing housing units in place. This study is to see if public sewer is warranted and, if so, to what extent. It should be impressed upon the engineer the Township is not looking for suburban-style growth, only to alleviate a potential problem. If sewer lines are extended, the Township needs to realize that infill development will occur. However, that should not result in a significant increase in residential units. The sewer lines, if needed, will be directly tied to the scope of existing development. The remainder of Wilmington Township should remain without public sewerage.

Water

The Borough recently reached an agreement with Aqua, the water supplier for the municipality, to cap certain costs in return for Aqua essentially being able to stage water distribution outside the municipal limits. The Borough will continue its program of delivery system improvements

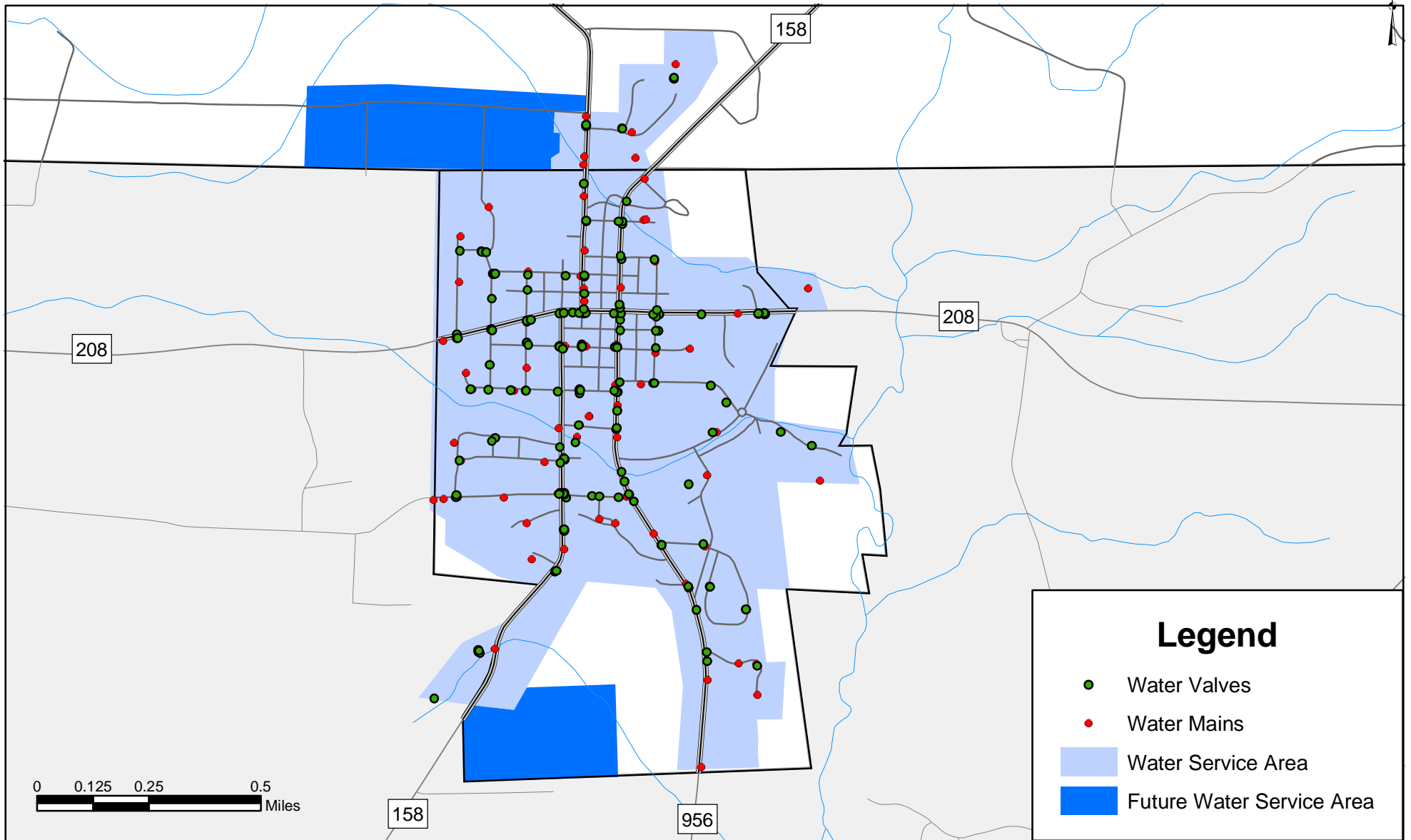


Plan Map 2 - New Wilmington Detail Sewer System

Wilmington Township (Mercer County), New Wilmington Borough
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2006,
U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

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Plan Map 3 - New Wilmington Detail Future Water System

Wilmington Township (Mercer County), New Wilmington Borough
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2006,
U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

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2008

that it has been undertaking in recent years. However, there are no plans at this time for any major projects geared to changing the nature of New Wilmington's water system.

In Wilmington Township, the only potential area where public water is likely to be extended is along Cowden Road. This would only make sense if it is deemed necessary to extend sewer service along the road. In the past, such a line had been discussed, extending from PA 18 in the west to the New Wilmington-Bethel Road in the east. If sewage is extended along Cowden, it will only extend west approximately half way from New Wilmington-Bethel Road to Angel Road (which runs south to PA 18). If that is the case, the logical expansion would then be from the existing service on the New Wilmington-Bethel Road to where public sewer service ends as well.

Again, as with public sewer, public water should be limited to where necessary in already developed areas of the Township. While not the same driving factor in development as one finds with public sewer, public water does play a role in increased development, especially with commercial and industrial properties. Again, outside of already developed areas near the northern border of New Wilmington Borough, public water should not be extended in the Township to preserve the rural culture that exists in the community.

Parks

Wilmington Township has recently begun the process of developing its park master plan. The first part of the process, a picnic pavilion, will be constructed by the Township itself. There is the expertise among the current staff to handle the construction of such a structure, at a significant cost savings, compared to it being done by a contractor. It was important to recently start the project since monies which the Township had secured from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) was about to expire. Over the next several summers, the Township plans to progressively work on other segments of the overall park plan. When practical, they will do the work in house. When the plan was completed, it was estimated that it would cost approximately \$500,000 for a landscape contractor to complete the project, far outside the budget of Wilmington Township. However, done in house, a significant savings will be realized. And it should be noted that the quality of work will not suffer. The staff is just as qualified to do this work as an outside contractor.

In New Wilmington, the Borough Park Master Plan prepared by Pashek Associates has been completed and adopted. A variety of scenarios have been proposed to increase the utility of park lands, including those undeveloped west of New Castle Street, along Carol Drive. When completed, the park master plan will be added to this Comprehensive Plan as an addendum.

Other Facilities and Infrastructure

As with all communities, funding projects that are needed in New Wilmington Borough and Wilmington Township is a constant battle between what is wanted and what is practical. Both communities have a good track record of being wise with their spending and proactive with projects. While this has been effective through the years, it may be prudent now to consult with each other on purchases for products for everything from day to day supplies to major projects. In today's environment, any chance for cost savings is welcome in any organization.

One area where the communities can save money is in lighting. For Wilmington Township, it is not a significant cost, as they do not have street lights. However, in New Wilmington, most of the streets have lights at a regular interval. Recent developments in LED lighting have made it so that streetlights now consume just one half, or even less, of the electric of conventional sodium vapor lamps. Though the initial costs of the LED bulbs are more expensive than the traditional lamps, most municipal users of the LED bulbs find that with the energy savings will result in the switchover paying for itself within three years. In addition to the energy savings, it is also possible to literally pick the color of the light which the LED bulbs will emit to best enhance the look district they are placed in. This will be particularly useful with the downtown revitalization study. A more natural light will accent the details of the downtown, accentuating the charm which the Borough would like to accentuate. And one should remember that the Borough is effectively the electric utility provider to itself. Again, this is a proactive, cost-saving step to make the Borough that much more efficient.

Economic Development Plan

Though not required by the MPC, a basic economic development plan finds its way into most comprehensive plans. The reason is simple: It ties in with so much of the work done in the comprehensive planning process. Why waste this opportunity to better this aspect of the communities involved?

For larger communities, it is relatively easy to create an economic development plan. There is considerable infrastructure in place, both physical and administrative. This is not so in smaller communities, especially more rural ones. They do have the opportunity to take advantage of the greater assets that a larger, urban neighbor may possess. Such is the case for Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough. This, however, suggests that the study communities should ignore this process. It simply means that they need to be smart in using assets that are at hand to positively impact the economy of the local region.

There are five main economic assets available to the Township and Borough. They are New Wilmington's downtown business district, Westminster College, tourism, the agricultural economy, and the senior care facilities in the area. All of these assets have attributes that can be exploited to expand the local economy. The most important factor is to make people aware of the different methods to take advantages of the assets.

Westminster College Business Incubator

Colleges and universities are hot beds of research and innovation. Most require that the professors and instructors, in addition to their teaching duties, routinely publish in the professional journals in their respective fields. Frequently, that what the instructors publish provide economic opportunities for them as well. Sometimes though, business support services are difficult for the instructor to secure.

This is even truer at small schools such as Westminster College. To assist in this, a business incubator is proposed, specifically for college faculty. It would provide shared services, specifically in secretarial, bookkeeping, and marketing services. Small office spaces would be available for those who need them. The tenants would have up to two years to establish themselves as a viable small business. After that, the business should be strong enough to venture out on its own.

Tourism

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This is as true here as in the rest of the State. The problem though with tourism is that, typically, it is a large industry because it is so pervasive and not necessarily because there are few, highly lucrative sites to see. For tourism to be more economically attractive, one must add value to the experience.

In Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough, we have assets to exploit to make the tourism experience more notable to the tourist and, for the local economy, more profitable. Obviously, the Amish community is a draw as well as Westminster College. And just outside the area are shopping destinations, including the Apple Castle, the Cheese House (both in Wilmington Township, Lawrence County), Volant, Sharon, and at the Grove City Prime Outlets

area. While tour buses do visit these areas, they often bypass the study communities. However, in recent years, new assets have come to the Borough in particular that can lure the busses here to take advantage of these tourist dollars.

With the revitalization of the old Golden Dawn into a small mall of local shops and the reopening of the Tavern restaurant, there are more reasons now for busses to stop here. A few other amenities would make it even better for tourist busses to stop here. First would be a well-maintained public restroom for visitors in the downtown. Another would be a place for the busses to park at while the passengers are wandering around town. A third would be to have coordination with events at the College, especially with performances and art displays.

A shop for local artisans, both from the Amish community and the English community, would be a new attraction that would be a draw. It would act as a clearinghouse for the Amish, a middleman if you will, as well as for artists from Westminster and local crafts persons.

The Amish Community

Traditionally, the local Amish community is engaged in traditional farming, frequently with an emphasis on dairy production. Most of the fields are planted with grains, harvested for hay and have herds of cattle grazing. However, many also grow fruits and vegetables for sale at road side stands and other local outlets. And increasingly, the Amish are erecting greenhouses to produce plants for local flower and vegetable gardens. While the road side stands and greenhouses provide extra income for Amish families, is there a way to expand this income?

Increasingly, sustainable foods are becoming an important trend in the restaurant industry. The goal is for local raised, high quality products to be used on their menus. Why not use these restaurants as a premium outlet for Amish raised foods? Coordination between the restaurants and the farmers is essential. The Amish would need to grow specifically the products that the restaurants need. But, at the same time, prices would be a premium to what the farmers would normally get. And, this can be a year-round process. The greenhouses could be used during the fall, winter, and early spring to grow specific crops, such as tomatoes, peppers, lettuces, and others. Again, the farms would grow specifically what the restaurants want and in the quantities they need. It will provide a quality, highly marketable product to upscale restaurants and a steady, year-round increased income stream to the local Amish community.

Senior Care Facilities

While it may seem as an unlikely asset, the senior care facilities that we have, the Shenango Home, Shenango on the Green, and the Overlook Medical Clinic add a lot to the local economy. Even Wynfield Commons is geared for the older members of our community, for ease of living, though not with any specific medical support. With the aging of the population, in general, and in this area particularly, marketing this area as friendly to the senior members is a wise move. Currently, there is another proposed development geared for seniors, a joint venture between the College and Shenango on the Green. The plan is for a development similar to the Wynfield Commons plan—an independent living complex.

While adding more senior members to the community, such developments have also added younger residents. As those nearing, or at, retirement age moved into Shenango on the Green and Wynfield Commons, the homes they sold went frequently to younger families. The birthrate in

recent years has spiked in New Wilmington. By marketing these complexes to the older members of the community, it is providing an opportunity for young couples to take advantage of the assets of the Borough, including the park, the School District, and the College.

Many senior developments advertise a continuum of care, independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing care, in a small-town environment. Why not exploit those very facts for the Borough and Township? These factors exist already here. Additionally, there is a full service grocery with a true butcher's counter (something most stores cannot boast), a pharmacy, hardware stores, a variety of restaurant, access to national and world-class entertainers, a library, recreational facilities, and much more in the two communities themselves. These assets are all easily accessed. They are all things that are taken for granted by local residents. But by trumpeting these attributes, the communities can grow the population, both by retaining local seniors, recruiting new seniors, and also by providing opportunities for new families to come in as well. By taking what is perceived by many as a negative—an aging population—Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough can use it as a growth opportunity.

Transportation Plan

State Roadways

In 2009, the bridges over both branches of the Little Neshannock on PA 158 were to be replaced, as per the Transportation Infrastructure Program (TIP). At the same time, it was been proposed that maintenance and repaving would be done to that roadway throughout the Township. The project was put on hold earlier this year as funds were not available. The Township was assured that the Twin Bridges project would go forward next year (2010). However, given current budgetary conditions, this may be an optimistic assessment. It should be noted though that pushing the Twin Bridges project back a year is not a bad thing. While the condition of PA 158 is not great, the chip-and-dip resurfacing done in 2008 filled in the worst of the ruts and pot holes. A skim coat of asphalt was applied in 2009 to 158 and it improved the roadway significantly. Additionally, this delay allowed the Township to work on Bend Road this year (2009). Wilmington Township received the funding to finish addressing drainage issues along the road that were severe enough to reduce Bend Road to one lane at various times and locations.

The completion of the Bend Road project is essential for the smooth completion of the Twin Bridges project. As currently proposed, both bridges on PA 158 will be replaced at the same time. The highway will be closed and a detour set up to go around this area. While Bend Road itself will not be part of the official State detour route, it will be a way many locals will use to avoid the construction. Having both projects running at the same time would have made for a very difficult transit problem for many Wilmington Township residents.

For the future, two major State roads in the municipalities have been identified as needing significant maintenance. These are PA 158 in New Wilmington Borough and the New Wilmington–Bethel Road in Wilmington Township. Both roads have significant traffic, not only motor vehicle but also horse and buggy. There are deep ruts in both of these roads. As milling of these sections, repair to the base and then resurfacing are needed to restore the roads, the municipalities should lobby the local PennDOT offices for these measures. It should be noted here that Wilmington Township and New Wilmington Borough belong to two separate transportation planning organizations. Mercer County is essentially the Shenango Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and as such, directly works with PennDOT in the determination of projects on State and Federal highways. Lawrence County is part of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission MPO and is part of the much larger whole. While this structure would seem to complicate potential large projects, this system is long established and does not cause a serious impediment to road rehabilitation.

Perhaps the most abused areas of these roads are the berms. The horseshoes and steel wheels erode the paved berms rapidly, far faster than the rest of the roadway. It is proposed that on a regular basis, either annually or biannually, that PennDOT spot patches and/or chip and dips the berms. This will increase the safety on these highways, both for the horse and buggies as well as for the motorized traffic.

Finally, in terms of the State highway system, the Township and Borough, along with the other communities along its length, should encourage the improvement of the New Wilmington-Bethel Road to PennDOT's 3-R standards. There are several areas on the road where there are sharp, blind curves; narrow shoulders; and other safety issues. It is one of the more heavily traveled

minor highways in the region and its improvement will be a great benefit to not only the study area but other communities as well.

Local Roadways

The high cost of fuel in 2008 and the recession have taken their toll on the driving public. The number of miles traveled both in Pennsylvania and nationwide has decreased. People are switching to more fuel-efficient vehicles. The net result is that less gasoline and diesel fuel is being sold. Correspondingly, there are less taxes being collected for road construction and maintenance, both for State projects as well as local ones funded by Liquid Fuels monies. Both the Township and Borough do much of their own work on the roads, as it is in an effort to save money. With the significant decline in Liquid Fuels funds, the two communities should look at working cooperatively as much as practical on local road projects to increase the savings to both municipalities.

Mass Transit

Again, as tax revenues decline for transportation, projects and services will have to be cut. Mass transit will not be immune to this new reality. While it is not a major impact to most, the loss of the New Castle Transit Authority's Grove City Outlet route would have big impacts to the Amish community in Wilmington Township. Though it only has a small part of its route in the two municipalities, the Amish use the bus service extensively to access shopping in the New Castle area. Though the Amish have other means to access these shopping areas, it would be a large inconvenience to them if this service was halted. The Township and Borough should do what they can to make sure that this route is not abandoned.

In Wilmington Township, as in the rest of Mercer County, the Mercer County Community Transit system is available for all residents. It is a demand based transit organization, with portal to portal operations.
