

# ALLENTOWN 2020

**Final Draft**  
October 2008



ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101  
610-437-7611

**“ALLENTOWN 2020”**

**City of Allentown  
Comprehensive Plan**

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**October 2008**

This publication was paid for in part with a grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development.

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Michael C. Hefele, AICP, Planning Director  
Alan H. Salinger, Chief Planner

Cynthia D. Carman, Community Planner  
Ronald D. Penrose, Traffic Control Superintendent

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## INTRODUCTION

As Allentown looks ahead to the year 2020, its success will depend largely on how well it understands and adapts to the various dynamics that will continue to shape it and the entire Lehigh Valley. It will depend on how well we function as a region; on how well we accept and embrace diversity among our citizens; and on how well we restructure our local economic base and participate in the regional economy. Success will involve continuing the transformation of our downtown and building on our assets - our arts, cultural and historic resources; our park system; our traditional neighborhoods; and our sense of community. It will involve dealing effectively with change.

“Allentown 2020” is intended to help us better understand these challenges and to improve our ability to deal with the changing environment in which we find ourselves. It paints a picture of Allentown today and tells how it is different from the past. But most importantly, it is intended to help Allentown position itself to achieve success in the future. It does so through a series of goals, policy statements and action steps in a number of key areas.

The recommendations found in this Plan are based on public input, interviews with key stakeholders, and the active participation of the project’s Advisory Committee members. They build on current initiatives and incorporate the recommendations of other, single purpose plans. “Allentown 2020” focuses on eight different aspects of the City, including discussions and recommendations in the areas of Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Community Facilities, Neighborhood Conservation, Historic Preservation, Transportation, and the Environment and Natural Resources. It summarizes many of these recommendations in a “Framework for the Future” – a series of ten simple, basic statements that describe some of the ideals presented in the Plan - and through the identification of eight “Strategic Planning Areas” throughout the City that hold the most potential for positive change.

The comprehensive plan, which is authorized under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, should not be confused with a strategic plan or other short-term document. Rather, its purpose is to provide decision makers, administrators and the community at large with a broader framework - a set of commonly shared principles, goals and basic direction - within which to take action. It acknowledges that urban issues are complex and dynamic and that economic, social and political changes occur over time, sometimes quickly. As such, there is a need to allow for flexibility in shaping programs and making decisions in response to these changes, but within the constraints of this broader framework.

This Plan should be the general blueprint that leads to more specific action and should be consulted when making various decisions that have long term implications. It should help set priorities for municipal capital improvements, provide guidance in setting economic development priorities and set the tone for land use and development controls. It should be continually revisited for the purpose of ensuring its currency and relevance, with formal reviews occurring at least every ten years.





# CITY PROFILE



## CITY PROFILE

### Historical Development

The land that now comprises Allentown was originally purchased in 1735 by William Allen and incorporated as Northampton Town in 1762. The town was located at the confluence of three streams, the Lehigh River, the Jordan Creek, and the Little Lehigh Creek. Just south of town lay the Easton-Reading Road, constructed in 1753, making the town strategically important during the Revolutionary War. By 1792, Allen had designed the platting of streets for his new community, which was to be called Allentown. The original grid layout of streets in the heart of the City remains today.

Throughout the 1800's, the discovery of a number of important natural resources around Allentown, such as coal, iron ore, and clay, led to the development of the City as a center for manufacturing and transportation. To facilitate the flow of goods, the local transportation systems also grew. Construction of the local canal system was begun in 1827, followed by the development of rail transportation in the 1850's. After 1860, industrial growth was even more dramatic, spurred on by the development of both the canals and the railroads. The area around Allentown became the center of the world's Portland Cement production, the foremost producer of silk in Pennsylvania, and the central location for the assembly of Mack Trucks.

Housing construction fluctuated with the events of the times. Most of the earliest housing was concentrated in close proximity to places of work. With the creation of automobiles and trolleys, growth spread outward along the main routes of travel and moved westward during the turn of the century and early 1900's. The City continued to grow through annexation, including the incorporation of East Allentown (Rittersville) in the 1920's and portions of South Allentown as late as the 1950's.

Allentown grew because of its industrial resources and, as a result, became the County seat and the hub of the Lehigh Valley's arts,

cultural, business and retail activities. Although still a leader in the Lehigh Valley in many respects, Allentown has undergone many changes that continue to lead the City in new directions.

### Regional Setting

Allentown is the largest of the 62 municipalities within the Lehigh Valley, comprised of Lehigh and Northampton counties, and in 2000 became the third largest city in the State, following Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Allentown is the county seat of Lehigh County and represented 34% of the total Lehigh County population, as of the 2000 Census. Allentown is located 90 miles east of New York City and 60 miles north of Philadelphia, as shown on Map 1. The City has excellent access from I-78, Route 22, Route 309, and I-476, the Northeast Extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Allentown is served by the Lehigh Valley International Airport, which is serviced by a number of major international air carriers.

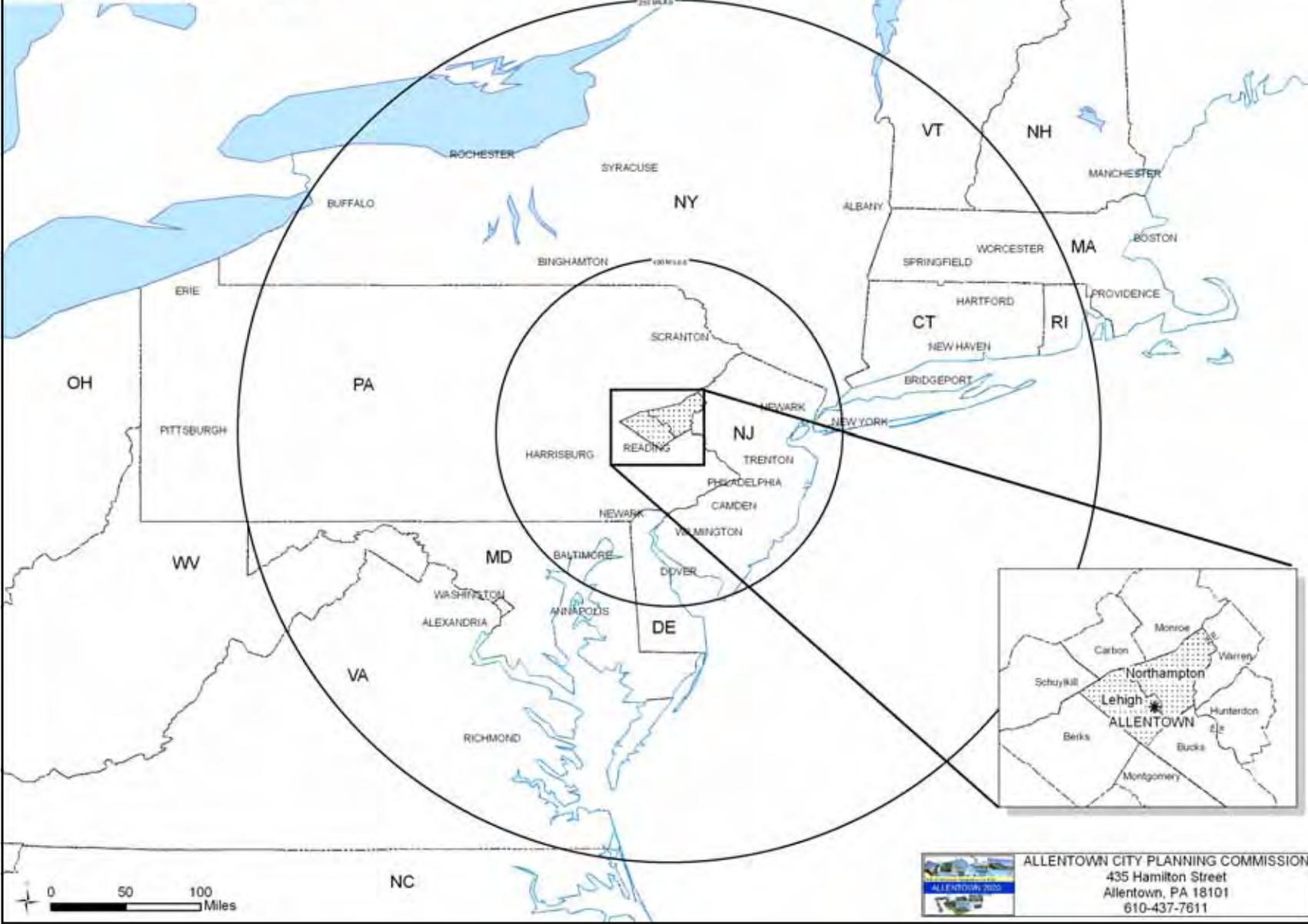
### Geography

Allentown comprises approximately 18 square miles. It is located along the Lehigh River, and is traversed by the Little Lehigh, Jordan, Trout, and Cedar Creeks. The creek areas, and increasingly the riverfront area, are the basis for an excellent linear park system, which has had a profound effect on the City's development, quality of life, and civic pride, giving the City one of its nicknames, Pennsylvania's Park Place.

Allentown is divided into five general areas, as shown on Map 2 and described below:

1. East Allentown, or the "East Side," which lies east and north of

# MAP 1 REGIONAL SETTING



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the Lehigh River, and which has developed since the early 20th century. The East Side is a mix of residential neighborhoods and concentrated commercial corridors along Hanover Avenue, Union Boulevard, and Airport Road.

2. The “First and Sixth Wards,” which is located between the Lehigh River on the east and the Jordan Creek on the west. “The Wards” was one of the earliest residential and industrial parts of the City and is still home to much of the City’s ethnic population.
  
3. “Center City,” which extends from the Jordan Creek west to 15th Street. This area contains the downtown area, along Hamilton Street from 4th to 12th Streets, and the 7th Street Gateway, a Main Street community. Center City contains many densely populated residential neighborhoods, including two local historic district neighborhoods that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This area is also home to Sacred Heart Hospital, a satellite campus of Lehigh Carbon Community College and several of the region’s cultural facilities, including the Allentown Art Museum, Symphony Hall, the Baum School of Art, Community Music School, the Liberty Bell Shrine Museum, Trout Hall, the Lehigh Valley Heritage Center, and the Allentown Public Library.
  
4. The “West End” extends from 15th Street westward to the City’s western boundary. It is characterized by lower density housing, much of which was built in the last 60 to 70 years. It includes an additional historic district neighborhood that is eligible for the National Register. It also contains a new area of residential and commercial development, which has occurred over the last decade. The West End is home to Cedar Crest and Muhlenberg Colleges, Lehigh Valley Hospital, St. Luke’s Hospital, and the Allentown Fairgrounds, as well as the Municipal Golf Course and several active and passive parks.
  
5. South Allentown, or the “South Side,” is characterized by both older and newer neighborhoods. Older, denser neighborhoods

are to the east and north, with newer and less dense housing found to the south. The southernmost part of the area contains a portion of South Mountain and has generally been protected as public open space. Many of Allentown’s more modern industrial facilities are located on the South Side, as well as the Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital, the world headquarters of Mack Trucks, and the Queen City Municipal Airport.

**Population and Household Trends**

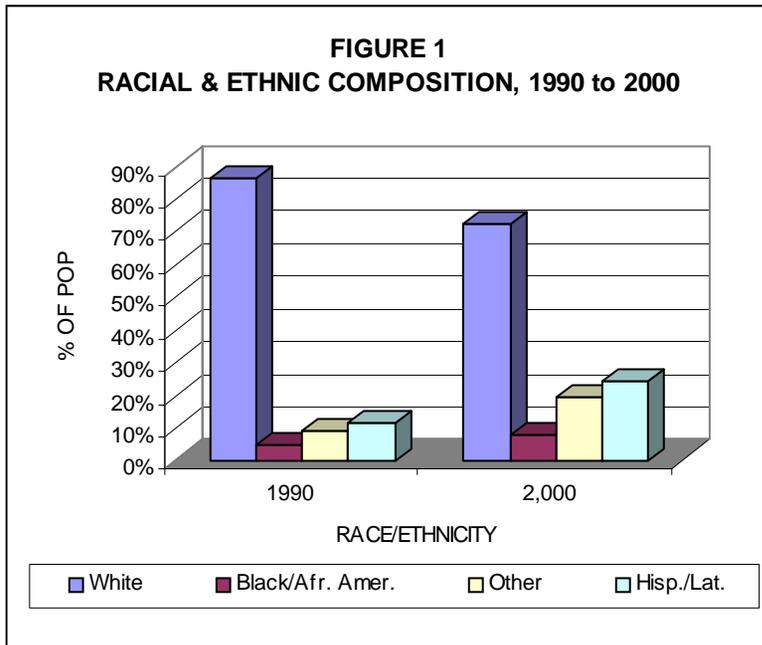
Allentown’s population has been increasing slightly over the last two decades and is projected to remain stable through 2020 (see Table 1). Meanwhile, the populations of Lehigh County and the region grew 7.2% and 7.6% respectively through the 1990’s. Regional growth is projected at 14.5% to the year 2020, with Lehigh County growth estimated at 11.3%. Allentown is estimated to comprise 30.7% of the county population in 2020, compared with 34.2% in 2000.

	1980 <sup>(1)</sup>	1990 <sup>(1)</sup>	2000 <sup>(1)</sup>	2006 EST <sup>(1)</sup>	2020 PROJ <sup>(2)</sup>
ALLENTOWN	103,758	105,090	106,632	107,294	107,469
% CHANGE		1.3%	1.5%	0.6%	0.2%
LEHIGH COUNTY	272,349	291,130	312,090	335,544	370,644
% CHANGE		6.9%	7.2%	7.5%	10.5%
LEHIGH VALLEY	497,767	538,235	579,156	626,850	704,026
% CHANGE		8.1%	7.6%	8.2%	12.3%

SOURCE: (1) U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, (2) LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

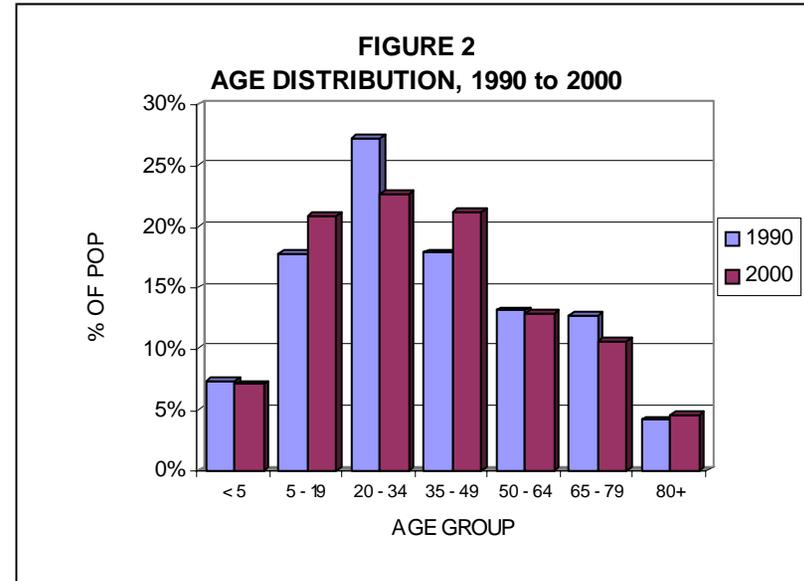
The racial and ethnic composition of Allentown’s population

experienced a very dramatic change during the 1990's. Census data indicates that the Hispanic/Latino population more than doubled to 26,058 people and now comprises over 24% of the City's population (see Graph 1). The number of Blacks/African Americans increased 60%, while only slight increases were seen in the Asian, Native American and other races. The total white population dropped by 14.6%, and now makes up 72.5% of the City's total population.



The age distribution of the population remained relatively stable between 1990 and 2000, with the exception of the 65 to 74 year old group, which decreased 21.5%. The number of school-aged children and the number of adults of pre-retirement age (45 to 64 years old) experienced the largest percentage changes of 9.5% and 9.4% respectively. The remaining groups showed modest changes, including slightly fewer young children (less than 5 years old) at -0.5%, slightly more young adults (20 to 24 years old) at

1.2%, and more retirees (age 65 and over) at 5.5%. The age distribution in 2000 is shown in Graph 2.



The per capita income of Allentown residents in 1999 was \$16,282, an increase of 26.9% since 1989. The amount was 74% of the per capita income of Lehigh County in 1999, down from 83% in 1989. The percentage of persons below the poverty level in Allentown in 1999 was 18.5%, up from 12.9% ten years earlier. This compares to 9.3% of Lehigh County residents in 1999.

The median household income in Allentown was \$32,016 in 1999, or 74% of the \$43,449 median household income in Lehigh County. Table 2 illustrates that 54% of Allentown households earned less than \$35,000 in 1999, compared to 39% of Lehigh County households. On the upper end, only 11% of City households earned more than \$75,000 in 1999, compared to 23% in the entire county.

**TABLE 2  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1999**

HOUSEHOLD INCOME (1999)	% OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS	
	ALLENTOWN	LEHIGH COUNTY
< \$10,000	12.4	7.4
\$10,000-\$24,999	26.5	19.2
\$25,000-\$34,999	15.3	12.8
\$35,000-\$49,999	17.4	16.9
\$50,000-\$74,999	17.4	21.0
\$75,000-\$99,999	6.1	10.7
\$100,000+	4.9	11.9

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**TABLE 3  
HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS, 1980 TO 2000**

	1980	1990	2000	% CHANGE 1990-2000
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS	41,307	42,775	42,032	-1.7%
Non-Family Households	14,098	16,285	16,905	3.8%
Single Person Households	12,249	13,561	13,914	2.6%
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.42	2.36	2.42	

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**Housing**

In 2000, Allentown’s housing stock totaled 45,960 units, representing an increase of 324 units since 1990. The current stock is composed of 53% owner occupied units and 47% renter occupied units, with the number of rental units increasing by 6.5% since 1990. 60.6% of the total number of units is found in single-family dwellings.

The total number of households decreased by 743, or 1.7%, during the 1990’s. This was in contrast to an increase of 3.6% in the previous decade. Family households represent the larger percentage of all households at 59.8%. The number of non-family households continues to increase however, accounting for 40.2% of all households, with single person households representing the majority of these households. The size of households remained relatively stable at 2.42 persons per households, compared to household sizes of 2.36 in 1990 and 2.42 in 1980 (see Table 3).

**Land Use**

Major land use changes since the 1993 Plan have occurred through the continued development of vacant tracts and through functional changes of already developed areas. Major residential developments occurred primarily in the City’s West End, but also in portions of the South Side. New commercial development occurred along many of the City’s arterial streets, such as Lehigh Street, South 4th Street and Airport Road. A number of former industrial properties have been redeveloped into residential and commercial uses.

Table 4 presents the distribution of land uses that existed in 2005. The greatest amount of land in the City is taken up by residential uses, at 30.5%, followed by transportation and utilities at 25.5% and parks and recreation at 12.6%. Only 8.5% of the land in the City is vacant land, much of which is either undevelopable or has severe development limitations.

**TABLE 4  
ESTIMATED EXISTING LAND USE, 2005**

LAND USE	ACRES	PERCENT
RESIDENTIAL	3,535.3	30.5
COMMERCIAL	896.0	7.7
INDUSTRIAL	877.9	7.6
WHOLESALE & WAREHOUSE	30.4	0.3
PUBLIC & QUASI-PUBLIC	2,952.6	7.4
PARKS & RECREATION	851.9	12.6
TRANSPORTATION & UTILITIES *	1,460.1	25.5
AGRICULTURAL & VACANT **	981.8	8.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11,586.0</b>	

\* includes road rights of way

\*\* includes rivers

SOURCE: LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

**TABLE 5  
ALLENTOWN RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT, 2000**

SECTOR	% OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES	42.8
MANUFACTURING	19.5
RETAIL TRADE	12.1
FINANCE, INSURANCE & REAL ESTATE	5.6
CONSTRUCTION	5.3
TRANSPORTATION, WAREHOUSING, UTILITIES	4.6
WHOLESALE TRADE	3.8
INFORMATION	3.1
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	2.9
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING, HUNTING, MINING	0.3

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**Economic Base**

The economic base of the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton MSA, which includes Lehigh Northampton and Carbon counties, has experienced shifts in employment from manufacturing to service-based industries. The percentage of the work force employed in manufacturing industries declined from 25.1% to 20.6% between 1990 and 2000, while service-based employment rose from 30.4% to 40.5%. Despite this change, the MSA maintained a higher concentration of manufacturing employment than the nation as a whole for both periods. The trends of the MSA were reflected in the employment of City residents in 2000, where the service industry accounted for 42.8% of all employment, followed by manufacturing at 19.5%, as shown in Table 5.

**Transportation**

The street system in Allentown continued to improve over the last decade, with the opening of the Basin Street underpass, the extension of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Sumner Avenue, and the completion of the American Parkway Northeast Extension in East Allentown, all of which have eased the flow of traffic into and through the City. The proposed New England Avenue and the American Parkway Bridge over the Lehigh River, and the improvement of South 4th Street will further improve the flow of traffic in the City.

Intercity and intracity bus transportation have also improved over the last decade. A new terminal has been constructed to serve intercity buses. Intracity bus service, though serving the Center City well, has continued to face greater demands for service to newer, less densely designed office and industrial development located outside the City. A new multi-modal transportation center has been constructed downtown to provide improved access and parking facilities for intracity buses.

Air passenger service to Allentown is provided through the Lehigh Valley International Airport, located just outside the City limits. Passenger activity at the airport increased from 433,000 enplanements in 1990 to a high of 1,014,000 in 2000, leveling off to 848,000 in 2007. With the growth in passengers and the increased number of airlines serving the airport, the Lehigh-Northampton Airport Authority (LNAA) will continue a capital investment program and is considering various development alternatives.

The Queen City Airport, located on the South Side of the City is a general aviation facility owned and operated by LNAA that serves individuals and small businesses. At this time, about 80 small aircraft are based at the facility.

**Major Community Facilities**

The aggregation of City, County, and School District offices in downtown Allentown has been increased with the addition of a Federal Courthouse building and a new County Government Center as well as the relocation of the Social Security office, the State Labor and Industry offices and the State Department of Transportation to the downtown governmental area. This area will be further enhanced by the construction of a new government area parking structure and an addition to the County Courthouse building.

Allentown is home to five hospitals, Sacred Heart Hospital, Lehigh Valley Hospital, St. Luke’s Hospital, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital, and the Allentown State Hospital. With the exception of the Allentown State Hospital, a mental health institution, the hospitals have all undergone extensive renovations over the last decade. Lehigh Valley Hospital has undergone interior renovations, while Sacred Heart, Good Shepherd and St. Luke’s, which renovated and expanded the former Allentown Osteopathic Center, have all expanded beyond the bounds of their primary hospital structures. Adjoining neighborhood properties continue to be acquired around some of the hospitals for future parking, office, or

development use.

Physical development among Allentown’s colleges has continued over the last decade. Muhlenberg and Cedar Crest Colleges have both added facilities on their campuses, including dormitories and a sports center at Muhlenberg and an aquatic center and a



science center at Cedar Crest. In addition, Lehigh Carbon Community College has opened a satellite campus downtown on Hamilton Street, which also offers courses from Kutztown University.

Allentown’s public school system, under the Allentown School District, has maintained a neighborhood-based school approach. However, with the school buildings continuing to age and school populations rising, the School District has completed an evaluation of its facility requirements and will be pursuing its recommendations for implementation, which may include the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new facilities. The area of the City west of Cedar Crest Boulevard is served by the schools of the Parkland School District. The public schools continue to be augmented by an extensive parochial school system. The Allentown Public Library, with its main branch downtown and satellite branches on the East and South sides of the City, serves not only Allentown residents, but also many non-residents.

# FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE



**FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE**

The following statements represent the overriding themes that emerged through the planning process, which both transcend and tie together the individual plan elements. These are the ideals that should be pursued throughout the implementation of the Plan.

- 1. We must think regionally. We must build upon current efforts with Lehigh County and other Lehigh Valley municipalities to establish a dialogue on a series of regional issues ranging from the implementation of smart growth techniques to the provision of regional services. A mutual understanding of the role that each community plays in the health of the Lehigh Valley must be secured. Municipal parochialism needs to give way to the creation of win-win scenarios.**

The City's 1993 Comprehensive Plan identified the need for the City and the remainder of the county and region to cooperate on a series of issues. Spurred by a report prepared by the Brookings Institution, "Back to Prosperity, A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania," and a companion report that focused on the Lehigh Valley, there is a growing realization among regional leaders that the futures of all of the Valley's urban areas, and the rest of the Lehigh Valley are interrelated. Many community leaders acknowledge that the region needs to maintain the vitality of its cities for it to continue to be attractive and successful. Convincing others and making dramatic systemic change is another matter, and one that will not occur easily or quickly.

Several recent initiatives, however, are encouraging. The Lehigh Valley Partnership, an organization of business and government leaders has taken a lead role in furthering a regional agenda, as has "Renew Lehigh Valley." Meanwhile, Lehigh and Northampton Counties have acted to form a bi-county health department, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has created a Bi-County Affordable Housing

Policy Advisory Committee, and Lehigh County has organized a Council of Governments comprised of representatives of all County municipalities for the purpose of meeting and discussing issues of a regional or common interest. These initiatives are the seeds from which understanding, cooperation and regional vitality should flow.

- 2. We must accept, understand and engage new residents into the community and into civic affairs. Outreach efforts to the ethnic and minority populations in the City's neighborhoods should be made to encourage participation in neighborhood activities. We need to ensure that our services are responsive to the changing needs of Allentown's population.**

Consider the following estimates provided by the Census Bureau for 2006:

- One out of every 7 Allentown residents was foreign born.
- The City's Hispanic population comprised over 34% of the total, up from 12% in 1990. The non-white population had grown to 46% of the total.
- 25% of Allentown's households did not reside in the same residence as the year before.



This increased diversity and mobility create challenges in planning for and delivering City services; for the school district in serving a growing enrollment that is more ethnic and less English speaking; for

agencies that are tasked with providing an educated and

skilled workforce; and for the neighborhoods themselves where newer and older populations co-exist and therefore must embrace diversity and cultural differences. There must be mutual respect for the City’s heritage and its laws, and new residents to the community should be encouraged to participate in neighborhood and civic affairs.

Change also brings opportunity. The new residents of the community bring with them their dreams, their customs, a new market segment and a new entrepreneurial spirit. This is reflected in Allentown’s neighborhood commercial areas. New ethnic restaurants, groceries and other service businesses spring up every day. City events have more of an ethnic flavor to them. In short, diversity creates a more culturally enriched community – if we are willing to accept and embrace it.

**3. We must pursue a comprehensive economic development strategy that is based on the need to:**

- **increase the standard of living of our residents and their participation in the regional economy,**
- **create opportunities and the environment for quality new development and the reuse of existing sites and buildings, and**
- **increase all of our fiscal bases.**

Following national and regional trends, Allentown’s economy has experienced a significant shift from the manufacturing sector to the service sector, with changes and implications that run deep. Many of those lost manufacturing jobs were located in or close to its neighborhoods, providing residents with employment opportunities close to home. Those jobs, to the extent they continue to exist, are now located mainly in the suburbs creating issues of accessibility for residents that are not particularly mobile.

The loss of manufacturing jobs and employment opportunities in general are reflected in the incomes of City residents that are a mere fraction of those in the remainder of Lehigh

County. These lower incomes have a broad effect, impacting the ability of residents to own and improve property, to purchase goods and services, and ultimately on the City’s income tax base. Allentown residents need the education, training and mobility to secure higher paying jobs that are now typically found in the suburbs. We also need to expand job opportunities right here in the City.

Also key to the City’s health is the stability of its tax base, which is primarily reliant on the value of its real estate. This particular measure, which accounts for more than 36% of total City revenues, grew a mere 4% over the preceding 10 year period. Real estate development therefore, is a critical component of this strategy. In a mature, built out city, those opportunities are few however, and are by necessity directed toward the reuse of brownfields sites, the attraction of higher order land uses, and to the revitalization of the downtown area.

**4. We must continue to make downtown the focal point of our city, build upon downtown’s role as a multi-functional business, government, cultural and entertainment center, and create an environment that attracts residents as well as business.**

Cities are identified and measured by the success of their downtowns. Allentown is no exception and is in the midst of re-shaping that image. This new image is being forged around the development of new offices, restaurants, cultural uses, residential living opportunities - and a new spirit. Downtown can once again be a regional destination, but for a variety of activities, which is what makes downtowns interesting.

**5. We must ensure a high “livability quotient” for our neighborhoods by:**

- **keeping them clean, safe and attractive,**
- **encouraging new investment and homeownership,**
- **strategically redeveloping areas that exhibit higher**

- **than normal densities and disinvestment,**
- **strengthening the organizational capacity and involvement of neighborhood residents, and**
- **Encouraging collaboration among neighborhood groups.**

Allentown is a city of neighborhoods, each representing a portion of the City's history and possessing its own unique characteristics. They are mosaics where people of diverse backgrounds, ideas, education, and income interact. Living in close proximity to places of work, shopping, entertainment and recreation saves time and expense. Typically, housing costs are more affordable, while a greater array of municipal services and public facilities are available.

Despite these advantages, the quality of life in some neighborhoods is sometimes strained. This stress is manifested by physical changes, such as the deterioration of the housing stock, lack of neighborhood investment, and poor property maintenance, while in others, general socio-economic conditions, are contributing factors. Current issues such as crime, litter, overcrowding, noise, and other general nuisance issues are symptoms of the more complex issues affecting the City's neighborhoods.

In a mature, fully developed city like Allentown, maintaining the livability of its neighborhoods is fundamental to the vitality of the City. Indeed, Allentown's continued desirability as a place to live depends on the quality of life experienced in the neighborhoods. This is a concern, and a responsibility, that residents and City government alike must share.

#### **6. We must protect, maintain, and restore our housing stock.**

The health and stability of Allentown's neighborhoods and their housing stock are inextricably linked. Quality neighborhoods depend on good, concerned residents who look for sound and affordable housing. The City has a

relatively sound, but aging housing stock that requires continual monitoring and upkeep. The City needs to remain vigilant in the implementation of a comprehensive inspection program that addresses the most serious of these issues, while ensuring that housing currently in good condition is not allowed to slip into disrepair.

- #### **7. We must protect and enhance the "built environment" by:**
- **paying more attention to design,**
  - **encouraging infill development that reflects the development pattern and fabric of its neighbors,**
  - **creating more attractive commercial corridors, and**
  - **protecting our historic and architectural resources.**

Design matters. In older cities such as Allentown, the built environment in many ways is as important as the natural environment. The City's diversity of architectural styles, its traditional neighborhoods, and its historic buildings compose the urban fabric that makes Allentown unique from its suburban neighbors. These need to be protected. However, the City also needs to move forward, and therefore must be able to accommodate change. We need to recognize the importance of maintaining Allentown's link with its past by preserving its most significant assets, while we continue to develop and grow.

Form and function should govern the design and review of new development, particularly when that development is occurring on an "infill" parcel. Compatibility with adjoining properties; the use of more traditional design techniques where warranted; improved landscaping and appropriate signage are a few of the more significant design elements that come into play.

- #### **8. We must continue to enhance and promote the great asset that is our parks system by:**
- **completing its system of greenways and establishing a system of local and regionally linked trails,**

- providing additional parks and open space in Center City and downtown, and
- promoting the parks system and its use for community events.

The City’s recently completed “Parks and Recreation Master Plan” referred to Allentown as a “city within a park.” Allentown is renowned for its extensive parks system, yet there is more to be done. There are areas of the City that are underserved, while there are facilities that are in disrepair. There is a need to strategically add to the system, while promoting the parks in general. The system of establishing greenways along the City’s waterways, which began many years ago, awaits completion. These greenways serve as excellent resources for passive and active recreation and to establish linkages within the City and beyond. All neighborhoods should have park and recreation facilities within their reach.

**9. We must promote a transportation system that ensures mobility throughout our city and the region, that provides access to jobs and that is neighborhood- and pedestrian-friendly.**

Traffic moves relatively easily into and through the City on a grid pattern of streets that was established well over 100 years ago. While some congestion occurs, it is to be expected in an urban area. In our quest to move vehicles into and through the City, however, conflicts arise where neighborhood streets serve as conduits for through traffic. Traffic calming techniques should be developed and employed.

Of significant concern is the continued pursuit of a system that provides options for mobility both within the City and regionally. Public transportation needs to continue to adapt to the needs of City residents without cars, who must be able to access jobs and other services that are in the suburbs.

A transportation system must accommodate more than streets

and more than cars. The ability to walk or use bicycles for work, recreation or to simply “get around” needs to be accommodated in established neighborhoods and in new developments.

**10. We must be respectful and protective of the natural environment and appreciate the value it adds to our quality of life, and that of the region. We must foster practices to become a sustainable community.**

The City’s location within the Lehigh Valley brings with it the beauty and opportunity afforded by several natural features, including several streams that have served as natural greenways though the City, views of and from South Mountain, and an interesting and varied topography throughout the City. Historically, the City has taken an active role in protecting these features, initially through an aggressive land acquisition program that provided the foundation for its vast parks system and watershed protection, and later to protect South and Lehigh Mountains from further development.

In an urban setting where much of the City’s development pattern has been established and the City is looking for ways to grow its tax base, there is a need to establish a responsible balance between the protection of the natural environment and the built environment. While the City encourages new development in order to contribute to its tax base, the potential locations for new development are limited, often resulting in pressures to develop properties that have significant physical limitations. The City needs to strike a balance between protecting the elements of the natural environment from the effects of development while also protecting the built environment from natural or man-made environmental hazards. Additionally, the City needs to promote the use of green building practices and technologies and the use of smart growth principles as they apply not only to urban development opportunities, but on a regional scale as well.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS



## STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS

The following non-prioritized list identifies those areas of the City where either positive economic growth is likely or redevelopment activities should be focused. Some of the areas are obvious and have been long identified as a priority, such as the downtown, while others deserve consideration for their long term potential.

1. **American Parkway Corridor**: Located on the City's East Side between the Lehigh River and Airport Road and served by the recently constructed American Parkway, this area contains several large potential development sites, including a few parcels that were once part of the Agere/LSI facilities. There is easy access to Route 22 and access to the City's downtown will be improved with the construction of the American Parkway Bridge. The corridor contains the site of the new minor league baseball stadium.

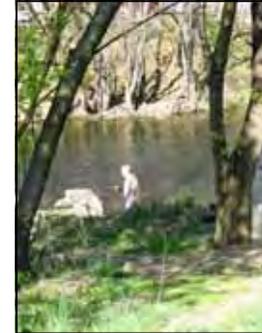
The area is suitable for and should be marketed for additional commercial, entertainment and/or light industrial uses.

2. **Lehigh River Waterfront**: The Lehigh River waterfront has long been seen as an untapped resource for recreation and economic development. Once the location for heavy industrial uses, interest and activity in waterfront development have never been higher. The America on Wheels Transportation Museum, recently completed improvements to Buck Boyle Park, and an ambitious proposed mixed use project on the site of the former Lehigh Structural Steel are examples of projects already underway.

The redevelopment of this area needs to be guided by a master plan. The plan should be developed in conjunction with a committee of waterfront stakeholders and should include an overall design concept, recommendations for the potential scale and intensity of development, zoning recommendations, provisions for public access to and along the Lehigh River, and

the identification of associated transportation and access related improvements.

3. **Jordan Creek Greenway**: As it passes through the City's densest neighborhoods, the Jordan Creek is the centerpiece of a corridor that has untapped potential. The stream represents one of the undeveloped greenways in the City, and lies amid a variety of larger, underused structures. Access to the area is provided by the American Parkway. The corridor is part of a larger greenway feasibility study



being conducted by the Wildlands Conservancy and is recommended for trail development in the City's "Parks and Recreation Master Plan". The combination of improved access and the potential for recreational and open space enhances the attractiveness of this area for reinvestment.

This area could develop into a home for the "creative class" seeking community and affordable work space and housing. In particular, the area north of Tilghman Street and extending west to North 7th Street, is already home to several artists' studio buildings, such as Green Street Dreams and Silkwerks, with plans in the works for a large 45-studio conversion project near 4th and Tilghman Streets. Marketing activities directed toward attracting artists, with incentives to encourage home ownership, should be pursued. Conversion of additional industrial buildings to studios and lofts should also be encouraged and are among the potential reuse possibilities for the area's building stock.

4. **North 7th Street Corridor**: Allentown's commercial corridors, with small locally owned shops, are experiencing renewed interest, growth and vitality. Nowhere is this more apparent



than in the North 7th Street Corridor, which was recently accepted into the Commonwealth's Main Street Program. The importance of this corridor is two-fold. First, the area is an important commercial district serving the needs of the heavily populated Center City neighborhoods. Second, the corridor serves as one of the "gateways" into the City. Emphasis on organization, business assistance, promotion, and façade improvements need to continue. The continued consideration of the appearance and function of 7th Street itself is also important. Recent improvements include the installation of period street lighting. An overall urban design study should be completed for the entire corridor that provides direction for future design enhancements inclusive of making the corridor more pedestrian friendly.

5. **Downtown and the Cultural Arts and Entertainment District:** As a testament to its importance to the overall community, the downtown area has been the focus of a number of planning studies and much public and private investment over the past ten years. Recent office construction, governmental office relocations and expansions, and building renovations have begun to transform the downtown. Currently, a process has been initiated to develop a common vision and strategy for its future. This focus needs to continue.

An important component of the downtown is the Arts and Entertainment District where a concentration of regional arts and entertainment facilities and venues attracts patrons from the entire Lehigh Valley. The recent construction of the Arts Park, additional parking facilities and proposed development activities will further strengthen this area.

6. **Little Lehigh Creek Corridor from South 3rd Street to South 10th Street:** This area runs along the Little Lehigh Creek and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and consists of parkland, an auto salvage operation, several vacant industrial buildings and other marginal uses. The area is also home to the Bridgeworks Enterprise Center and Business Incubator,

and a large industrial operation. In addition to the existing parkland, the City has acquired a former rail line for the purpose of establishing a trail through this area. Because of its proximity to both Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Lehigh Street, the area is highly visible and in need of attention.

7. **Lehigh Street/I-78 Corridor:** With its proximity to I-78, this corridor has the potential for significant development that could substantially add to the City's fiscal base and provide much needed employment opportunities. Within this area are a number of potential development and redevelopment sites, including the Queen City Airport. Admittedly, the redevelopment of the Queen City Airport presents substantial regulatory and political obstacles; however, its potential is equally substantial. Also located within this area are the former facilities of Mack Truck, some of which remain vacant and available for development, including a large former assembly plant building. Future development efforts in this corridor should focus on land uses that take advantage of the access to I-78, that enhance the City's tax base, and that create meaningful employment opportunities.

8. **The West End Theater/Fairgrounds District:** Another up-and-coming commercial district is the North 19th Street area, in the vicinity of the Allentown Fairgrounds. The area has a neighborhood feel, but serves a broader market. Similar to the 7th Street Corridor, continued focus on organization, promotion and design are recommended. Further, the Fairgrounds could potentially play a role in growing the district through cross-promotion as well as through development on the Fairgrounds property.





# PLAN ELEMENTS



LAND USE



## **LAND USE GOALS:**

- *The development or redevelopment of land to its highest and best use in accordance with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.*
- *The preservation and enhancement of the quality of life of Allentown's neighborhoods and the provision of additional residential opportunities at sustainable densities and compatible with existing neighborhoods.*
- *The provision of adequate and well planned areas for a variety of commercial activities ranging from neighborhood convenience shopping to regional commerce.*
- *To provide industrial opportunities that create jobs and tax base growth, through the re-use of existing buildings and development of new facilities while minimizing negative impacts associated with industrial uses.*
- *To provide for the land use needs of recreational, cultural, educational, health and other philanthropic institutions, and to ensure their compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.*

## LAND USE

The land use element of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to direct the location and scale of the use of land in the City. It attempts to ensure that sufficient land is set aside for various housing types and densities; commerce, industry and centers for employment; and public uses, in such a manner that does not create incompatibility, congestion of the street network or environmental problems. The land use plan supports and helps implement the goals and policies of the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan; guides the preparation of revisions to the City's Zoning Ordinance and the review of proposed land use changes; and directs new economic development initiatives.

The 1993 Land Use Plan recognized that the City had little available land for new growth. It identified Allentown as a "mature city" that would have to find ways to grow from within and not rely on the development of vacant land to expand its tax base or provide space for needed housing opportunities and commercial development. It focused its strategy on the appropriate reuse of buildings and land, ensuring quality in design and proper site planning, and the need to protect existing neighborhoods.

Many of the same issues that existed in 1993 exist today. Much of the land suitable for development that was identified in 1993 has since been developed, or is proposed to be. Other issues that continue to be of concern include residential conversions; accommodating infill development; ensuring suitable design in both commercial and residential development; finding appropriate reuses for vacant and underutilized buildings; and protecting neighborhoods from unwanted or incompatible development.

Design issues and their effect on the built environment are becoming a critical part of the dialogue. As in most cities, recreating and preserving the form and function of traditional neighborhoods is a desirable objective. Traditional neighborhoods - with their mix of uses, pedestrian orientation, interconnecting street systems, and proximity of residences to each other and the

street - promote sustainability, ease traffic circulation, and promote interaction among residents.

Typically, land use plans will be embodied in a future land use map. However, this plan does not include such a map, but rather it relies on its policy statements to inform the incremental land use decisions that are typical of a fully developed city.

### Vacant Land, Brownfields and Redevelopment Opportunities

The ability of the City to grow its real estate tax base will be limited to the few remaining vacant tracts of land and the reuse of buildings and sites otherwise known as "brownfields." These sites are shown on Map 4 and listed on Tables 6 and 7.

Available vacant sites are few. Table 6 identifies 10 remaining vacant tracts of land in excess of four acres, three of which are either owned by the City of Allentown or the Allentown School District and two others which currently have development applications pending. As noted, most of the remaining sites are affected by one or more environmental concerns (flooding, steep slopes, etc) or have limited access. The future zoning and development of these tracts need to take these issues into consideration.

Table 7 provides a list of brownfield sites, which are sites that have previously been used, and may or may not be impacted by remaining built features or on-site environmental issues. Since they are sites that had a prior use, they are located in already built-up areas with necessary public services in place. In many instances, these sites lie within close proximity of residential neighborhoods, which at one time likely housed many of their employees. Today, they provide opportunities for growth and development that is needed in the City, but any such reuse must be carried out with full consideration of the ultimate effect on

adjoining neighborhoods, design sensitivity, and impact on the environment and public services.

**TABLE 6  
VACANT SITES (IN EXCESS OF 4 ACRES)**

MAP #	PROPERTY LOCATION	SIZE (AC)	ZONING	DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS
A	American Parkway & North Irving Street	9	B-3	Undeveloped site, good access, proximity to American Parkway
B	North Ivy Street	10	I-3	Proximity to American Parkway, limited access
C	North Ellsworth Street	4	I-2	Moderately sloping
D	North Bradford Street	8	I-2	Steep slopes, wooded, limited access to site
E	East Linden & Filbert Streets	17	RM	Steep slopes, wooded, residential development plan approved
F	Allentown School District – Mizpah Grove	21	I-G	Steep slopes, wooded
G	Central Park	12	RMH	Steep slopes, wooded, residential development plan approved
H	Constitution Drive	24	RLC	Steep slopes, wooded
I	South Albert Street	14	RM	Partially located in floodplain, drainage considerations, limited access to site
J	Mayo Tract	17 (47)*	RL, RLC	Steep slopes, wooded
K	Allentown School District – South Mountain	31	RMP	Moderately sloping, wooded
L	Camelot Tract	9	RM	Steep slopes, wooded
M	Sheftel Site – 29th & Mitchell Avenue	7	I-3	Proximity to I-78

\* 17 acres in the City, 47 acres total.

**TABLE 7  
BROWNFIELD AND PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SITES**

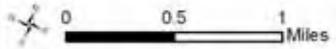
MAP #	PROPERTY LOCATION	SIZE (AC)	ZONING	DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS
1	Lehigh Structural Steel Site	33	I-3 / RRO	Former industrial use, limited access to site, proximity to riverfront, proximity to American Parkway
2	American Parkway & Dauphin St.	26	B/LI	Portion wooded, moderately sloping, proximity to American Parkway
3	Agere Site	24	B/LI	Proximity to American Parkway
4	Boulevard Drive-In Site	13	B-3, B/LI	Limited visibility, moderately sloping
5	Allentown State Hospital	30	I-G	Previously developed site, some steep slopes
6	Lehigh Landing	6	B-5	Former industrial use, previously developed site, proximity to riverfront
7	UGI Tank Site	3	I-2	Former industrial use
8	Incinerator Site	28	B/LI	Former industrial use, partially located in floodplain, limited access to site, wooded
9	Montex Textiles Site	5	I-2, RMH	Former industrial use
10	South 5th Street	11	I-2	Former industrial use
11	Allentown Commerce Park	51	I-3, B/LI	Former industrial use
12	Exide Battery Site	14	B-3	Former industrial use, proximity to I-78, commercial development plan approved
13	Queen City Airport	198	I-2	Proximity to I-78
14	South Glenwood Street	10	B-4	Proximity to I-78, former industrial use
15	South St. Elmo Street	9	P	Former industrial use
16	Quarry Site	14	P	Steep slopes
17	Lehigh Parkway East	4	RH	Proximity to park
18	Ritter & Smith Site	3	B/LI	Former industrial use, residential development plan approved
19	Davis Site – Sumner Ave.	5	B/LI	Partially located in floodplain, former industrial use

# MAP 4 VACANT SITES AND BROWNFIELDS



 Development Proposed  
 Vacant Sites  
 Brownfield & Re-Use Sites  
 See Tables 6 and 7 for site information.


**ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
 435 Hamilton Street  
 Allentown, PA 18101  
 610-437-7611


 0 0.5 1 Miles

As mentioned, this Land Use plan does not rely on a rigid map in presenting its recommendations. Maintaining flexibility within the context of sound planning and an understanding of the community’s developmental objectives is one of the keys to facilitating successful urban redevelopment. Toward that end, the following policy, in addition to others found within this plan, should be followed in the review of land use matters.

**GOAL: The development or redevelopment of land to its highest and best use in accordance with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.**

**POLICIES:**

- 1.1 The following criteria should be used in evaluating and designating the future use of land in the City:
  - The use must be compatible with adjacent land uses.
  - The use must be accommodated by existing or potential infrastructure capacity (including streets).
  - The use must be in accordance with the environmental policies of this plan.
  - The use must address the housing, economic development, employment, and City fiscal objectives outlined in this plan.

**ACTIONS:**

- Review land use designations and development standards in current Zoning Ordinance.
- Review requests for rezoning, redevelopment opportunities and other land use determinations for consistency with this policy.
- Actively promote development of identified sites in accord with these land use recommendations and the broader objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Residential**

Residential land uses comprise approximately 33% of the City's developed land area, as visible on Map 5. Their pattern, density, and relationship among other uses vary from area to area and are representative of the period in the City's history during which they developed. The older sections of the City grew along with and among the industrial employers of the time. They are interspersed with neighborhood commercial and other non-residential uses and are characterized by densities in some areas as high as fifty units per acre. Newer residential areas are less densely developed and are more homogenous in terms of use as a result of zoning and increased mobility that no longer required the tight, mixed use neighborhoods of the past.

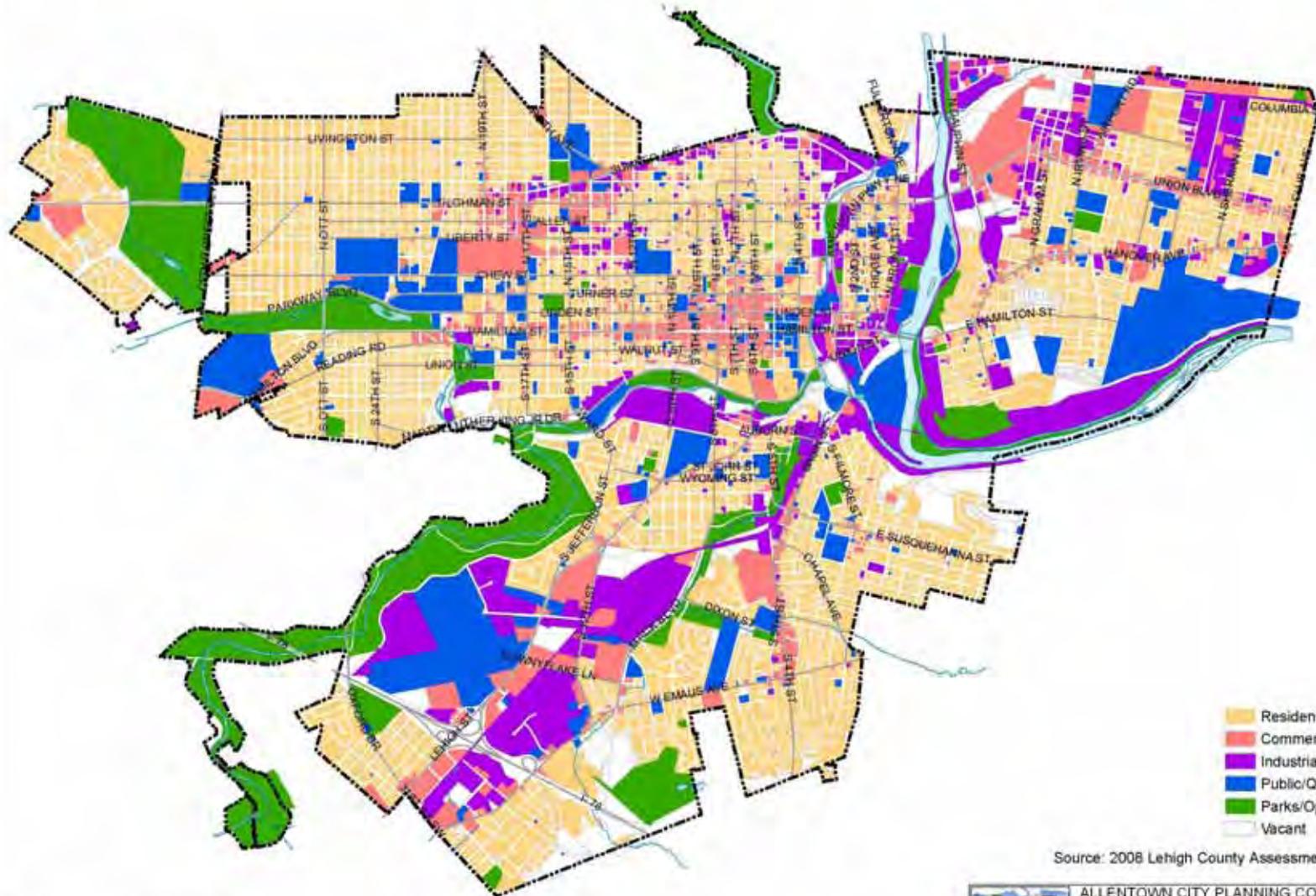
Housing density has emerged as a key issue, particularly in many Center City neighborhoods. Attributed to the previous conversion of single family dwellings to multi-unit structures and development that occurred prior to the introduction of zoning, many neighborhoods exhibit residential densities far in excess of those permitted under current zoning standards. With larger household sizes and modern needs, this issue manifests itself in the increased need for City services and school capacity; lack of adequate parking and open space; and a variety of quality of life concerns. However, higher density housing that is properly planned and designed is appropriate in Center City areas and in the downtown.

Many of the larger tracts suitable for residential development that were identified in the 1993 Plan have been developed or have development plans pending. Led by the development of the former Trexler Estate tracts in west Allentown, over 2,600 new residential units have either been constructed or are in the approval stages since the 1993 Plan.

As a result of this development activity, few opportunities for new residential development remain. New residential development is largely limited to the adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized

MAP 5  
GENERALIZED LAND USE

LAND USE



Source: 2008 Lehigh County Assessment Records



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buildings; the development of tracts that are affected by one or more site constraints; infill projects; and redevelopment. All of these options pose challenges in ensuring that they occur at a scale and design that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and consistent with the ability to provide the necessary and proper services.

The residential land use strategy emphasizes the preservation and maintenance of neighborhood quality of life, the appropriate design of new projects, and the reduction of existing densities where appropriate.

**GOAL: The preservation and enhancement of the quality of life of Allentown's neighborhoods and the provision of additional residential opportunities at sustainable densities and compatible with existing neighborhoods.**

**POLICIES:**

2.1 Land use controls should be designed and administered to protect the livability of Allentown's neighborhoods and preserve their residential character. Residential areas should be protected against the intrusion of non-compatible uses and excessive densities. The use of Traditional Neighborhood Development concepts in the design of new development, particularly infill development, should be implemented.

2.2 To the extent possible, and in keeping with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance should reflect the existing land use pattern, minimizing to the extent possible the creation of nonconforming uses and structures.

2.3 The use of flexible, performance-based zoning techniques designed to deal with the existing diversity of dwelling types, densities and uses that presently exist in many of the City's neighborhoods, while providing sufficient

safeguards for residents from incompatible uses and structures, should be pursued.

2.4 In mixed use neighborhoods, land use regulations should be developed that recognize and provide for the continuation of that mix in order to allow for walkable neighborhoods where residents can walk or bike to work, shopping and other typical destinations. Certain performance standards should provide for the protection of residential uses from the potential impacts associated with commercial uses such as traffic, signage, illumination, and hours of operation.

2.5 Provisions should be made in land use ordinances for various housing types and densities that satisfy the goals and policies of the housing plan, commensurate with the ability to provide necessary public services and infrastructure. Generally, residential densities in higher density neighborhoods (those that exceed current zoning standards) should be reduced through de-conversion incentive programs and strategic redevelopment activities. Properly designed higher density development should continue to be accommodated in the urban core.

2.6 Residential areas should be protected from adverse environmental impacts such as air and noise pollution and other nuisances.

2.7 Standards for residential development should be formulated that satisfy the environmental goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

2.8 In order to preserve the character and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods, the conversion of existing single-family residential dwellings into multi-unit structures should be restricted to the extent possible.

2.9 Infill development should be designed and constructed to

complement the surrounding neighborhood architecturally and functionally.

2.10 The development of parking facilities for neighborhood residents in residential zones should be permitted subject to strict review criteria that consider factors such as perimeter buffering, lighting, etc.

2.11 Home occupation uses and opportunities for live/work spaces should be permitted within all residential zones to the extent that they:

- are incidental to the use of the premises as a residence
- are compatible with residential uses
- do not detract from the residential character of the neighborhood.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Update the Zoning Ordinance and other land use regulations to reflect residential policies.
- Pursue the adoption of flexible zoning techniques which facilitate the reuse/development of available infill sites consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Implement the use of the Traditional Neighborhood Development concept in areas where appropriate.
- Increase City enforcement efforts to identify and remove illegal conversions.
- Continue to offer incentive programs for property owners to “de-convert” previously converted properties.

#### **Commercial**

Allentown is well served by a wide variety of retail and commercial areas. Commercial interests and consumers have a variety of choices within the City to sell or purchase a wide assortment of goods, ranging from larger shopping centers to walkable neighborhood shopping areas as exemplified below:

- Although the stature of the Central Business District as a regional shopping area has declined, it remains a center for business, entertainment, government and cultural arts. In fact, it is this diversity and intensity of economic activity upon which Downtown’s future will depend.
- Several commercial corridors are found along major arterial streets such as Union Boulevard, Hanover Avenue, Lehigh Street and South 4th Street. These areas provide for a variety of commercial opportunities, but pose challenges typical of strip commercial development.
- The North 7th Street Corridor and the West End Theater District are two areas that serve not only their immediate neighborhoods, but have also blossomed into destinations for patrons outside their initial market area, and typically provide specialized services and goods. Maintaining their uniqueness, while strengthening their respective positions are objectives shared by both communities and the City.
- A variety of smaller neighborhood-based commercial areas and uses are scattered throughout some of the City’s older residential neighborhoods. The character of these areas is ultimately shaped by the population they serve. They are also important components of urban living as they provide areas for commerce and services within walking distance for many of their patrons.

Major commercial development that has occurred since the 1993 Plan includes downtown projects such as the PPL Plaza and Butz

Corporate Center, larger retailers including The Home Depot and Wegman’s, and numerous stand-alone banks, drug stores, convenience stores and restaurants. Few opportunities remain for the development of new commercial centers; therefore greater attention will be placed on improving current sites as they are upgraded by their owners, or redeveloped for new commercial uses.

This commercial land use strategy addresses the tensions which typically occur between commercial and residential uses. Performance standards and better site design and review are recommended. Landscaping, circulation (internal and external), signage, and better overall site design summarize plan strategies. The strategy also continues to stress the important role that a successful and diverse downtown area and sub-areas will play in strengthening Allentown as a whole.

**GOAL: The provision of adequate and well planned areas for a variety of commercial activities ranging from neighborhood convenience shopping to regional commerce.**

**POLICIES:**

- 3.1 The Central Business District should continue to be a multi-functional city and regional center for commerce, cultural and entertainment activities, government uses, and residential living.
- 3.2 New commercial areas should be located according to the following criteria:
  - The ability to provide for safe and proper access.
  - The availability of adequate road capacity.
  - Consistency with the environmental policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
  - The adequate protection of adjacent residential uses.
- 3.3 Measures should be taken to reduce the negative impacts typically associated with highway commercial

development. Such measures include:

- Implementing access management techniques that limit and/or locate driveway entrances in ways that minimize conflicts and increase safety.
- Encouraging the clustering of individual businesses into small commercial centers.
- Enhancing and enforcing regulations regarding signage, landscaping, buffering, etc.
- Conducting design studies to provide recommendations for improving the appearance and function of these corridors.

- 3.4 Opportunities for neighborhood retail and service uses at scales compatible within residential areas, subject to various performance standards for parking, signage, and lighting, should be provided in neighborhoods where this mix has traditionally been found. Traditional Neighborhood Development concepts should be applied to these neighborhoods in the City’s Zoning Ordinance.
- 3.5 Design controls should be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance to ensure that new uses/development in commercial areas are compatible with the surrounding area, especially adjacent residential areas.
- 3.6 Uses permitted within commercial areas should be re-evaluated to determine their suitability within those areas.

**ACTIONS:**

- Review requests for rezoning to commercial zoning districts according to these policies.
- Implement design principles and review processes targeted toward achieving compatibility with adjoining commercial and residential development.

- Support initiatives intended to support and strengthen the downtown and neighborhood commercial areas.
- Review the Zoning Ordinance and amend it as needed to carry out these policies.

**Industrial**

The face of industrial land use in the City is rapidly changing, reflecting regional and national trends away from a manufacturing-based economy to a more service and commercial orientation. Relatively little new industrial development has occurred in the City since the 1993 Comprehensive Plan. In fact, approximately 250 acres of land zoned and/or used for industrial purposes have been redeveloped or rezoned to accommodate non-industrial uses. The remaining amount of vacant land zoned for industrial use is 1,981 acres, while the actual amount of land used for industrial land uses is 878 acres.

Existing industrial facilities vary, ranging from older, multi-storied structures located in older neighborhoods to relatively newer industrial areas located primarily on the City’s South and East Sides. Many of the former have been converted to other uses or are underutilized and face uncertain futures. These structures once served as accessible places of employment for neighborhood residents. Structurally, they remain integral to the neighborhood fabric and as such, finding suitable reuses or some other disposition for them are important.

The City has three industrial zoning districts, each with varying degrees of permitted uses and performance oriented standards. The General Industrial District permits the broadest array of industrial uses, while the Limited Industrial District prohibits the heaviest of industrial use. The 2000 Zoning Ordinance created the new Business/Light Industrial district, allowing for a broad mix of business and industrial uses. This district was created to facilitate

the reuse and/or redevelopment of various areas in the City and has achieved that purpose. In total, this district encompasses about 433 acres in the City.

**GOAL: To provide industrial opportunities that create jobs and tax base growth, through the reuse of existing buildings and the development of new facilities, while minimizing negative impacts associated with industrial uses.**

**POLICIES:**

- 4.1 Zoning standards for industrial uses should be reviewed and updated in addition to setting clear and enforceable performance standards to limit environmental impacts.
- 4.2 Site plan reviews should be required for larger projects with particular attention to traffic circulation, effect on surrounding land uses, and municipal services.
- 4.3 The reuse of older industrial buildings should be encouraged as a means to expand the real estate fiscal base and provide opportunities for neighborhood-based employment.
- 4.4 The City Zoning Ordinance should permit an array of industrial uses distributed in a manner compatible with the area and adjacent properties, infrastructure capacity and highways.
- 4.5 Land that had historically been used for industrial purposes and remains suitable for industrial use should be preserved for such to the extent practical.
- 4.6 In mixed use neighborhoods, provisions should be made to facilitate the reuse of vacant or underutilized industrial buildings within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods to the extent that neighborhood impacts can be successfully mitigated.

**ACTIONS:**

- Review City, State, and Federal development regulations with the purpose of identifying and reducing impediments to adaptive building reuse.
- Require the provision of buffering and screening measures to aid in the transitioning of uses, as well as remove from or limit the visual impacts of waste and outdoor storage areas, parking lots, and loading areas.
- Market available industrial land for the purpose of attracting employment opportunities for City residents.

**Public and Quasi-Public**

As the Lehigh Valley's largest city, Allentown is home to a vast array of governmental and institutional facilities, including health care, educational, recreational, and cultural. They are substantial in land area and benefit the quality of life of both Allentown and the Lehigh Valley.

The land use dynamics of these uses are shaped primarily by their growth, such as that experienced by the hospitals and colleges located within the City. Since the 1993 Plan, Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital and Muhlenberg College have all experienced significant growth. The growth of these institutions in particular has raised concern in their surrounding neighborhoods over the ultimate impact of that growth. Balancing the needs of the institutions and their contributions to the City's quality of life with the resultant impacts on the surrounding communities is a delicate issue. Communication and a mutual understanding of institutional and neighborhood concerns is important in maintaining neighborhood trust and understanding both sides of the issue.

Less visible, but nonetheless significant, is the key role that certain of these uses play as neighborhood resources and focal points. These include neighborhood schools, places of worship, community centers, parks, and playgrounds. This mix and interaction of land uses serves to strengthen neighborhoods by providing needed services in close proximity to their residents.

Since the last plan, Allentown has had success in attracting and retaining government offices of all levels to its downtown area – an important ingredient in attracting people to the downtown. These include the relocation of the Social Security office and the district office of PennDOT; the construction of a new Federal courthouse; the conversion of a former department store into the Lehigh County Government Center; and the renovation of the Lehigh County Courthouse. City government has invested in its downtown location, in a former industrial building for satellite offices, and in a new parking garage to serve the eastern end of the downtown area.

Activity in the area of parks and recreation is more maintenance-oriented, with acquisition and development being limited to environmentally sensitive lands, inadequately served areas, and the provision of access and continuity to the City's waterways, pursuant to a recently completed "Parks and Recreation Master Plan".

**GOAL: To provide for the land use needs of recreational, cultural, educational, health and other philanthropic institutions, and to ensure their compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.**

**POLICIES:**

- 5.1 Areas currently zoned for Institutional and Governmental use should be reviewed for consistency with current locations and anticipated expansions. Any proposed expansion of this zoning district should consider any potential impacts on adjoining neighborhoods.

- 5.2 The Zoning Ordinance should be reviewed periodically to ensure its currency with changing social and institutional needs and uses.
- 5.3 Working relationships between institutional uses and their surrounding neighborhoods should be encouraged.
- 5.4 To the extent possible, the City should continue to concentrate offices in the downtown. The City should also encourage other levels of government and public entities to maintain existing downtown offices or locate new offices in the downtown areas.
- 5.5 City facilities should be located where necessary to ensure the efficient delivery of services and provide for the safety of the public while being considerate of adjoining residential neighborhoods and minimizing any impacts to those neighborhoods.
- 5.6 Acquisition of and/or the delineation of land to be set aside for parks, playgrounds and open space should be limited and driven by the following factors:
  - The proposed acquisition is in an area deficient in park and recreational facilities as identified by the “Parks and Recreation Master Plan”.
  - The proposed acquisition provides greater access or continuity to waterway based linear park systems or recreational areas.
  - The proposed acquisition furthers the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

**ACTIONS:**

- Update City zoning regulations to remain current with institutional needs and neighborhood protection issues.
- Encourage communication between institutions and

- neighborhood residents as expansions are being considered.
- Enhance the role of institutions as neighborhood assets and by including institutions in neighborhood planning activities.
  - Implement the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS:**

- *To broaden the City's income distribution by increasing opportunities for residents to participate in the regional economy.*
- *To maintain and improve the standard of living of Allentown's residents.*
- *To maintain a diverse local economy which avoids severe and seasonal or cyclical swings.*
- *To enhance the fiscal well-being of the City of Allentown.*
- *To enhance the role of arts, culture and entertainment activities in improving Allentown's quality of life, and as a driver for economic development activities in the downtown arts district and other parts of the City.*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Allentown's economy, fiscal base, and workforce have undergone considerable change since the adoption of the 1993 Comprehensive Plan. The City has been impacted by a globalizing economy, a downtown that is in transition, a less educated and less mobile workforce, continuing suburban competition and, similar to the rest of the Lehigh Valley, an economy that is driven less by production than by services. These changes have been and continue to be felt in the incomes of its residents, demand for industrial land and buildings, and ultimately, in the City's real estate, earned income, and commercial tax bases.

Despite these challenges, Allentown's economy and economic opportunities are strengthened by the growth of the Lehigh Valley and its increasingly diverse economy; its proximate location and access to the New York City and Philadelphia markets; a downtown that is rebounding; and a new diverse population that has brought with it new entrepreneurial opportunities.

### Labor and Employment

Between 1970 and 2000, Lehigh and Northampton Counties saw the percentage of persons working in manufacturing decline from 42 to 16 percent, and those working in the service sector increase from 16 to 33 percent. This shift has reduced the wages for many since the average service sector wage is generally well below the average manufacturing wage.

This shift is no better illustrated than by the closure of Bethlehem Steel and the substantial downsizing of Agere/Lucent, which resulted in the loss of thousands of higher paying manufacturing and technology jobs just within the past 10 years. The list of top employers in Lehigh County now includes a mix of Fortune 500 companies such as Air Products and Chemicals, Mack Trucks and PPL; area hospitals; and various levels of governments.

The list of targeted industry clusters now being recruited to the Lehigh Valley includes the health care industry and life sciences; advanced materials manufacturing; technology intensive and support-related manufacturing; the business services industry; information and communications; and the financial services industry.

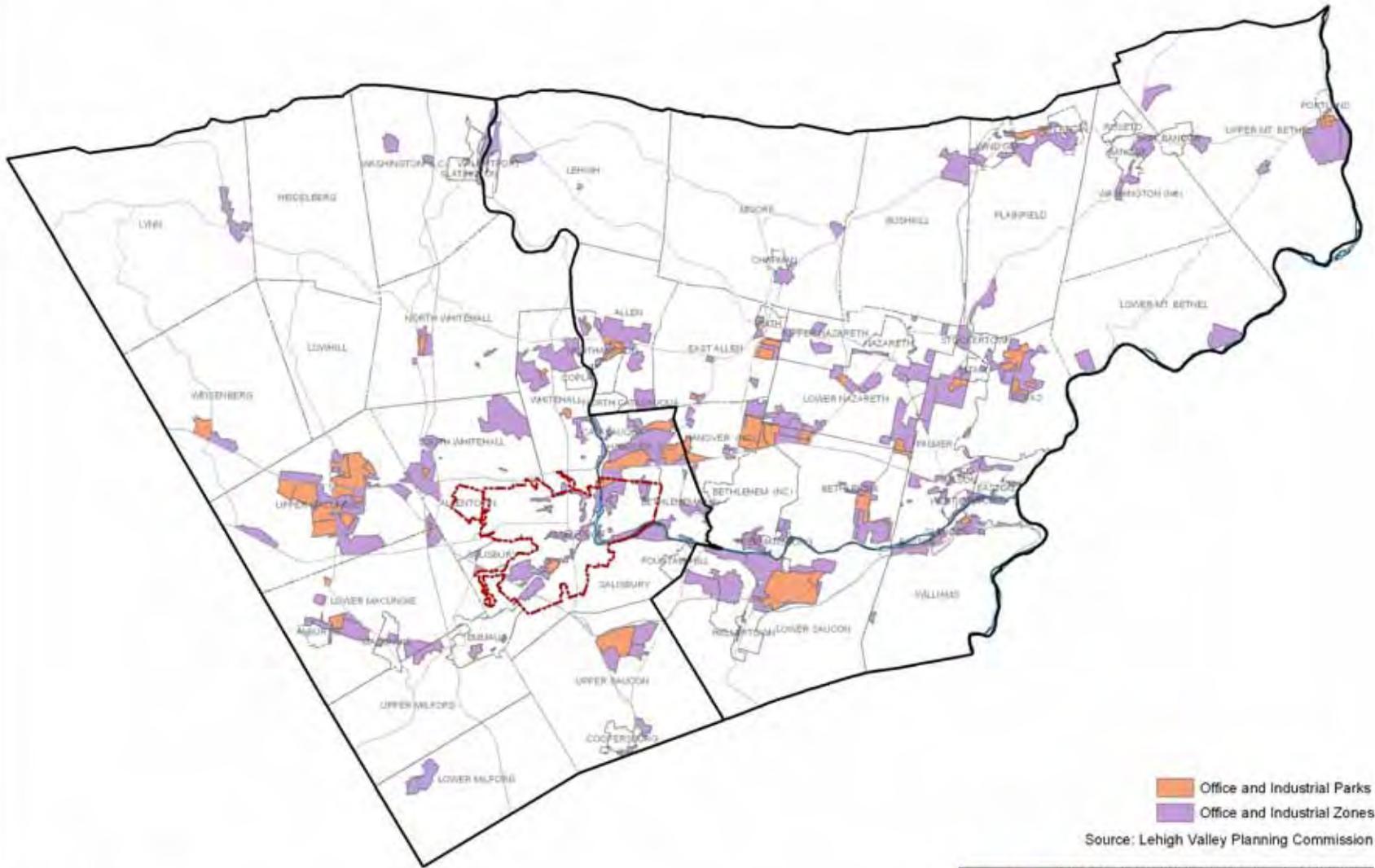
The location of the region's largest manufacturers and employment centers continues to grow along the region's highway network and, thus, farther away from the City, as shown on Map 6. This dispersion places greater importance on maintaining a transportation system that affords access for the City's less mobile population to these outlying employment opportunities.

The ultimate benchmark for any community's economy is the standard of living of its residents. Regardless of the measure used, the incomes of City residents drastically lag those of the residents in the balance of Lehigh County. According to the 2000 Census, the per capita and household incomes of Allentonians were 30% and 31%, respectively, both below those of Lehigh County as a whole. Meanwhile, the rate of poverty for families was more than 11% higher in Allentown than in all of Lehigh County.

### Workforce Development

Workforce readiness requires an educated and trained workforce. With a changing economy, adequate workforce development is crucial, but the City is not staffed to design or sponsor programs. In order to make sure that City residents meet the requirements of the region's changing employment opportunities, the City must rely on the programs and initiatives provided by a number of organizations. It can also influence workforce development through grants it makes with its Community Development Block Grant program, by using Enterprise Zone grants and tax credits, and by collaborating with others such as PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley, community and educationally-based non-profits, the

MAP 6  
LOCATION OF MAJOR OFFICE & INDUSTRIAL AREAS



Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Allentown School District (ASD), and Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC).

The Plan recognizes the need to help non-English speaking Allentonians learn English and to help those without a high school diploma receive a general equivalency diploma (GED) to enhance their abilities to find work and advance economically. The City continues to support non-profits that provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and GED's. Additionally, the City will need to continue to partner with LCCC and PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley to provide training and educational assistance to City residents, and specialized training courses prepared for employers (i.e. customized job training).

**Enterprise Zone**

In cooperation with the Allentown Economic Development Corporation (AEDC), the City has been an active participant in Pennsylvania's Enterprise Zone program, allowing it to access State grant funds to assist businesses, and to direct staff resources toward the needs of new and/or expanding businesses. Key elements of the Enterprise Zone strategy are reflected in this plan. The boundaries of the Enterprise Zone are shown in Map 7.

**GOAL: To broaden the City's income distribution by increasing opportunities for residents to participate in the regional economy.**

**POLICIES:**

- 6.1 The City and AEDC should continue programs directed toward expanding employment opportunities within the City, and facilitating employment of City residents outside its boundaries, particularly the City's un- and underemployed.
- 6.2 The City should advocate for region-wide employment opportunities for City residents. New, relocating or

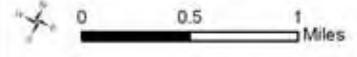
expanding companies should be requested to reach out to Allentown residents, particularly the City's un- and underemployed.

- 6.3 The City should advocate on behalf of urban low income workers and raise awareness of issues such as limited transportation options, training, and acculturative needs, including English as a second language.
- 6.4 Accessibility to employment opportunities outside Allentown should be improved.
- 6.5 The City should work with community-based organizations and other agencies to identify and remove other barriers to employment.

**ACTIONS:**

- Facilitate greater opportunity for resident participation in the economy through development of multi-year neighborhood and/or community based economic development strategies in low income neighborhoods in partnership with business, philanthropies, and government agencies. Strategies may include but not be limited to:
  - redevelopment planning and implementation,
  - neighborhood commercial development, such as 7th Street's Main Street program
  - capitalizing on the City's mixed use neighborhoods, where residents can walk to work, such as the Weed and Seed and Elm Street program areas.
  - reestablishing an "Enterprise Zone" and marketing its associated tools, such as tax credits, training, and competitive grants to increase resident employment opportunities and income, and City fiscal base.
- Encourage employers benefiting from City and/or AEDC assistance programs to hire eligible Allentown residents first.

# MAP 7 ENTERPRISE ZONE




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- Work with private developers, Lehigh and Northampton Transit Authority (LANTA) and the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) to provide public transportation with convenient routing and levels of service which facilitate the employment of City residents in suburban commercial and industrial centers.

**GOAL: To maintain and improve the standard of living of Allentown’s residents through workforce readiness.**

**POLICIES:**

- 7.1 AEDC and the City should develop partnerships with educational institutions and PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley, and include training in its array of economic development services.
- 7.2 All of Allentown’s children should be prepared by their educational institutions to enter the workforce and/or further their education by attending vocational or post-secondary institutions.
- 7.3 The City’s Economic Development strategy should seek to develop the tax bases to enable the School District to better finance its educational offerings.
- 7.4 For those resident–workers wanting to improve their basic education or improve their skills, the City should seek partnerships with educational institutions and community based organizations to provide these services.

**ACTIONS:**

- The Enterprise Zone manager, AEDC and City economic development staff should act as facilitators between employers and PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley, LCCC, and other educational and training agencies.
- Increase, market, and encourage participation in programs for:

- Adult basic education
- General Equivalency Diploma (GED)
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

**GOAL: To maintain a diverse local economy which avoids severe and seasonal or cyclical swings.**

**POLICIES:**

- 8.1 The City and AEDC should sponsor business recruitment programs with attention to the current array of industries within the City and region and their impact upon increasing economic diversity.
- 8.2 Economic development activities should include those programs which encourage the growth of small business and growing sectors of the economy. Facilitating the “next large employers” should be a primary focus of City economic development activities.
- 8.3 The City should continue to offer inducements to attract new firms, and retain and grow existing firms.
- 8.4 Inexpensive space and other incentives should be used as inducements for start-up firms to locate in the City. The AEDC Bridgeworks incubator should be included within the promotion.
- 8.5 Encourage the use and development of green technology as an economic development strategy.

**ACTIONS:**

- Expand the City-AEDC incubator program. Choose older industrial buildings proximate to or within neighborhoods, to create accessible employment.
- Establish whether there are existing business clusters upon

which to leverage additional economic growth.

- Partner with local utility and energy providers, businesses and non-profits to develop, stimulate and attract green technology firms.

**Land and Buildings**

The ability for the City to grow economically and provide employment opportunities within its borders is made difficult by a lack of suitable land and buildings. Much of the land that was yet to be developed in 1993 has been developed, leaving environmentally sensitive areas, brownfields, or parcels with other issues impeding their development.

With the changing needs of industry and the marketplace, demand for the City’s remaining vacant industrial-zoned land and multi-story factory buildings has diminished. As a result, many sites have been rezoned to accommodate non-industrial uses. Those that have not attracted alternative uses are left behind as empty brownfield sites, or sites and buildings that are only partially being used. This is evident in many older neighborhoods that are filled with large multi-story buildings that once housed industrial uses but have since gone unused or underutilized. Other more prominent sites, such as the Queen City Airport and Allentown Fairgrounds, are opportunities that could accommodate new development.

**Downtown Revitalization**

Having moved from its prominence as a regional shopping district and losing its two remaining department stores in the mid-1990’s, downtown continues to improve as it redefines itself. In the past six years alone, downtown has been strengthened by the construction of two significant office buildings, the substantial reuse and rehabilitation of several other structures, and the

relocation into downtown of several commercial and governmental offices. Interest in downtown living has increased as witnessed by the construction of higher-end townhouses and a growing interest in the development of loft apartments. The cultural arts continue to be a strong asset.

Still, the downtown remains a high priority area for revitalization. The citizen survey conducted as part of this planning effort identifies the health of downtown as very important to the overall future of the City – and even the Lehigh Valley as a whole. To be sure, regardless of its actual impact on a city’s economy and finances, the strength and quality of its downtown defines that community.

In recognition of this strategic importance, three recent planning efforts have focused on the downtown. The “Downtown Development Plan,” was completed in 1997 and was the first comprehensive attempt to redefine downtown’s market niche and economic role. In 2004, the Urban Land Institute was engaged to assist in identifying key strategies that would bring community and development interest back to the downtown district. Most recently an “Economic Development Action Agenda” was developed in an effort to prioritize programs and key projects, primarily directed toward the downtown. All of these studies share a vision of a re-born multi-functional downtown that serves as a center for business, government, residence, culture, entertainment and visitation.

**Neighborhood Commercial Development**

Because many Center City Allentown households do not own automobiles, geographic and economic relationships have been profoundly changed. Many Center City residents place greater importance on employment, merchants and services that are walkable or accessible by public transportation. Neighborhood commercial areas and neighborhood-based commerce, such as the corner store, have increased significance, and these evolving

local markets have in turn produced increased opportunities for local, often ethnic, entrepreneurs. The North 7th Street Corridor is an example of a flourishing neighborhood-based economy. The North 19th Street area, while serving a larger market area, is strengthened by its relationship with surrounding residential and institutional neighbors.

**Fiscal Base Development**

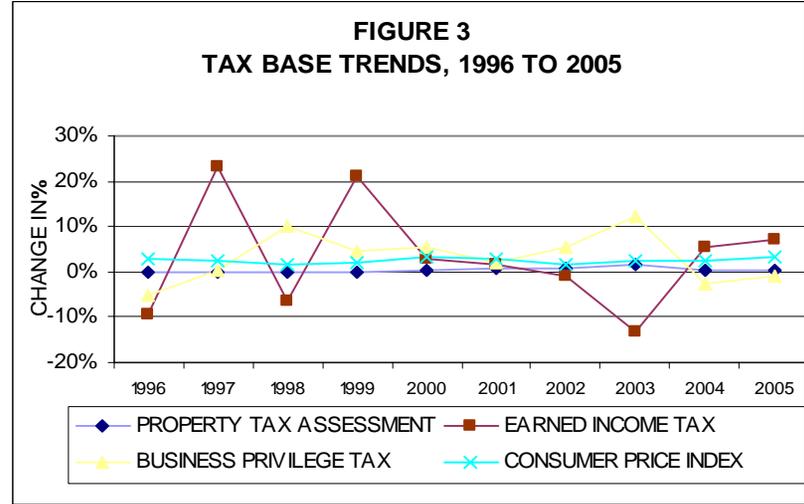
A strong economy is important not only for the direct benefit it has for the City’s residents, but also for the financial well-being of the City itself and its continuing ability to provide quality municipal services to which its residents have become accustomed.

The City’s fiscal base is composed of three tax bases: taxable real estate (land and buildings), earned income (wages), and commercial gross receipts (business activity). Figure 3 below shows the performance of each of these measures. As shown, for the ten-year period between 1995 and 2005, both the Earned Income Tax and Business Privilege Tax proceeds have exceeded the Consumer Price Index. However, the real estate tax base, the source for over 36% of the City’s total annual revenue in 2006, grew a mere 4% over the prior ten years. The need for fiscal growth in all the City’s tax bases will be reflected in the strategy that follows and throughout this Plan.

**GOAL: To enhance the fiscal well being of the City of Allentown.**

**POLICIES:**

- 9.1 Create plans and strategies that expand the real estate tax base by:
  - Developing vacant land,
  - Using underutilized parcels more intensively, and
  - Reusing and rehabilitating existing structures, emphasizing individual or groups of parcels and structures of substantial scale or in critical areas, while



- 9.2 recognizing the need to protect adjoining residences or residential areas.
- 9.2 City leadership should work closely with and be supportive of the School District’s state legislative efforts for more equitable financing of urban school districts.
- 9.3 For all levels of development, the City’s review processes should be customer friendly, clear, orderly, consistent, fair and timely.
- 9.4 The City should continue and encourage focused planning and programming in the Strategic Planning Areas identified in this Plan. The City should also recognize the Union Boulevard and South 4th Street commercial corridors as areas that deserve some attention as potential economic growth areas.
- 9.5 Maximize the financial, programmatic, and visitation benefits of the National Heritage Canal Corridor program to increase the potential of the Lehigh River waterfront for

tourism.

9.6 Continue to advance downtown as a center of employment, commerce, government, arts and culture, residence, entertainment, visitation and tourism.

9.7 Continue to address the “perception and reality” of crime, and cleanliness.

9.8 Encourage Lehigh County and other governments to strengthen their presence in the downtown in order to provide daytime commercial foot traffic.

**ACTIONS:**

- Adopt zoning and building regulations that protect and enhance the design characteristics of older buildings and neighborhoods.
- Continue to provide financial and other inducements that complement efforts maximizing land and buildings.
- Consider financial incentives for new buildings or adaptive reuses that use green building technologies or designs.
- Continue to provide in the Zoning Ordinance for high-rise development in the downtown and high density residential districts to maximize use of developable air spaces.
- Prioritize and develop area plans for the eight Strategic Planning Areas identified in this Plan.
- Continue to improve the “One Stop” permitting system.
- Review City zoning, building and fire protection ordinances to ensure they do not unduly restrict the use and design of older structures.

- Encourage adaptive reuse strategies for land and buildings.
- Increase efforts to subsidize the cost of brownfield reuse, through grant and other programs.
- Using neighborhood-based economic development strategies, revitalize existing neighborhood commercial and industrial areas to provide needed services and employment opportunities for residents.
- Review the needs of local entrepreneurs and develop actions based upon them.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote the City’s major ethnic business districts as unique destinations.
- Establish an Enterprise Zone and associated tools such as tax, training and business development incentives to increase City employment and incomes.
- Pursue development opportunities along the Lehigh River waterfront and Jordan Creek.
- Work with AEDC, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC), the County and others, such as the local utility companies, in redevelopment activities.

**Arts and Culture**

The arts play an increasingly important role in improving a community’s quality of life, and they enhance economic revitalization by acting as destinations within urban centers supporting visitation and tourism. Allentown has significant arts and cultural resources. Some of the facilities are clustered near one another, forming a significant node or place upon which to continue building an arts and cultural “destination” by adding additional activities and facilities. Others are located in various

other parts of the City, complementing the neighborhoods and shopping areas. Additionally, Muhlenberg and Cedar Crest Colleges provide considerable contributions to publicly available arts, cultural and intellectual pursuits, and The DaVinci Science Center, Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum, and America on Wheels Museum present additional dimensions of interest, spanning a wide age range. Allentown, through the initiative of the Hispanic American League of Artists, has begun to enjoy a mural arts program in several of its center city neighborhoods.

As noted earlier, Allentown’s downtown includes a unique and significant arts and entertainment district, including the Allentown Art Museum, Baum School, Symphony Hall, Crocodile Rock, Arts Walk and Park, Musselman Arts Center and Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum. A recent plan for the Cultural Arts and Entertainment District was written, featuring management recommendations and programmatic and public improvements to better leverage these institutional assets. The depth and extent of these assets make it possible to foster inter-institutional relationships, amplifying the district’s attributes into a significant arts, culture and entertainment destination, with the potential for enhancing the City’s economic base through visitation and tourism.

Meanwhile, there is a heightened interest in attracting individual artists and arts-related activities and businesses, which is manifested by the following:

- There is some evidence that artists from the New York metropolitan area are finding their way to the Lehigh Valley and Allentown because of the proximity and reduced living and real estate costs. The challenge for the artists, and the community at large, is the creation of a “critical mass” of this activity and a corresponding “place” to display their arts and interact with the public. Additionally there has been some activity in the creation of “live-work” studio space to accommodate artists and their workspace.
- Similarly, there is interest in the establishment of a center for

the performing arts for rehearsal and performances, where the costs and management may be shared among several existing and emerging groups.

- The Arts Commission is playing a more active role in marketing and coordinating arts-related activities and is currently engaged in a strategic planning process that will guide their activities in the years ahead.

**GOAL:** To enhance the role of arts, culture and entertainment activities in improving Allentown’s quality of life, and as a driver for economic development activities in the downtown arts district and other parts of the City.

**POLICIES:**

- 10.1 The City and its agencies, including the Arts Commission and the Allentown Economic Development Corporation, should continue to promote Allentown’s unique Arts District assets and their role in making downtown a destination.
- 10.2 “Live-work” space opportunities geared for artists should be amongst housing choices available to Allentown residents, particularly for older multi-story industrial buildings.
- 10.3 The City should encourage policies and activities that foster the growth of the local arts community.
- 10.4 The City should continue to provide and support the efforts of others in providing arts activities that are available to the entire community.

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue to use the “Cultural Arts and Entertainment District Master Plan” as a guide to further developing the downtown arts district.

- Support the Arts Commission in its efforts to complete and implement its Strategic Plan.
- Review and amend the Zoning Ordinance, as appropriate, to provide for “live-work” opportunities for artists.
- Continue to support and grow mural arts as a neighborhood improvement activity.
- Pursue the location and development of a shared Performing Arts Center.

HOUSING



## **HOUSING GOALS:**

- *An adequate supply of housing to provide for the needs of the City's current and future populations.*
- *The provision of sufficient affordable and special needs housing within the City and on a regional level.*
- *The provision of a safe, well-maintained housing supply.*

## HOUSING

A community's housing stock plays an important role in ensuring the health and prosperity of the community at large and at meeting individuals' needs for quality and affordable shelter. Key elements of the 1993 Plan included recommendations for the development of the lands owned by the Trexler Trust in west Allentown into upscale housing of a variety of types; the need to maintain and reuse the City's existing building stock to meet future housing needs; a recognition of a growing housing affordability issue and the need for an effective regional response to that issue.

Many of the same issues and dynamics that shaped the 1993 Plan continue to influence the City's housing situation today, while others have emerged or grown more significant as the City, and the Lehigh Valley, become increasingly affected by external factors beyond their control. Some of the key findings include the following:

### Housing and Neighborhoods

The health and stability of Allentown's neighborhoods and their housing stock are inextricably linked. Quality neighborhoods depend on good, concerned residents who look for sound and affordable housing, and quality housing leads to quality neighborhoods.

In 2007, the City commissioned a study on this neighborhood/housing relationship. In its final report entitled "A Housing Strategy for Allentown's Central City Neighborhoods," the study provides recommendations for the City to better manage its housing stock through a comprehensive program of code enforcement; strategic acquisitions; initiatives to increase homeownership; better information sharing among various levels of government; and creating the organizational capacity and funding support to sustain these efforts.

### Housing Production and Trends

Despite the lack of large, easily developed sites, a total of 324 housing units were added to the City's housing supply between 1990 and 2000, bringing the total to 45,960. Since then, permits have been issued for an additional 741 units, while 150 units were lost through demolition of existing structures. Many of the new units were added with the development of the former Trexler Estate lands in west Allentown which provided the opportunity to provide new "high end" housing that the City's supply had previously lacked, while others were the result of the conversion of vacant buildings into housing and the development of previously skipped over sites. Future opportunities for new housing will be limited, thus increasing the importance of infill sites and the reuse of existing buildings to provide for this type of housing.

The shift toward renter occupied units and away from owner occupied units continues, and along with it concern over the stability of the most affected neighborhoods. The ratio of owner occupied units to renter occupied units in 2000 was 53% to 47%, a swing of 4% toward rental units since 1990. In 2005, the rate of homeownership dropped further to 51%. This continues the downward trend of homeownership in the City from 1980 when its percentage was over 58%.

### Housing Condition

Forty percent of all housing in Allentown is located in structures over 65 years old. Despite its age, the City's housing stock is generally considered to be well built and fairly well maintained. Less than one percent of all units are considered to be blighted and vacant. Additionally, most rental units that have been inspected under the terms of the City's Rental Licensing Program are in compliance with local housing codes. Given its age and the trend toward more rental properties, pressures will mount to

ensure the housing stock remains in good condition; this is a responsibility that property owners and the City must share.

### Population and Household Characteristics

The demographics of the City continue to change as its population and household structure become more diverse, older and poorer. These changes ultimately affect the demand for various types of housing; the level of affordability; and potentially the condition and quality of the housing stock. In the shadow of increasing housing prices, poverty levels continue to rise as do the number of households that pay a disproportionate share of their income on housing costs. A summary of the more significant changes follows.

Overall, the number of households and family households are declining, while the average household size is increasing. The number of households in the City decreased by almost 2% in the 1990's to a total of 42,032. More significantly, the number of family households also decreased, while the number of single person households increased. Despite this, the number of persons per household increased in 2000 to 2.42 persons; up from 2.36 in 1990.

The age of the population could affect the demand for and type of housing needed in the future. The percentage of the population between the ages of 20 and 34, generally considered to be the years during which new households are formed, is at its lowest since 1970 at 22%. However, the number of individuals age 5 to 19 increased over 9% between 1990 and 2000, possibly signaling a rise in the number of new households in the future. Meanwhile the portion of the population aged 65 and over declined since 1990 to 15%; however, within that group the percentage of the population aged 75 and over increased to over 8%.

Allentown's population is also becoming more transient. In 2000, only 50% of the population age 5 and over resided in the same

house as they did in 1995 – down from 55% in 1990. Of those who lived in a different dwelling, 4% lived abroad 5 years prior as compared to 3% in the 1990 Census. Nineteen percent of those living in a different dwelling in both censuses came from a different state.

### Household Income

Household incomes are not keeping pace with those throughout Lehigh County. Median household income was \$32,016 in 1999, an increase of 23% over the previous 10 years. Conversely, median household incomes in Lehigh County rose 64% over the same period. The percentage of the population with incomes below the poverty level increased from 12.9% in 1990 to 18.5% in 2000. Only 46% of all households had incomes greater than 80% of the area median of \$57,653, while 17% were considered to be of extremely low income, defined as less than 30% of the area median. Of those with extremely low incomes, 76% were renters.

### Current Market Trends

The re-emergence of the New York/New Jersey in-migration in the first half of this decade has impacted the housing market of the entire Lehigh Valley, as well as of the City. In addition to an increase in housing prices, this phenomenon has brought new homeowners, renters, developers and speculators to the City. New interest is being shown in the downtown and Center City areas where various residential projects are being considered. Examples of these include the construction of 32 new townhomes on two downtown sites, and the conversion of several downtown buildings into loft apartments. Other similar projects are under consideration that involves the adaptive reuse of former industrial facilities into market rate apartments and lofts.

This trend presents new opportunities for certain segments of the market, particularly for downtown and for larger, vacant buildings

that have the potential for conversion to loft apartments. It also poses challenges, however, in dealing with and meeting the needs of new residents and new owners unfamiliar with local codes and procedures. The impact of this movement will likely continue to ebb and flow along with the level of in-migration itself.

**GOAL: An adequate supply of housing to provide for the needs of the City's current and future populations.**

**POLICIES:**

- 11.1 Additional housing to satisfy future demand either through new construction or rehabilitation of substandard units should be facilitated at appropriate densities, especially in cases that satisfy one or more of the following objectives:
- Complements an economic development initiative.
  - Provides a viable reuse of a vacant or underutilized building and is designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
  - Provides an additional housing choice in the City.
  - Enhances the City's tax base.
- 11.2 Center City, and more specifically the downtown area, should be targeted for programs designed to enhance its livability and encourage the occupancy of vacant units.
- 11.3 The use of the existing housing stock to meet housing needs should be encouraged by continually providing for its maintenance. Demolition should, therefore be discouraged except:
- Where it will remove a threat to the public health or safety;
  - Where the ultimate disposition of the resulting land will provide a benefit to the neighborhood or satisfy a broader City objective;
  - Where the demolition is necessary to implement an activity outlined in Policy 11.1.

11.4 The City should promote sustainable building practices, such as the use of renewable or recycled materials, energy efficiency and green design, in both new housing construction and the rehabilitation of existing housing.

11.5 In order to retain and attract moderate to upper income households to the City, and to provide an option to suburban migration, the development of higher quality housing should be encouraged, especially in those cases that reinforce downtown and Center City neighborhood revitalization efforts.

**ACTIONS:**

- Identify vacant and available sites suitable for residential development.
- Create "infill" development strategies, including flexible zoning techniques, that encourage the construction of higher quality housing units that are sensitive to the characteristics and attributes of the surrounding neighborhood.
- Identify and develop rehabilitation strategies for underused structures suitable for residential reuse at densities that are supported by City services, infrastructure and other amenities and that do not negatively impact surrounding neighborhoods.
- Consider financial incentives for new housing projects or adaptive reuses that use green building technologies or designs.

**GOAL: The provision of a safe, well-maintained housing supply.**

**POLICIES:**

12.1 The City should administer and enforce its housing codes

in a manner that is systematic and comprehensive, involving all properties.

- 12.2 An aggressive program that seeks to reduce the number of blighted and vacant structures should be continued. Such a program should first focus on the enforcement of all applicable codes in an attempt to secure compliance. Public acquisition should be used as a last resort. The ultimate disposition and reuse of publicly acquired property should emphasize homeownership.
- 12.3 The City should continue the Rental Housing Inspection program.
- 12.4 The City should lobby for and pursue State and Federal housing rehabilitation, maintenance assistance and energy improvement funds, as well as other non-public funding sources such as foundations, financial institutions and private contributions.
- 12.5 The City should continue to require the pre-sales inspection of all residential properties.

**ACTIONS:**

- Expand the current housing inspection program to include strategies for areas of immediate need (high priority), areas of moderate need that require only minimal maintenance efforts, and low priority areas where inspections are conducted only on a complaint basis.
- Enlist the cooperation of the County judicial system and expand the City's capability to prosecute repeat, problem offenders. Lobby for changes in State law where necessary to facilitate these efforts.
- Identify and initiate enforcement proceedings for blighted and vacant properties. Initiate acquisition proceedings pursuant to

the Blighted Property Review Process when enforcement efforts have failed.

- Acquire and rehabilitate where possible or demolish vacant, deteriorated properties that have been made available through HUD foreclosures, sheriff's sales, etc.
- Research and pursue non-traditional sources of funds such as community development corporations, philanthropic organizations, etc. for code enforcement and blight removal.
- Research and promote innovative methods for homeowners to finance property improvements, including energy efficiency improvements.

**Assisted Housing**

Similar to other urban areas, Allentown is home to many individuals who have difficulty affording decent housing. This issue tends to become severe as income levels drop. For example, according to the City's 2005 "CDBG Consolidated Plan", 72% of extremely low-income households, 32% of moderate income households and 30% of middle income households were paying in excess of 30% of their gross income on housing costs. Further, 74% of all extremely low income households occupied units with physical defects or lived in overcrowded conditions. As of May, 2005 there were 2,775 households on the public housing waiting list, while the Section 8 waiting list contained 2,221 households.

In attempting to meet these needs, the Allentown Housing Authority owns and manages over 1,400 units of public housing and has issued 948 vouchers for Section 8 housing. In addition to these units, there are over 2,100 units currently receiving some form of housing subsidy. In total, almost 4,500 housing units, or almost 10% of the City's entire housing stock receives some form of government subsidy.

A 2007 study commissioned by Lehigh and Northampton Counties

entitled: “An Affordable Housing Assessment of the Lehigh Valley in Pennsylvania” underscored a growing regional affordability gap. The study determined that a household income of over \$58,000 is required to afford the median priced home of \$189,000 in the Lehigh Valley. While the study points out that almost one-half of all households in the region earn less than \$50,000 annually, a full two-thirds of the City’s households fall into this category and, thus, are unable to afford the median priced home.

While many facilities and programs are in place to help address these needs, many gaps and unfulfilled needs remain. Further, the region’s concentration of poverty within the City and within certain neighborhoods presents significant challenges to maintaining the stability of these neighborhoods and providing safe and affordable housing. The regional housing study clearly identifies the issue of housing affordability as a regional issue and provides a comprehensive strategy for its resolution.

**Special Needs Housing**

The City is home to many individuals and families with specialized housing needs, including the chronically homeless; those in need of emergency shelter; the physically and mentally handicapped; the elderly and frail elderly; and those in need of supportive and/or rehabilitation programs. It is difficult to assess the magnitude of these needs, however, various types of shelters and supportive housing opportunities currently exist in the City, including emergency shelters, personal care homes, long term nursing homes and community residential rehabilitation programs.

The City is not the provider of these services or facilities, but plays a critical role by supporting grant funding, providing information and referral, and ensuring that there are no unreasonable barriers to locating new facilities or programs.

**GOAL: The provision of sufficient affordable and special needs housing within the City and on a regional level.**

**POLICIES:**

- 13.1 The City should work with housing development corporations and other agencies and regional coalitions to identify the need for and to develop housing facilities necessary to serve the needs of the City's handicapped, elderly, and other populations with special needs. These opportunities should be provided for in a manner that satisfies the following criteria:
  - Avoids concentrating facilities in any one neighborhood.
  - Recognizes the facility and program requirements of the sponsor of the facility and the population to be served.
  - Is consistent with the Federal Fair Housing and Americans with Disabilities Acts.
  - Meets an identified need in the prevailing Consolidated Plan.
  
- 13.2 The City should continue to seek State, Federal, and other sources of housing assistance funds that address the needs of low and moderate-income persons subject to the following guidelines:
  - Such assistance shall be based on the housing needs identified in the prevailing Consolidated Plan and other adopted housing plans.
  - In order to ensure mixed income neighborhoods, assisted housing projects should be spread throughout the City and not concentrated in any single area.
  - Projects serving families’ needs should be limited in scale so as to be compatible with the neighborhood in which they are proposed.
  - Priority should be given to those projects that assist in the maintenance and/or rehabilitation of substandard units.
  
- 13.3 The City should encourage and support programs that address the need for affordable and special needs housing

on a regional level.

- 13.4 The City should review its applicable regulations to ensure that they do not unnecessarily raise the cost of housing construction and rehabilitation or exclude various forms of affordable housing to the extent that safety and neighborhood stability are not jeopardized.
- 13.5 The City should encourage the use of green building materials and energy efficient designs for affordable housing or other housing projects receiving financial assistance through the City.
- 13.6 The City should continue its efforts to preserve the existing supply of affordable housing.
- 13.7 The City should continue to support emergency shelters and transitional housing, when the need for such facilities is fully demonstrated and the provider has adequately described the operational and social service components.

**ACTIONS:**

- Coordinate housing planning and assistance efforts through the creation of a Housing Task Force of representatives of various housing agencies.
- Continue to work with the financial community in addressing low and moderate-income housing needs through the provision of low-interest loans, etc.
- Support the efforts of housing agencies that are committed to meeting community affordable housing needs.
- Support the policies of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission related to affordable housing and the implementation of those policies during the review of municipal plans, ordinances, and programs.

- Support the efforts of the Lehigh Valley Coalition on Affordable Housing and other organizations that are directed toward achieving regional cooperation on the issue of affordable housing.
- Review and revise City building, housing and zoning codes that may unduly restrict the development of affordable housing.
- Maintain a relationship with the providers of specialized housing and advocacy groups to stay aware of current and emerging needs.
- Inform providers of available State and Federal funding opportunities.
- Periodically review and update zoning and other related ordinances to maintain their relevance and conformance with applicable Federal and State legislation and needs of specialized housing providers.
- Identify and evaluate the reuse potential of vacant structures as possible sites for affordable housing projects.

ALLENTOWN 2020

# NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION



## **NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION GOALS:**

- *To promote a strong sense of community, organization, and involvement in neighborhood activity.*
- *To create neighborhood environments that are clean, safe, and attractive.*
- *To provide needed public services and amenities to all City neighborhoods.*
- *To improve and maintain the quality of the housing stock, particularly in the City's older neighborhoods.*
- *To stimulate and attract investment in the City's neighborhoods.*

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION

Allentown is a city of neighborhoods, each possessing its own unique characteristics in terms of its history, physical form, function, land use, and culture of its residents. The neighborhoods in Allentown have been defined in a variety of ways. Some represent specific areas of historical development or growth in the City. Others are organized around, or divided by, physical attributes such as major streets or rivers, or around community facilities, such as parks, schools, or places of worship. Others have less distinct boundaries which have simply been identified by the residents who live there.

Regardless of how they are defined, Allentown's neighborhoods serve their most important role as compact places where people live and interact, while many also provide places of employment, shopping, and recreation for their residents. Neighborhoods also serve to provide a sense of identity for their residents. Indeed, Allentown has a long history of strong neighborhood identity, organization, and cohesiveness, built around residents working together for the betterment of their neighborhoods.

In a mature, fully developed city like Allentown, maintaining the livability of neighborhoods is fundamental to the vitality of the City. Indeed, Allentown's continued desirability as a place to live and its ability to attract new residents depend on the quality of life experienced in its neighborhoods. This is a concern, and a responsibility, that residents and City government alike must share.

There are a number of factors that make the City's neighborhoods desirable places to live. Typically, housing costs in the City are more affordable than in outlying suburban areas, while a greater array of municipal services and public facilities are available. Living in close proximity to places of work, shopping, arts and culture, parks, and recreational activities saves residents the time and expense of traveling to such amenities. There is also the opportunity for social interaction with people of diverse

backgrounds, ideas, education, and income, which provides an element of interest and awareness typically not found in newer, suburban areas.

Despite these advantages, the quality of life in many City neighborhoods is sometimes strained. This stress is manifested by physical changes, such as the deterioration of the housing stock, lack of neighborhood investment, and poor property maintenance. Intrinsic social and cultural changes, and general socio-economic conditions, are also contributing factors. Current issues, such as crime, litter, overcrowding, lack of parking, noise, and other general nuisance issues, are symptoms of the more complex issues affecting the City's neighborhoods.

Recent efforts to deal with these challenges have been as diverse as the issues themselves, including a variety of activities focused on housing, crime, and drug-related issues – generally symptoms of more complex socio-economic problems. Grassroots efforts to organize neighborhood associations and crime watch groups, the allocation of grant funding to improve housing and other neighborhood conditions, and community policing programs, have all been efforts to address one or more of these issues.

This strategy builds on several existing programs and introduces some new approaches in an attempt to provide a comprehensive means to achieving the overall goal of preserving and enhancing the livability and quality of life of Allentown's neighborhoods. It emphasizes the importance of strong neighborhood organizations; clean and safe environments; quality public services, housing and amenities; ongoing reinvestment; and sound land use planning.

### Organization and Involvement

The City has a long history of strong, organized neighborhood associations, built around residents working together to improve

their neighborhoods, and to create neighborhood identity and cohesiveness. Current existing neighborhood groups are shown on Map 8. This strategy encourages efforts to support and build upon the organizational capacity of these groups.

**GOAL: To promote a strong sense of community, organization, and involvement in neighborhood activity.**

**POLICIES:**

14.1 The City should support the work of existing neighborhood groups and encourage the formation of new neighborhood groups in neighborhoods where none exist. The organizational and operational capacity of neighborhood groups should be strengthened to give them a greater role and sense of ownership in neighborhood revitalization activities. Outreach to all segments of the population should be encouraged.

14.2 Organized neighborhood groups should be encouraged to prepare and implement neighborhood plans and strategies. These plans should be community-generated and supported, and involve all segments of the community.

**ACTIONS:**

- Assist in organizing groups where interest is shown at the neighborhood level. Provide training in neighborhood organizing and leadership skills. Provide information and education to promote informed participation in neighborhood improvement activities.
- Provide information, technical assistance, and guidance to neighborhood groups in preparing and implementing neighborhood improvement plans. Successful programs developed from recently completed plans, such as the Weed and Seed Plan and the Old Allentown Neighborhood Plan,

should be used as examples on which to build for use in other neighborhoods.

- Explore the creation of an umbrella organization through which neighborhood groups can collaborate with each other and seek funding for grassroots projects.
- Encourage communication and interaction among neighborhood groups. Explore opportunities to bring neighborhood group leaders together to share their knowledge and experiences and to learn from each other.
- Provide a neighborhood ombudsman to serve as a liaison between City Hall and neighborhood groups.
- Encourage neighborhood groups to work with non-profit organizations to provide meeting space and activities for neighborhood groups and residents, either in existing neighborhood institutions or by acquiring and converting vacant buildings into neighborhood centers.

**Clean and Safe Environments**

Two of the most important aspects of a livable and high quality neighborhood are cleanliness and safety. Unkempt housing, littered streets, and the fear of crime discourage positive investment and perpetuate a cycle of decline and disinvestment. Conversely, well kept neighborhoods, where residents interact and feel at ease, encourage continued investment and a positive residential and business environment. This strategy encourages pro-active and cooperative actions to remove and prevent blighting and nuisance conditions from infecting neighborhoods.

**GOAL: To create neighborhood environments that are clean, safe, and attractive.**

# MAP 8 NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION



Dashed green lines are used to distinguish between overlapping boundaries.



ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
 435 Hamilton Street  
 Allentown, PA 18101  
 610-437-7611

**POLICIES:**

- 15.1 The City should make it a priority to ensure that neighborhoods are free from offensive blighting conditions and public nuisances that diminish the quality-of-life in City neighborhoods.
- 15.2 The City should encourage cooperative efforts with residents and neighborhood groups to maintain the physical health and appearance of neighborhoods.
- 15.3 The City and its Police Department need to continue to be aggressive in their use of resources to reduce crime.

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue and expand an aggressive, zero-tolerance program to remove abandoned cars, clean off graffiti, clean up and secure vacant lots and other “hotspots” for criminal activity; demolish unsafe structures in City neighborhoods; and step up enforcement of City ordinances and abatement of nuisance issues, including litter, noise, speeding, double-parking, rodent and insect infestations, high weeds, and animal feces.
- Provide information to neighborhood residents about code enforcement issues, including what the regulations are and how to effectively report violations. Provide outreach specifically to new City residents to inform them of their responsibilities as City and neighborhood residents.
- Assign Neighborhood Action Teams, consisting of employees from different City departments, including Police, Building Standards & Safety, Zoning, Health, and Recycling & Solid Waste, to common districts in the City in order to improve communication with each other and with neighborhood groups.
- Encourage neighborhood groups to undertake neighborhood

beautification and environmental improvement projects, such as litter clean-ups, flower and tree planting, and curb painting.

- Provide physical identification of neighborhoods through signs or banners in or around the neighborhoods.
- Encourage the implementation of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to reduce opportunities for crime in neighborhoods and increase the defense of neighborhoods by residents.



**Public Services and Amenities**

Many of the City’s neighborhoods were built more than 75 years ago, and some more than 100 years ago, when the standards and conditions of living were much different than they are in today’s modern world. Subsequently, some neighborhoods are not able to

meet today's living standards. Coupled with the fact that many of the City's original single-family dwelling units had been converted over the years to multiple dwelling units, the condition is exacerbated. This strategy encourages the City to explore whatever means possible to continue providing the public services and amenities needed to meet today's standards of living.

**GOAL: To provide needed public services and amenities to all City neighborhoods.**

**POLICIES:**

- 16.1 The City, working with the Allentown Parking Authority, should pursue opportunities to provide additional parking resources in residential areas, particularly in the denser Center City neighborhoods.
- 16.2 The City should seek opportunities to provide additional open space in neighborhoods that are not adequately served by existing parks or playgrounds, as identified and recommended in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- 16.3 The City should join with Lehigh County to study whether the methodology used to assess multi-family dwellings in relation to single family properties is equitable with respect to the amount of services required of each.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop neighborhood parking lots in areas that exhibit a shortage of parking by acquiring vacant parcels or by demolishing unsafe or substandard structures on interior blocks or half-streets, when possible.
- Work with the Allentown Parking Authority to implement the Residential Parking Permit program in neighborhoods where it is warranted.

- Implement the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to:
  - identify parcels, particularly in the North End and East Side, which could be acquired for open space, and
  - continue the relationship with the Allentown School District to establish joint school/neighborhood parks and use neighborhood schools as neighborhood and recreational resources.
- Encourage the maintenance and improvement of open space areas by residents, neighborhood groups, or community organizations.

**Quality Housing Stock**

The City's neighborhoods serve their most important role as the place where people live, therefore, the condition of the housing stock plays a vital role in the condition and visual appearance of the neighborhoods. This strategy supports efforts to help improve and maintain the physical condition of the housing stock, as well as to encourage increased single-family owner occupancy.

**GOAL: To improve and maintain the quality of the housing stock, particularly in the City's older neighborhoods.**

**POLICIES:**

- 17.1 The City should encourage and assist property owners to rehabilitate and maintain their properties.
- 17.2 The City should encourage and assist property owners, non-profit organizations and private developers to de-convert former single-family dwellings that have been converted to multiple units.
- 17.3 Where deteriorated or blighted houses exist on primary streets, the City should support their rehabilitation in order

to maintain the continuity of streetscapes, when practical.

17.4 Where structures that are inadequately constructed or poorly maintained, or do not meet modern living standards, exist on dense interior blocks or half-streets, the City should support their demolition when it supports a broader neighborhood objective.

**ACTIONS:**

- Direct Community Development Block Grant funds and other available resources toward programs to rehabilitate dwellings, de-convert multi-family structures back to single-family use, and correct building and housing code violations.
- Support landlord and tenant education programs that encourage landlords to maintain their buildings in good condition and rent to responsible tenants who will maintain their living units.
- Expand the rental unit inspection program to allow apartment units to be inspected more frequently. Strengthen and continue City enforcement efforts to identify and remediate illegal conversions into apartment units.
- Continue to restrict the conversion of single-family residential dwellings into multi-unit structures.
- In order to reduce housing density of overly dense neighborhoods, where practical and necessary, acquire and demolish blighted or substandard structures on interior blocks or half-streets as opportunities arise or where it supports a larger City or neighborhood objective.
- Explore ways to expedite the City’s Blighted Property Review process to enable faster abatement of vacant or blighted properties.

- Continue to require pre-sales inspection of all residential properties.

**Investment**

Any efforts at neighborhood improvement require one significant element: the investment of money into the neighborhood, whether it is the investment made by property owners to buy and maintain properties, or more significant investments made by the City, other public agencies or even private sources to undertake larger revitalization activities. This strategy encourages efforts to increase the investment in neighborhoods in order to support the neighborhood revitalization.

**GOAL: To stimulate and attract investment in the City’s neighborhoods.**

**POLICIES:**

- 18.1 Encourage homeownership in neighborhoods that have experienced or have the potential to experience significant declines in owner-occupied housing.
- 18.2 Encourage new housing developments or redevelopments to incorporate a mix of housing types for residents of varying income levels.
- 18.3 Leverage available resources to attract strategic investment in City neighborhoods that supports defined revitalization goals.

**ACTIONS:**

- Support programs that teach financial literacy and responsible homeownership, including how to buy, pay for, maintain, and care for a home.

- The City should continue to support programs designed to increase homeownership, particularly in neighborhoods that have experienced declines in the rate of homeownership.
- Restore a homesteading program in which blighted properties acquired by the City can be purchased inexpensively by new owner-occupants and brought up to code.
- Build on the assets that make the City an attractive place to live and improve marketing of the City to a wider range of socio-economic groups.
- Encourage City employers to provide benefits or incentives to their employees to live within the City.
- Provide financial or other incentives for private developers and community development corporations to undertake housing rehabilitation or redevelopment projects.
- Support private strategic investment by including neighborhood projects and programs in the annual budgets for Capital Improvements, Community Development Block Grants and other appropriate funding sources.
- Continue to explore and pursue grant funding for neighborhood revitalization or improvement projects from the Federal and State governments, non-profit foundations and private corporations.
- Work with local banks to obtain funding and favorable financing for neighborhood revitalization activities through their community re-investment programs.
- Continue to encourage redevelopment and investment in the downtown business district to serve as a magnet for investment in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

**Land Use**

In addition to being the place where people live, many neighborhoods also serve as places where people work, shop, and play. Indeed, a neighborhood can become more livable if residents have convenient, even walkable, access to such amenities. However, such amenities can sometimes produce impacts that are not compatible with a residential area, particularly if they also serve a population beyond the immediate neighborhood. This goal encourages efforts to provide desirable neighborhood level goods and services in a way that is compatible with the residential character of neighborhoods. This goal also reflects the need for higher density residential areas, particularly in Center City, but in conjunction with the ability to provide needed services and amenities.

**GOAL: To produce a compatible mix of land uses at appropriate densities in residential neighborhoods.**

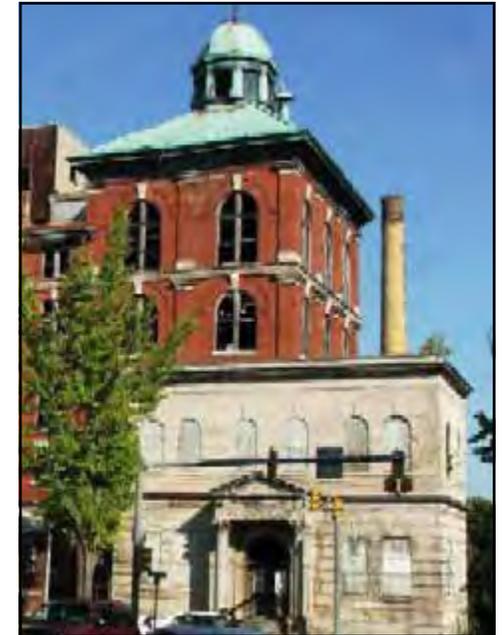
**POLICIES:**

- 19.1 The City should establish residential densities in City neighborhoods at levels that can be supported by the infrastructure and amenities available.
- 19.2 Walkable neighborhoods should be encouraged by continuing to allow compatible commercial and institutional uses that provide neighborhood-level goods and services without detracting from the residential character of the neighborhoods.
- 19.3 The City should establish working relationships with large institutions and neighborhoods to facilitate institutional growth with the least disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods.

**ACTIONS:**

- Establish maximum housing unit density thresholds for residential neighborhoods and target density reduction strategies toward neighborhoods exceeding the thresholds.
- Review zoning regulations on vacant infill properties or former commercial or industrial structures to ensure that the allowable density of potential new residential development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Facilitate communication between potential business owners, developers, and neighborhood residents as new commercial uses are being considered. Encourage neighborhoods to proactively evaluate what commercial uses are needed and where they would be appropriate.
- Encourage institutional uses to contribute to their surrounding neighborhood, such as providing benefits to employees to live in the neighborhood, providing green space or open space that can be used by neighborhood residents, allowing neighborhood residents to use their parking facilities during off-peak hours, or providing payments in lieu of taxes to offset the tax exemptions on their properties.
- Request that large non-profit institutions file five-year plans with the City so that adequate planning for the impacts of any proposed development can be undertaken. Encourage communication between institutions, neighborhood residents and the City as institutional expansions are being considered. Discourage institutions from acquiring adjacent residential properties for speculative use, unless depicted in a longer term plan that has the support of the City.

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION



## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOAL:**

- *To recognize, preserve, and promote the architectural and cultural value of the City's historic structures, neighborhoods, and resources.*

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The design qualities of older buildings, and their conveyance of a sense of time and place in the City’s history, contribute to Allentown’s richness and quality of life. These qualities have made preservation a driving, yet quiet, force in Allentown’s urban residential and commercial development. This movement has facilitated the adaptation and reuse of older buildings, particularly in several key development areas, and has led to the protection of three distinctive historic neighborhoods, as shown on Map 9. The City also has many individual sites that are either listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These are also shown on Map 9.

Despite these successes, the issue of historic preservation in the City goes largely unnoticed. While there are various groups that support the protection of these buildings and neighborhoods, preservation has not been a theme that has significantly shaped City policy. Participants in workshops conducted as part of this Comprehensive Plan routinely identified the City’s historic architecture and resources as one of its strengths and an asset on which to build. However, in the public survey, there was relatively little importance placed on preserving historic and architectural resources as an opportunity for economic growth. Similarly, there was little importance given to architectural design as a factor in the impact of new development.

There are a number of tools that can be used to protect historic resources, all of which rely on either state enabling legislation or state and federal incentives to protect and reuse historic structures. Both The Pennsylvania Historic District Act of 1961 and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code authorize local communities to enact legislation designed to protect the integrity of historic areas and buildings through the creation of local historic districts. Typically within these districts all exterior improvements and changes require review and approval by the governing body. The creation of “Conservation Districts” is a relatively new technique that communities have adopted that focuses efforts to

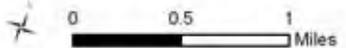
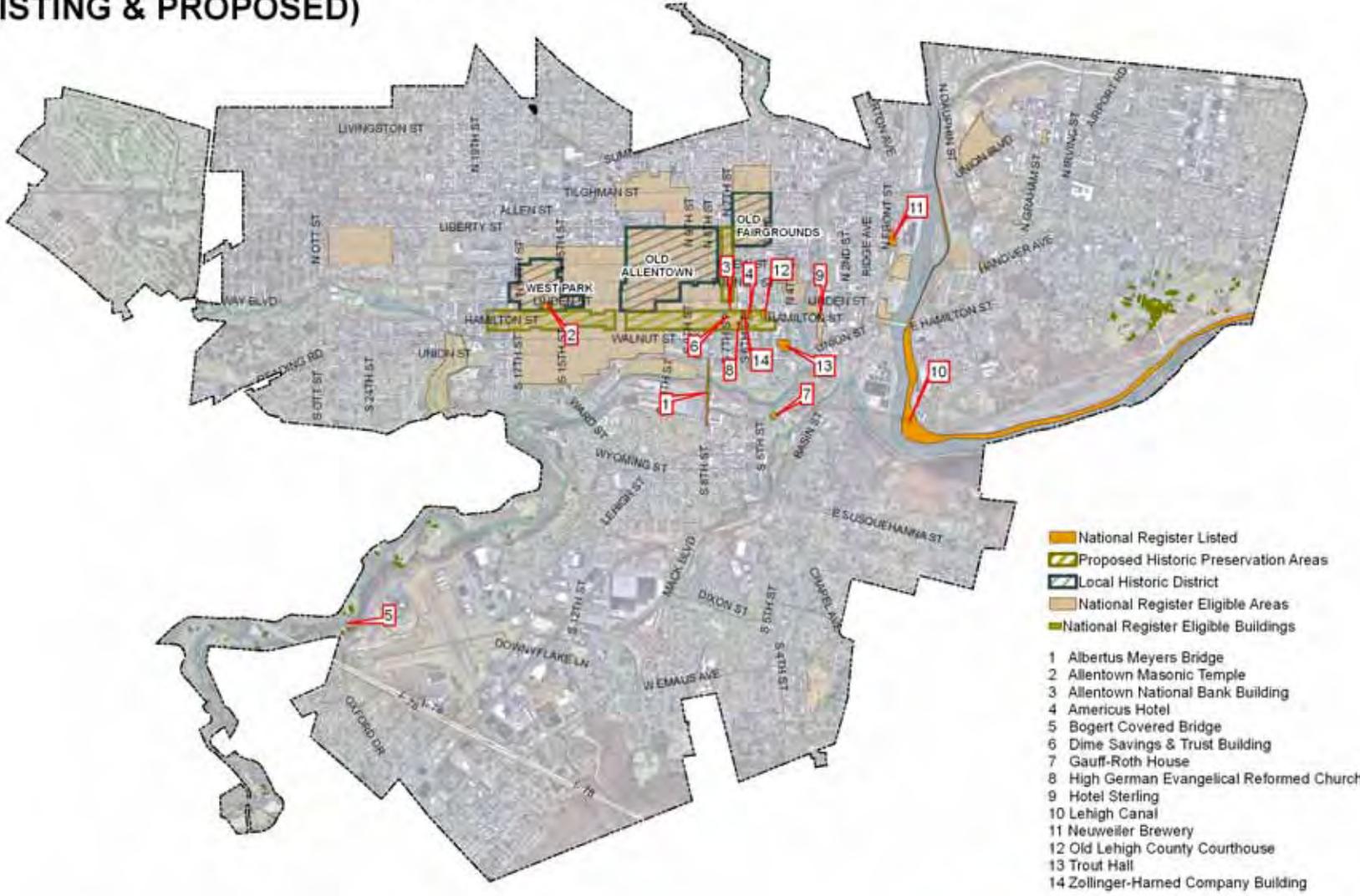
preserve only the more significant features of buildings within a designated area, and thus the basic fabric of that area. Both have their place in a comprehensive preservation program, depending on the level of protection warranted and public acceptance of the initiative. It is interesting to note that many qualitative design elements that communities would like to regulate, such as signage, façade improvements, etc. can only be done within identified historic districts.

Table 8 and Map 9 identify specific areas within the City that could be worthy of some level of historic protection, based on their historic importance and their level of threat, and the recommended means of protection for each.

As mentioned, the preservation movement in the City has not been universally accepted. Although there are certainly significant successes, it has not been widely embraced for either its qualitative or cultural merits, or for its economic and neighborhood revitalization benefits. Therefore, a large part of the following strategy is directed toward increasing public awareness of historic properties and historic areas through outreach activities, education, and physical identification. This is particularly significant in view of the number of new residents that have come to the City and are residents of its historic neighborhoods.

<p><b>GOAL: To recognize, preserve and promote the architectural and cultural value of the City’s historic structures, neighborhoods, and resources.</b></p>
<p><b>POLICIES:</b></p>
<p>20.1 The City should continue to encourage and support historic neighborhood preservation programs. These programs will be expanded and enhanced where neighborhoods support the protection of historic resources.</p>

**MAP 9  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AREAS  
(EXISTING & PROPOSED)**



ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101  
610-437-7611

TABLE 8  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Resource	Significance of Resource	Proposed Means of Protection
National Register listed properties	Significance is already recognized by being listed, but listing gives no protection.	Historic District
Hamilton Street Mansion District (12th to 19th Street area)	Hamilton Street was the location of the original residences of the many of the City's earliest prominent citizens.	Historic District
Little Lehigh Parkway houses	The houses were part of one of the area's earliest settlements. The Parkway was one of the Country's earliest planned park systems.	Conservation District to regulate major alterations
Hamilton Street Business District (5th to 12th Streets)	The City's main business district contains numerous examples of significant local architecture.	Conservation District to regulate new construction and major alterations
North 7th Street Corridor	A large neighborhood commercial district also contains numerous examples of significant local architecture.	Conservation District to regulate new construction and major alterations
All National Register eligible areas	Areas that have been identified by the State for the quality and integrity of their architecture.	Conservation District to regulate new construction and major alterations

20.2 Historically significant structures or areas should be supported for registration on the National Register of Historic Places or as local Historic Districts or Conservation Districts.

20.3 The City should pursue funding opportunities and other benefits offered by the state and federal governments, as well as private organizations, to help preserve and protect its historic and cultural resources.

20.4 The rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings should be encouraged as a means to reduce the consumption of natural resources and energy and reduce the generation of waste material.

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue the existing historic preservation program through the implementation of the Historic District Ordinance.
- Review the Historic District Ordinance to ensure that it is as effective as possible.
- Continue to provide support to neighborhood groups in historic neighborhoods.
- Better market the City's historic neighborhoods and increase awareness of the historic district benefits and regulations to existing and potential property owners.
- Provide outreach and education about historic preservation to realtors, home improvement companies, contractors, satellite dealers, and other businesses that deal with historic properties.
- Strengthen the visual identification of historic districts through physical improvements, such as banners, street signs, date

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

plaques, historic markers, street lighting, etc.

- Install architecturally appropriate lighting on the historic 8th Street bridge and plant street trees and provide other beautification efforts at the approach from the south.
- Amend the Historic District Ordinance to include properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create a City-wide demolition ordinance to provide a mechanism to regulate the demolition of structures or resources eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create a Conservation District ordinance to regulate the appearance of new construction and major building alterations in designated National Register eligible neighborhoods (see Map 9).
- Encourage property owners with National Register eligible properties to have them formally listed on the Register.
- Pursue having the City's three local historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Survey the remaining areas of the City for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create a listing of locally significant properties or resources, including individual properties, neighborhoods, and resource groups, such as schools, churches, bridges, hotels, factories, etc.
- Protect and maintain the integrity of historic cemeteries.
- Explore participation in the Certified Local Government program to increase eligibility and access to funding for

historic preservation activities.

- Support the efforts of the Allentown Preservation League to salvage and reuse historic building materials.
- Explore other funding sources for historic preservation activities.
- Encourage the use of historic rehabilitation tax credits as a means of preserving historic structures and furthering economic development objectives.



# COMMUNITY FACILITIES



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS:

- *The availability and accessibility of quality parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open space for all residents throughout the City.*
- *The provision of an efficient, well-maintained infrastructure providing cost-effective services to all City residents and regional users.*
- *The reduction of residential and commercial waste, increase in total recyclable materials collected and reused, and improvement of neighborhood cleanliness through education and enforcement.*
- *An educational infrastructure satisfying the educational needs of the student population, and their neighborhoods, through school-based community services.*
- *To provide continued working relationships between the colleges, the City and neighborhood groups and enhance the educational, social, economic developmental and cultural benefits that institutions of higher learning bring to Allentown's quality of life.*
- *Access to affordable and effective health care for all residents.*
- *The provision of cost-effective and efficient governmental services and facilities.*
- *Ensuring the safety and security of Allentown residents, businesses and institutions to further the City's growth and development in partnership with the community.*
- *To continue to provide the highest level of emergency and preventive services.*

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Community Facilities plan reviews the future needs for public and quasi-public facilities and services within the City. The plan examines a broad range of topical areas, including Parks and Recreation, Infrastructure, Solid Waste, Education, Health Care, Public Safety, and Government Facilities.

Generally, the City is well served by these facilities and services, having planned and financed needed improvements and enhancements to its infrastructure on a regular basis. This strategy focuses on issues related to meeting the needs of the City's changing demographics, facilities maintenance and upgrading in the face of more challenging fiscal constraints, and opportunities for the regionalization of selected services.

### Parks and Recreation

The City has over 1,400 acres of dedicated parkland for active and passive recreation activities, which comprises about 12% of the City's total land area. In addition, the Allentown School District owns and manages several play and sports facilities that add to the City's overall offerings. As shown on Map 10, the park system includes a variety of neighborhood parks and playgrounds, as well as a network of parkways that follows the streams through the City. No other municipal service or facility received as much positive comment in the Comprehensive Plan's public survey as the park system .

The City recreation program includes organized sports activities, special activities such as the Senior Olympics, sports facility maintenance, and management of the City's swimming pools and golf course.

#### Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The City, with the financial assistance of the Trexler Trust,

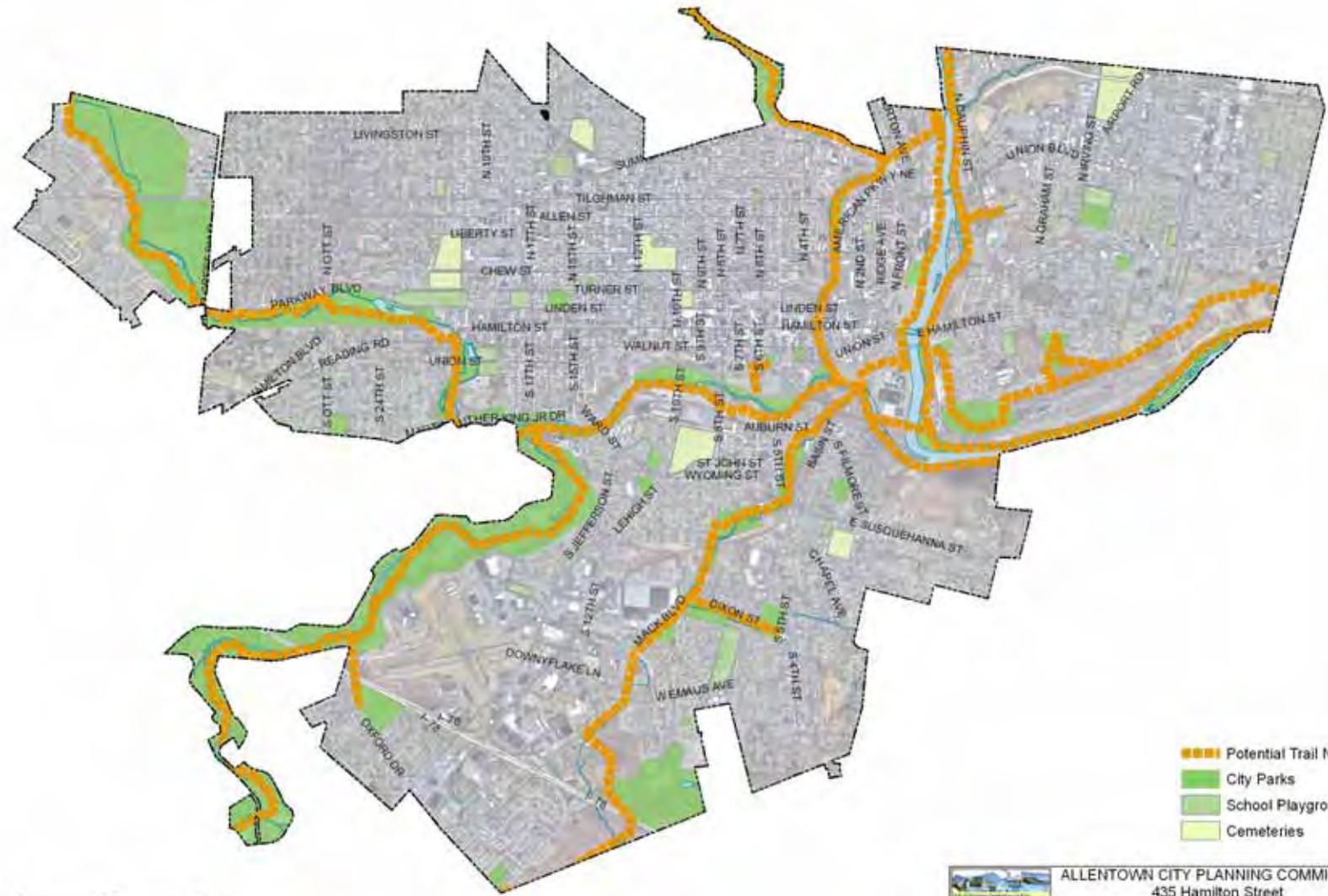
completed the "Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2006" to guide the City's Parks and Recreation Program. Major recommendations included the following:

- Create a comprehensive and highly interconnected trail network that links as many of the City's parks together as possible, as shown as Map 10.
- Create park and recreational opportunities so that these facilities are within a 10 minute walk for all residents of the City. Specifically, the Plan identifies neighborhoods in the northern portion of Center City and the East Side as being park deficient.
- Create a network of interconnected public spaces, including areas from private developments in downtown.
- Expand active recreation and alternative sports resources and facilities. The need for additional soccer fields was specifically identified.
- Create an exciting and vibrant waterfront "place" that serves the City's residents, acts as a regional attraction, and is a model for waterfront revitalization nationally for a city the size of Allentown.

#### Regional Greenways

In 2007, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission completed the "Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan". The intent of the plan is to provide connectivity between the greenways in the Lehigh Valley in order to protect the environment, supply recreational opportunities, and connect natural and cultural areas. The City of Allentown is recognized as a hub, a center of activity connecting various greenways. The plan identifies nine priority corridors throughout the Lehigh Valley, four of which run through parts of Allentown. Two of these four, the Jordan Creek corridor and the Pennsylvania Highlands corridor, are identified for Early Implementation activities.

# MAP 10 PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES AND TRAILS



- Potential Trail Network
- City Parks
- School Playgrounds
- Cemeteries



ALLENTOWN CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101  
610-437-7611

In general, the goals and actions recommended for all municipalities are to update and improve zoning and natural resource protection ordinances; to review procedures to address the effects of development on, and the protection of, natural resources; to identify the location of future public areas and preserve right-of-way areas for recreation and open space; and to create Environmental Advisory Councils to review zoning and rezoning proposals, subdivision and site plans, and similar projects for their impact on the environment. For the two priority corridors identified for Early Implementation, the plan specifically recommends that Allentown work with Whitehall Township to acquire additional high priority natural resources lands between Jordan Meadows and Jordan Park for open space and passive recreation in the Jordan Creek greenway corridor, and to continue to work with the County, Salisbury Township and the Wildlands Conservancy to acquire and protect remaining high priority lands on Lehigh Mountain and South Mountain, which are within the Pennsylvania Highlands greenway corridor.



**GOAL: The availability and accessibility of quality parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open space for all residents throughout the City.**

**POLICIES:**

- 21.1 The City should use the “Parks and Recreation Master Plan” or its successor as its guide to future parks and recreation improvements and programming.
- 21.2 Recreational programs and services should be available to all residents through planning and coordination of municipal, quasi-public, and private providers.
- 21.3 Park and recreation land acquisition and development should satisfy at least one of the following criteria:
  - The land will ensure public access to currently inaccessible City waterways.
  - The land will be developed for the purpose of active park use that addresses a deficiency as identified by the “Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan.”
  - The land will directly contribute to or complete the existing plan to link parklands throughout the City.
  - The land is important for the protection of environmentally sensitive features. Either the parcel itself is in need of protection or the securing of the parcel will ensure the protection of neighboring properties. Environmentally sensitive lands include, but are not limited to, floodplain areas, steep slope areas (in excess of 25%), and areas necessary to protect and preserve the City’s water supply.
- 21.4 The City should work with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and other partnering organizations in implementing the regional “Greenways Plan”.

**ACTIONS:**

- Pursue the implementation of the management, maintenance, and marketing strategies recommended in the “Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan.”
- Seek alternative funding mechanisms for future projects and land acquisitions with emphasis on the creation of a nonprofit organization to raise and solicit funds; intergovernmental resources such as grants; and mutual cooperative intergovernmental relationships.
- Create a mechanism to facilitate mutual cooperation in the planning and facility management of public and private recreational programs and facilities throughout the City.
- Increase awareness and utilization of existing lesser-used City-owned facilities, services and programs through better identification, marketing, etc.
- Create a City and regional trail and greenway network.
- Promote the development of downtown parks, plazas, spaces and walkways.
- Create an attraction-oriented indoor parks and recreation component to the City’s park system.

**Infrastructure**

The City provides itself and several suburban areas with water and sewer treatment and conveyance services. Issues surrounding Allentown’s infrastructure (water and sewer supply and treatment, and stormwater management) are not uncommon to similar older cities where the age and obsolescence of these

facilities are the prime concern rather than expansion. Although many of these facilities are at or near 100 years old, the status of the City’s infrastructure in general is not dilapidated or beyond repair. This is the result of routinely allocated capital funds and other resources for infrastructure repair and maintenance.

However, the recent financial challenges of the City have not permitted a regular or substantial allocation of resources. If not restored, the effects of the diminished maintenance and replacement will manifest themselves in service disruptions and less productivity. At a minimum the restoration of funding for the regular repair and replacement of existing infrastructure is imperative if the City is to continue to serve its citizens well and remain competitive with other cities.

Wastewater Treatment

The rated capacity of the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is 40 million gallons per day (mgd). All 40 mgd is currently allocated among the City and adjoining “signatory communities” including the Lehigh County Authority (LCA), Salisbury Township, South Whitehall Township, Emmaus and Coplay–Whitehall Sewer Authority. The average daily treatment plant flows have ranged between 30 and 35.5 mgd due to variations of annual precipitation. The City owns 19.57 mgd of the 40 mgd capacity, while using approximately 17.5 mgd of that total. Fees paid by City users and regional signatories provide both operating and capital funds. During the course of this planning period, the wastewater treatment plant will be upgraded and expanded at a cost of \$19.5 million.

The importance of the sewer plant transcends waste purification. With many of Allentown’s suburban neighbors having significant land reserves available for development, the importance of available treatment capacity is profound. Sewer capacity availability is a limiting factor permitting or not permitting communities to build and ultimately affects their ability to grow and develop fiscal base. As needed, signatory communities purchase

additional treatment capacity from the City. Proceeds from the sale of this capacity are intended to allow the City to benefit from regional growth, and as such, become sources for City economic development programs, capital projects, and general fund revenues.

Currently, sewage treatment capacity is not an impediment to City or regional economic development and growth, although an influx of large industrial users could consume the remaining sewage treatment capacity more quickly than the current residential development in the region. In the planning period's early stages the City will need to revise its Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan to increase the capacity of the sewage treatment plant for future growth.

At the present time there are several sewage treatment issues. The more salient are:

- Adjusting to customer and regulatory quality standards which may change periodically,
- Increasing efficiency and reducing processing costs,
- Providing security in the post September 11th age,
- Considering regionalized ownership and service delivery of City sewer and water facilities to reduce costs,
- Satisfying more stringent restrictions on peak flow treatment and discharge.

#### Water Filtration

Similar to sewage service, the City is a regional provider of water. It relies on four water sources – two surface water and two ground water - to provide a supply of 28 million gallons per day (mgd), with 50 million gallons of finished water storage in three reservoirs. The water treatment plant (WTP) has a design capacity of 16 mgd. The combination of these features makes for a robust and flexible system that decreases its susceptibility to emergency situations.

As of 2007, the City is only pumping an average of 14.8 mgd, down from the peak year of 1987 when it pumped an average of 28 mgd. This drop in consumption is due mainly to the loss or reduction of consumption by manufacturing process users. Other losses are due to the mandate for water conservation fixtures, water conservation education during drought years, and potential unit price sensitivity. Water treatment and delivery have high fixed costs, so that costs may increase as demand drops. Industries that might be consumers of water are bottled water, electronic and fabric concerns.

Unlike sewage, where new treatment facilities are expensive and potentially controversial, regional users can tap groundwater supplies in the Valley, thus creating challenges for the City to continue to provide water treatment services to outlying communities at competitive pricing.



Regionalization of Water and Sewer Services

In 2004, a committee composed of City and Lehigh County Authority (LCA) representatives was formed to evaluate the regionalization of water and sewer services. The study found that:

- “The current organizations’ service areas, types of services, and customer characteristics all lend themselves to consolidation under the new entity.”
- “An analysis ...concluded that a consolidated entity, streamlined to improve processes and eliminate redundancies, provides greater market presence and economies of scale, resulting in more efficient and effective quality service delivery.”

The study recommended that the evaluation move to the next level of more detailed review which would include a consolidation plan. A financial review completed in June of 2004 was favorable to a merger.

Stormwater Management

The City has an extensive storm water management system consisting of underground conveyance and a series of privately and publicly owned stormwater management facilities. An adequate drainage system prevents damage to buildings, limits stream damage, and reduces opportunities for flooding and traffic accidents. The City has aggressively pursued the installation of storm sewers in areas where they were historically lacking, to the point where very few areas remain underserved.

As mandated by State and County laws, the City has participated in several storm water management plans for each of its watersheds. The approved plans set standards for managing the quantity and, more recently, the quality of storm flows emanating from new development. Implementation of the program is primarily through the City’s land development and subdivision review process.

**GOAL: The provision of an efficient, well-maintained infrastructure providing cost-effective services to all City residents and regional users.**

**POLICIES:**

22.1 Future infrastructure programming should emphasize the maintenance, repair, and replacement of existing facilities, and increased productivity. New capital projects which expand the current infrastructure or propose the addition of new systems or facilities should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The proposed project will address a major public health or safety issue, or significantly reduce potential damage to property.
- The proposed project will directly support the City’s economic development objectives and yield a positive distribution of benefits to costs.

22.2 The City should continue to provide regional public services such as water and sewer treatment and expand such services if a fair distribution of costs associated with providing such service can be achieved. In providing the services, the City should directly benefit from the regional growth that these services enable.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop an inventory and rate the condition of all infrastructure systems in the City.
- Expand the City’s base of water customers by marketing a plentiful supply at reasonable prices to water intensive users.
- Ensure that water and sewer service rates reflect the full costs of operation and investment.

- Seek to expand the potential resources to fund needed capital improvements.
- Revise the City's Act 537 Sewage Facility Plan to increase capacity for future growth.

**Solid Waste and Recycling**

In 2007, the City's curbside trash collection recorded 38,746 tons of solid waste and 8,404 tons of recyclable materials. These figures compare with tonnages in 1994 of 34,234 and 3,568 respectively. The City's recycling program, which was in its infancy when the current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1993, has increased its neighborhood presence through anti-litter campaigns, cleanup, and enforcement programs, and operates several collection sites throughout the City.

Between 2002 and 2004, the City experienced a sharp 16% increase in solid waste tonnage. This was an issue, since the bidding of waste contracts is based on annual collection volumes, and affects the future collection and disposal contracts. In 2006, City Council passed trash limits for curbside collection to cap the amount of municipal solid waste collected and landfilled. The City achieved this goal, reducing trash from 44,476 tons in 2005 to 42,126 in 2006, to 38,746 in 2007. In June 2007, cardboard and paperboard were added to curbside recycling and by December 2007, a 28% increase in paper fiber recycling was realized.

Ongoing goals and issues in this area include:

- Working with citizens, community groups, agencies and City bureaus to improve the cleanliness, and appearance of Allentown's neighborhoods, which will foster community and economic development.
- Educating the public about and enforcing the City's Anti-Litter, Municipal Waste, and Recycling Ordinances.
- Reducing solid waste tonnage.

- Diverting more of the total waste stream from landfill disposal to recycling.

**GOAL: To reduce residential and commercial waste, increase total recyclable materials collected and reused, and improve neighborhood cleanliness through education and enforcement.**

**POLICIES:**

- 23.1 The City should continue to pursue methods of municipal solid waste disposal which are environmentally safe, cost efficient, and available. Recycling should continue to be a large component of the City's municipal solid waste management program.
- 23.2 The City should continue efforts to divert more of the total waste stream to recyclables.
- 23.3 The City should continue to work with citizens and neighborhood groups on programs that improve the quality of life.

**ACTIONS:**

- Expand the recycling program by including additional recyclable materials.
- Encourage recycling through continued educational and promotional programs.
- Continue neighborhood-level improvement activities in the areas of litter, waste and graffiti removal.



**Education**

Allentown School District: No public institution has been so profoundly affected by the demographic, socio-economic and cultural changes that the City has undergone over the last 20 years than the Allentown School District. Many of Allentown’s new residents are younger and are households with children, of low income, and speak English as a second language. Allentown’s school population has swelled beyond capacity, this after a period of declining district enrollments and subsequent disposition of surplus buildings. The District now needs space to provide for the increased enrollment and the special challenges presented by today’s student body in terms of language, cultural differences and often poverty. To meet the need for additional space, the Allentown School District has recently completed and begun to implement a Comprehensive Facilities Plan, which will impact the City’s land use and neighborhood and economic development.

Table 9 provides the total growth in enrollment in the Allentown School District since 2001, including projected totals through the 2009-2010 school year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>K-12 Enrollment</b>	<b>Net Cumulative Change</b>
2001-2002	16,470	
2002-2003	16,812	342
2003-2004	17,216	746
2004-2005	17,521	1,051
2005-2006	18,118	1,648
2006-2007	18,505	2,035
2007-2008	18,318	1,848
2008-2009	18,448 projected	1,978
2009-2010	18,700 projected	2,230

Parkland School District: Over the last 15 years, the City has also contributed to an increase in enrollment in the Parkland School District, due to the development of the former Trexler lands in the far West End. Since the 1993 Plan, over 700 new units of high-end market rate housing have been constructed in this area. As this area is now almost completely built out, there should be no further impacts on the Parkland schools.

While public school enrollments have grown, private or parochial school enrollments have declined. The number of Allentown School District students attending private schools decreased by 436 students between 1995 and 2005.

**GOAL: To provide an educational infrastructure that satisfies the educational needs of the student population, and supports the surrounding neighborhoods through school-based community services.**

**POLICIES:**

- 24.1 The Comprehensive Facilities Plan prepared for the Allentown School District should provide the guidance for the district’s physical improvements and expansions.
- 24.2 The City should work with non-public school systems to the extent possible to retain existing and develop new facilities within the City limits.
- 24.3 The City and School District should continue consultation regarding projects affecting school district-owned land and facilities and the neighborhoods in which those properties exist. This cooperation should exist in each of the following areas:
  - Existing school facilities should continue to be used as community centers that provide neighborhood services, such as, but not limited to, recreational programs and facilities, meeting places, etc.
  - In those instances where the School District has

declared specific land or buildings surplus, their disposition should carefully consider the impacts to and needs of the surrounding community, in addition to the property's highest and best use.

**ACTIONS:**

- The City will continue to work closely with the Allentown School District in facilities planning and implementation of activities of mutual interest within the District's Comprehensive Facilities Plan.

Higher Education

Three colleges have campuses in the City: Cedar Crest, Muhlenberg, and Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC). Since the last plan, the student bodies and facilities at Muhlenberg and LCCC have grown considerably. Muhlenberg has increased its presence in Allentown's West End by purchasing adjacent properties, and LCCC has moved from leased space in the Sovereign Building to a former office building it purchased and renovated in the 700 block of Hamilton Street. Cedar Crest has also expanded, although it has been able to do so within the bounds of its current campus.

The colleges play important roles in Allentown's community life. First and foremost they educate many local residents who go into the workforce and many times become community leaders. The Community College especially provides educational opportunities locally and inexpensively to students who otherwise would not be able to obtain post-secondary education, which creates an educated workforce for area employers. The colleges provide an array of intellectual and cultural opportunities, and their student bodies provide a source of energetic volunteers benefiting various sectors of Allentown's population. Many students are in the workforce and the student bodies provide an additional aggregate income benefiting local businesses. Muhlenberg College, for example, recognizing how the 19th Street area could provide

shopping and entertainment amenities to its students, has variously supported the 19th Street shopping area improvement program and encourages its students to patronize the businesses. Muhlenberg College: The College has adopted a strategic plan extending to 2013, which identifies future projects on the existing campus including new student housing (to reduce the number of students living off-campus) and a newly completed science facility. The student body will not grow beyond its current 2150. Tensions between the college and surrounding neighborhood that existed as the college expanded into the neighborhood have been ameliorated as the college has endeavored to add additional student housing on campus.

Cedar Crest College: The college may add 250 students, and construct new dormitory facilities and a parking deck. At the present time the college does not plan to expand beyond its existing campus.

Lehigh Carbon Community College, Donley Center: LCCC has increased its presence in Allentown's downtown with its growth into a former office building on Hamilton Street's 700 block, which has the highest utilization of any of the College's sites. Its growth and prominent Hamilton Street location provide a vital source of day and evening foot traffic in the downtown. With the inclusion of academic partners, the college hopes to expand the downtown facility's program to a full 4-year degree, include student housing, and develop the downtown facility as an integral part of its arts program.

**GOAL: To provide continued working relationships between the colleges, the City and neighborhood groups, and to enhance the educational, social, economic, and cultural benefits that institutions of higher education bring to Allentown's quality of life.**

**POLICIES:**

25.1 The City, colleges, and nonprofit groups should expand

the mutually beneficial opportunities derived from student volunteers, such as tutoring and serving as role models for City schoolchildren, or providing technical and research assistance on particular issues.

25.2 The City and colleges should continue to be active partners in the development of various neighborhood, cultural and economic development programs, such as the City's Arts District and the West End Theatre District development.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop working groups between the City, neighborhood groups, and the colleges for specific issue-oriented or developmental purposes.

**Health Care**

Allentown is fortunate to have several hospitals providing quality health care, substantial employment, and investment to the community. Since the last plan, the ownership and scale of the institutions have changed, as have their physical manifestations in their respective neighborhoods. In addition to the hospitals, the City also has an active Health Bureau, providing health awareness and educational resources, and a limited number of clinical services. The Bureau and its community partners have developed the City's "Five-Year Public Health Plan (2006-2010)", which identifies nine priority areas: Food Safety, Indoor Air Quality, Violence Prevention, Infant Health, Mental Health, Dental Health, Heart Disease, Cancer, and HIV/AIDS. Recent actions by the City and Lehigh and Northampton Counties may result in the creation of a regional public health agency, which may supplant the City Health Bureau and provide services on a regional level.

Access to health care is an important issue, since many of the City's residents are of modest means. The 2000 Census indicated

that in Lehigh County, 34,471 persons were without health insurance, and of those, 5,252 were children. Since Allentown's median family income is significantly lower than the county's, it is likely that many of the uninsured are City residents. In recent years, the addition of hospital-managed primary care centers and school family centers have provided additional needed care.

Hospitals

Lehigh Valley Hospital: Lehigh Valley Hospital has a significant presence at 17th and Chew Streets, which includes the former Allentown Hospital, the School of Nursing building, and other properties. The hospital's clinic activity has increased significantly, and many of its resident physicians are bilingual.

Future plans include the renovation and expansion of its Emergency Department and additional parking, and the possible expansion of their nearby daycare for employees. The hospital's growth will most likely come by bringing in currently decentralized facilities so they are closer and more accessible to clients. Recently, the hospital announced a housing program that would provide incentives to employees to reside near its Allentown facilities.

Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital: Good Shepherd's South Allentown presence has grown and has transformed its surrounding area into a campus-like setting, as the hospital continues its pursuit to become known as a regional and national center of excellence in the field of physical rehabilitation. Over the planning period, the hospital expects growth in therapy, and is also considering a 10,000-square foot satellite outpatient facility.

Allentown State Hospital: The Allentown State Hospital is a component of the State's mental health system. It has a sizable presence in terms of land and employment on Allentown's East Side, having 214 acres of land and 400 staff. The hospital has an extensive campus extending to Hanover Avenue on its north and sloping towards the Lehigh River on its south, and is served by

public transportation.

The movement to deinstitutionalize the mental health system has significantly reduced the number of patients at the hospital. Since the current plan's completion in 1993, the hospital population has been reduced to two-thirds its size and now houses about 174 patients. It is not expected that the hospital population will increase. A surplus 30+ acre portion of the State Hospital land will be transferred to the City for economic development purposes.

St. Luke's Hospital: St. Luke's Hospital acquired the former Allentown Osteopathic Hospital and has significantly improved and enlarged its presence with an investment of \$100 million. The hospital's mutual interests with the City include maintaining the viability of the surrounding neighborhood with its neighbors, partnerships with the City and School District, and emergency preparedness, including training in a range of health-related topics.

Sacred Heart Hospital: The hospital has plans to increase beds or outpatient treatment facilities in the next ten years, as well as to

conduct various renovations. The hospital is interested in community health and health awareness issues, as well as increased participation in school-based health clinics, an expanded role with the City Health



Bureau, and cooperation on programs to improve housing and reduce crime. The hospital is a critical health care facility and focal point within a densely populated, lower income neighborhood.

**GOAL: To enable access to affordable and effective health care for all residents.**

**POLICIES:**

- 26.1 The City should participate in efforts to assure that primary health care needs of the uninsured, underinsured, and special needs populations are met through such activities as grant and community development actions, and site assistance.
- 26.2 The City should provide a cooperative framework for the expansion of health care institutions so that they may carry out their community service functions, while balancing those expansion needs with the concerns of surrounding neighborhoods.
- 26.3 A high priority should continue to be placed on prevention-oriented public health practices and programs. Particular emphasis should be directed to the five public health priority areas contained in the City's "Five-Year Public Health Plan (2006-2010)," developed by the Allentown Health Bureau and community partners, unless succeeded by a new plan directing any regional public health entity.

**ACTIONS:**

- The City's Health Bureau will lead the community in implementing interventions to accomplish the objectives contained in the City's "Five Year Public Health Plan," and will continue to perform core public health functions: assessment of the population's health status, the development of the public policies to maintain and promote health, and assurance that the population has access to public health services.

**Government Facilities and Public Buildings**

As the region's largest city, and the Lehigh County seat, the presence of public buildings in Allentown is considerable. Allentown's downtown is the home for Lehigh County's government offices and courts, and also has a substantial number of offices for the State, the Federal Government and the School District, particularly along Hamilton Street between 4th and 5th Streets. These uses are one reason people visit the downtown, according to the public survey, and are substantial employment sources.

Municipal

City-owned and operated facilities are numerous and as varied as the services it is required to provide. These include City Hall and other offices, police headquarters, a former airplane hanger used for vehicle maintenance, shops and storage areas for parks and recreation, police and fire academies, water and sewer treatment facilities, and others. Since the last plan, the City has significantly improved, or acquired and rehabilitated several municipal buildings, the most significant of which is the Bridgeworks, now the home of the City's engineering offices, workshops and storage facilities. Additionally, the City has transferred the Queen City Airport to the Lehigh Valley Airport Authority, while retaining a leasehold for the continued operation of the Streets Bureau and City garage at that location.

Future issues include accommodating the expanding needs of the Police Department and the possible relocation of the Streets Bureau and City garage operations, should an extension to the current lease to use space at the Queen City Airport not be negotiated.

County

Lehigh County continues to maintain a significant presence in downtown Allentown. This presence was solidified with the

rehabilitation and reuse of the former Leh's Department Store for its offices during the late 1990's and with the decision to expand and rehabilitate the County Courthouse at 5th and Hamilton Streets. The Lehigh County Prison is also located downtown at 4th and Linden Streets.

State and Federal

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation offices formerly located on Lehigh Street were moved to a downtown building at 10th and Hamilton Streets. The Lehigh Street site will be sold for private development.

The Social Security Offices have returned to the City in a reused building at 4th and Hamilton Streets. The Federal Courthouse at 5th and Hamilton Street is the most recent Federal office to be constructed in the City. The addition of the State and Federal offices creates more employment and office visitation, resulting in increased downtown foot traffic.

<b>GOAL: To provide cost-effective and efficient governmental services and facilities.</b>	
<b>POLICIES:</b>	
27.1	Priority should be given to the maintenance and repair of existing facilities over expansion needs. Expansions of existing facilities or the construction of new facilities should be considered only when absolutely necessary to ensure the efficient provision of services.
27.2	All levels of government should be encouraged to increase their presence in the downtown area through the continuation of current office facilities or the relocation of new office facilities, if possible.

**ACTIONS:**

- Upgrade and operate governmental facilities to higher energy efficiency and optimal indoor air quality.

**Public Safety**

Police Department

The Allentown Police department is headquartered at City Hall. The Department includes the Communications and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Bureaus. In 2005, police calls totaled 107,219, compared to 90,740 in 1996, representing an increase of 18%. EMS calls totaled 12,932. The Department is operating under a 2004 plan that will be revised in the near future.

The Department expects continued increases in the level of service through being proactive, developing prevention strategies, and using technology to collect and analyze information more effectively. For example, a recently installed records management system will be able to provide information on crime patterns and times quicker and the installation of a network of security cameras in high crime areas will assist in the prosecution of crimes.

The Department will continue to focus on reducing crime and the perception of crime, funding, making citizens feel safer, and homeland security.

**GOAL: To ensure the safety and security of Allentown residents, businesses and institutions in partnership with the community.**

**POLICIES:**

28.1 The Police Department should continue its efforts to work with neighborhood organizations and development programs.

28.2 The Police Department should continue to increase its resources to improve the City’s public safety program through grants or service regionalization.

**ACTIONS:**

- As resources permit, expand neighborhood-based police programs.
- Re-introduce crime watch and prevention programs for neighborhood leaders and residents.
- Continue efforts with downtown and neighborhood commercial areas to improve the customers’ sense of safety.
- Continue to obtain grants to underwrite the costs of training and capital improvements.
- Continue to work with Lehigh County Community College in developing joint training programs, and with Lehigh County in interoperability in communications facilities, where there are achievable program improvements and cost savings.

Fire Department

The Fire Department has 6 fire stations strategically located throughout the City, a training academy and administrative offices. Because of the fire stations’ strategic locations, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) locates its ambulances at the stations, and the Fire Department acts as a medical first responder. Over the last 10 years, the number of operations has increased by 1,198 or an average of 3.3 per day, with much of the increase derived from being the first responder. Fortunately, the number of major fires that occurs in the City is small, with responses to automatic alarm and motor vehicle accidents having increased considerably. The Department is beginning an outreach program providing fire education resources to community groups.



The Department is engaged in various regional programs including:

- The Department's Bomb Squad responds to all incidents within Lehigh County, while Lehigh County provides equipment to the squad.
- The Department has mutual aid pacts to bring outside resources into the City.
- Lehigh County provides specialty vehicles such as air units and tankers,
- Lehigh County and the City have a combined Special Operations Team to respond to hazardous material incidents.
- The County has assisted the City in obtaining Homeland Security funding of over \$100,000 in recent years from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA).
- The Fire Academy provides training to Easton and Bethlehem departments on a fee-for-service basis.

**GOAL:** To continue to provide the highest level of emergency and preventive services.

**POLICIES:**

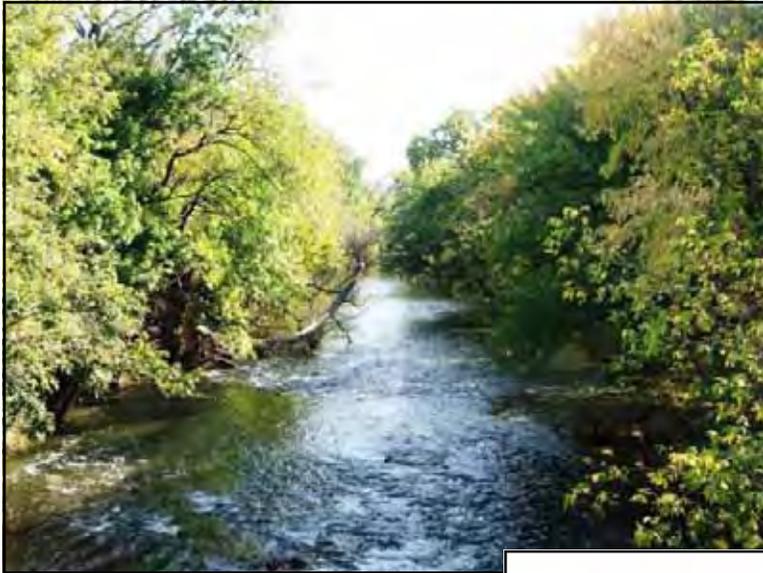
- 29.1 Encourage mutually beneficial training and emergency service programs.
- 29.2 Public education and promotion of fire safety and emergency preparedness should continue to be important department activities.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop a capital program for equipment replacement, physical plant development and maintenance.
- Continue County-coordinated PEMA Homeland Security programs.
- Continue cooperative and regional service programs which provide additional service, reduce costs, and increase revenues.
- Continue the Department's public education programs for fire safety and emergency preparedness.
- Continue the Department's inspection efforts in order to improve Allentown's neighborhoods and commercial facilities.
- Develop a Department capital budget that will provide guidance on physical plant and equipment expenditures.



# ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES



## **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES GOALS:**

- *To protect the City's natural environment through effective regulation and management of land, air, water, and sensitive natural features, within the context of a highly developed urban land area.*
- *To guide the City toward becoming a sustainable community.*

## ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The City's location within the Lehigh Valley brings with it the beauty and opportunity afforded by several natural features, including streams that serve as natural greenways through the City, views of and from South Mountain, and an interesting and varied topography throughout the City. Historically, the City has taken an active role in the protection of these features, initially through an aggressive land acquisition program that provided the foundation for its vast parks system and watershed protection, and later through the protection of South and Lehigh Mountains from further development.

In an urban setting, where much of the City's development pattern has been established, there is a need to establish a responsible balance between the protection of the natural environment and the built environment. While the City encourages new development in order to contribute to its tax base, the potential locations for new development are limited, often resulting in pressures to develop properties that have significant physical limitations. The City needs to strike a balance between protecting the elements of the natural environment from the effects of development while also protecting the built environment from natural or man-made environmental hazards. This section discusses some of the more affected elements of the natural environment, shown on Map 12, and also the need to reclaim previously developed "brownfields" to accommodate additional growth and tax base enhancement.

### Floodplains and Wetlands

The City has relatively few issues relating to floodplain or wetland areas on privately-owned property. State and Federal regulations, as well as extensive public ownership for park and recreational uses along City streams, have minimized the developmental pressures on the areas which are typically the most prone to flooding. The City's participation in the Federal Flood Insurance Program and its local application of building and zoning laws to

reduce flood risks will continue. The City's cooperation with State and Federal authorities concerning wetlands during the review of development plans and proposals will foster compliance with the prevailing wetlands regulations enforced by those authorities.

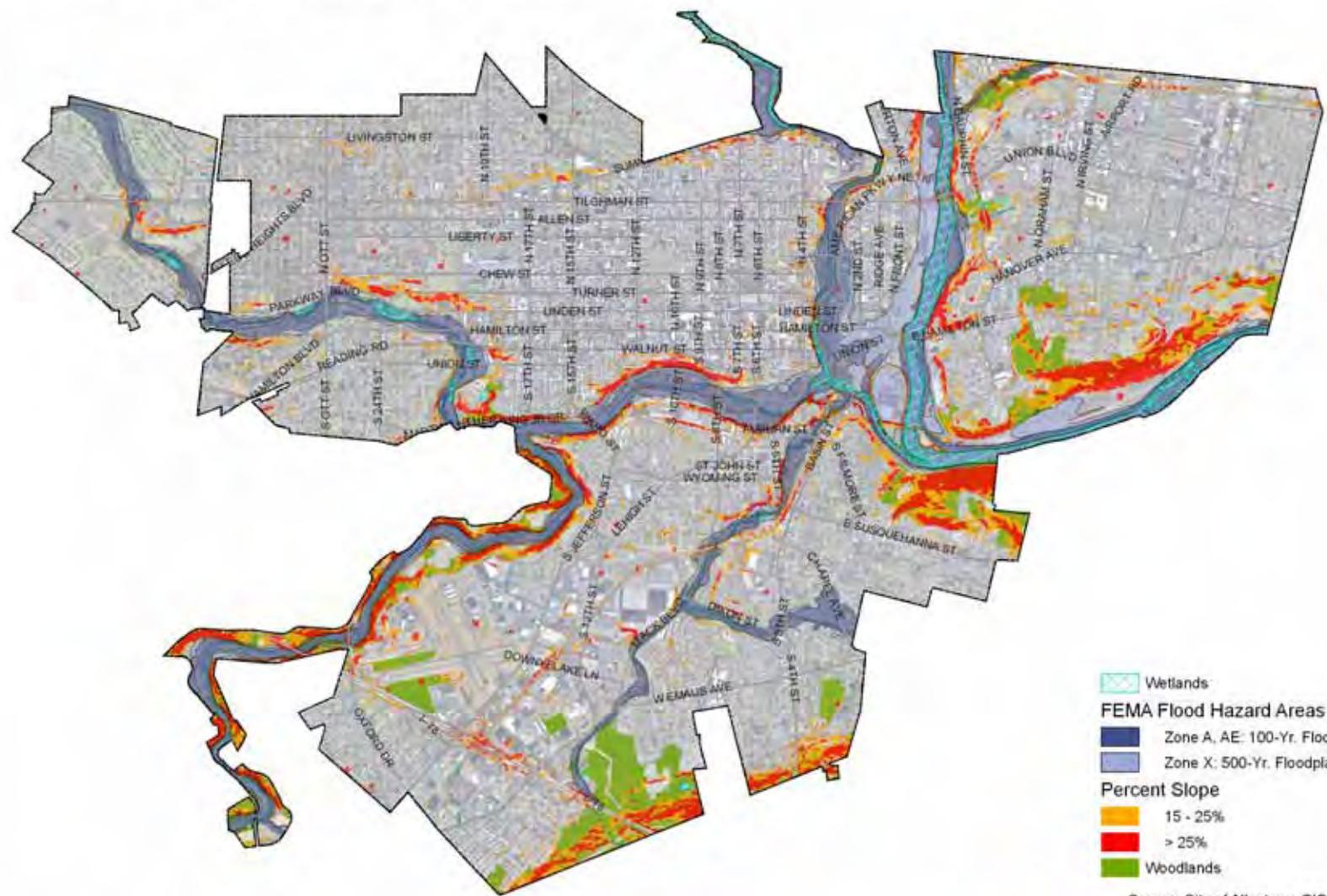
### Steep Slopes and Woodlands

Steep slope areas are those with slopes generally exceeding fifteen percent. Uncontrolled development of these areas can lead to increased stormwater flows and greater risk of soil erosion and sedimentation impacts. Related to the issue of steep slope development is the excessive clear-cutting of trees when development occurs in woodland areas. As with steep slope development, the clear-cutting of trees can lead to increased runoff, soil erosion and sedimentation, as well as affecting wildlife habitats and aesthetics. To a great degree, the steeply sloped and wooded areas within the City are protected through existing measures, such as the conservation zoning on South Mountain and the acquisition of open space through the City parks system. A few areas do exist which have not been afforded these protections. Stricter regulations on the development or use of privately owned properties in steeply sloped and wooded areas should be considered, particularly along South Mountain, Lehigh Mountain and the Lehigh River corridor.

### Carbonate Geology and Sinkholes

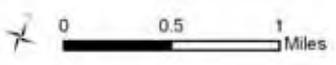
Allentown, like much of the Lehigh Valley, is underlain with limestone, a water-soluble carbonate rock, which dissolves when it is exposed to water. This interaction between the rock and water can create underground voids which undermine the stability of the ground surface, resulting in sinkholes. Sinkholes can develop naturally, however their development may also be facilitated by construction activity and the aging of water and sewer lines, which

# MAP 12 ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS



- Wetlands
- FEMA Flood Hazard Areas**
- Zone A, AE- 100-Yr. Floodplain
- Zone X: 500-Yr. Floodplain
- Percent Slope**
- 15 - 25%
- > 25%
- Woodlands

Source: City of Allentown GIS




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can cause increased amounts of water to rapidly infiltrate the ground. Allentown has seen periodic appearances of sinkholes in recent history which have undermined streets and even buildings. While it is almost impossible to determine where a sinkhole collapse might occur, continuing efforts to chart the locations of past sinkhole occurrences will help to pinpoint problem areas. The ongoing maintenance of City water and sewer infrastructure will help to minimize the potential for leakages that could contribute to future occurrences. Increased outreach must be provided to property owners about the importance of obtaining sinkhole insurance to provide relief to them from the financial effects of sinkhole occurrences.

### **Water Quality**

The City uses four water sources for its drinking water, which include two surface water sources and two groundwater sources. The surface water sources are the Little Lehigh Creek, the primary source, and the Lehigh River, which is used only as a backup supply. The groundwater sources are Crystal Spring, located in the City, and Schantz Spring, located in Upper Macungie Township. There are also a limited number of domestic and industrial users who have private groundwater resources. Assessments of the City's water sources at various times have shown some potential pollution activities within the watershed areas in the form of agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential activities. However, it has been determined that existing State and Federal regulations should provide adequate protection. The City works with local watershed groups to raise awareness for and implement source water protection programs. The focus of future watershed protection activities should be on controlling the quality of stormwater runoff, particularly along transportation corridors near the water sources.

### **Air Quality**

Though air quality is a local health concern, the establishment of air quality standards, and their administration and enforcement, fall within the purview of the State and Federal governments. The City is most involved through its participation in Federal highway programs which require compliance with regional air quality planning. The City has implemented several traffic design improvements in the recent past to achieve slight reductions in carbon monoxide emissions.

The City has recently begun participating in a Climate Protection Agreement to help reduce global warming, cut dependence on fossil fuels, and accelerate development of clean, economical energy resources and fuel-efficient technologies. The City is also a partner in the Air Quality Partnership, a public/private coalition dedicated to improving air quality in the most populous areas of Pennsylvania.

### **Brownfields**

Brownfields are underutilized lands that may be contaminated or polluted by hazardous substances, typically as the result of former industrial or commercial uses. There are approximately 20 brownfield sites scattered throughout the City. The cleanup of brownfield sites has become more important in recent years, both in protecting nearby residents from potential risks and by enabling the redevelopment of otherwise unusable properties. The regulatory process for brownfield cleanup falls under the State and Federal governments, as does funding to assist in both the cleanup and redevelopment of such sites. The City must continue its efforts to promote and assist in the cleanup and redevelopment of its brownfield sites.

**Natural Resources**

In 2005, the Nature Conservancy updated its “Natural Areas Inventory of Lehigh and Northampton Counties” which identifies outstanding floral, faunal and geologic features in the Lehigh Valley. The inventory identifies one area of statewide significance and one area of local significance that are in, or affected by, the City of Allentown.

The area of statewide significance is the Robert Rodale Reserve, located on the northwest facing slope of South Mountain, straddling portions of Allentown, Salisbury Township and Emmaus. The area is jointly owned by the City of Allentown and the Wildlands Conservancy. The quality of the site is threatened by logging activities, and by increased populations of exotic plant species. In order to protect this site, there is a need to prevent trails, especially mountain biking, from crossing through or near seepage areas or vernal pools, and to prevent further forest fragmentation by minimizing disturbance to the area.

The area of local significance is the Lehigh Mountain, in particular the north facing slope above the Lehigh River. The site is located in Salisbury Township, but portions are owned jointly by the City of Allentown, Salisbury Township and Lehigh County. The report indicates that the area contains a large second growth forest and is significant in that it is one of the largest tracts of relatively undisturbed forest left along the Lehigh River south of Blue Mountain. It has particular value both for the protection of biodiversity and for recreation because of its close proximity to the heavily developed Allentown-Bethlehem area. There is a need to prevent further fragmentation of the forest by minimizing disturbance to it, and to minimize competition from invasive shrubs and herbs.

**GOAL: To protect the City's natural environment through effective regulation and management of land, air, water, and sensitive natural features, within the context of a highly developed urban land area.**

**POLICIES:**

- 30.1 Actions should be taken to minimize the use of steep slopes and woodland areas for development. Where steep slopes and woodland areas are proposed for development, design alternatives to protect and mitigate any negative impacts typically associated with their use should be required.
- 30.2 The City should encourage the reuse of previously developed properties or brownfields.
- 30.3 To the extent possible, the City should seek to minimize the occurrence of sinkhole collapse through utility management planning and public awareness.
- 30.4 The City should protect wetlands, floodplains, watersheds, and other environmentally sensitive areas, consistent with State and Federal law, and reduce flood hazard risks of development.
- 30.5 The City should continue to work with local watershed groups to raise awareness for and implement source water protection programs.
- 30.6 The City should continue to adhere to the Federal Clean Air Act in pursuit of its activities and policies and participate in regional transportation programs intended to improve air quality.
- 30.7 The City should assist in the implementation of the recommendations of the Natural Areas Inventory of Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

**ACTIONS:**

- Identify steep slope and wooded areas most susceptible to development, particularly on South Mountain and Lehigh

Mountain and in the Lehigh River watershed, and adopt appropriate regulatory measures through zoning and subdivision ordinances, acquisition, or other practices minimizing negative impacts upon these areas. Regulatory measures should include provisions that reduce the overall intensity of the development, provide flexibility in design to avoid steeply sloped areas greater than 25%, protect against clear-cutting activities, and require effective erosion and sedimentation control and stormwater management techniques.

- Continue the City's land acquisition program for open space, greenways, and natural areas through the Capital Program, the "Lehigh County Green Futures Fund" and other cooperative efforts that have proven successful, particularly those identified in the regional "Natural Resources Plan" and the City's "Parks and Recreation Master Plan". Seek measures to further protect the Lehigh River corridor.
- Encourage private landowners to establish conservation easements on environmentally sensitive properties in exchange for tax credits.



- Expand land use regulations to require developers to submit documentation of existing environmental and natural conditions when developing previously undeveloped properties, including an inventory of natural species.
- Work with property owners, developers, and other agencies to find, evaluate and mitigate any contamination of former industrial sites.
- Lessen construction risks by providing information on the occurrences of sinkholes at specific sites when available. Appropriate site investigation, planning and design should follow specific site review.
- Continue routine inspection of City infrastructure with the intent of reducing leakages as one possible factor in sinkhole collapse.
- Increase public awareness of the availability of sinkhole insurance and the importance of having water leaks repaired quickly.
- Continue to participate in the Federal Flood Insurance Program and implement its regulations prescribing land use and structural design risk reduction measures.
- Implement best management practices for stormwater and watershed management to protect water quality and minimize flooding.
- Continue to identify wetlands during the early review of development plans and coordinate State and Federal regulatory processes.
- Continue to participate in and increase public awareness of air quality action programs.

**Sustainability**

There has been increasing discussion in recent years about the need for communities to become sustainable. In its simplest sense, as defined by the World Commission on Environment Development in 1987, a sustainable community is one that meets its present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In order to ensure Allentown’s sustainability, there needs to be a systematic, integrated approach that brings together environmental, economic and social goals and actions. The American Planning Association has developed a strategy for planning for sustainability that is comprised of four main objectives:

- Reducing dependence on fossil fuels, metals and minerals that are extracted from the Earth;
- Reducing dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in the air, water, land, or living things;
- Reducing dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems; and
- Meeting human needs fairly and efficiently.

A comprehensive strategy for achieving greater sustainability would include approaches that seek to make more efficient all of the functions of city government; from the way it provides basic services to the manner in which it attracts and regulates new development. Finding ways to increase energy efficiency, reduce waste and improve productivity would be basic objectives within such a strategy, but these are beyond the scope of this document. While the Comprehensive Plan contains numerous policies and actions that support its growth and development in a sustainable manner, the City needs a more complete strategy. Toward that end, this plan recommends that the City’s Environmental Advisory Council take the lead in pursuit of such a plan with the assistance of all City departments.

**GOAL:** To guide the City toward becoming a sustainable community.

**POLICY:**

31.1 To implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan whenever possible to promote practices that support sustainability.

**ACTIONS:**

- Assign the Environmental Advisory Council to oversee the planning process and implement a sustainability plan for the City.
- Provide public education and awareness of sustainable practices.
- Develop community-wide support and cooperation in becoming a sustainable community.
- Support regional initiatives that encourage the implementation of smart growth policies and initiatives.

# TRANSPORTATION



## TRANSPORTATION GOALS:

- *To provide and maintain a street and highway network which affords the best possible mobility, convenience, and safety for the public within the City and the surrounding areas.*
- *A public transportation system capable of delivering a wide variety of transportation services which meet the basic needs of the residents of the area; provide services responsibly, cost effectively, and safely; and are coordinated with desired economic, social, and environmental goals.*
- *To provide adequate, convenient, and affordable parking in the Central Business District for all users including shoppers and employees.*
- *To manage the parking supply to provide the convenient parking of vehicles that does not impede traffic circulation and accommodates residents' and users' needs.*
- *The development and maintenance of inter-city transit service which fulfills the needs of riders and potential riders; provides service to major metropolitan areas including New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.; and includes terminal facilities with parking and convenient access to local public transportation.*
- *To better facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel.*

## TRANSPORTATION

An effective transportation system is necessary in an urban area to preserve and enhance economic activity, relieve congestion, and promote energy conservation. Essential to the development and maintenance of an effective transportation network is consideration of not only the street and highway network, but other modes of transportation including public transportation, intercity bus service, walking, and bicycling. Additionally, adequate parking facilities must be available in residential neighborhoods, at employment sites, and in commercial areas. This transportation strategy is directed toward providing mobility, convenience, and safety for motorists, pedestrians, and transit users.

### Highway and Street Network

#### Existing Network

The regional highway network plays an important role in preserving and enhancing the vitality of the City. Traffic routes 145, 309, 222, 22 and Interstate Routes 78 and 476 make the Allentown area accessible from all directions and most importantly, provide easy access to the New York and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Access to the City's downtown area is served directly from the north and south by Route 145 and from the west by Route 222.

Locally, Allentown is served by a long established street network consisting of arterial, collector and local streets. Although movement through the City is generally considered good, north-south travel is sometimes difficult. Limited rights of way and existing development are constraints to correcting this situation. In several instances, the street network used to move traffic into and out of the City consists of primarily residential streets, creating some conflict between the two functions. In an effort to improve its system of arterial streets, direct traffic away from residential areas and to ease congestion in general, the City has completed several

Projects, including the extension of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive to South 24th Street, the American Parkway in east Allentown, and the Sumner Avenue Extension. Map 13 shows the City's network and classification of streets.

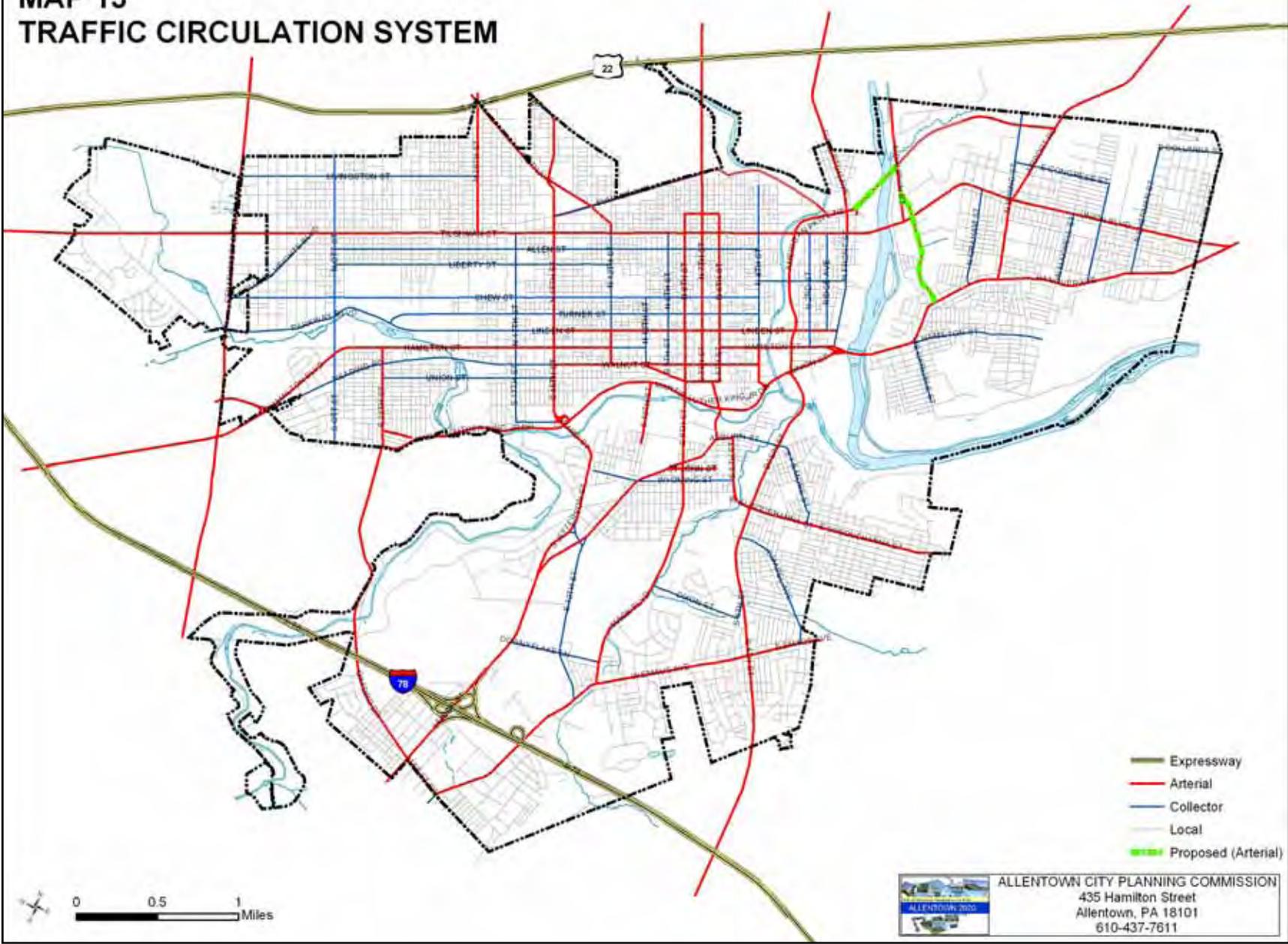
Just as important as traffic movement within the City is the ability to reach the City conveniently and safely, and conversely for City residents to access the developing employment centers being established on the periphery of the City. Suburban growth and development have resulted in increased congestion along several arterials into the City, most notable of which are Route 222 from the west, Route 145 from the north and Airport Road from the northeast. The completion of the Route 222 bypass from Wescosville to Trexlertown will relieve congestion on that stretch of Route 222, while improvements to Route 145 in Whitehall Township and along Airport Road have been completed. Meanwhile, Route 22 through the Lehigh Valley continues to experience increases in volumes and is the subject of a long-term effort to be improved and widened.

#### Congested Corridors and Other Areas of Concern

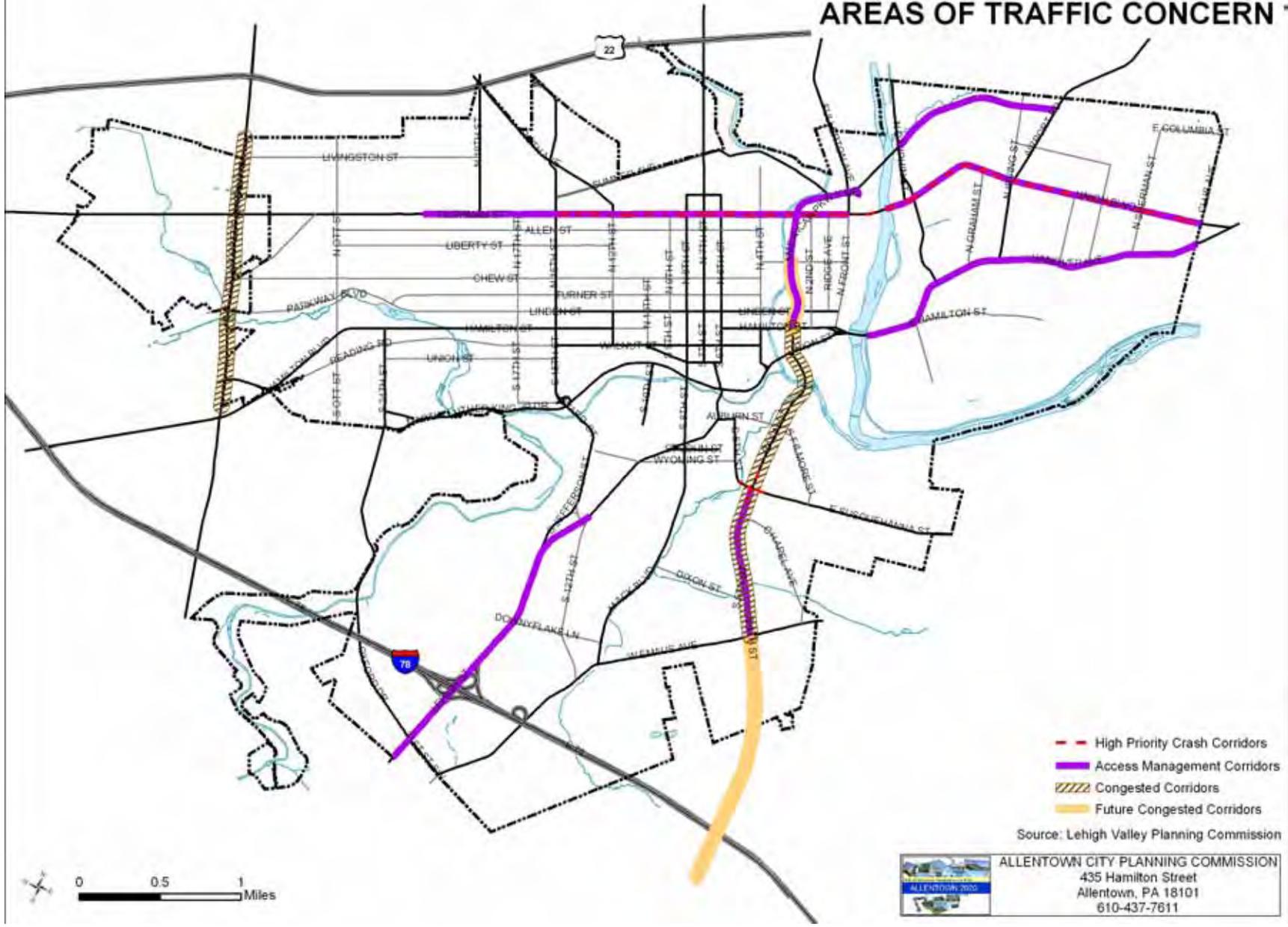
Map 14 indicates those corridors identified in "The Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan, 2007-2030" as either currently congested or projected to be congested by 2030. They include portions of the South 4th Street corridor in South Allentown and Cedar Crest Boulevard, segments of which either abut or are located in the City. Congestion management studies have been conducted for both of these corridors. By the year 2030, it is projected that congested corridors will continue to include Cedar Crest Boulevard, and the American Parkway corridor from Gordon Street south to I-78, inclusive of the South 4th Street corridor.

Map 14 also indicates locations identified by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission as "high priority crash locations" (corridors that are important both in terms of accident frequency and

# MAP 13 TRAFFIC CIRCULATION SYSTEM



### MAP 14 AREAS OF TRAFFIC CONCERN



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severity). In the City, they include the Tilghman Street/Union Boulevard corridor between Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street; and the intersection of South 4th and Susquehanna Streets.

Existing and Potential Major Traffic Generators

Despite losing many of its largest employers over the past 20 years, the City is home to a number of institutions and land uses that currently generate a significant amount of traffic. They include St. Luke’s, Lehigh Valley, Sacred Heart and Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospitals; Muhlenberg and Cedar Crest Colleges; seasonal operations such as the Allentown Fairgrounds, the newly opened Lehigh Valley Baseball Stadium in east Allentown and J. Birney Crum Stadium in West Allentown; and the downtown itself with its offices, arts and entertainment venues.

Additionally, several areas have been identified in this plan as places where new development and redevelopment should be encouraged, but that are likely to have impacts on traffic circulation and congestion. These include the Lehigh River waterfront and the Lehigh Street/I-78 Corridor. Future planning for these areas needs to consider impacts on traffic congestion and associated improvements.

Planned Improvements

With the completion of the projects mentioned earlier, the list of large scale highway improvements in the City is limited to the following:

- American Parkway Bridge over the Lehigh River: This project is currently in final design with an anticipated construction date of 2010. This project will complete the American Parkway corridor from downtown Allentown to Airport Road, thus providing improved access to Route 22 and the Lehigh Valley International Airport. The project includes the installation of other congestion management techniques on various corridors

within the project area that will help relieve congestion on Union Boulevard and Hanover Avenue.

- New England Avenue: Located in East Allentown, this new arterial will provide for improved north-south access between Hanover Avenue, Union Boulevard and the American Parkway. Construction is scheduled to commence in 2009.
- South 4th Street Improvements: Modest improvements have recently been made to this commercial corridor, as it has experienced increases in volumes since the completion of I-78 south of the City. With the eventual construction of the American Parkway Bridge, this corridor will be part of a larger network that connects the American Parkway with I-78. More extensive improvements, including the widening of South 4th Street between Emaus Avenue and Auburn Street, is included in the long-range element of the “Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan, 2007-2030.”

Access Management

The City is traversed by a number of arterial roads that have developed as commercial corridors. These corridors are typically characterized by smaller commercial lots that were developed independently having at least one or two driveways, often in close proximity to one another. This situation causes conflicts with traffic on the arterial and potential safety issues.

Working with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, six corridors identified on Map 13 were studied. The result was a series of recommended legislative actions and changes to driveway standards along these streets. These recommendations include provisions relating to the number of driveways permitted; requirements for cross-easements and shared access among uses; improved sight distance standards; better driveway spacing and the requirement of traffic impact studies for developments of various sizes.

**GOAL:** To provide and maintain a street and highway network which affords the best possible mobility, convenience, and safety for the public within the City and surrounding areas.

**POLICIES:**

- 32.1 The City should pursue the construction of new transportation facilities to accommodate present and future traffic volumes where their need and feasibility have been established.
- 32.2 Adequate transportation facilities should be provided to satisfy the projected needs of new development and major land use changes.
- 32.3 The City should continue to work with regional, State and Federal agencies to implement needed highway transportation improvements within the City and its environs.
- 32.4 The City should pursue congestion management strategies on corridors and at intersections that experience severe congestion.
- 32.5 The City should adopt stricter standards regulating access onto heavier traveled arterial roads.
- 32.6 Traffic calming techniques should be employed where warranted and practical.

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue to pursue the construction of the American Parkway Bridge and New England Avenue as high priority projects.
- Conduct traffic studies in conjunction with land use and redevelopment planning of the Lehigh Waterfront area and

Lehigh Street/I-78 Corridor.

- Pursue the implementation of the South 4th Street improvements as recommended in the “LVTS Surface Transportation Plan”.
- Continue to monitor roadway conditions to determine locations in need of improvement to relieve congestion and/or improve safety.
- Continue to synchronize traffic signals to maximize traffic movement efficiency in order to minimize fuel consumption and reduce carbon monoxide emissions.
- Remain an active participant on the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study.
- Investigate and implement traffic calming techniques on residential streets that meet established standards.
- Develop and implement access management techniques.

**Public Transportation**

Public transportation has been an important mode of travel within the City since before the turn of the century. Much of the area's early growth and development was closely associated with the location of trolley tracks and the availability of transit service. In 1972, the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority (LANTA) was created to restore high quality transit service to the Lehigh Valley.

More than 4.6 million trips are taken on the Metro transit system annually. In addition, LANTA operates Metro Plus, a door-to-door specialized reservation service. About 460,000 trips are taken annually on this service which provides access to essential

community services for the elderly, people with disabilities and those who are financially disadvantaged.

While public transportation does not capture a very large market share of trips taken locally, it is estimated that about 10% of the population rely on public transit either regularly or sometime during the year. Given the rising cost of gasoline and local efforts towards “smart growth,” public transportation has the potential to be a far greater asset within the community than it has been in recent decades.

Traditionally, public transportation has been the strongest in Center City Allentown. This is still true, with 66% of LANTA's daily bus trips providing service there. Almost 4,000 passenger trips are made daily into downtown, including passengers transferring from one bus to another. This represents about 25% of all trips taken on LANTA Metro buses daily. Further, 17 of Metro's 26 bus routes serve Center City, and more than half of the 600 scheduled bus trips operate daily in downtown. According to the 2000 census, 4% of Allentown's labor force used public transportation as their means to get to work compared to less than 1% for the balance of Lehigh County.

Recently, operations in downtown were improved with the opening of the Allentown Transportation Center (ATC) at 6th and Linden Streets. This facility serves to provide a central staging and transfer point in downtown and has enabled LANTA to eliminate operations along Hamilton Street in downtown that had proven to be inefficient. The project was a partnership between LANTA, the Allentown Parking Authority, the City of Allentown, the County of Lehigh, and the Morning Call. The ATC will serve as an inter-modal transportation center, including an intracity bus terminal and a parking facility, with a total project cost of over \$14 million. The structure includes a 500-space parking deck, 11,000 square foot surface parking lot for public use, a sixteen-berth bus plaza, 5,000 square foot transfer terminal and separate retail areas. It is estimated that 3,500 transit riders will use this new transfer center daily.

While Center City continues to be the primary service area, LANTA faces the problem of addressing an area of expanding employment dispersion. As more offices and industries locate beyond the Center City areas, the transit system becomes less able to respond quickly and cost effectively. This lack of accessibility is of concern for City residents in need of these employment opportunities. Complicating the situation is the need to provide service for employees who work 2nd and 3rd shifts or those who need transportation to day care in addition to transportation to their place of employment. Various initiatives have been implemented to help address these needs, each with varying degrees of success.

LANTA has just initiated a year long process to prepare a Regional Transportation Development Plan (TDP). The process will include a complete evaluation of its route structure and will attempt to identify service issues and community needs through a variety of survey instruments, interviews with community leaders and an advisory committee. The results of this process will go a long way toward identifying needs and developing a system that addresses those needs. It is important that the City and other advocates for public transportation be involved in this process.

**GOAL:** A public transportation system capable of delivering a wide variety of transportation services which meet the basic needs of residents; provide services responsibly, cost-effectively, and safely; and are coordinated with desired economic, social, and environmental goals.

**POLICIES:**

- 33.1 Emphasis should be placed on increasing transit ridership through facilitating movement along fixed routes, particularly in and around the central business district, and providing convenient access to the system.
- 33.2 The provision of quality public transportation access to major employment, educational, social, and health care

facilities outside of Center City should be encouraged in order to address the mobility needs of City residents.

33.3 Regional land use polices and development patterns that are favorable to the provision of public transportation should be supported.

**ACTIONS:**

- Participate in LANTA's Regional Transportation Development Planning process and be an advocate for City residents in need of reliable, economical and efficient service.
- Ensure that regional transportation plans further City development and downtown revitalization.
- Encourage LANTA to continue to monitor and evaluate routes in an effort to improve access for City residents to major educational, social, and health care facilities.
- Consider public transit needs and bus accessibility in the review of all new land developments.

**Parking**

The provision of adequate parking space for automobiles is an essential element of the City's transportation system. Parking is a scarce and valuable commodity which must be managed in an organized and professional manner in order to accommodate the needs of residents, shoppers, and others within the City. The Allentown Parking Authority was created in 1985 to meet this need. The issue of parking availability ranked high on the citizen survey responses with respect to the ability to park downtown and as a factor of concern with any new development.

Parking plays an important part in maintaining and improving the

vitality of Center City. The most recent comprehensive evaluation of downtown parking occurred in 1982 focusing on the area bounded by Chew, 4th, Union, and 12th Streets. More recently, the Parking Authority was a partner in two evaluations that resulted in the construction of the new Allentown Transportation Center, which includes parking for 508 vehicles, and the new Government Center Deck at 4th and Hamilton Streets, which can accommodate 550 vehicles. Both of these parking decks, and many of the Authority's other downtown facilities, accommodate both contract and public parking. Generally, downtown is considered to be well served, except for the area west of 10th Street.

In addition to the downtown area, the Parking Authority manages on-street parking and helps to accommodate resident parking in congested areas through the Residential Permit Parking (RPP) Program and the provision of neighborhood parking lots. Currently, six RPP zones are located in the City around the downtown area and the larger institutions where employee and resident parking conflicts occur. These areas are typically designated for short term on-street parking, except for residents who purchase a RPP permit. The Parking Authority will be conducting a thorough evaluation of the RPP program in 2008.

Many of Allentown's neighborhoods experience residential parking difficulties. Narrow streets which cannot accommodate two sided parking, closely spaced and/or narrow width dwelling units, limited off-street parking sites, and multi-family dwelling units all contribute to the competition for available spaces. In response, neighborhood parking lots have been developed where opportunities have presented themselves, usually as a result of a building demolition or acquisition of a vacant parcel. The City will typically acquire and construct the lot then turn it over to the Parking Authority, which then provides spaces to neighborhood residents through a monthly lease. In total, the Authority manages 17 such lots, with a total number of 383 parking spaces.

**GOAL:** To provide adequate, convenient, and affordable parking in the Central Business District for all downtown users including shoppers and employees.

**POLICY:**

34.1 In order to enhance the vitality of the central business district, adequate off-street and on-street parking should be provided and marketed to fulfill the needs of the various user groups.

**ACTIONS:**

- Work with the Allentown Parking Authority to aggressively market existing transient parking facilities to ensure the public's awareness of locations and validation programs.
- Work with the Allentown Parking Authority to ensure that nighttime facilities and adjacent streets are amply illuminated. Make pedestrian access to parking facilities more attractive.
- Investigate zoning and other means to ensure that sufficient parking is provided for new Center City development.
- Investigate the possibility of a joint public-private venture to provide facilities to alleviate the shortage of contract spaces west of 10th Street in the downtown area.

**GOAL:** To manage the parking supply to provide the convenient parking of vehicles that accommodates the needs of residents and users and does not impede traffic circulation.

**POLICIES:**

35.1 On-street parking supply and loading facilities must be managed efficiently to fulfill the needs of adjacent land

uses and support safe traffic movement on public streets.

35.2 The supply of residential parking areas should be sufficient to enhance the livability of neighborhoods.

35.3 The Zoning Ordinance should continue to require off-street parking for all land uses in accord with nationally accepted standards except where certain local experiences may warrant deviation from those standards. Methods aimed at gaining the maximum utilization of parking lots such as "shared parking" arrangements and reduced parking stall standards should be employed where practical.

**ACTIONS:**

- Continue to monitor land use changes and institute on-street parking controls to provide the most effective use of curbside space.
- Increase parking enforcement at locations where illegal double-parking has been identified as a major factor in traffic accidents.
- Expand the Residential Permit Parking Program (RPP) to provide relief to impacted neighborhoods not currently included within designated RPP areas.
- Construct neighborhood lots in impacted areas as opportunities arise.

**Intercity Bus Service**

Highway improvements, in particular the construction of Interstate Route 78, have made the Lehigh Valley area more accessible to the New York City area and other metropolitan centers. This improved accessibility has allowed people and businesses to

move to the Lehigh Valley where real estate costs are lower and a more attractive environment exists. The growth in both the Philadelphia-Lehigh Valley and the New York City-Lehigh Valley corridors has increased the demand for transit to those areas. According to the “Lehigh Valley Surface Transportation Plan, 2007-2030”, a total of 50 round trips per weekday are made to New York City and 9 round trips are made to the Philadelphia area from the Lehigh Valley. All of these trips are provided by for-profit, private carriers. A study conducted in 1990 reviewed the New York City service and concluded that there were no significant shortcomings in that service and that public intervention was not needed at that point in time. The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority is currently examining this corridor and may reach different conclusions.

Allentown's intercity bus service terminal is a privately-operated facility that was recently relocated to North Race and Hamilton Streets. The site is located along LANTA routes and provides a pull-off area for buses and a small parking lot. In addition to New York City, daily service is available to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Newark (Airport), and a number of other smaller metropolitan areas. There have been some preliminary discussions of relocating this facility to the Allentown Transportation Center.

**GOAL:** The development and maintenance of intercity transit service which fulfills the needs of riders and potential riders, provides service to major metropolitan areas, and includes terminal facilities with parking and convenient access to local public transportation.

**POLICY:**

36.1 Steps should be taken to ensure that convenient and efficient transit service is available between the Lehigh Valley and the New York City and Philadelphia metropolitan areas.

**ACTIONS:**

- Encourage regional planning bodies and public transportation officials to continue to monitor the usage of bus service to New York and other major metropolitan areas to ensure that services satisfy ridership demands.
- Facilitate discussions between LANTA and the intercity bus operators on the possibility of relocating those functions to the Allentown Transportation Center.
- Participate in planning and feasibility studies to examine the potential for rail service and to ensure that any future service benefits the City and its residents to the fullest.

**Bicycle/Pedestrian Travel**

Pedestrian and bicycle travel are of increasing interest in the City's planning and design considerations. Almost 20% of the City's households do not own automobiles, and among renters the percentage is more pronounced, at over 31%. This trend is reinforced by the fact that in 2000, 7.5% of Allentown's employed walked to work, though only 0.3% of workers bicycled to work. In recent years LANTA has outfitted its buses with bike carriers to facilitate inter-modal “bus-bike” capabilities.

As it was when Allentown's Center City neighborhoods were built, being able to walk to work or shop is still an important aspect of urban life. The increasing cost of fossil fuels and the burden it places on car ownership, especially among the City's lower and moderate income population, and a growing movement towards “green” technologies and lifestyles, are trends likely to increase the importance of “walkability” and bicycling over the Plan's implementation. The recreational and health value of these modes is also important.

In order to foster this movement, pedestrian and bicycle travel need to be safe and convenient. Although the City has not undertaken any comprehensive studies with respect to these modes of travel, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission recently completed a safety evaluation throughout the two county area. Clusters of crashes involving pedestrians and motorists occurred along the 7th Street corridor from Washington to Union Streets and on Tilghman Street between 4th and 12th Streets. The installation of new and repair of existing sidewalks; the construction of sidewalk extensions or “curb bulb-outs” at high traffic intersections; the installation of crosswalks at busy intersections; and efforts at traffic calming are measures that improve the pedestrian experience and pedestrian safety. The City currently requires that sidewalks be installed in all new developments and routinely inspects the condition of existing sidewalks to determine the need for repair.



The data regarding bicycle/motorist crashes is less discerning on a regional level, however, 7th and Tilghman Streets was identified as one area that showed some clustering of crashes. Improvements to the bicycling experience, particularly for on-street travel, is more complicated, with less

consensus among professionals. Education in understanding and following pedestrian and bicycling laws is one key area of agreement, however. Recommendations contained elsewhere in this Plan which call for the pursuit of a comprehensive trail network throughout the City will go a long way toward accommodating off-road pedestrian and biking needs.

**GOAL:** To better facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel.

**POLICIES:**

- 37.1 Land development proposals should include provisions for both pedestrians and bicyclists, such as appropriately designed sidewalks, street crossings, access onto and through commercial sites and bicycle storage facilities at high traffic areas.
- 37.2 The City’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance should be kept up-to-date with the best practices for bicyclists and pedestrians for their application in substantial developments.
- 37.3 The City’s Capital Program should include public improvements that facilitate both walking and bicycling to employment and neighborhood shopping facilities proximate to City residential areas.
- 37.4 Pedestrian and bicycling trends should be monitored in order to better meet changing resident transportation choices and how they impact employment and shopping.

**ACTIONS:**

- Develop a Bicycle Master Plan for the City.
- Continue to require the installation of sidewalks for all new development.
- Consider the need for pedestrian and/or bicycle access and facilities as part of the site plan review process.
- Employ techniques to improve pedestrian safety on all major arteries, with particular emphasis on the North 7th Street corridor.
- Work with design professionals and bicycle advocates in developing consensus for on-street bicycle provisions.

# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

As a policy document, the Plan provides a framework for the City and its agencies to follow in making decisions in a number of key areas involving land use, resource allocation, program development and facility location, to name a few. The Plan also provides numerous recommended actions that can be taken to help in fulfilling the goals, policies and vision that the plan sets forth. Most importantly, once adopted, there needs to be a recognition that the Plan serves as the City's official policy document on matters relating to its future growth and development.

Several of the more significant elements and implementation measures identified in the Plan are as follows:

**Framework for the Future:** As described in the Plan, this early section provides a list of ten basic principles/actions that should be used as a general guide in taking action. They represent those issues and needs that transcend a number of areas and represent in effect, a priority list of things to do to ensure future success

**Strategic Planning Areas Development:** The plan identifies eight areas throughout the city that hold the most potential for significant economic growth or require a focused effort of renewal and redevelopment. The development of each of these areas should be guided by their own individual plans and strategies developed in concert with the overriding goals policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Revise Zoning Regulations:** The current zoning ordinance was adopted in 2000 and is currently undergoing a "strategic" review, primarily for the purpose of introducing the concept of Traditional Neighborhood Development standards and practices into the ordinance. The Plan should also serve as the basis for the consideration of future zoning amendments and land use changes.

**Capital Improvements Programming:** The plan reinforces the need to continue to program needed capital improvements through an annual systematic process that reflects the priorities of maintenance, repair and upgrading.

**Neighborhood Improvement Plans:** The plan recommends that Current neighborhood revitalization and support programs be strengthened through comprehensive neighborhood improvement plans jointly prepared by neighborhood residents and City staff.

**Economic Development Planning and Programming:** The plan identifies several development and redevelopment opportunities, and recommends the pursuit of various business assistance and recruitment programs. Most importantly, the Plan emphasizes the need for increasing resident incomes and employment. While the Plan sets the tone for these matters, the City looks to the Allentown Economic Development Corporation and other economic development partners for implementation.

In addition to these key strategies and those that are found throughout the Plan, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code requires that certain governmental activities be reviewed by the Planning Commission for conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

### Monitoring and Updating

Changes happen. It would be unrealistic to expect that economic, social, and even political changes would not affect the course of action or issues laid out in the Plan. The Planning Commission should monitor the implementation of the Plan after its adoption, and evaluate its performance bi-annually. Formal updates will be conducted every ten (10) years to ensure the Plan's continued relevance, reflect current thinking, and adjust to emerging local and regional trends.

**INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG PLAN ELEMENTS**

The Plan’s “Framework for the Future” provides 10 themes, or principles, which emerged during the planning process. Elements of these common themes were brought out at the initial and draft review public meetings, in the citywide survey, and committee meetings. The themes resonate in one or more plan elements as described below.

1. **Regional Thinking.** Regional thinking is illustrated in the Community Facilities, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, and Environment and Natural Resources elements. The various theme references illustrate how the City’s growth and future are interdependent with other communities throughout the Lehigh Valley.
2. **Our Changing Population.** Perhaps the single most fundamental change experienced in the City over the past 15 years has been its residents. The City’s population has changed and with it so have its neighborhoods, workforce, and business community. The Plan’s Housing, Neighborhood Conservation, and Economic Development elements recognize these facts and speak to the need to be sensitive to and involve all of Allentown’s residents in the city’s economy and community affairs.
3. **Our Economic Development Strategy.** Increasing resident incomes and the City’s tax bases is central to the plan’s Economic Development element, and manifests itself in the Goals and Objectives contained in the Land Use element.
4. **Our Downtown.** The Plan’s Economic Development, Land Use and Community Facilities elements contribute to the fulfillment of this framework principle. These elements support the downtown as being the locus of intense commercial, entertainment, arts and culture, government and residential activity.
5. **Livable Neighborhoods.** The Neighborhood Conservation, Housing and Land Use elements provide the foundation upon which neighborhood maintenance and improvement can be built. Because of the importance placed on the issue of neighborhood conservation, it has been highlighted as a separate plan element.
6. **Our Housing Stock.** The Plan links the quality of a community’s housing stock with the quality of its neighborhoods in both the Housing and Neighborhood Conservation elements.
7. **Our Built Environment.** This theme is woven into the Historic Preservation, Housing and Land Use elements, with each having supportive goals, policies, and activities to contribute to the City’s appearance and protection of historic and architectural resources. The Environment and Natural Resources element discusses the need to protect the built environment from natural or man-made environmental hazards.
8. **Our Parks System** There is no greater consensus in the City than that over the extent, richness, beauty and untapped potential of the City’s park system. The Community Facilities, Environment and Natural Resources, and Neighborhood Conservation elements speak to the implementation of the City’s recent Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the acquisition of land for open space and the location of future parks.
9. **Our Transportation System.** The Transportation element proposes goals, policies and activities for transportation system improvements, however, more significantly, both the Transportation and Economic Development elements stress the need for improving access and meeting the commuting needs of persons needing work beyond the City’s boundaries.

The Transportation and Neighborhood Conservation elements also discuss the importance of walkable or bicycle friendly neighborhoods.

10. **Our Natural Environment and Sustainability.** The Environment and Natural Resources element gives substance to the Framework's concern for the environment and natural features and promotes the sustainability of the City. Specifically, the plan speaks to the issue of sustainability from the perspective of ensuring the City's attractiveness as an alternative to suburban sprawl and ensuring its future as a livable urban community. Elements of the plan that promote sustainability include encouraging the continuation of walkable mixed use neighborhoods; ensuring that the City's economic development program is aimed toward helping people earn sustainable wages; promoting green building techniques and a healthy mix of housing types; supporting the preservation and rehabilitation of Allentown's historic resources and protecting the natural environment.

**CONFORMANCE WITH REGIONAL AND MUNICIPAL PLANS**

Allentown is bordered by the City of Bethlehem, Emmaus Borough, and Salisbury, Whitehall, Hanover (Lehigh County) and South Whitehall Townships. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission’s “Comprehensive Plan, The Lehigh Valley...2030” shows Allentown and the adjoining portions of these communities as areas suitable for “Urban Development,” with the exception of Salisbury Township’s South Mountain area along the City’s southern border. Generally, the abutting portions of these municipalities continue to be characterized by similar existing development, except in a few instances more fully discussed below.

The area of Bethlehem bordering Allentown on the east is zoned for and developed with commercial uses, and is not unlike what is found in Allentown, with the exception of the adjacent Midway Manor neighborhood. Club Avenue is a well-traveled border street separating the neighborhood from Bethlehem’s commercial development.

Salisbury Township, bordering the City on the south and southwest, has almost no conflicting development patterns with the City, since residential areas exist in both municipalities. Exceptions are the office-park uses adjacent to the City’s Little Lehigh Parkway. These two areas are separated topographically by steep, wooded slopes that serve as a buffer for the Parkway. The City closely reviews new development in this area in order to mitigate any negative impacts to the park area. Both municipalities continue to share an interest in preserving the undeveloped South Mountain areas, and have conservation zoning districts along this common boundary.

South Whitehall Township abuts the City on the southwest, west, and north and the communities’ uses are generally compatible. Emmaus Borough shares a small common border with Allentown to the southwest, with similar residential uses and densities as the adjoining City side. The City’s northern border with Whitehall Township consists primarily of Jordan Park, which is contrasted by

the abutting substantial highway shopping corridor and higher density multifamily development in Whitehall.

At the time of the Plan’s last writing, the Trexler Estate properties in the City’s far west were undeveloped. Since then, more than 200 acres on both sides of Tilghman Street have been fully developed through a mixed-use plan of housing types and modest areas of complimentary commercial uses. The area adjoins two of South Whitehall Township’s more established neighborhoods to the south and west, and an existing commercial area along Tilghman Street.

Allentown’s boundary with Hanover Township has become more fully developed. The area abutting Dauphin Street has been shaped by the extension of the American Parkway and the location of a corporate headquarters in the township. The City’s adjoining land uses are light industrial and office and are not incompatible with the offices in Hanover Township. The balance of the boundary, with the exception of one modest area, is composed of compatible land uses. With cooperation, consultation and attention to the final development pattern, any potential issues should be minimized.

