

# **WALKER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**PREPARED BY THE  
WALKER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**ASSISTED BY**



**GRANEY, GROSSMAN, RAY AND ASSOCIATES  
Grove City, Pennsylvania**

**WALKER TOWNSHIP  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**Prepared by the  
Walker Township Planning Commission**

**June, 2001**

**Assisted by  
Graney, Grossman, Ray and Associates  
Grove City, Pennsylvania**

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## **PART I - BACKGROUND ANALYSIS**

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## WALKER TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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**Preface:** As Walker Township faces the future, it does so with the knowledge it will grow – and it must assess its future strategy to deal with that fact. Growth has been a constant element in the Township’s recent past. In 1960, the Census Bureau counted 1,042 persons in Walker. By 1990, that figure had grown to 1,515 (+473 or 45%). And Census figures for 2000 are 1,747, another 232 persons. But, local data clearly indicates even that figure may be low. Regardless of the numbers used, since 1960, the Township has grown by more than 50 percent.



Faced with these trends, the Township initiated efforts to prepare an update to their 1974 Comprehensive Plan. One of the first steps was to hold a Town Hall Meeting. On October 25, 1999, this meeting was held at the McConnellsport Volunteer Fire Company. An estimated 47 persons attended this session, and a series of priorities and themes were apparent.

- ❑ The primary concern of local residents was jobs! Full employment at a local, regional, and county level was given top priority!
- ❑ A second concern was a fear of over-regulation that would discourage new residents and investment. (This response was very different from a later survey, as noted on page 2.)
- ❑ Another need was for some type of local health care facility.

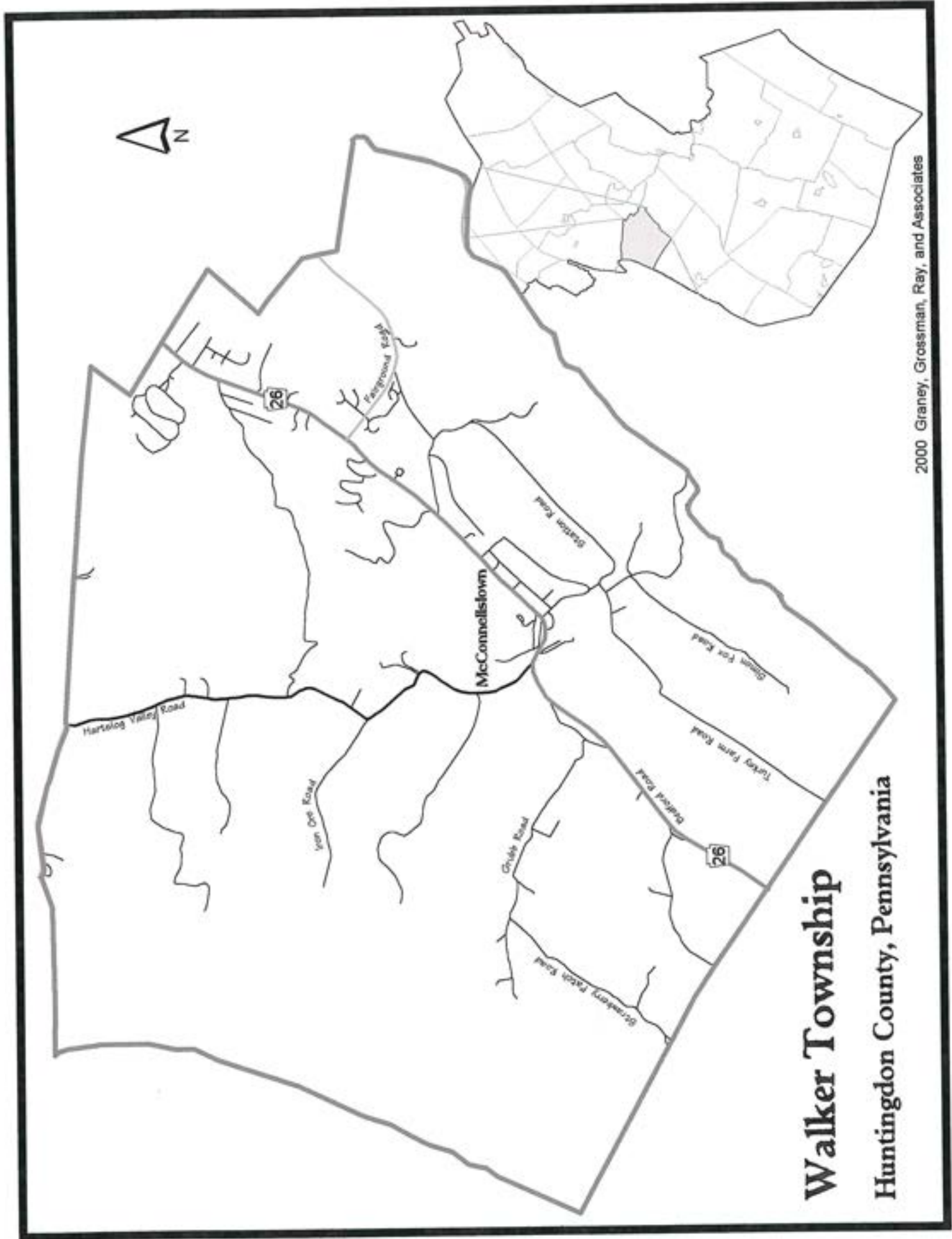
At the same time residents were expressing these concerns, it was also evident that the participants wished to preserve two important existing characteristics of Walker Township:

- ❑ A quality place to live
- ❑ Its rural setting

A more detailed report on the Town Hall Meeting can be obtained by reading the Town Hall Meeting Report, dated November 1999, which is part of this document.

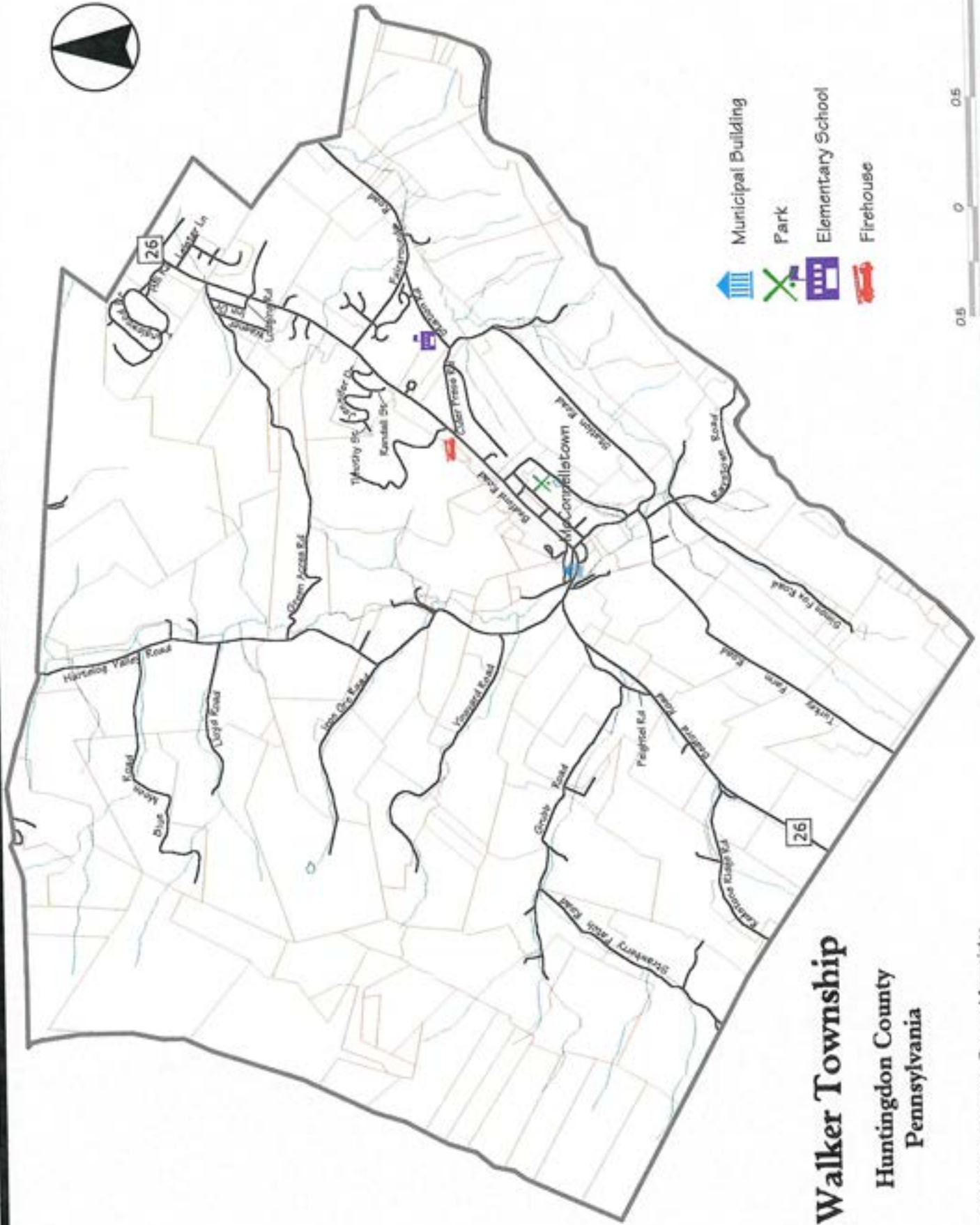
Realizing that not all of their residents could attend the Town Hall Meeting, the Township mailed a citizen survey to all local residents in the spring of 2000. Some 15 percent of the 764 receiving the survey have responded. These results are also part of the Township’s Plan. However, some highlights are appropriate:





# Walker Township

## Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania



# Walker Township

Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

- Profile – The typical respondent was a middle-aged, working person with a family who had resided in Walker for about 20 years and works locally.
- Land Use – Residents indicated a need for medical facilities, additional shopping opportunities, new homes, and offices. However, the great majority of respondents wanted to see intense land uses, such as industrial parks and “big box” retailers outside the Township. Huntingdon Borough and Smithfield Township locations were suggested for such uses.
- Housing – Most welcomed new single-family homes and housing complexes for the elderly. Multi-family developments (apartments, mobile home parks, and condos) were least favored.
- Regulations – While residents at the public meeting voiced concerns about over-regulation, people responding to the questionnaire were just the reverse. Most believed some type of additional regulation was warranted.

The one theme common to both the Town Hall Meeting and survey was that most people enjoy the quality of life in Walker Township. The small-town atmosphere of “MacTown” and the low-density development of the open areas in the Township are highly prized.

As this Plan, its priorities, and suggested actions are finalized, the citizens’ input, as expressed at the Town Hall Meeting and citizen survey, will need to be weighed and balanced. The right mixture of options and protections must be found so the Township continues to prosper without losing those attributes that draw people to it.

**Plan Format:** This Plan is divided into the following elements:

**Part I:**

Background Data – Information Gathering

- Demographics
- Housing
- Land Use
- Community Facilities/Utilities
- Transportation

## **Part II:**

### Comprehensive Plan

- Community Development Objectives
- Land Use Plan
- Housing Plan
- Transportation
- Community Facilities and Services
- Plan Interrelationships and Impact on Contiguous Municipalities

The above elements are those required for the preparation of a comprehensive plan by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

## **Part III:**

### Citizen Input

- The Town Hall Meeting
- The Citizen Survey

## DEMOGRAPHICS

As mentioned in the Preface, Walker Township has enjoyed a long period of sustained growth. Table 1 shows the comparative population change between the Township, County, and Commonwealth. Change data for the State are shown in percentages only.

**TABLE 1  
COMPARATIVE POPULATION CHANGE  
WALKER TOWNSHIP, HUNTINGDON COUNTY,  
AND THE COMMONWEALTH**

Year	Walker Township			Huntingdon County			PA %
	No.	Change	%	No.	Change	%	
1960	1,042	NA	NA	39,457	-1,415	-3%	+8.0%
1970	1,212	+170	+16%	39,108	-349	-1%	+4.0%
1980	1,390	+178	+15%	42,253	+3,145	+8%	+0.5%
1990	1,515	+125	+9%	44,164	+1,911	+5%	+0.1%
2000	1,747	+232	+15%	45,586	+1,422	+3%	+3.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The pattern is obvious. While all three jurisdictions have grown, only Walker Township has a record of sustained significant population increases. And, based upon the Census Bureau, this pattern is continuing.

The year 2000 Census data was released literally as the final draft of this Plan was being prepared. The Census revealed Walker's pattern of growth accelerated during the 1990s in both numbers and by percentages. Once more, local rates exceeded County and State changes by a factor of five. There was one interesting anomaly. Based upon housing permit data in the decade of the 90s, a population count of 1,850 to 1,950 was expected. However, with a final count of some 1,747, over 100 below expectations, the trend toward smaller household sizes (resulting in more houses with fewer residents per house) is obviously continuing for Walker Township.

In addition to examining the Township's growth pattern, vis-à-vis, the County and the State, it is also appropriate to compare with the patterns of adjacent municipalities. Such a comparison is illustrated in Table 2.

**TABLE 2  
COMPARATIVE GROWTH  
WALKER AND CONTINGUOUS TOWNSHIPS**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent* Change</b>
<b>Walker</b>	<b>1,042</b>	<b>1,212</b>	<b>1,390</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>1,747</b>	<b>44%</b>
Juniata	464	367	411	411	553	51%
Penn	723	719	933	956	1,054	47%
Porter	1,222	1,231	1,778	1,942	1,917	56%
Smithfield	2,547	2,488	2,495	4,194	4,466	80%
*1960-2000						
Source: U.S. Census						

In reviewing the numbers shown in Table 2, please note that a second Correctional facility was located in Smithfield during the decade of the 1980s and inmate population is reflected in that township's population.

All of the communities that are neighbors to Walker show vigorous growth. It is a classic example of the twin influences of suburbanization and major transportation corridors. On the negative side, the influence of topography is apparent. Note that Juniata Township, though showing a large proportionate growth, has seen only a modest total increase from 1960 to the year 2000. This is likely due to its land forms (steep slopes) and the high percentage of government-owned land. Geographically, the township is about the same size as Walker.

All in all, the classic land use development influences that are active in this area will be felt in Walker Township for years to come.

**Population Characteristics:** The results of the 1990 Census are a decade old, yet the year 2000 detail data will not be available for several months, perhaps more than a year. Therefore, an overview-profile of selected 1990 demographics will still be helpful.

One important demographic factor is age characteristics. The attached illustration, titled, "1990 Census Data," shows 10-year age profiles for both Walker Township and abutting communities. These tables speak for themselves and little narrative is warranted. There is one caveat. Due to the location of two prison facilities in Smithfield Township, certain of its age brackets are completely out of proportion to normal age distributions.

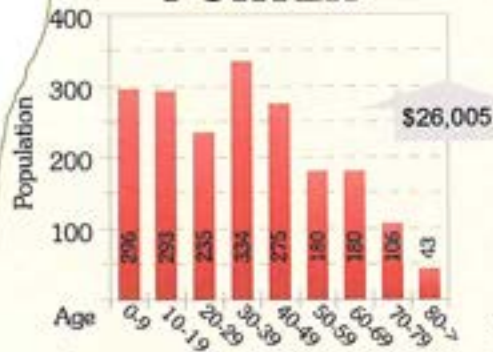
**Age:** To place age characteristics in a more usable fashion for the Township, Table 3 was fashioned. Here, Walker Township alone is considered. In this table, age is more closely related to life activities, and, hence, better for planning considerations.

# Population 1990 Census Data

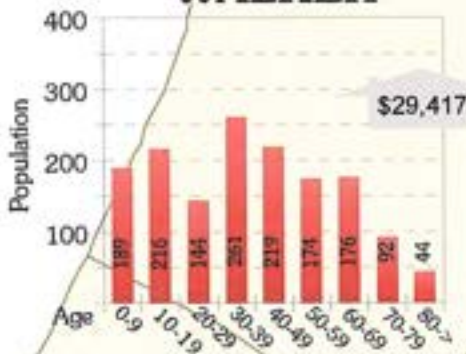
## Walker and Neighboring Townships

Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

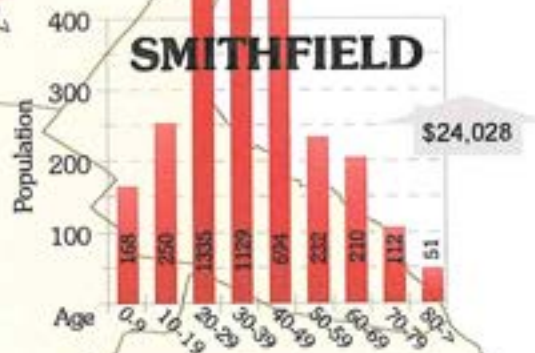
### PORTER



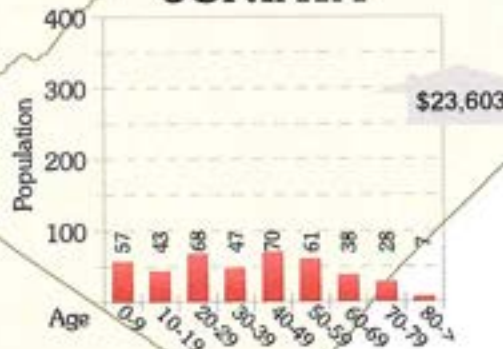
### WALKER



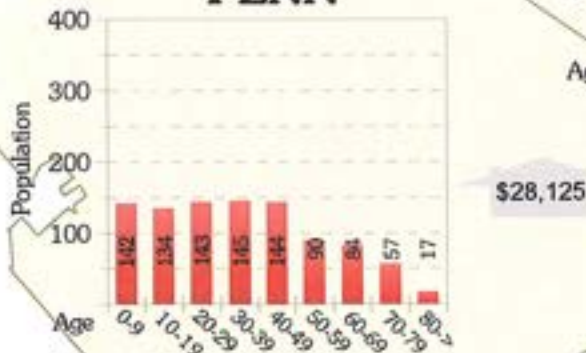
### SMITHFIELD



### JUNIATA



### PENN



Median Household Income

**TABLE 3  
AGE CHARACTERISTICS  
WALKER TOWNSHIP**

Age Category	No.	Percent
Pre-Schoolers – Under 5	95	6.3%
School Age – 5 to 17	267	17.6%
Young Adults – 18 to 24	113	7.5%
Mid-Life – 25-44	455	30.0%
Adult – 45-64	361	23.8%
Older – 65+	224	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,515</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Source: U.S. Census STF-1A		

The profile shown above is generally consistent with expected rural demographic patterns. The age pyramid is dominated by the “Mid-Life” category, where the “Baby Boomer” generation is found. The number of persons in the younger categories is also typical. The only anomaly is the “Older” age classification which was just slightly higher than anticipated.

**Households:** The number of households is also a planning concern. In 1990, there were 588 households in the Township. In Census jargon, a household can be comprised of a single person or a group of unrelated persons living in the same dwelling. Households classified as “families” must have at least two persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In Walker, the family household is the dominant type (78%). Of the 127 non-family households, 111 were composed of persons living alone, and about half that number (56) were persons 65 and older.

**Gender and Race:** Gender and racial characteristics were typical. Some 48.5 percent of all persons were male and 51.5 percent female. Usually, as population ages, the ratio of females to males changes, with higher percentages of females. The area was composed of white residents primarily, 99 percent, with only 14 minority residents.

**Income:** The Census also reports economic information gathered through statistical sampling. These are highlighted in Table 4. This table illustrates Township characteristics as compared to the County and State. Comparative household income data relative to nearby townships is shown on the graphic “Census” plate.



**TABLE 4**  
**ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS – 1990\***  
**WALKER TOWNSHIP, HUNTINGDON COUNTY,**  
**AND PENNSYLVANIA**

	<b>Walker</b>	<b>Huntingdon County</b>	<b>Pennsylvania</b>
Median Household Income	\$29,417	\$23,067	\$29,067
Median Family Income	\$32,125	\$27,807	\$34,856
Per Capita Income	\$13,580	\$10,471	\$14,008
Persons Below Poverty Level	5.1%	13.4%	11.1%
Families Below Poverty Level	3.1%	10.5%	8.2%
*All Census income data is from the prior year – 1989.			
Source: 1990 Census STF-3a			

Table 4 shows a community that has income levels significantly higher than the County. In fact, figures are close to Statewide norms. This is a bit unusual in rural central Pennsylvania. The sustained economic prosperity of the southeast section of the State typically skews statewide data to such an extent that most rural communities do not come even close to the Commonwealth income medians. Thus, Walker Township's economic profile was unexpected, and represents a positive anomaly.

Overall, the following summary can be made:

- Walker Township has experienced sustained growth over the past five decades and that pattern is expected to continue.
- The age structure of Walker is typical for a rural area.
- However, the proportion of those in the age 65+ group is a little higher than expected.
- Most of the households are families.
- Nearly half of the one-person households are comprised of individuals aged 65 and over.
- Incomes in Walker are higher than comparable County figures and nearly on par with the Commonwealth.
- The incidence of poverty in Walker is well under one half that found in the County or the State.

## HOUSING

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The Demographic section dealt with the population trends of Walker Township. Its link with comprehensive planning is obvious. Nowhere is the link between demographic data and physical development more apparent than in the area of housing. The demand for housing is generated by household growth. As a community grows, new homes are needed, the demand for various services increases, and retailers often follow their customers to the suburbs.

In Walker Township, that demand has been increasing. Historic population and Census estimates would lead the Township to expect 5 to 7 new homes per year in the 1990s. The actual numbers have been much higher; more on the order of 10-14 homes annually. (At the time of this Plan, 2000 Census housing counts have not yet been released.)

**TABLE 5**  
**NEW HOMES – WALKER TOWNSHIP - 1990-2000**

<b>Year</b>	<b>New Homes</b>
1990	13
1991	10
1992	15
1993	13
1994	12
1995	11
1996	7
1997	19
1998	14
1999	15
2000	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>

Source: Township Building permit data

Finally, the issue of housing quality must be considered. If the Township wishes to be attractive to new residents, it must remember that the quality of homes and surroundings is an important consideration. No one wants to invest in his or her dream home next to a fast-food restaurant or a junkyard. Just as important to both current and new residents is the matter of housing quality. A family's home is their biggest and most important investment; its quality and that of their surroundings is a major concern.

As was the case with the Demographic section, the U.S. Census of 1990 will be used for much of this element. However, because of the time since the last Census, the emphasis will be more on trends and comparisons, rather than dwelling upon the statistics exclusively.

Using Census data from 1990, there were 631 total housing units listed in the Township. Of these, 588 were occupied and nearly 90 percent of these had owners residing in them. Some 43 units were listed as vacant in 1990, a vacancy rate of 6.8 percent. Of the 43 units listed as vacant, however, 12 were classified as seasonal homes. Consequently, the real vacancy rate was nominal.

By far, the most popular housing unit was the single-family home. There were 518 traditional one-family homes counted in 1990 and 98 mobile homes. Together, they comprised 98 percent of the housing stock. Only 15 apartments were listed. It also must be noted that there were no group quarters listed for the Township. Group quarters are such facilities as nursing homes, college dormitories, or prisons.

The Census also lists housing values for owner-occupied units. Their owners estimate the value of their homes. Though this is certainly not a professional appraisal, the values given usually bear a general relationship to the housing market. In 1990, the median home in this Township was given a value of \$57,100. This figure was \$14,000 higher (about one third) compared to the County median of \$43,100.

Contract rent is easier to gauge. Few tenants are ignorant of that figure. In 1990, the median monthly contract rent in Walker was \$192, while the County was \$197. That difference is nominal.

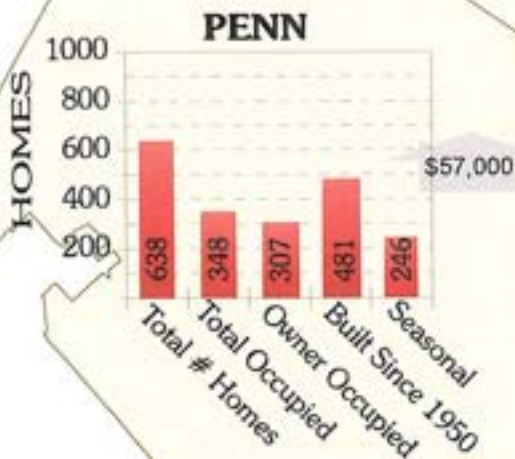
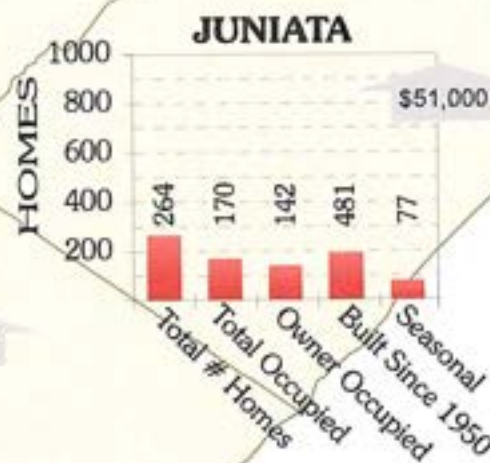
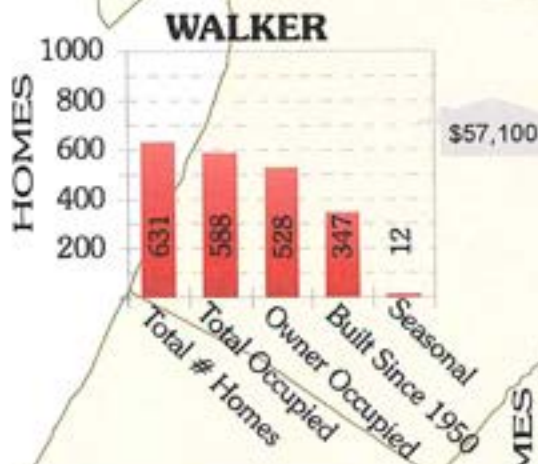
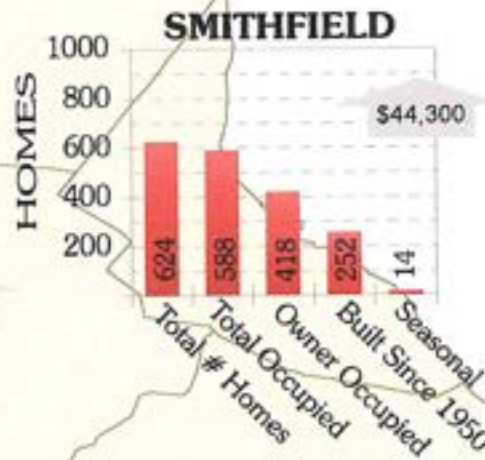
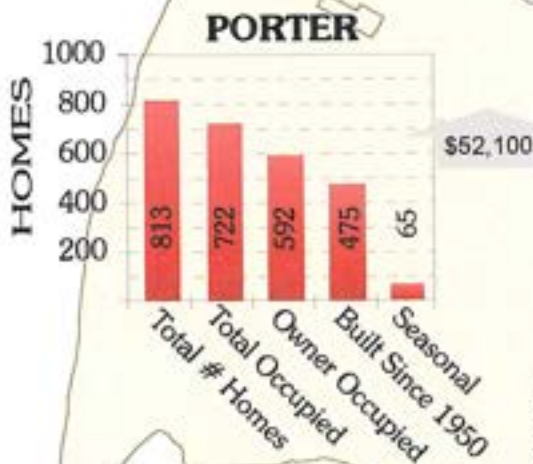
One final key Census figure is the year a home was built. Many older homes were well built and are well kept. However, older homes often do require more maintenance and offer a greater potential for blight. According to STF-3A (Census File) data, only 34 percent of all homes in Walker were built prior to 1950. Countywide, that ratio is 41 percent. This would indicate age-induced housing concerns are not likely widespread.

Relevant housing data for Walker and surrounding communities from the 1990 Census is shown on the following plate.

# Housing 1990 Census Data

Walker  
and  
Neighboring  
Townships

Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania



Median Value of Homes



Finally, there is the issue of housing quality. In 1998, housing surveys were completed for six municipalities as part of the Huntingdon County Housing Plan. Walker Township was one of six, and the results are shown in Table 6.

**TABLE 6  
HOUSING CONDITIONS SURVEY  
WALKER TOWNSHIP – 1998**

Level of Deterioration Number	Minor	Major	Severe	Total	Percent
	25	13	2	40	6%

Source: 1998 Field Survey, Graney, Grossman, Ray and Associates

It must be noted that exterior housing surveys tend to underestimate the actual number of deteriorated homes by approximately 15 percent. Using this factor, the total estimated number of problem units in the Township is 46, about 7 percent of the total housing stock.

There are two items of importance to note while examining Table 6. First is the fact that most of the deteriorated units (60%) were rated as having only “minor” problems. Typically, they can be restored with only modest effort. The second note is that the incidence of deterioration for Walker is only half that estimated for Huntingdon County (see page 9, *Continuity Through Conservation II, Supplement to Phase I*). In summary, the issue of problem homes is not a pressing, pervasive one for Walker Township, though the situation merits periodic monitoring.

In summary, the following is apparent for Walker Township:

- The great majority of homes are single-family units.
- Housing growth averages 10 to 14 units annually.
- Generally, housing values are higher than other areas in the County.
- Housing quality is high.
- Though there are some deteriorated homes in the Township, their incidence is low.

## LAND USE

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The centerpiece of a comprehensive plan is land use. No one single element has such a profound effect on a community's character. An understanding of land use is needed before any recommendations can be made relative to future development strategies. To consider this Plan element from a purely zoning aspect does not recognize its importance. The classic reference book *URBAN LAND USE PLAN* (Chapin et. al.) emphasizes that there are four characteristics of land:

- Land as functional space
- Land as a setting for activity
- Land as a commodity to be developed
- Land as a perceptual or aesthetic resource

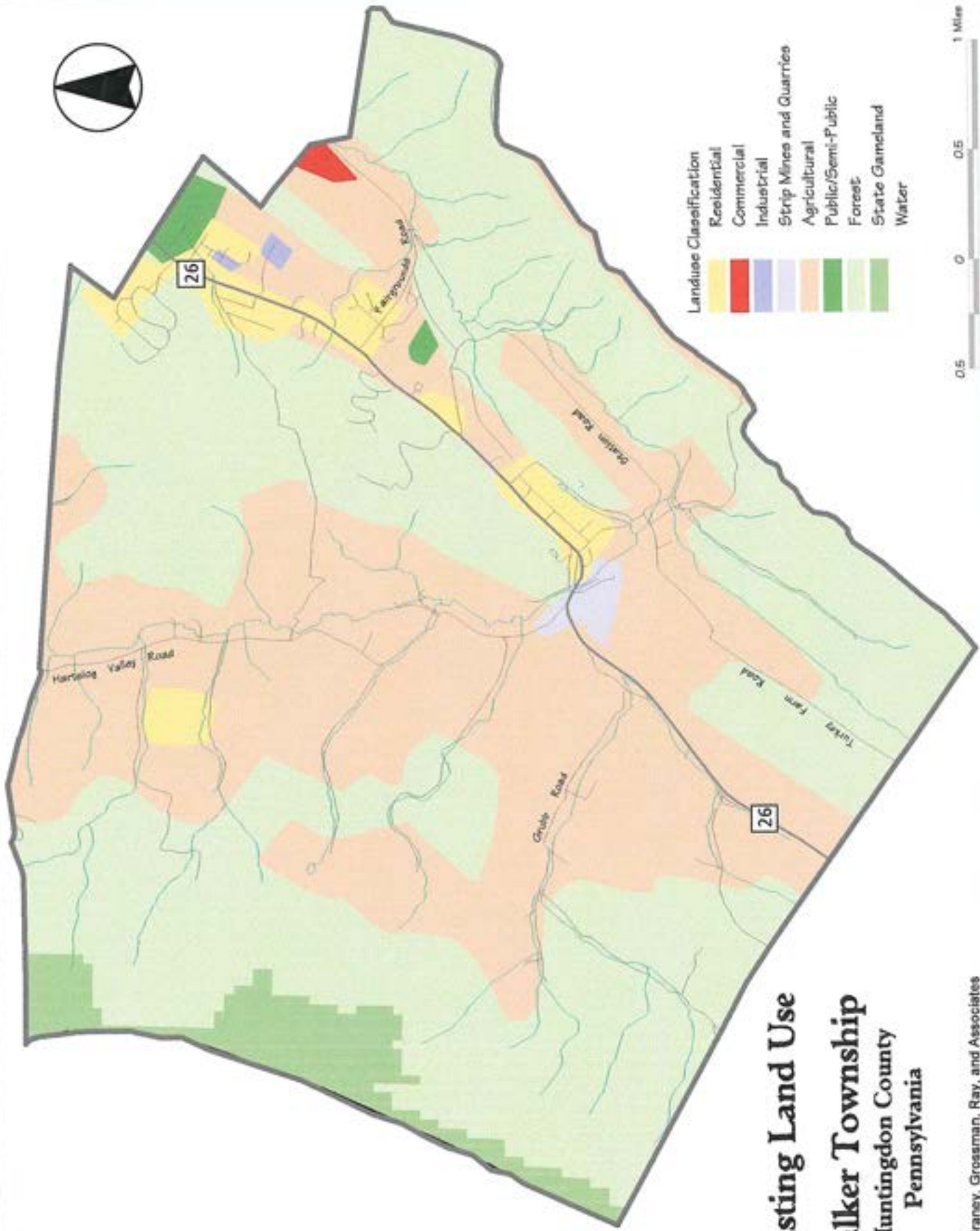


Everyone has a tendency to focus on a different element of these four. Certainly, the professional planner spends a great deal of time on the functional aspect (i.e., how is land used), and setting for activity (i.e., work, shopping, or residential) characteristics. Residents at the Town Hall Meeting in Walker, however, showed a concern for the last two characteristics. Some desire to develop land and encourage new homes and investment is viewing land as a developable commodity. These residents fear over-regulation might inhibit development. Others saw the local

landscape as rural and attractive, a quality they wished to preserve. They feared over-development.

To examine the current land use in Walker Township, and allow for informed decisions on the future, the following elements will be examined.

- Current land use
- Physical development concerns (floodplains, wetlands, etc.)
- Ownership patterns that constrain development (parks, game lands, etc.)
- Current land use controls in the Township



# Existing Land Use

## Walker Township

Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

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**Existing Land Use:** The plate titled Current Land Use illustrates, graphically, the land use for Walker Township. To develop this information, a two-person team drove all public roads and coded the individual use of land on a property map. Field work was supplemented by visits to the local USDA office and the Game Commission. These data were then entered onto a digital map of the Township, Current Land Use.

A special note is in order relative to land use maps. Huntingdon County also completed a land use effort and a graphic of their work for Walker Township is presented here. It differs in detail from the one presented in this report. The difference is the source. In an area as large as a county, it is impractical to do a driving survey of the whole County. Consequently, aerial photos or remote-sensing (i.e., satellite) land cover resources are used. These tend to present land use in a generalized manner. For example, a satellite image may view a cluster of 10 homes, but miss a single home by itself, quite appropriate for county-level planning but not detailed enough for most municipal plans.

The Current Land Use plate has seven active land-use categories – areas with no distinctive color are open or unused spaces. Much of such land is wooded. The different use areas, polygons to electronic cartographers, were plotted to create the Walker Township Current Land Use Map. Total areas were calculated electronically and are presented below.

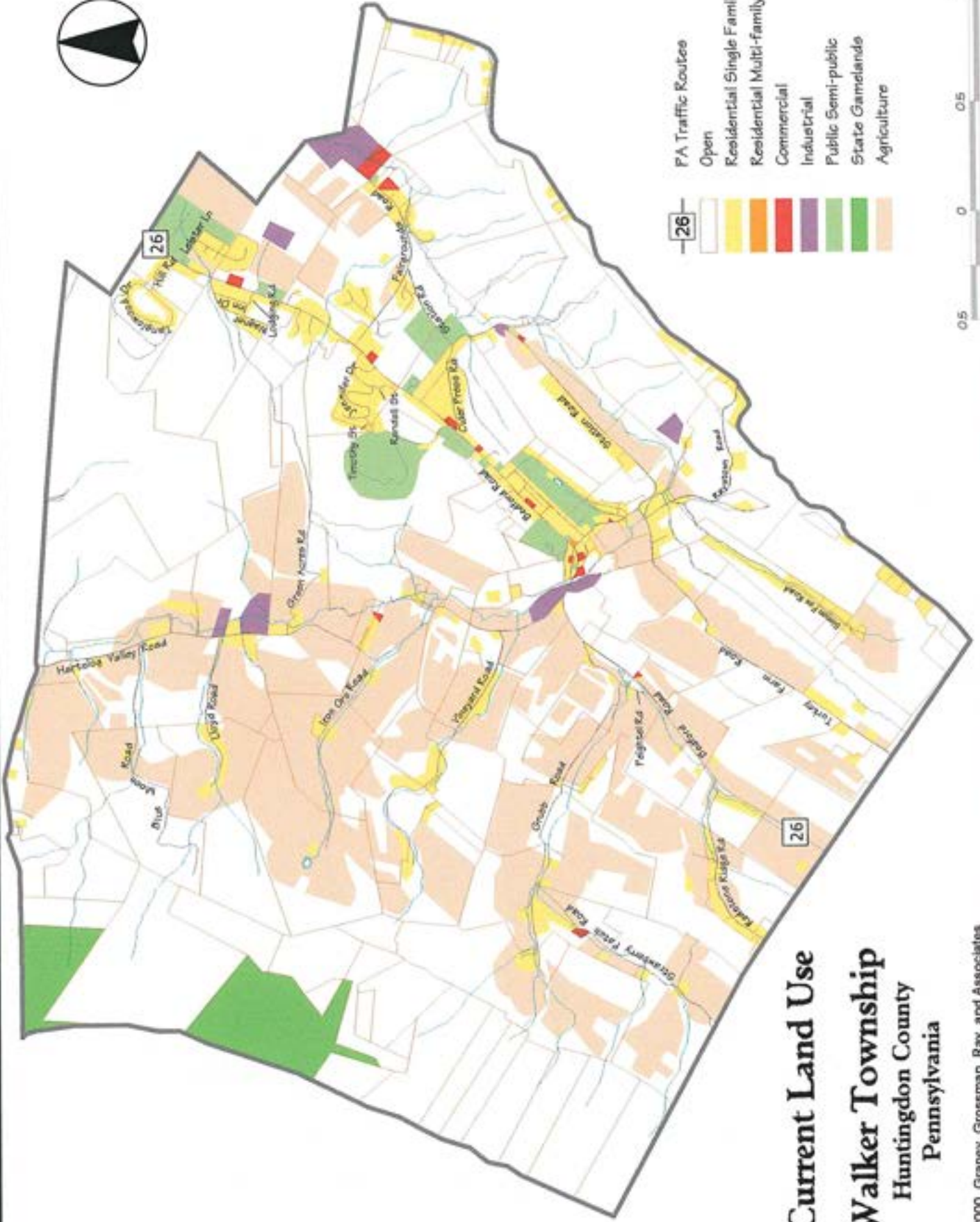
**TABLE 7  
LAND USE  
WALKER TOWNSHIP**

	<b>Acres</b>
Residential Single-Family	828.4
Residential Multi-Family	1.1
Commercial	25.0
Industrial	89.6
Public, Semi-Public	234.3
Agriculture	2,838.4
Game Land	286.4
Open	7,518.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,821.5</b>
Source: Land Use Survey, March 2000	

These numbers, in themselves, are not important. Rather, it is the proportion and arrangement of uses that is of greatest interest.

In many ways, the existing land use development has followed classic lines. The most intensely built-up areas are along Route 26 and within the settlement of McConnellstown.





- PA Traffic Routes
- Open
  - Residential Single Family
  - Residential Multi-family
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Public Semi-public
  - State Gamelands
  - Agriculture



# Current Land Use

## Walker Township

### Huntingdon County

#### Pennsylvania

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Recent suburban homes are in new subdivisions not far from Route 26 off Fairgrounds Road, another important connection to the Huntingdon area. In the Township, more rural area development patterns are quite lineal along local roads. These are often composed of isolated farmhouses and small residential clusters. Commercial uses are nearly entirely along Route 26, while industrial land uses are more scattered.

If transportation corridors have been a primary influence on Walker Township, land forms have not been far behind as the following section illustrates:

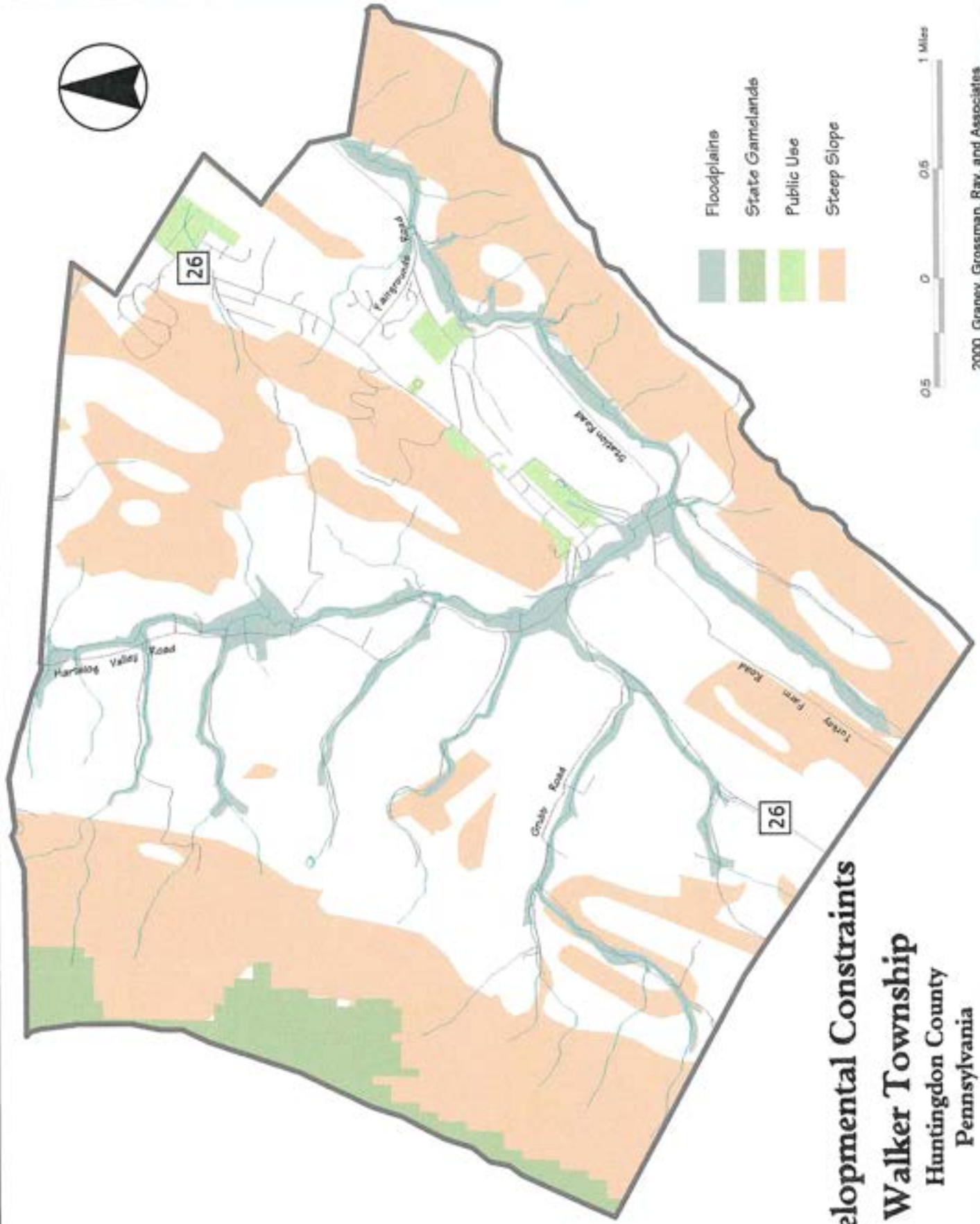
**Development Constraints:** The plate, on the following page, shows steep slope area (15% or more), floodplains, Game Lands, and public uses. The limitations imposed by the first two elements are obvious. Under State and Federal policy, development is discouraged in floodplains. That policy, coupled with the obvious danger of such practices, has limited past building in such areas and will likely constrain future construction.

The role of steep slopes is even more apparent. When land is so steep that roads are impractical, few will build on it. In fact, homes or other buildings do not function well in such circumstances. They are difficult to access and impose expensive construction costs. From an environmental standpoint, development on steep slopes always poses a risk. In California, homes in such areas are often subject to unstable soil conditions. Locally, the most obvious potential problem is erosion. If a comparison is made between the Current Land Use plate and Development Constraints, the impact of slopes on the Township's settlement pattern is obvious.

**Ownership and Other Use Constraints:** The public or semi-public ownership of land may not physically prevent land development, but are constraints nevertheless. State Game Lands, municipal parks, cemeteries, and, to a lesser extent, schools and churches all tend to be long-term uses which effectively remove land from the marketplace. Though school and church properties may return to the private market, such episodes are limited and occur rarely.

The designation of land as an Agricultural Security Area is another consideration. Such designations are based upon the owners' desire to declare that their land is intended for farming use. However, experience throughout Pennsylvania has shown such land is not exempt from development. Though public acquisition and eminent domain of "Ag Security" properties have severe limitations, there is no real restraint on private activity. It is only when development rights of such land is acquired under the Commonwealth's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) Program that new building is actually forestalled.

**Current Land Use Regulations:** Walker Township has a Zoning Ordinance as well as a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.



- Floodplains
- State Game Lands
- Public Use
- Steep Slope



# Developmental Constraints

## Walker Township

Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

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Zoning: Though dated 1989, the Township's Zoning Ordinance is based partially on models developed in the 1950s and 1960s. However, it has been generally updated to include the major changes to the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code in 1988. Also, the Ordinance uses tables rather than following a completely narrative format.

In general, this document can be described as a narrative, permissive ordinance. There are eight separate zones in the Walker Zoning Ordinance. Of these, Floodplain functions as an Overlay Zone.

The remaining seven zones are rather typical for a rural Pennsylvania area with a village. A brief overview of the zones follows:

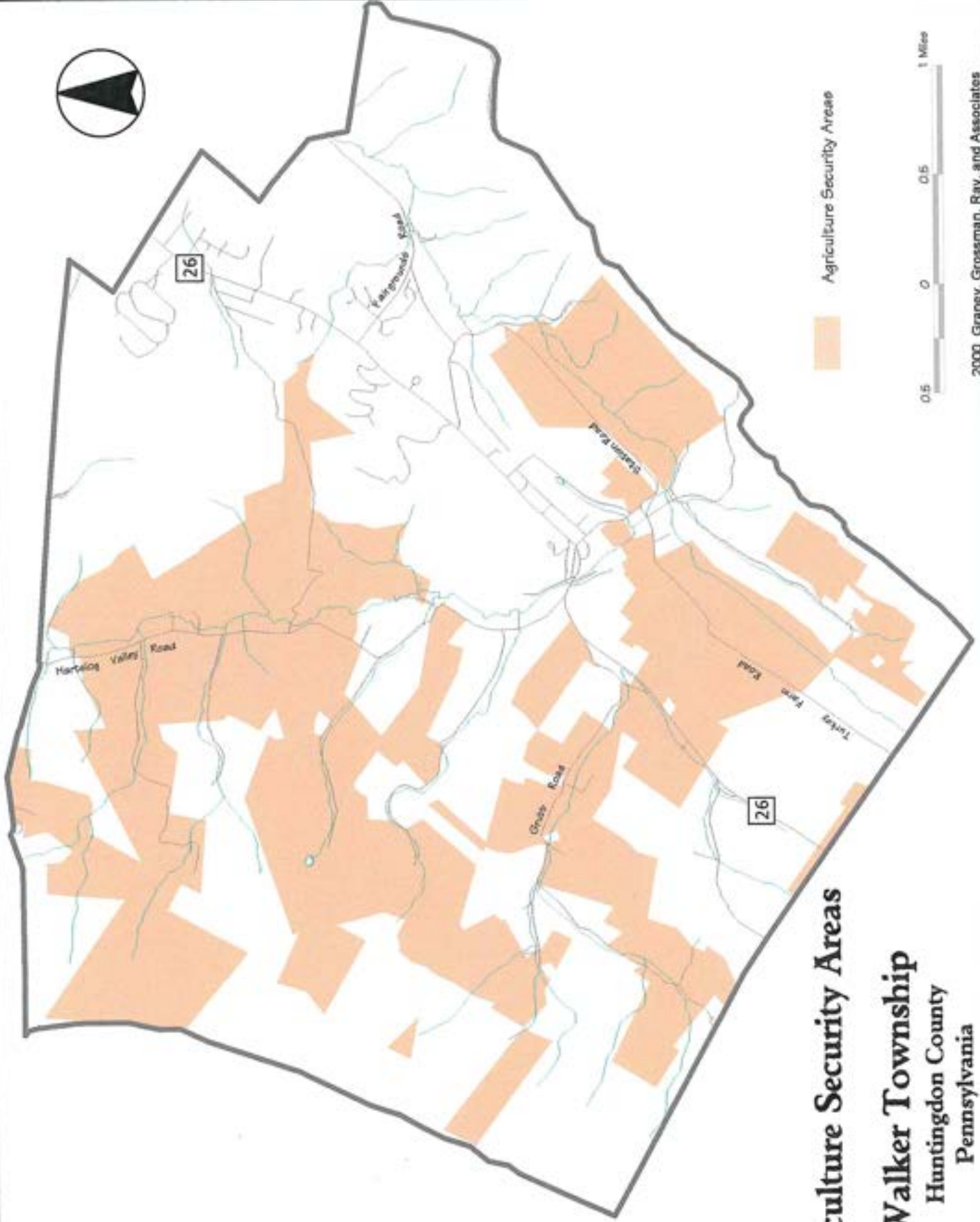
A-1 Conservation – A rural-based district with large (2 acre) lot sizes required. A wide variety of uses are allowed. Some 41 discrete uses are listed as permitted uses, conditional uses, or special exceptions.

R-S Suburban Residential has a more restrictive philosophy – only 24 uses. Though it is much more residential in content, the R-S still allows typical rural uses such as agriculture, extractive industries, and golf courses. Lot size is one acre in areas with no utilities (sewer and water) but can drop to 15,000 square feet if the property has sewer service. Residential development density in sewered areas will vary. There, single-family is about 3.6 dwelling units an acre, while multi-family units can easily exceed 10 dwelling units an acre.

R-U Urban Residential – This district has 30 total uses, and the agricultural heritage of the community is evident, as agriculture is allowed in the R-U zone. For the unsewered areas of R-U districts, the required lot size is one-half acre. However, in the sewered areas, the density patterns of R-S are followed.

V – Village – Historically, the Village district was meant to accommodate a mixture of residential and commercial uses in contained areas. There are 33 uses allowed in this district. Permitted uses are essentially related to residential needs. However, the conditional uses permit a broad range of commercial activities. Lot sizes for sewered areas are similar to the R-U zone, for unsewered areas the zoning minimum lot is one-half acre.

B-1 Limited Business – This zone is intended for the “sale of commercial retail goods ... personal service ... professional offices and limited business services ...” There are only 20 uses listed in the three categories in this zone, and they follow the zone philosophy. The only residential use allowed is multi-family. Sewered areas allow smaller lots, 7,500 square feet, while the unsewered



## Agriculture Security Areas

**Walker Township**

Huntingdon County

Pennsylvania

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minimum lot is 20,000 square feet. Multi-family density follows the R-S guidelines

B-2 General Business – This district includes all the B-1 uses as well as a few others. However, more uses are included in the “permitted” category. This district is more highway-oriented than the B-1 zone.

I-Industrial – While listing only 17 uses, this district provides for a wide variety of industrial uses. It does require performance standards for certain uses. Minimum lots of 2 acres are required.

Section 305 covers the Floodplain district.

There are 10 Articles in this Ordinance, which runs approximately 66 pages. In addition to Article 3, which contains District Regulations, Article 2 – Definitions, Article 4 – Supplementary Regulations, and Article 5 – Signs, are of the greatest interest.

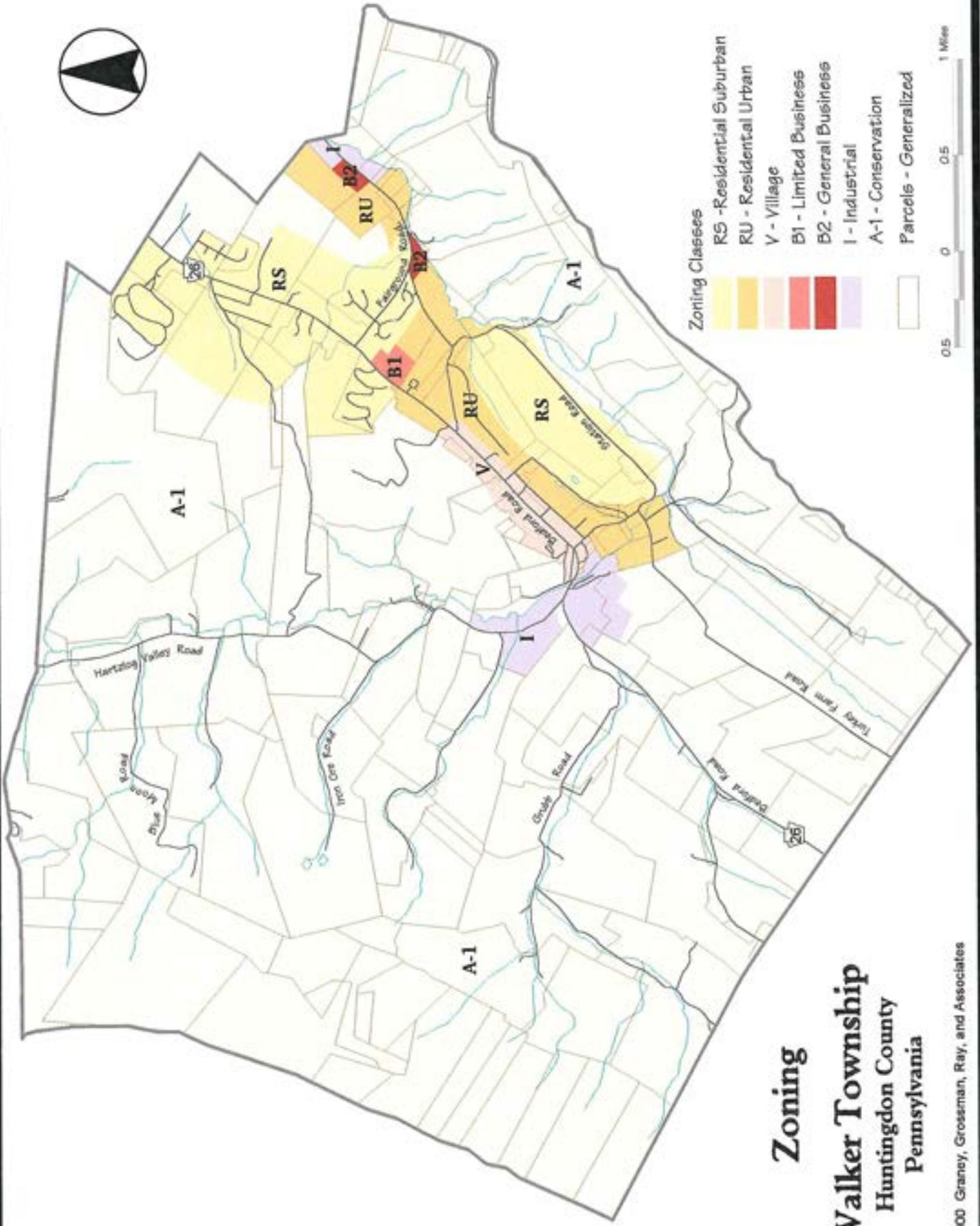
Overall, the Ordinance is a solid standard zoning regulation. It should receive a thorough review after the completion of the Plan. Items of special interest include:

- Definitions
- Criteria for Special Exceptions and Conditional Uses
- Consideration of newer uses (i.e., Assisted Living, Day Care, Convenience Stores, etc.)
- Review of parking standards
- The introduction of standards for retail uses in the Village District
- Any changes to current zoning practices

Subdivision Regulations: While zoning ordinances vary in their content and land use approach, subdivision ordinances are often more generic. The Township’s regulations are based upon a format widely used in the Commonwealth.

Generally, the Ordinance appears quite satisfactory, although there are some changes that should be considered after the completion of the Comprehensive Plan. Some areas of concern include:

- Sketch plan requirement
- Lot and setback standards
- Updates to reflect current role of SEO versus “perc” test requirements
- More comprehensive land development regulations
- More comprehensive mobile home park requirements
- Rewording recreational set asides



- Zoning Classes**
- RS - Residential Suburban
  - RU - Residential Urban
  - V - Village
  - B1 - Limited Business
  - B2 - General Business
  - I - Industrial
  - A-1 - Conservation
  - Parcels - Generalized

# Zoning

## Walker Township

### Huntingdon County

### Pennsylvania

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Of the items noted above, the two that require the most intensive consideration are the land development standards and the regulations for mobile home parks. While some fear that over regulation may stymie future township development, it must be remembered that the price paid for poor development practices is often the taxpayer. If inadequate drainage, highway access or other problems are allowed it is the Township who will be held accountable by future residents.

Overall, the Township's land use regulations provide comprehensive tools for land development in the Township. However, these tools need to be examined to upgrade them for consistency with future development policies in Walker Township.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES/SERVICES

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There is little doubt that Walker Township is in the path of growth. Over the past, decade an average of 10+ homes are built each year. Such a pattern will translate into a substantial population gain continuing a pattern the Township has experienced for decades.

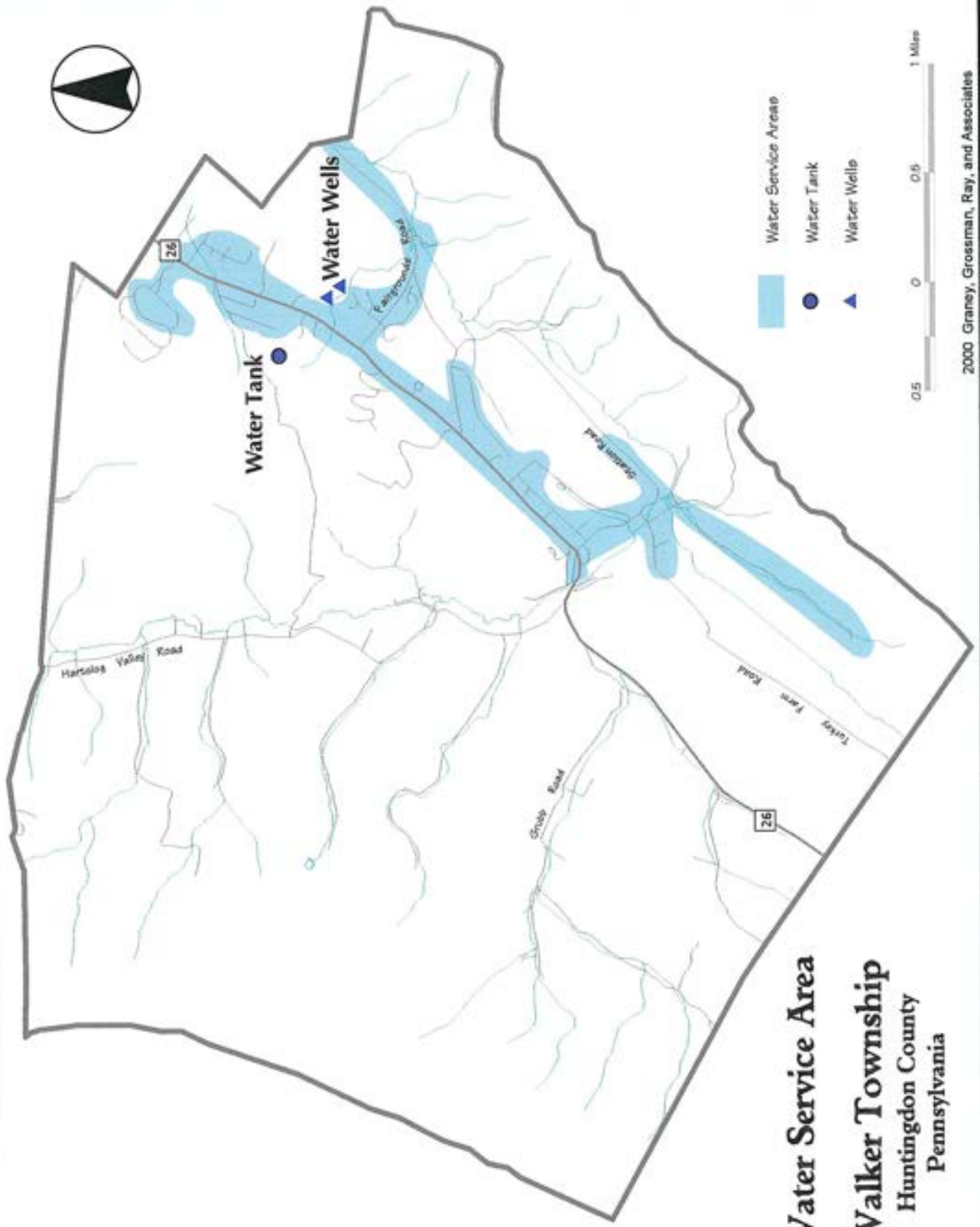
Although some of this growth is evidenced by scattered new homes in underdeveloped areas, the majority can be found in fully serviced subdivisions. And, as the pattern of growth continues, the issue of sewer and water services becomes more and more important. Its importance is more than one of engineering capacity. There are key relationships between land use and these critical services. Intense land use needs sewer and water. Any future growth areas the Township may consider should have these two utilities in close proximity.

**Water:** The Walker Township Municipal Authority owns both the water and sewer systems in the municipality. The water system uses two artesian wells near Buck Run as its source; one 200 feet deep, the other at 100 feet. Water flows from these wells, at an average of 45 gallons per minute (gpm), for a yield of approximately 130,000 gallons per day (gpd). These are good, producing, wells. Even in the 1999 drought, their yield remained good. There is a 15,000-gallon wet well at the well site for water storage. Raw water is treated for acid reduction and corrosive control as well as with chlorine. It is then pumped into the system with the excess being stored in a 500,000-gallon tank off of Wagner Drive. Though available for total system use, the tank is primarily for fire protection.

This is a modern system, built in 1990. Piping is generally PVC, with some copper used for individual connections. The water pressure averages some 120 pounds to 140 pounds PSI, which is high. Typical residential pressure is 40 pounds to 70 pounds PSI. To prevent high pressure problems in the homes of users, reducing valves are used. Fire hydrants are placed each 500 feet through the system.

Currently, the Township's water system services just under 480 customers, and pumps an average of 66,410 gpd. The service area focuses on Route 26, the Village of McConnellstown, with extensions up Fairground Road, Station Road, and Simon Fox Road (see plate). Water is metered. Users pay \$30.00 per month for the first 4,000 gallons used and \$7.50 excess per each 1,000 gallons after that.

Based upon current data, the average use is only about one half of the system's capacity, leaving about 65,000 gpd of available water. At current residential development rates, the system has sufficient capacity for the next two decades. In general, no serious system



Water Tank

Water Wells

**Water Service Area**  
**Walker Township**  
Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

- Water Service Area
- Water Tank
- Water Wells

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problems are reported. Unaccounted water (leakage) is minimal. However, an inspection of the storage tank last year did reveal some corrosion, and preventative tank maintenance work is to be budgeted for 2001. A recent test by the McConnellstown Volunteer Fire Company indicated fire flow is quite good.

**Sanitary Sewer:** Like the water system, the sewer system is also about 10 years old. This is a collection system only. Users have septic tanks with the effluent running into a collection system of PVC lines, sized at either six inches or eight inches. The Authority lines all flow by gravity to a 12-inch main, which flows north along Crooked Creek. This line transports the waste to Huntingdon Borough for treatment.

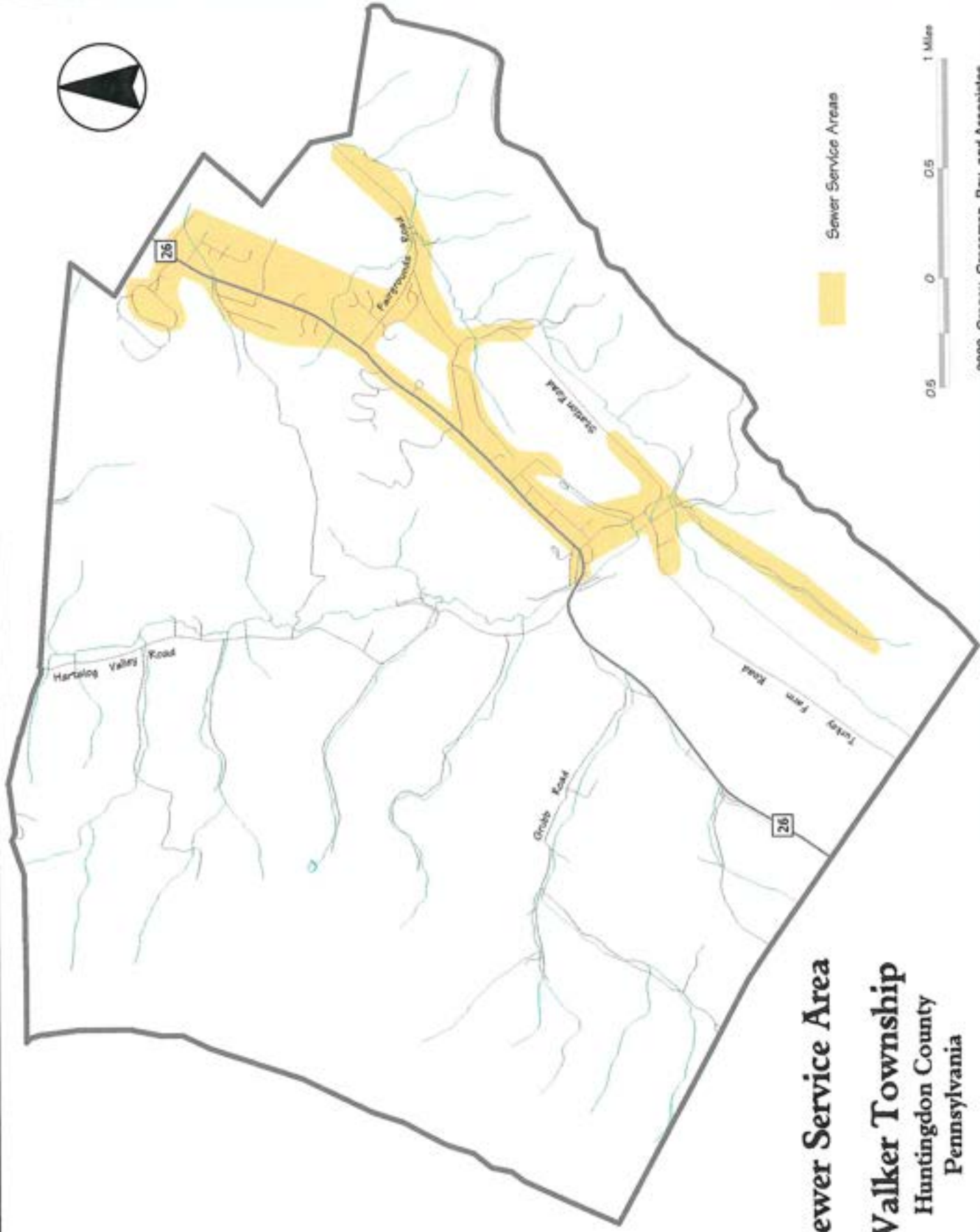
As each hookup has an associated septic tank, that tank needs to be periodically emptied. This is accomplished by the Authority, which pumps each tank in rotation once every three to five years, averaging about 125 tanks per year. The tank sludge is taken to the Huntingdon Borough sewer treatment plant for treatment. By agreement, this activity takes place between May and October.

The sanitary sewer service area generally follows the water service area. The user count is also approximately the same (see Sewer Service Area plate). While water fees are based on use, the sewer system has a flat monthly rate of \$25.40.

According to its operators, the sanitary sewer system is generally in good condition and is not the subject of DEP orders or a corrective action program. There is, however, evidence that the system does have infiltration and inflow (I&I) problems. Though the problems are not pinpointed, the supposition is that it results from inflow. This is likely due to sump pumps and downspouts hooked into the system, as usage peaks are usually associated with storm events. Given its age and construction, widespread infiltration is unlikely.

Beyond line size and I&I episodes, the system's only real limitation is its treatment agreement with Huntingdon – some 200,000 gpd. Typical flows are only 50,000 to 60,000 gallons a day. Of course, storm events, however, can double or triple that figure. It is estimated that the system now uses only 40 percent of its allocation. This translates into 20+ years of unused capacity, at contemporary development rates.

The Municipal Authority has one employee who manages the system. Additional maintenance personnel are shared employees with the Township.



**Sewer Service Area**  
**Walker Township**  
Huntingdon County  
Pennsylvania

Sewer Service Areas



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**Parks and Recreation:** Walker Township residents enjoy a variety of recreational opportunities. Less than a mile east of its borders is Raystown Lake. Here, fishing, boating, a variety of water sports, and other activities abound. On the west side of the Township, State Game Land 118 can be found, and local hunters have easy access to other nearby Game Lands. For formal sporting activities, team sports, and similar endeavors, the Borough of Huntingdon is only a few miles distant.

For the hunter and shooter, the Shenecoy Club is found in the Township. This facility provides for archery, skeet, trap, and target shooting, as well as a substantial newly built clubhouse.

There is also a developed playground park for residents. The Township owns and operates Woodcock Valley Community Park. This facility is located in McConnellstown, adjacent to the former elementary school. Starting with a State grant in 1993, Phase I of this park is now complete. There are play fields for Little League and regular baseball, and Pee Wee Football, a .7-mile walking trail is in place, a hard court basketball court and play equipment installed. A gazebo and a large picnic pavilion round out the current attractions.

Phase II looks to add a restroom facility (portable toilets are now in place). Longer-range plans include, volleyball, horseshoe pits, and additional play apparatus.

Overall, the Township has adopted a policy of providing facilities needed locally, by its own residents or those of nearby communities. It recognizes that formal, more costly, resources can be better provided by larger communities, such as Huntingdon Borough.

**Educational Resources:** Residents of the Township have a variety of educational resources close at hand. The Pennsylvania State University is just a few miles north and Juniata College is in nearby Huntingdon Borough.



Public education is provided by the Huntingdon Area School District. There are approximately 2,600 students served by the district through seven schools. There is one elementary school within the Township, Southside Elementary. This is a new facility, with kindergarten through fifth grades and 395 pupils (1998-1999 school year). Southside has a library and extensive computer resources.

Though this school is scarcely two years old, there is some concern relative to its capacity. This is due to local growth patterns.

**Public Health and Safety:** The public safety needs of residents are provided by a variety of organizations. The McConnellstown Volunteer Fire Company located in the village offers fire protection. Its service area includes the entire Township. The Huntingdon Ambulance Service provides ambulance service. Though the Township does not have its own police, the State Police Barracks along Route 26 is within its borders.

## TRANSPORTATION

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A community is influenced by many forces and transportation is a major one. As noted in the section on land use, the roads and highways of Walker Township have helped shape development patterns. Also, its location on the County's transportation network, in relation to nearby employment centers, has had an impact. There is little doubt that the Township's transportation convenience for commuters has been an influence on its growth over the past few decades.

Transportation encompasses highways, railroads, water-borne vessels, and air facilities. In Huntingdon County, water resources are used primarily for recreation, but other modes are important, especially highway and rail. Walker's system is essentially a single mode.

Transportation facilities of the Township consist of its road network. The Commonwealth maintains one system, containing 18.81 miles. Its major element is Route PA 26, classified by PennDOT as a minor arterial. Route 26's annual average traffic count is just under 5,000 vehicles a day. In terms of functional importance, SR 3035, Fairground Road is next. Here, the daily traffic is about 4,000 vehicles. It is classified as a major collector. Other roads include Hartslog Valley Road (SR 3039), a minor collector, and SR 3037, Turkey Farm Road. These are also part of the State system. Ridge Road and SR 3014 are found along the edges of the Township. Ridge Road (SR 3033) is classified as a major collector, but appears to function mainly as a low-volume local road for Walker. The State system with vehicle counts is shown on the Transportation Features plate.

The Township's local road systems function primarily for local access. Some are found in McConnellstown. Others follow natural features, often streams, to service rural farm areas. Many of these local roads simply stop when development ends and topography is steep. The local road system consists of 16.59 miles. The Township receives Liquid Fuel Funds to aid in local road maintenance and upkeep.

**Currently Programmed Transportation Projects:** Transportation is one activity where planning is directly related to improvements. This process is generally governed by the Federal and State governments, which generate the funds for larger transportation projects. Currently, this process is governed by Federal legislation known as "TEA-21." In essence, this process is a collaborative one between the State (via PennDOT) and regional/local organizations. Transportation plans are translated to action through the four year, TEA-21, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).





For Huntingdon County, transportation planning is coordinated by the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission. Huntingdon County is part of this four-county transportation planning effort. The Huntingdon County Planning Commission is the primary representative. Consequently, local concerns, priorities, and suggestions should be funneled through that agency.

Currently, there is only one construction project PennDOT has slated for the Township. A \$938,000 improvement to the Route 26 and Fairgrounds Road intersection has been approved.

Also, a complete transportation study of Route 26 from Huntingdon Borough to the County line (south) is planned, but no schedule is known as yet. This study may critically influence future land use policies for Walker. Though it is unlikely there will be recommendations for dramatic changes, this corridor study would be an ideal vehicle for the Township to highlight capacity, safety, and similar issues. Its recommendations could also influence land use. Consequently, Township officials must take an active part in its formation.