A G E N D A

PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE – COMMITTEE WORKSHOP PRPC-10

February 28, 2018

1. Energy Conservation Plan – Posted on PRPC website. Revisions per Workshop PRPC-9 indicated on draft text in RED

    a. Renewable energy Regional efforts
    b. Zero energy buildings
    c. Electric vehicles
    d. Various minor clarifications

2. Housing Plan – Posted on PRPC website. Revisions per Workshop PRPC-9 indicated on draft text in RED

    a. Interrelationship of schools and development trends
    b. Pending developments table
    c. Adaptive reuse of historic and industrial buildings
    d. Implementation Strategies – Emphasis on interrelationship with open space protection

3. Economic Development Plan – Initial draft

    a. Goals and Objectives
    b. Regional Economic Conditions
    c. Current Trends in Economic Development
    d. Infrastructure
    e. Economic Development Incentives and Funding Support
    f. Economic Development and Revitalization Areas
    g. Implementation Strategies
    h. Future Land Use Plan – Revised Valley Forge MU and add EDAs

4. Announce Next Workshop – March 28, 2018 – Draft Community Facilities Plan

5. Adjournment

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CHAPTER FIVE – ENERGY CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Energy conservation is a necessary component of environmental sustainability. This Chapter focuses on methods of achieving greater efficiency and cleaner sources of energy generation for electricity, heating and transportation in order to reduce pollution, limit the depletion of and dependency on finite resources, and lessen the impacts of carbon-induced climate change.

5.1 ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Advance strategies and practices that reduce energy consumption and promote renewable and non-polluting energy sources. This goal is to be advanced through the pursuit of the following specific objectives:

1. Increase utilization of renewable energy systems.

2. Develop regulatory and/or incentive-based standards for energy efficient buildings and construction.

3. Coordinate development with transportation systems, and in particular mass transportation.

4. Maximize energy efficiency of transportation systems.

5. Promote an efficient and flexible electric grid that includes local and regional clean power generation.

5.2 RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS

There are a number of renewable energy systems that have practical application in the PRPC Region. These systems provide substantial benefits in terms of reduced demand on polluting and nonrenewable resources, while providing mid-term to long-term economic advantages to residences and businesses. If State and Federal incentive programs are re-funded and augmented, the use of renewable energy and all of its attendant benefits will be dramatically increased.

There are national and regional efforts underway to promote and increase the use of renewable energy. In 2017, Phoenixville became the first Chester County municipality to adopt a resolution to commit to 100% renewable electricity by 2035, and other County and PRPC municipalities have similar resolutions under consideration. Efforts like this provide models to be emulated in the private sector to enhance energy sustainability.

Solar Energy

Solar energy is derived from the sun's radiation and is classified as active or passive. Passive solar relies on building technologies that utilize thermal mass, orientation, light dispersal/absorption, and convection, and is discussed further in section 5.3. Active solar creates electricity or heats water. Because solar water heating applications are typically most practical at latitudes lower than 40 degrees, this section deals with solar electricity generation.

In the last two decades, photovoltaics (PV), also known as solar PV, has evolved from a pure niche market of small scale applications towards becoming a mainstream electricity source. It works through solar cells that convert light directly into electricity using the photoelectric effect. With rapid advances in solar panel and battery storage technology, solar electricity generation is becoming increasingly affordable and practical at small to large scale, and is expected to be the world's leading source of electricity production by 2050.

Figure 5-1 demonstrates that available solar resource in the PRPC Region is significant, with solar potential of up to 4.4 kWh/square meter/day. In practice, current solar panels currently produce about 15 watts per square foot, or about 265 watts per typical 65 inch by 39 inch panel. According to Philadelphia Electric Company (PECO), average electrical demand is approximately 17 kWh per day. Thus, even small solar panel arrays can produce a significant amount of needed electricity.

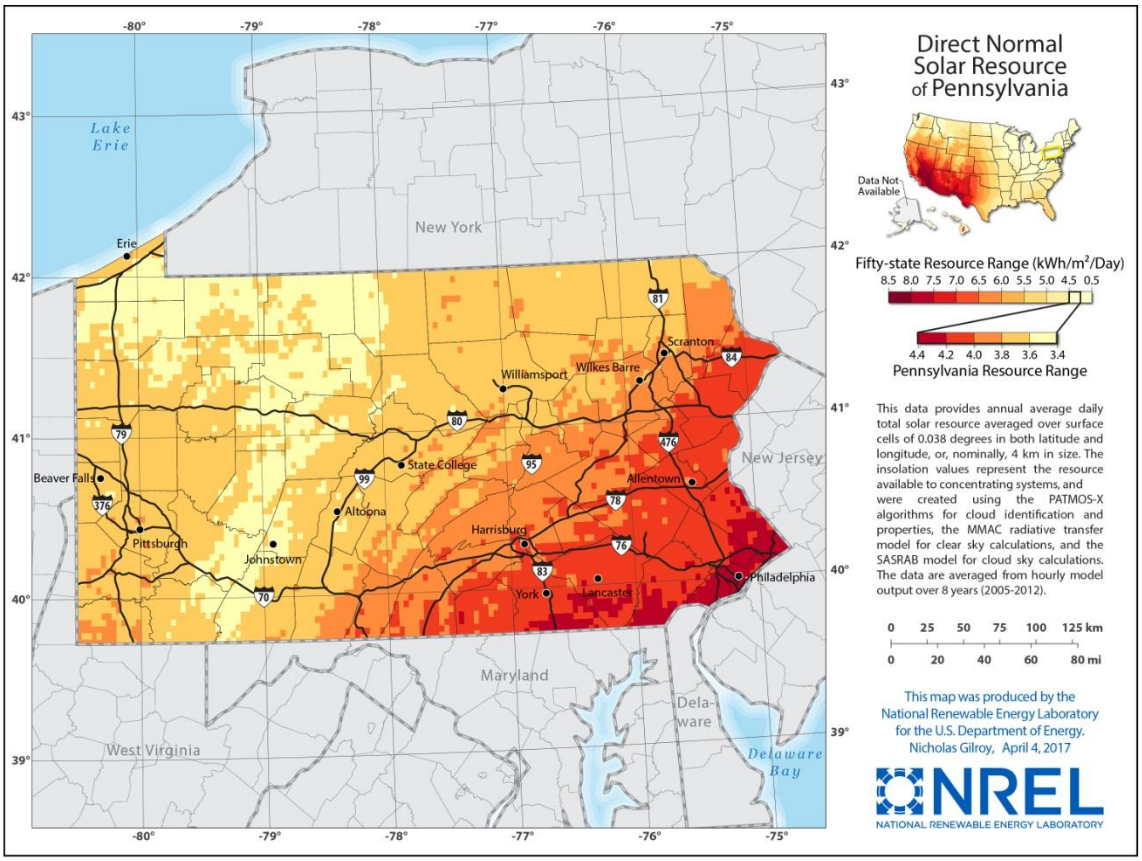


Figure 5-1. Solar Energy Potential in Pennsylvania

Also contributing to increasing practicality of solar electrical systems is dramatically improving battery storage technology. Current battery systems capable of sustaining typical residential demand over a period of days cost only slightly more than fossil fuel powered generator systems, and their cost is expected to decrease rapidly as their function improves.

Government incentives make solar PV systems more affordable to residences and businesses. There is currently a significant federal tax credit that would cover 15-20% of the system installation cost. In addition, Pennsylvania has a solar rebate program that requires legislative funding for implementation.

Another alternative available to homes and businesses is leasing a PV system, whereby an individual pays a fixed or variable monthly rate to a solar company who owns and installs the system. This eliminates the upfront cost for the user and typically results in modest cost savings on electricity to the home or business, while greatly reducing demand on the non-renewable fueled electrical grid.

Ground Source Heat Pumps

Ground source heat pumps (GSHPs) are wells in the soil that greatly increase the efficiency of heating and cooling (HVAC) systems by providing an ambient heat source or sink with higher moisture content and more constant and moderate temperature than air sourced heat pumps. Since heating and cooling typically consumes up to 50% of residential energy demand, these systems can greatly save on cost and reduce environmental impacts over conventional fossil fuel or electrical systems. In fact, GSHPs are recognized as among the most efficient technologies for HVAC and water heating.

Installation costs for GSHP’s are two or three times higher than for conventional systems, but this difference is returned in energy savings over a period of three to ten years, depending on comparisons with radiant electrical, oil, or natural gas. The working life of GSHP systems is estimated at 25 years for inside components and over 50 years for the ground source loops, so they are considerably more durable than conventional HVAC systems, which represents another source of savings in terms of cost and environmental impact. The return on investment period can be considerably shortened through Federal and State incentive programs.

Wind Energy

Wind energy consists of turbines of various sizes and designs that power electrical generators. It is a significant source of electricity in many parts of the world and the United States. Southeastern Pennsylvania, including the PRPC Region is marginal for wind power production in comparison with other parts of the State, as illustrated in figure 5-2. Thus, this discussion focuses on site specific application of wind power, as opposed to large commercial wind farms.

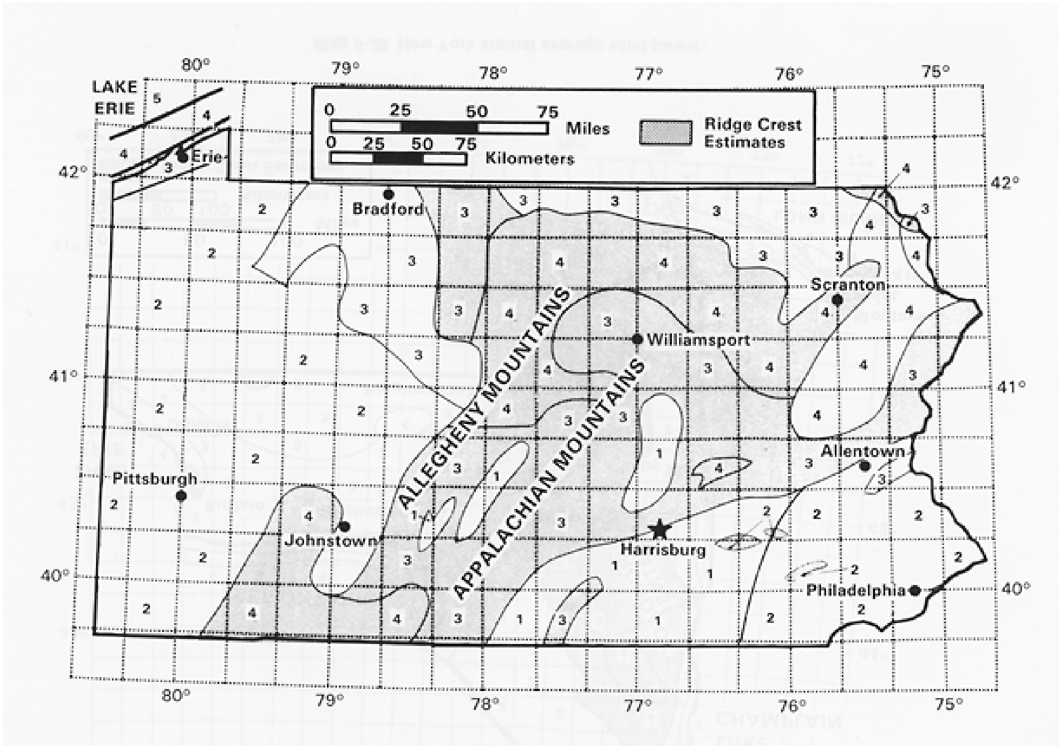


Figure 5-2. Wind Energy Potential in Pennsylvania. Wind power classes 3 and 4 are suitable, class 2 is marginal, and class 1 is generally unsuitable.

Wind power has historically been used in agricultural settings in southeastern Pennsylvania, and advances in turbine and generator efficiency have enabled this source to continue in farm and residential applications. As with solar, improved battery storage technology and cost have increased the capacity to utilize wind power.

State and Federal wind energy tax credit programs for onsite wind power for residential and business application could be reinstated to incentivize it. Regardless, wind energy remains a technologically feasible supplemental power source for this region, if one is able to absorb a lengthy period of return on investment.

5.3 ENERGY EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION

Energy efficient building layout and construction has been part of traditional building practices worldwide since the beginnings of civilization. However, with the advent of industrial age technology that produced cheap and abundant energy and economic systems that conceal costs through externalization, practices changed to favor a consumer-based method of development. The 20th century way of development has needlessly consumed resources, and has resulted in throwaway buildings and landscapes that become blight when their design lives of a scant few decades is exhausted.

This section explores technologies that reduce the environmental impacts of building and development, while improving livability, durability, and sustainability.

Recent advances in architecture, site planning, and consumer product certification have been created to encourage building and development that is more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Modern techniques in building and energy efficiency (e.g. PassivHaus) can be applied to either new construction or retrofits, resulting in buildings that have zero net energy use or even that produce net positive energy.

LEED Certification

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed in 1998 by the U.S. Green Building Council, provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. It has since become a standard throughout the U.S. Practices that attain points on the LEED certification scale include such measures as:

- Siting to achieve passive or active solar benefit
- Thermal massing
- High performance insulation for walls, roofs, doors, and windows
- High efficiency HVAC and mechanical systems
- Renewable source energy
- Use of recycled and renewable building materials
- Recycling of construction waste and demolition materials

SITES Certification

SITES is a sustainability-focused framework developed in 2009 that encourages landscape architects, engineers, planners, architects and other designers toward practices that protect ecosystems and enhance the mosaic of benefits they provide, such as climate regulation, carbon storage and flood mitigation. SITES is the culmination of work by leading professionals in the fields of soil, water, vegetation, materials and human health. Administered by Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI), SITES offers a comprehensive rating system designed to distinguish sustainable landscapes, measure their performance and elevate their value. SITES certification is for development projects with or without buildings—ranging from national parks to corporate campuses, streetscapes to homes, and more. (Source – Sustainable Sites Initiative, 2017) SITES is a points-based system that emphasizes performance objectives over specific practices. Typical measures consistent with SITES certification would include:

- Stormwater water quality and infiltration practices, such as rain gardens, meadows, level spreaders, riparian buffers, green roofs
- Habitat protection and enhancement
- Pervious paving surfaces
- Recycled, locally sourced, and sustainable building materials
- Coordination with mass and multi-modal transit
- Renewable energy
- Water conservation
- Soil management
- Pedestrian accessibility and interconnections
- Operations, maintenance, monitoring, and stewardship

Energy Star

Energy Star, created in 1992, is an international standard for energy efficient consumer products including computer products, kitchen appliances, buildings, and others. Energy Star certified products typically reduce energy by between 20 and 30 percent as compared to those that are non-certified.

5.4 RECYCLING, REDEVELOPMENT, AND REDUCED RESOURCE USE

Recycling

Recycling requirements were established by PA Act 101, The Municipal Waste Planning Recycling and Waste Reduction Act adopted in 1988. Each municipality within the Region works to comply with these requirements in varying ways. Waste haulers are required to have recycling programs and collect recycling separate from waste in all municipalities. In the Borough of Phoenixville, the Borough collects comingled products weekly, which includes paper, glass, plastics, metal and aluminum cans.

Additionally, both Phoenixville Borough and East Pikeland Township have composting facilities. The Phoenixville composting facility is located on South 2nd Avenue. The Phoenixville composting facility accepts/collects yard debris from residents of Phoenixville Borough and also accepts yard debris from Schuylkill Township residents and approved contractors in the region. Residents of Phoenixville and Schuylkill can get mulch from the facility during established hours.

The East Pikeland composting facility was established in 1993 and it is located next to the Township building on Rapps Dam Road. Residents can drop off their yard waste and pick up mulch when needed.

While West Vincent and Charlestown Township do not currently have composting programs, opportunities to create such programs should be considered. Programs could start simply at a designated site maintained by the Township or at community garden areas. Another alternative could be to develop multi-municipal agreements similar to the arrangement between Phoenixville and Schuylkill Township with the other municipalities of the Region to allow residents of West Vincent and Charlestown Townships to use the existing facilities.

Opportunities to expand local recycling programs should be encouraged, such as composting food waste and offering yard waste composting in municipalities that do not have this option.

Redevelopment

In an effort to reduce energy use associated with the development of an undeveloped site, incentives should be provided to encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized parcels located near population centers.

Reduced Use of Resources

The United States population continues to use natural resources at a higher rate per capita than most other countries. Many opportunities exist to reduce the amount of resources used, but often a concerted effort to educate the population is required to help people change habits. Some examples of opportunities to reduce energy use include turning off lights in rooms when not being used, unplugging appliances and electronics when not in use, setting heating system slightly lower in the winter and wearing warmer clothes, washing clothes using cold water, insulating roofs and windows, and installing low-flow plumbing fixtures. Opportunities should be pursued to educate residents and businesses of the Region regarding ways to reduce energy and resource use.

5.5 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Transportation accounts for nearly 30% of total energy use in the US, and can therefore contribute significantly toward energy conservation efforts. Transportation planning will receive further attention in Chapter 10.

Transportation systems significantly impact energy use in our region. Single-occupancy vehicles account for the vast majority of commuting vehicles and miles driven. As summarized in the Chester County Landscapes2 Comprehensive Plan, the percent of employed residents who drove alone, based on the American Community Survey from 2008-2012, was 84-90 percent in East Pikeland and Schuylkill Township, 79-83 percent in Phoenixville and Charlestown Township, and 71-78 percent in West Vincent Township. As technology and innovation continue to develop, creative alternatives for reducing the miles driven by the single-occupant driver become available. Because much of the Region is developed at low densities, and is encouraged to remain that way through land use policies, a wide range of alternatives needs to be available to residents. Mass transit that is feasible in the urbanized areas, may not be feasible in the rural areas where the population density does not support such services.

Within the Phoenixville Region there are organizations focused on transportation coordination between public sector transportation agencies and the Chester County business community. TMACC is a non-profit that was established in 1992 by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation to serve as a liaison between public sector transportation agencies and the private sector on transportation issues affecting the Chester County business community. TMACC's focus is on Mobility Management and Sustainability through education, advocacy and special programs.

Another nonprofit doing work in the region advocating and promoting a viable transportation network for the region's economic vitality is the Greater Valley Forge Transportation Management Association (GVF). GVF is based in King of Prussia, but its mission is to achieve a desirable quality of life and a healthy, competitive economic environment by developing multi-faceted transportation strategies throughout the region.

Land Use Planning and Zoning Coordination

Local zoning and land development regulations provide opportunities to establish energy conservation standards and improved transportation systems for new development. Consideration of interconnections for both vehicles and pedestrians between existing and proposed development across municipal boundaries can be required in local ordinances to provide improved opportunities for people to make choices to reduce vehicle miles traveled and to choose to walk between businesses that are relatively nearby.

Mixed use development supports energy efficiency and a reduced impact on transportation systems by encouraging a mix of residential, commercial and office development in proximity to one another providing improved opportunities to walk or bike between uses. Coordinating zoning and requiring interconnections between mixed-use developments in adjacent municipalities supports such mixed-use areas.

Local ordinances can also be amended to require new development to provide bicycle storage and bicycle parking facilities near entrances to buildings, rather than remotely located on the property. Bicycle parking facilities should be covered, at a minimum, to protect bicycles from harsh weather. Pedestrian facilities interconnecting adjacent properties should link new development to existing development.

To help encourage carpool/ridesharing, local zoning codes can be amended to require new development to provide parking for this purpose.

Mass Transportation Planning and Improvements

Mass transportation includes existing fixed route transportation systems typically consisting of buses, trolleys, and trains/rail service. In the Phoenixville Region mass transportation is currently limited to bus service, and this service is limited to Phoenixville, Schuylkill Township, Charlestown Township and East Pikeland Township. Phoenixville is served by two SEPTA bus routes, Route 99, which provides regular transit service between Royersford and King of Prussia including stops in Audubon and Norristown. Route 39 also serves Phoenixville, Schuylkill Township, and East Pikeland Township with stops along Route 724 in East Pikeland and stops along Route 23 in all three municipalities. The portion of Charlestown Township associated with the Great Valley Corporate Center is served by bus 206, which connects the Great Valley Corporate Center with the Paoli Train Station and points in-between. West Vincent Township does not have SEPTA service available. SEPTA previously provided bus service between Phoenixville, the Great Valley Corporate Center and the Paoli Rail Station, but ridership was low and the service was cancelled in 2014.

Providing transit opportunities throughout the region remains challenging because much of the Region is rural in nature and does not lend itself to opportunities for high volumes of riders outside the more urbanized areas. While increased frequency and coverage could help increase ridership, the SEPTA routes tend to be circuitous between major destinations such as Norristown and King of Prussia resulting in long commutes that are often not practical for employees who have other alternatives. Opportunities for express buses during peak hours should be considered, particularly along major roads in the Region including Route 23, Route 29, and Route 724. Reestablishment of the SEPTA service previously provided between Phoenixville, the Great Valley Corporate Center and the Paoli Rail Station should be considered and establishment of a bus route along Route 100 in West Vincent connecting Ludwigs Corner to the Exton train station should also be considered.
Due to limited funding for mass transit, the amenities associated with bus stops tend to be minimal, further reducing the appeal of choosing transit. Improved amenities such as protected shelters at bus stops, bicycle parking, wifi on the buses, and more comfortable seating should be considered to increase ridership. Some amenities could be sponsored by the local municipality and/or businesses to make transit more appealing.

Rail Service

Phoenixville was served by commuter rail service until the 1980’s when it was ended. Studies have been completed over the years to reestablish rail service between Phoenixville and Norristown, but adequate funding has not been allocated beyond conducting studies. The possibility of connecting Phoenixville with the Great Valley Corporate Center in Charlestown Township via rail was subsequently investigated, but again funding was not allocated and the project did not move forward. Reestablishment of rail service to the Phoenixville Region should be advocated to help improve energy conservation opportunities.

Other Publicly Funded Transportation

While not having a fixed daily route, Rover Community Transportation is a transportation service available for residents throughout Chester County needing to travel within Chester County. While the service is available to anyone in Chester County, the emphasis is on providing a transportation alternative for Chester County seniors and disabled residents. The Rover transportation service is subsidized for residents who are disabled, senior or who qualify for certain other government assistance programs. Residents who do not qualify for subsidies can use the service, but must pay the full rate which is dependent on the distance of the trip. Full price rates currently range from $11.75 (0- 4.99 miles) to $129.05 (41+ miles). To use Rover, a reservation must be made the prior day by 1 PM and routes may include picking up other passengers along the way to a destination. Given the high price for full-rate customers, Rover tends to be a better alternative for riders eligible for subsidies.

Because there is a fleet of vehicles associated with the Rover Community Transportation system already active in the Region, consideration should be given to potential partnerships between the Rover program and local employers to offer shuttle services between population and employment centers within the greater region.

<u>Ride Sharing/Carpooling</u>

Another opportunity for reducing energy use in the region is ridesharing or carpooling. Ridesharing or carpooling consists of two or more people with similar work schedules riding together to a similar area. Carpooling/ridesharing is typically done in a private vehicle and arrangements can vary from taking turns driving a private car, to compensating a driver for providing a ride. Challenges associated with carpooling/ridesharing including finding another person from your area with a similar commuting pattern and finding safe and secure meeting places from which to travel. Within the Region there are currently no park-and-ride parking lots to encourage ridesharing. Consideration should be given to identifying locations for park-and-ride lots in the Region to better improve opportunities for shared rides. Ridesharing websites exist, but without a better understanding by the general public how such an arrangement could work for them, it is often difficult for people to be willing to try such an alternative.

<u>Alternative/Multimodal Transportation</u>

Multi-modal transportation refers to a transportation system that involves various modes (walking, cycling, automobile, public transit, etc.) and connections among modes. To encourage use of multimodal transportation alternatives, the points of transition from one mode to another should support an easy, safe transition. This could range from waiting areas protected from harsh weather to adequate lighting and protected seating for people having to wait to adequate parking for cars or bicycles. As technology advances and innovative, energy efficient ways to get from one point to another are developed, municipalities within the Region should continue to find ways to encourage and support alternative modes of transportation.

<u>Telecommuting</u>

Telecommuting is a work arrangement that allows an employee to conduct work during any part of regular paid hours at an approved alternative worksite, such as at home. As technology improves and telecommuting becomes much more feasible for a wider range of businesses, telecommuting from home is a simple alternative that maximizes energy efficiency by eliminating the need to travel for work on the telecommuting days.

<u>Complete Streets</u>

Complete streets is a concept focused on requiring improvements within the public right-of-way to be designed and operated to enable safe access and passage for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Municipalities are often challenged by developers requesting relief from certain aspects of complete street requirements due to an anticipated lack of pedestrian, transit or bicycle use. Granting such requests essentially eliminates the possibility of these alternative modes becoming established in the future. Granting such relief should be avoided. Throughout the Region gaps can be seen in the infrastructure for pedestrians and bicycles resulting in unsafe conditions for those who have no alternative to walking and bicycling. These gaps also discourage others from walking or bicycling due to the lack of safe facilities. Retrofitting rights-of-ways later to accommodate such infrastructure tends to be challenging and a significant financial burden to the tax payers within a community. Complete streets provide residents and employees with choices of alternative forms of transportation and enhance the livability of the Region.

Plug-in and Alternative Fuels

Significant progress has been made with plug-in car technology in the past several years, but challenges continue regarding public charging stations. According to resources available on the internet there are two charging stations within the Phoenixville Region, one at the Borough of Phoenixville municipal building and one at Main Line Animal Rescue on Route 113. However, according to Phoenixville Borough representatives, the charging station at the Phoenixville municipal building was recently removed because the company servicing the unit went out of business. The Borough continues to search for sponsorship to replace the charging station and the possibility of expanding the charging stations to other spaces in the Borough parking lot along Bridge Street, which are also wired for charging stations. Without convenient and accessible charging stations ~~in the Region~~, people with electric cars may be less likely to travel to the Region. Municipalities within the Region should consider opportunities to provide such stations at municipal buildings and public parking lots ~~or~~ and encourage local businesses to provide charging stations.

The Region has a significant and growing number of hybrid and electric cars, and this trend will accelerate as more people recognize their numerous advantages. Individuals can utilize a number of incentives to switch to hybrid and electric vehicles (EVs) and significantly diminish both operating costs and carbon emissions. By themselves, EVs cost less than half to operate than their gasoline powered equivalents. Coupled with on site solar and/or electricity purchased from 100% renewable sources, an EV can operate essentially emissions free. PECO and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection each have substantial rebate programs applicable to new and used hybrid and EV purchases. In addition, there are programs to obtain electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE, level 2 charger) for free or at reduced cost.

Figure 5-3. Electric Vehicle

5.6 ELECTRICITY GRID

The electricity grid system has traditionally been centralized. Centralized systems are typically dependent on a limited number of energy production facilities, utilizing energy sources such as natural gas, nuclear, or coal, which generates large quantities of electricity that is located a long distance from end-users resulting in transmission and distribution inefficiencies due to long distances required for distribution. Such systems are inefficient and vulnerable should the system be interrupted close to the source, resulting in the loss of power to a large area.

In an effort to reduce dependency on a centralized source of energy generation, distributed energy generation is playing a larger role in electricity distribution. A distributed energy system is one where there are multiple sources of energy production, both large and small. Sources of energy vary from wind turbines, solar panels, conventional fossil fuels and nuclear power plants. Transitioning to the distributed energy system provides opportunities for alternative sources of energy when one source becomes unavailable.

Support Modernized Grid

Within the Region the distributed energy system can be supported by encouraging new development to incorporate energy efficient technologies such as roof-mounted solar into development. Retrofitting existing buildings with solar also adds to the diversifications of the grid system.

5.7 LOCAL INITIATIVES

There are a number of actions that can be taken on the local level to advance energy conservation. These include regulatory strategies, municipal programs, and model projects.

Local and Community Regulations

PRPC municipalities should review local development and building codes to create incentives and eliminate barriers to energy conservation. Incentives could consist of various types of density bonuses for low impact design. Ordinances could be crafted in ways that walk applicants through various components and processes of green building, with established details and methodologies to expedite design and approval.

Figure 5-4. Solar PV Panels

Further, in order to promote sustainability through resource protection and energy conservation, it is critical that ordinances and rules made by local authorities and community associations do not counter these objectives. Municipalities should ensure that ordinance standards based on purely aesthetic or parochial concerns do not create unintended barriers to environmentally conscientious development, construction, or rehabilitation. In addition, where regulations are crafted with the intention of promoting the use of sustainable practices, permitting and cost hardships that would discourage those practices should not be invoked. Finally, community association covenants should be scrutinized to prevent the establishment of arbitrary and counterproductive prohibitions of sustainable practices.

Municipal Programs

Municipalities should advocate energy conservation throughout the community. These efforts can take a number of forms:

- Local recycling and composting programs or participation in and expansion of existing regional programs
- Information gathering and dissemination through printed materials, public exhibits, and web content
- Implementation of sustainable practices at municipal facilities, such as LEED/SITES certification, stormwater/habitat projects, electric vehicle charging stations, and model projects using sustainable materials
- Use of alternative fuel and EV/hybrid vehicles
- Advocacy of multi-modal transportation
- Community fairs and events focused on energy and environmental sustainability
- Coordination with community and regional organizations dedicated to energy conservation

5.8 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following policy recommendations will implement the goals and objectives of the Energy Conservation Plan:

EC-1 Assure that local ordinances promote use of renewable energy.

Develop provisions to advance renewable technologies with straightforward processes and permitting, and eliminate provisions in the codes that act as deterrents. Emphasis should be placed on promoting solar PV and GSHP development.

EC-2 Advocate use of energy efficient technologies in local building and development codes.

Preferred practices should be advanced through simplified permitting and/or fee structures that favor those practices. Eliminate code provisions that prohibit or discourage sustainable building practices.

EC-3 Establish guidelines for community associations to prevent arbitrary prohibitions of sustainable practices.

Examples are aesthetically motivated outright prohibitions on solar panels, outdoor clothes lines, landscaping restrictions, etc. that are commonly found in community association covenants.

EC-4 Create municipal resource centers for activities and information on energy conservation.

Include energy conservation strategies for residents in utility bills or other forms of communication from municipalities to residents. Also, maintain public resource files for grants and technical assistance for energy efficient building, renewable electricity, and EV and hybrid vehicles.

EC-5 Create or expand municipal and/or regional recycling programs.

Consider the development of food composting recycling programs within the region.

EC-6 Develop municipal projects to serve as models of energy efficient practices for the community.

Examples are sustainable building practices in municipal facilities, EV and high efficiency vehicles, multi-modal transportation and accessibility. Consider municipal adoption of resolutions to implement 100% renewably sourced electricity usage.

EC-7 Continue to work with regional transit advocates and SEPTA to promote rail service to Phoenixville with stops in the Phoenixville Region as appropriate.

EC-8 Improve opportunities within the Region for residents to utilize alternative modes of transportation.

Identify locations that can serve as park-and-ride facilities to better encourage carpooling and ride-sharing in the Region.

On municipal websites develop a list of resources for residents interested in ridesharing/carpooling.

Encourage SEPTA to provide incentives for those carpooling/ridesharing to rail stations by offering dedicated free or reduced parking for those carpooling.

Provide secure bicycle parking/storage at key multimodal locations to allow storage of bicycles while using another mode of transportation.

Have representatives of the Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee attend local meetings of community organizations such as Chambers of Commerce to promote opportunities for carpooling/ridesharing and other alternative transportation opportunities.

EC-9 Encourage improved mass transportation service to the Region where feasible.

Encourage SEPTA to develop express bus service to major destinations such as King of Prussia and Norristown during peak hours.

Work with SEPTA, other transportation organizations, municipal governments and local business organizations to promote available bus services, and newly proposed bus service, to residents and employees in the Region to improve ridership.

Encourage partnerships between SEPTA and large employers in the greater region to develop shuttles between population centers and major employers. Consider incorporation of the Rover vehicles as regular shuttle vehicles between key locations connecting population and employment centers.

EC-10 Provide electric vehicle charging stations at municipal buildings and parking lots, and encourage local businesses to provide charging stations.

CHAPTER SIX – HOUSING PLAN

The plan for housing helps to maintain and shape the type of community the Region will have. Housing policy influences who lives in the community in terms of ethnicity and economic characteristics. It also affects economic viability by prioritizing a workforce appropriate to local and regional centers of employment. It works in concert with the Land Use Plan to create vibrant settlements while protecting rural and natural areas. The Housing Plan is thus an essential part of establishing and sustaining a healthy and dynamic, Regional community of neighborhoods.

6.1 HOUSING PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Provide a range of housing opportunities in appropriate areas to meet the needs of all Phoenixville Area residents, regardless of household size, age and/or income. This goal is to be advanced through the pursuit of the following specific objectives:

1. Manage new housing through a balanced pattern of development that preserves and enhances existing communities and the natural and scenic landscapes of the Region.

2. Encourage clustering of housing and village-style mixed-use development, and discourage sprawling development patterns that consume existing open space.

3. Provide a diversity of housing options for residents throughout the Region.

4. Maintain, preserve, and revitalize the Phoenixville Region's existing neighborhoods, particularly its older housing stock, and create new residential opportunities that make it a community of choice for homeowners and renters.

5. Support the revitalization of existing residential areas in older communities and neighborhoods through effective code enforcement and the preservation of the housing stock.

6. Ensure opportunities for affordable housing throughout the Phoenixville Region.

7. Prioritize housing opportunities for seniors and families.

8. Encourage home ownership opportunities in areas of the Region where owner-occupancy rates are much lower than the majority of the Region.

6.2 EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND CURRENT TRENDS

The PRPC Region includes housing patterns in rural, suburban, and urban settings. Although the majority of housing units are single family detached, over 40% of the Region's dwellings are in attached or multifamily buildings – a percentage that will likely increase in accordance with post-recession trends. There is a good availability of rental housing for a diverse and transitional workforce, although the emphasis of new development on an upscale, rental market is having an impact on affordability and the proportion of single-family detached housing stock.

Current Housing Data

Housing Unit Types

Most of the housing across the Region is made up of single family detached units, although attached and multi-family units constitute a combined total of 43% of housing stock. Mobile homes comprise just 1% of the Region's units, and most of these are contained within three developments in Schuylkill Township.

Phoenixville offers the greatest diversity in housing options, with a fairly even split between single family detached, single family attached, and multi-family units. As figure 6.2-2 shows, this coincides with the greatest rental availability in the Region. The Borough's dense residential concentration presents a greater opportunity for mixed use development and transit options than elsewhere in the Region.

Outside of Phoenixville, East Pikeland and Charlestown Townships have the largest percentage of single family attached housing. In both municipalities, these residences are largely clustered in traditional neighborhood and carriage home developments along major transportation route corridors. The overwhelming majority of units in both Schuylkill and West Vincent Townships are single family detached. However, West Vincent and East Pikeland Townships each contain a significant portion of multi-family housing, which suggests increased renter opportunities in both municipalities.

The location of single family attached and multi-family units throughout the Region may help identify areas needing expanded transportation options, amenities and services, or mixed-use development opportunities.

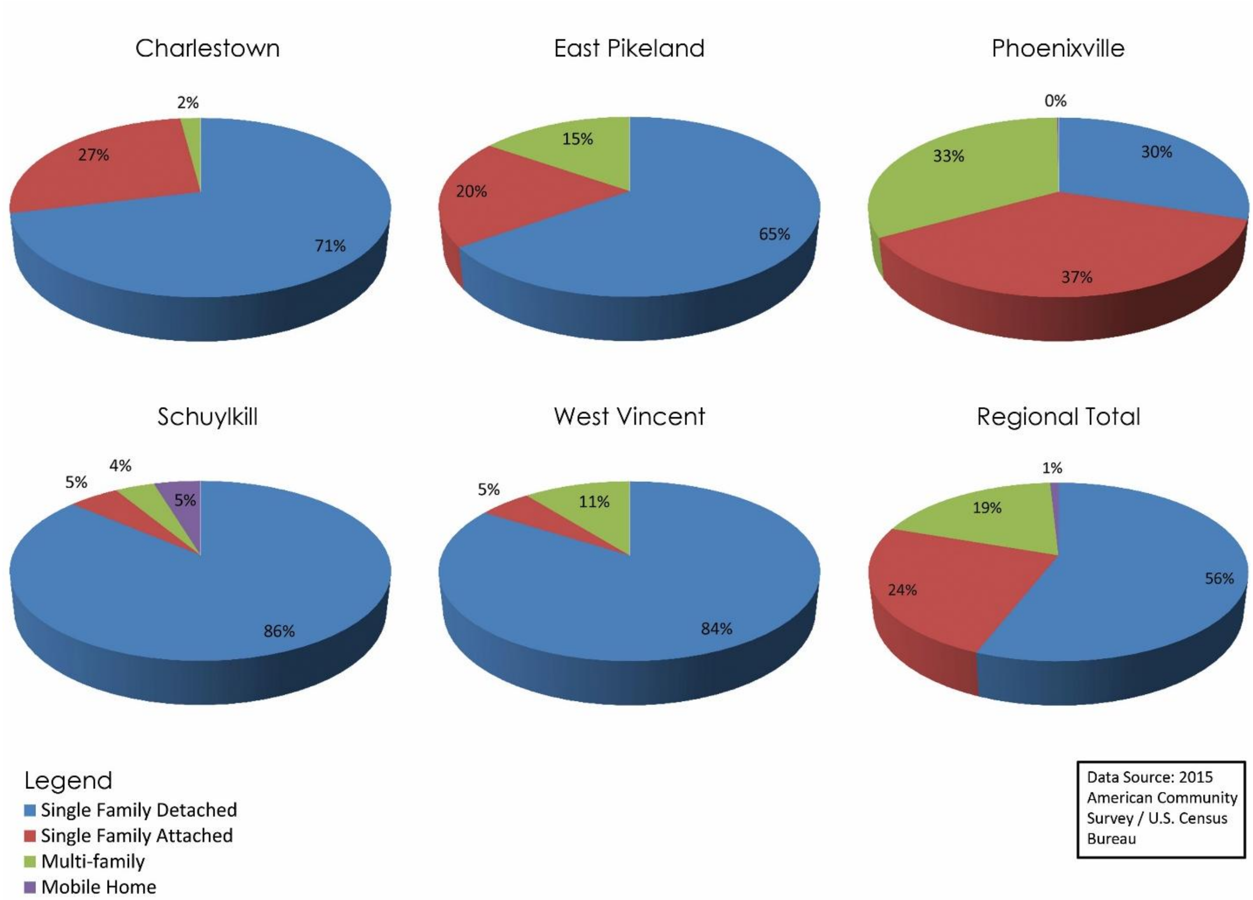


Figure 6.2-1: Housing Unit Types by PRPC Member Municipality and by PRPC Study Area Total

Housing Unit Occupancy and Tenure

Owner-occupied housing makes up the vast majority of units in each of the Region's municipalities with the conspicuous exception of Phoenixville Borough (figure 6.2-2). Here, renter-occupied housing is approaching an equal proportion with owner-occupied housing, particularly after the surge in construction of multi-family and single family attached units in 2016 (see table 6.2-2 on page 11). Both West Vincent Township and East Pikeland Township also experienced a significant increase in renter-occupied housing between 2010 and 2016, which is consistent with the new apartment and townhouse construction that took place during this time. Although Charlestown and Schuylkill Townships did not see dramatic gains in the percentage of renters, they too have had a slight increase in this segment of the housing market.

With its combination of good schools, an abundant job market, and favorable tax rates, vacant housing has not been a significant problem in the Region. Throughout the Region, unit vacancy rates have remained for the most part stable and below the statewide rate of 6.5% (2010). While Phoenixville had a relatively high rate of vacancy in 2010 (6.1%), it remained below the statewide figure. Some of the Borough's vacant units could represent older housing stock in need of rehabilitation (see figure 6.2-3). East Pikeland and West Vincent's vacancy rates rose in 2010 to exceed that of the state (7.1% and 7.7%, respectively), although this is due to recent construction yet to be occupied; by 2016's estimates, vacancy fell to rates consistent with those of Charlestown and Schuylkill Townships.

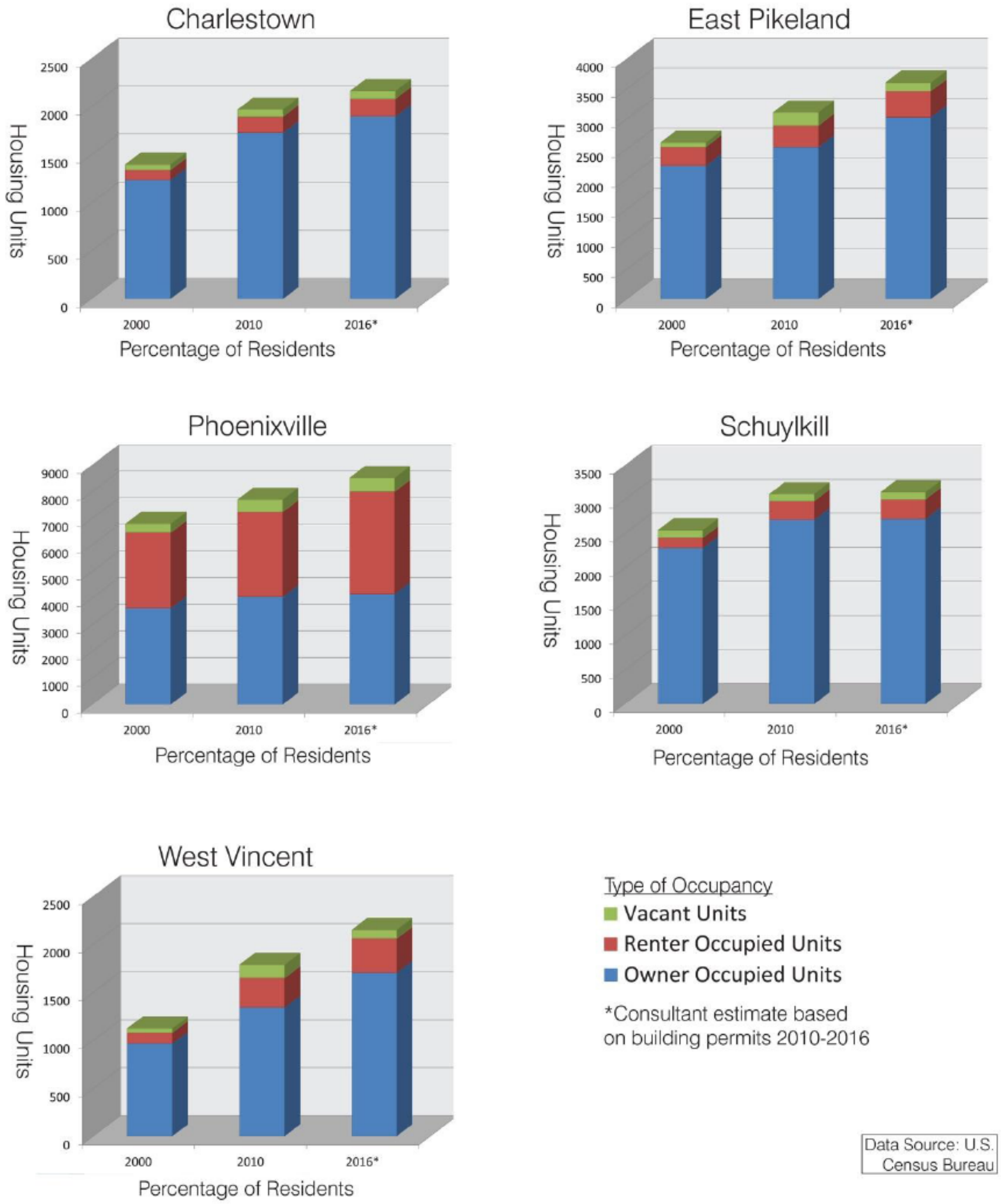


Figure 6.2-2: Unit Occupancy and Tenure by PRPC Member Municipality

Housing Growth and Age of Units

Historically, the high quality of schools and robust regional economy have been consistent stimulators of residential growth in the Region. Dates of housing construction in the Region may correspond with periods of greater economic development. The majority of housing units built before 1970 are found in

Phoenixville, which accords with the Borough's long history of economic growth associated with the steel industry. A significant proportion of units were also constructed in East Pikeland and Schuylkill Townships before 1970 (36% and 40%, respectively).

The thirty years between 1970 and 2000 brought robust exurban growth to the Region: Charlestown, East Pikeland, and Schuylkill Townships each added over 40% of their current housing stock during this time, and over a quarter of the current units in West Vincent and Phoenixville were constructed in this time period as well. This period saw the trend of less densely placed, single family units contributing to sprawl throughout the Region.

The growth of housing construction continued in nearly all of the PRPC member municipalities between 2000 and 2015. This period of growth is particularly significant in West Vincent Township, which saw more units built during these 15 years than in the previous 60 years. A large number of units were also built in Charlestown Township following the year 2000 (643 units, or 34% of its housing stock). The growth in these townships to a large extent reflects the boom in the construction of multi-family and attached single family units that occurred following the Region's recovery from the Great Recession of 2007-2008. If we project the 2000-2015 building trends for each municipality out to 2030, Charlestown and West Vincent would each be on track to add over half of all of their housing units during this time (51% and 56%, respectively), followed by East Pikeland (35%), Schuylkill (31%), and Phoenixville (16%). This incredible, Region-wide growth could create strains on existing services, and lead to a demand for expanded amenities – the Region should plan so that this growth is directed in a sustainable manner.

The Region will also need to consider its aging housing stock. Phoenixville, East Pikeland, and Schuylkill have the greatest number of units approaching fifty years of age or older. Phoenixville in particular has the greatest concentration of older units, but these buildings present unique opportunities and challenges in each of the PRPC member municipalities. Farm houses, townhouses, and other old buildings contribute to the area's unique sense of place and historic character, and should be reused wherever possible as opportunities allow. However, plans for repurposing these buildings should balance historic significance with safety concerns and the maintenance needs pertinent to older structures.

Changes in Occupancy

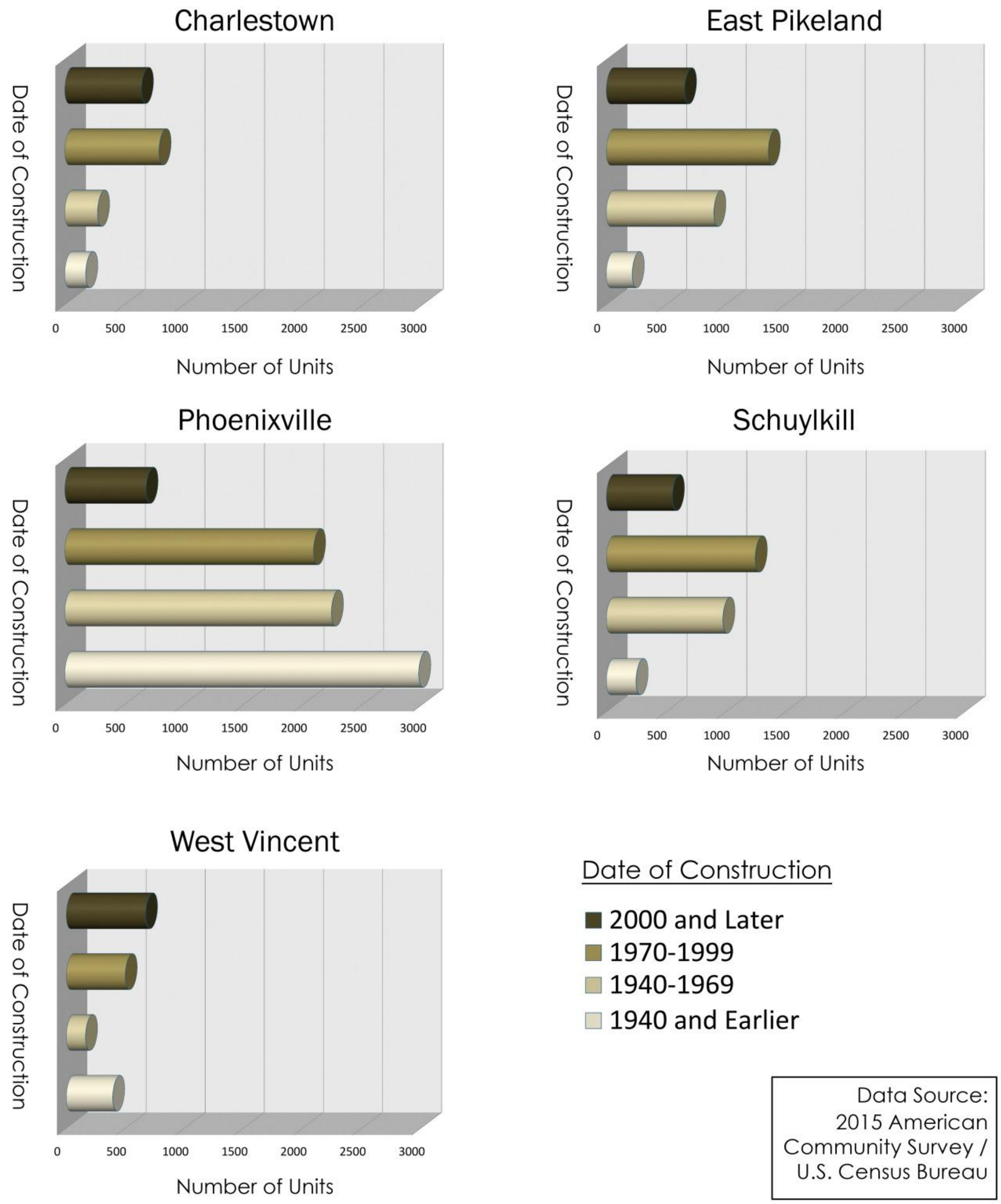


Figure 6.2-3: Dates of Housing Construction by PRPC Member Municipality

The Region's population is a fairly dynamic one, which may be explained at least in part by the recent housing boom: as figure 6.2-4 shows, over half of all households occupied their current residence during or after 2000. The 2000-2010 decade saw the most significant fluctuation for Charlestown (52% of households occupied current residence), Schuylkill (44.6%), and West Vincent (41%) Townships in particular, followed by East Pikeland (34.9%) and Phoenixville (34.6%).

The years following 2010 brought significant change for East Pikeland, Phoenixville, and West Vincent's occupants as well; in each of these municipalities, over a quarter of all housing units changed occupants at this time. This is likely due to the occupation of newly constructed residences, although change of occupants in rental properties may also help to explain these fluctuations.

Phoenixville appears to have the most dynamic population: it has seen the greatest number of residences changing occupants since 2000 in the Region (73.5% of units), and is the only municipality in the PRPC with more units changing hands in 2010 or later than in any other decade. This is consistent with a significant renter population, as is shown both in figure 6.2-2 and in charts in Chapter 2, Demographics; it may also be partly explained by the Borough's recent economic revitalization. Larger proportions of the population in Charlestown, Schuylkill, and (to a lesser extent) East Pikeland and West

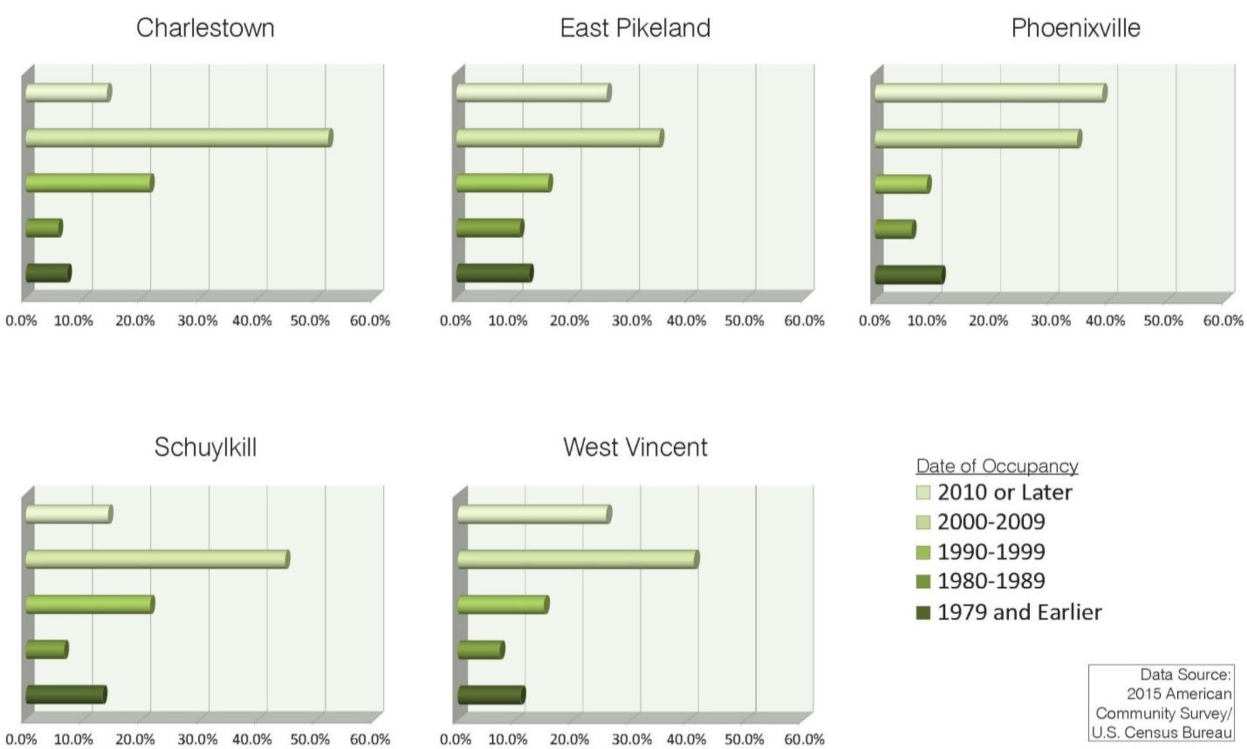


Figure 6.2-4: Dates of Housing Occupancy across PRPC Member Municipalities

Vincent townships have settled in their current households since at least 1999, indicating a greater percentage of stable, family-based households – this is also supported by figures in Chapter 2.

Occupants per Household

As with family composition numbers discussed in Chapter 2, the number of occupants per household gives some indication of patterns of residential density and may be used to help direct planning for transportation and general economic growth.

In Phoenixville and East Pikeland there are many 1- and 2-person households, which is indicative of a greater percentage of non-family households; this is consistent with the family household data presented in in Chapter 2. In the other municipalities, however, demographics data shows that the 2-occupant households indicate a higher percentage of family members, couples without children or with grown children than non-family households.

Households with three or more occupants make up at least one third of all households throughout the Region, except in Phoenixville. When paired with family household data, this shows that traditional, nuclear families are a significant proportion of the population here. It is interesting to note, however,

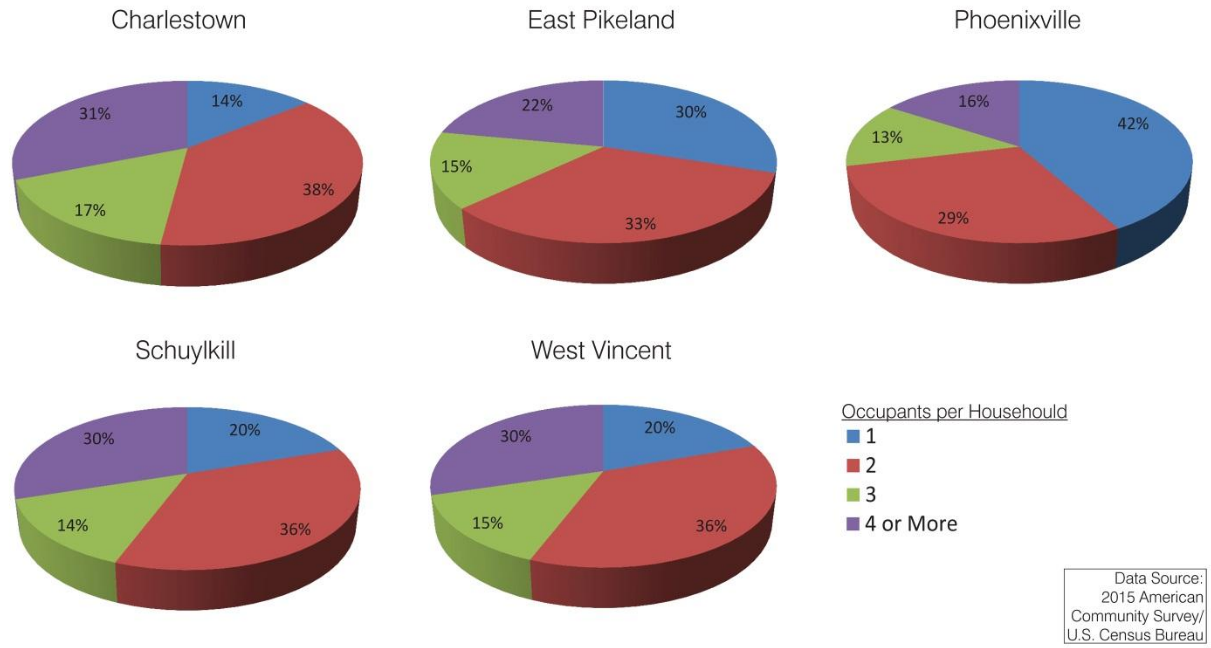


Figure 6.2-5: Number of Occupants per Household across PRPC Member Municipalities

that these households make up less than 50% of households in every one of the PRPC member municipalities.

Household Income

Household incomes relative to renting vs. owning types occupancy help provide a picture of residents' ability to purchase homes and where rental markets should be concentrated.

In Schuylkill Township there is the smallest gap between the incomes of renters and owners ($111,165 vs. $129,975). Given that Schuylkill has a similar relative number of rental units (9.2% of units - see figure 6.2-2) as the other municipalities, this may correlate with a higher quality of rental accommodations (e.g. luxury apartments).

West Vincent has the largest gap in median household income between renters and owners ($52,232 vs. $155,417), and a relatively large rental market (16.5% of all units), which points to a large discrepancy in the quality of rental versus owned units. Phoenixville has a fairly narrow gap between renter and owner

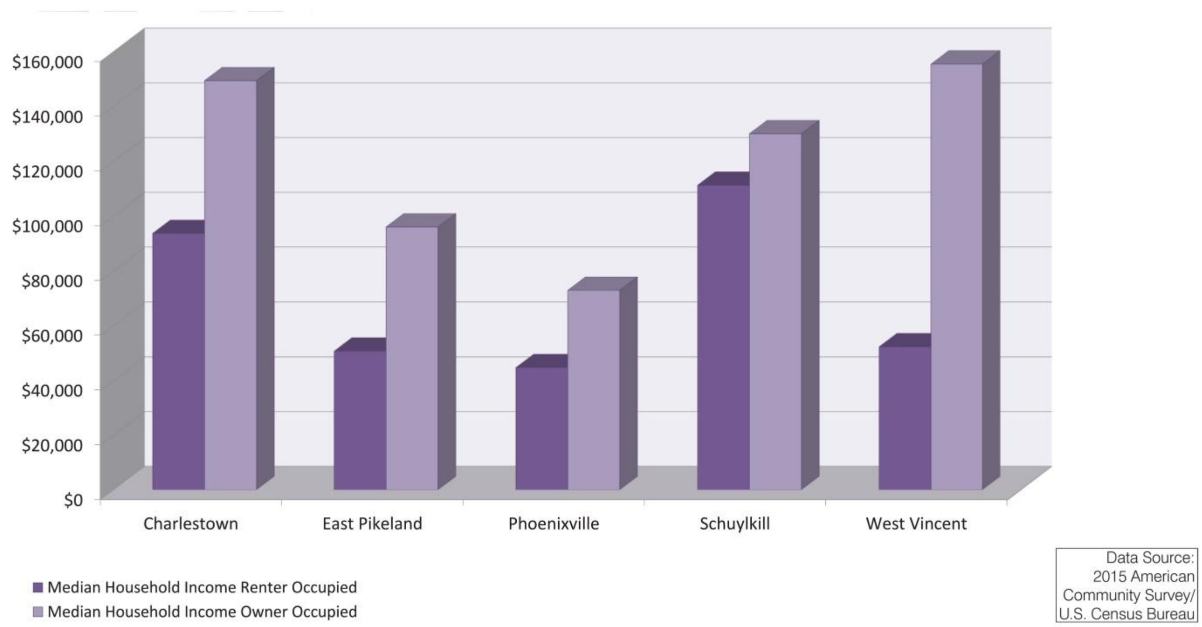


Figure 6.2-6: Median Income of Renter Occupied vs Owner Occupied Households across PRPC Member Municipalities

incomes ($28,195), but a high number of rental units (45.1% of available housing), likely indicating less of a discrepancy in quality of accommodation between owned and rented units.

<u>Impact of the Great Recession</u>

The Great Recession of 2007-2008 dramatically altered the nature of housing growth in the Region. Prior to that time, small to large developments of single family detached houses on suburban lots was the dominant paradigm, and tracts of agricultural and natural lands were transformed at an alarming rate. Very little development occurred during the Great Recession of 2007-2008. Then, as the economy recovered, development patterns shifted toward revitalizing areas of Phoenixville and toward higher density and mixed use communities in the surrounding Townships. Large lot subdivisions have for now at least given way to small lot, attached, and multifamily developments, and there has been a recent dramatic increase in the construction of rental apartments.

According to Chester County Planning Commission data, overall County-wide housing sales numbers and median prices by 2014 had recovered to approximately pre-recession levels, although numbers of new, non-apartment units are still significantly lower. In addition, construction of new owner occupied housing was slowed dramatically by the recession, but rental units are still being built in all of the Region's municipalities at a significant rate.

Table 6.2-1 Regional Changes in Housing Occupancy 2000-2016

Municipality/Year	Occupied Housing Units	Owner Occupied Units	% Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied Units	% Renter Occupied
Charlestown 2000	1340	1236	92.2%	104	7.8%
Charlestown 2010	1893	1728	91.3%	165	8.7%
Charlestown 2016*	2079	1898	91.3%	181	8.7%
East Pikeland 2000	2530	2221	87.8%	309	12.2%
East Pikeland 2010	2885	2530	87.7%	355	12.3%
East Pikeland 2016*	3457	3025	87.5%	432	12.5%
Phoenixville 2000	6460	3619	56.0%	2841	44.0%
Phoenixville 2010	7232	4041	55.9%	3191	44.1%
Phoenixville 2016*	8000	4156	52.0%	3844	48.1%
Schuylkill 2000	2436	2291	94.0%	145	6.0%
Schuylkill 2010	2977	2704	90.8%	273	9.2%
Schuylkill 2016*	3001	2715	90.5%	286	9.5%
West Vincent 2000	1077	965	89.6%	112	10.4%
West Vincent 2010	1646	1341	81.5%	305	18.5%
West Vincent 2016*	2057	1703	82.8%	354	17.2%

* Consultant's estimate based on municipal building permit data 2010-2016

<u>Significant New Developments and Trends</u>

Ongoing Regional projects provide evidence that the post-recession change in development patterns persists. Developments include multifamily and mixed residential buildings, and some incorporate or are near supporting commercial uses. Phoenixville's new housing consists almost entirely of apartments, and East Pikeland, Schuylkill, and West Vincent Townships also have significant new apartment projects pending or proposed. Attached housing consisting of twins, townhouses, or carriage homes is still a significant factor in Phoenixville and in Charlestown, Schuylkill, and West Vincent Townships. There are notable single family detached housing developments in Charlestown, East Pikeland, Schuylkill, and West Vincent Townships, but these are generally open space/cluster or Traditional Neighborhood Development configurations with compact development patterns as opposed to the large lot paradigm that was predominant before.

Table 6.2-2 Significant Approved and Pending Residential Projects
Source: Municipal records as of December 2017

Project by Municipality	Apartments	Single Family Attached	Single Family Detached	Total Housing Units
Charlestown Township				
Devault Village	0	51	27	78
Pickering Crossing	0	76	0	76
Spring Oak	0	102	82	184
East Pikeland Township				
Kimberton Glen	0	0	332	332
Pikeland Glen	0	0	285	285
Westside	171	0	0	171
Phoenixville Borough				
Barkley Gardens	125	0	0	125
Eland Pointe Crossing	193	0	0	193
Filmore Village	0	29	0	29
Odessa*	240	0	0	240
SteelTown Village	0	48	0	48
Steel Works/500 block Bridge Street	336	0	0	336
Steel Site**	0	551	0	551
Various Infill Projects	12	14	6	32
Schuylkill Township				
Reeves	0	32	64	96
Meadows at Valley Forge	0	32	0	32
West Vincent Township				
Bryn Coed Farms	0	0	27	27
Eagle Farms II	0	105	93	198
The Promenade	30	110	0	140
The Ridings	0	0	65	65
Weatherstone Courtyards	0	113	72	185
Weatherstone Apartments	240	0	0	240
Totals	**1347**	**1263**	**1053**	**3663**

* Exclusive of senior living component – see Table 6.2-3 for senior living units.
** Sketch plan
*** SteelTown Village's units are rentals.

It is noteworthy that the majority of new housing in Phoenixville is rental apartments, with attached units as the only other significant residential housing type constructed within the borough. The result over time could be a shortage of housing stock for residents looking to move up as their disposable income increases and families grow. The potential result for Phoenixville could be the loss of residents with increased disposable income to other municipalities. Based on the pending residential developments in the other municipalities of the Phoenixville Region, opportunities for new single-family detached residential units are available.

Housing for senior citizens has also become a significant component of the Regional residential mix. In addition to older facilities such as Phoenixville Care and Rehabilitation Center, there are a number of new and proposed senior living facilities, including assisted living and continuing care retirement communities. This trend is expected to continue as older residents of the Region wish to remain within the community and close to family members. Existing and planned senior living facilities include the following:

Table 6.2-3 Regional Senior Living Facilities

Facility Name	Municipality	Type	#Units/Beds
Atria/Woodbridge	East Pikeland	Assisted Living	105
Coldstream Crossing	East Pikeland	Independent Living	146
Spring Mill	East Pikeland	Independent/Assisted Living	86
Phoenixville Care	Phoenixville	Skilled Nursing	138
Odessa (planned)	Phoenixville	Independent/Assisted Living	260

Regional Housing Demand Projections

Based on DVRPC projections as summarized in Chapter 2, the Phoenixville Region's population is expected to grow by another 10,689 between 2015 and 2030. Region-wide, there were 2.4 residents per unit on average as of the 2010 US Census. This would translate into a 2030 demand for 4,455 new dwelling units, assuming that average persons per unit remains essentially as it is today. Of this projected demand, ~~4,016~~3,663 dwellings are currently approved or pending as of 2016. Thus, to meet the DVRPC projected population growth, the Region would need to plan for an additional ~~439~~ 792 dwellings by 2030.

There are a number of factors that could alter this projected scenario. As we have seen, the majority of housing units currently proposed are apartments, which typically have fewer occupants than single family dwellings. In addition, family and household sizes may continue to decrease as they have over recent decades. These factors could raise the number of new units required to accommodate the growing population. On the other hand, energy, economics, and popular preferences may accelerate the current trend toward people living in higher density urban areas, which could dampen Regional growth pressures. These considerations notwithstanding, there is more than sufficient developable land designated in the Future Land Use Plan (Chapter 3) to accommodate population growth within the next 10 to 15 years.

6.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The Housing Plan aims to enhance Regional sustainability. This includes considerations of location and accessibility, density, construction methods, energy use and efficiency, and the strengthening rather than abandonment of existing communities.

Development and Redevelopment Focused on Existing Communities and Growth Areas

New housing should occur primarily as infill within existing urban areas and villages or in areas designated as growth centers. This allows for a focus on improvement of existing housing stock and adaptive re-use of historic buildings, which can be far less resource intensive than greenfield development and sprawl. Phoenixville has enjoyed a remarkable revitalization, and obviously remains an attractive location for new development and redevelopment. In addition, the villages of Birchrunville, Kimberton, Valley Forge, and Wilmer could be sites for limited development in context with the historic character unique to each. Finally, new mixed use growth areas at Devault, Ludwigs Corner, and the Route 23/724 corridor could accommodate significant amounts of well-planned housing coordinated with roads and other infrastructure. Each of these types of developments focused on existing settlements and growth areas takes development pressure off of rural and natural lands, which conserves valuable resources and prevents wasteful and energy intensive sprawl.

Historic adaptive re-use has long been part of the Regional development picture, with barns, mills, train stations, and other historic structures converted to serve contemporary residential, office, and commercial needs. More recently, Phoenixville has experienced conversion of underused and derelict industrial and warehouse buildings into luxury apartments. Adaptive reuse of these historic structures preserves critical elements of the unique Regional character and contributes to the aesthetic and desirability of living and working here.

Mixed Use Development and Multi-Modal Accessibility

Sustainability is advanced by providing people with transportation alternatives to personal cars. There are a number of ways that the Housing Plan can assist in this regard:

- Concentrate housing in walkable mixed use areas. This generally involves “smart growth” strategies that have residential, work, shopping, and leisure accommodations in close proximity to one another and linked by a comprehensive sidewalk system.

- Coordinate development and redevelopment housing with accessibility to public transportation. Provide bus stops with shelters in walkable proximity to residential communities.

- Coordinate housing development with multi-use paths for walking and bicycling. Where necessary, provide connections to the existing multi-use trail system, and participate in extending the system where possible.

Sustainable Building Practices

Construction materials and methodologies described in Chapter 5 – The Energy Conservation and Sustainability Plan should be incorporated to retrofit existing housing and to construct new housing. This will result in housing that is more affordable from an operational standpoint while having dramatically reduced environmental impact.

6.4 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

As the economy continues to recover from the recession, many residents of the Phoenixville Region struggle with housing affordability. Home values and rents continue to increase, and for many, income is not keeping pace in some of the communities of the Region. The result is that more people must dedicate a higher percentage of income to housing, or leave the Region to find affordable housing elsewhere.

Affordable housing is typically defined in terms of median household income. A primary indicator used to determine affordability of housing is the measurement of the percentage of the population that is paying 30 percent or greater of their household income toward housing costs. As the percentage of the population spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing expenses increases over time, housing is considered to be less affordable.

According to the Pennsylvania Housing Availability and Affordability Report produced by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency in 2012, housing trends in the marketplace include:

- A trend toward lower homeownership rates
- Data showing that more people are renting
- Indications that rents are increasing due to greater market demand, and
- Evidence of an increasing need to provide affordable housing options for the state's residents – of particular importance for an aging population and for households in the Marcellus Shale Region.

In the Phoenixville Region housing trends generally appear to be following state and national trends. As noted previously, housing construction has shifted significantly to rental apartments and away from single-family detached units. While apartments are traditionally considered to be a more affordable housing alternative, many of the apartments recently constructed in the Region have been luxury apartments with rents well above average. This trend appears to be further driving up rents and reducing the overall affordability of housing.

Table 6.4-1 shows short-term trends relating to median rent and the percentage of households spending 30 percent or greater of income on rent in the Phoenixville Region. Over the course of the five years shown in Table 6.4-1, the number of rental households spending 30 percent or greater of income on rent increased in all regional municipalities except Schuylkill Township, with Phoenixville and East Pikeland showing significant increases. The rental data in Table 6.4-1 also shows median rents increasing slightly in Schuylkill and West Vincent Townships and substantial median rent increases in Phoenixville and East Pikeland. Median rent information was not available for Charlestown Township for 2010.

Table 6.4-1 Household Rental Summary 2010-2015

	Median Rent (monthly)		Percentage of Households with Gross Rent 30% or Greater of Income	
Municipality	**2010**	**2015**	**2010 Rental Households**	**2015 Rental Households**
Charlestown	n/a	$1,618	14.8%	23.7%
East Pikeland	$944	$1,659	36.5%	53.1%
Phoenixville	$940	$1,053	31.2%	45.8%
Schuylkill	$1,088	$1,102	30.9%	22.8%
West Vincent	$1,449	$1,420	31.6%	42.4%

In addition to the proportions of households paying 30 percent or greater of income for housing expenses, another indicator of housing affordability is the proportion of owner- occupied units compared to renter-occupied units. Traditionally, a higher, steady rate of owner-occupied units reflects a relatively affordable housing market. However, studies are finding that younger adults are placing a lower priority on home ownership and prefer to rent, partially due to the flexibility it affords them.

Table 6.2-1 indicates that owner occupancy continues to remain strong throughout the townships of the Region. Charlestown's owner occupancy rate remained virtually unchanged, while the other municipalities experienced a slight drop in favor of renter-occupied housing; West Vincent Township's percentage of owner-occupied units decreased the most, with a drop of 6.8% in owner occupancy from 2000 to 2016. Based on the approved and pending developments summarized in Table 6.2-2, more than 50 percent of the new residential units in the Region will be rental apartments. This will significantly influence the proportion of owner-occupied units in the Region, particularly in Phoenixville and East Pikeland where the majority of new apartments are proposed.

Table 6.4-2 does not indicate a consistent trend relating to owner-occupancy throughout the Region. Median household income for owner-occupied units increased in three of the regional municipalities, Charlestown, Schuylkill, and West Vincent Township, while Phoenixville and East Pikeland experienced reductions in household income for owner-occupied units. Regarding percentages of owner-occupied households paying 30 percent or greater of income for housing cost, results are also mixed. Phoenixville and Schuylkill Township saw increases in the percentage, and in both municipalities approximately one-third of households in owner-occupied units spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing. Meanwhile, East Pikeland and West Vincent both saw a reduction in the percentage of households spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs.

Table 6.4-2 Household Owner-Occupancy Income & Housing Cost Summary 2010-2015

	Median Household Income for Owner-Occupied Units		Percentage of Households with Housing Cost 30% or Greater of Income	
Municipality	**2010**	**2015**	**2010**	**2015**
Charlestown	$ 136,920	$ 149,350	24.5%	25.5%
East Pikeland	$ 99,606	$ 95,934	34.0%	24.7%
Phoenixville	$ 76,866	$ 72,851	31.8%	34.8%
Schuylkill	$ 126,522	$ 129,975	22.2%	32.3%
West Vincent	$ 129,453	$ 155,417	36.6%	29.6%

Overall, more of the Region's population is spending 30 percent or more of household income on housing, particularly residents in rental housing. As the Borough of Phoenixville continues to enjoy a resurgence of the downtown area, the neighborhoods within walking distance of the downtown become more desirable for housing revitalization, which drives up residential property values and rents, further reducing housing affordability in the borough. Housing in the townships of the Phoenixville Region remain dominated by owner-occupied residential units as illustrated in Table 6.2-1, although the owner-occupancy rate has decreased slightly since 2000. In the Borough of Phoenixville, the percentage of owner-occupancy has dropped to 52 percent, and this is anticipated to decrease further given the high number of apartments approved for development.

Existing Affordable Housing Developments & Funding

Within the Phoenixville Region there are three existing developments that provide public housing to tenants. Two of these developments are located within the Borough of Phoenixville and a third is located in Schuylkill Township, just outside Phoenixville. The first development in Phoenixville is King Terrace, which is a 50-unit public housing development for elderly and disabled tenants only. The second development, also within Phoenixville, is Fairview Village which has public housing and tax credit units. Fairview Village has 25 public housing and 11 income-restricted units available. The third development located in Schuylkill Township is the Liberty House, which is a 48-unit residential facility in that is a former military hospital that was renovated in 1996 to provide housing for the homeless. The property has one floor with transitional housing for the homeless and another floor with permanent housing.

Another publicly funded housing alternative is the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, which is a federally funded government program administered locally by public housing agencies to assist very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled. The housing choice voucher program allows participants to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program. In Chester County the Housing Authority of the County of Chester (HACC) administers the housing choice voucher program. According to the HACC website the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher waiting list has been closed since October 2011 and there is no notice of when the waiting list will reopen.

In addition to government housing programs, there are local nonprofit organizations and churches that provide housing assistance to people in need. A variety of organizations provide housing assistance in the Phoenixville Region including the Phoenixville Area Community Services, the Community Coalition, Orion and several churches. In addition to Liberty House, there are also shelters in Phoenixville that provide temporary housing for those with immediate housing needs.

Proposed Affordable Housing Developments

Table 6.2-2 provides a breakdown of significant approved and pending residential projects as of 2016. More than 50 percent of the proposed units in the Region are apartments, which traditionally tend to be more affordable than single-family attached or detached units. However, it is noted that recent developments have been luxury apartments with much higher rents, further contributing to the challenges of affordable housing. Two of the approved/pending developments have an affordable housing component summarized as follows:

- SteelTown Village is a 48-unit affordable housing development consisting of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units for individuals and veterans with disabilities, elderly and workforce families. Qualification for acceptance into the community is dependent on maximum income relative to family size. The development was initiated by a private organization that focuses on affordable housing and the development was awarded $10,009,620 in tax credits from the State of Pennsylvania in 2017.
- Eland Pointe Crossing is an apartment development approved by Phoenixville Borough in January 2018 for 193 apartments, of which eight (8) units will be dedicated as affordable units. According to Borough representatives, the provision of the affordable housing units was negotiated through the review process, separate from requirements associated with Borough ordinances.

Affordable Housing Initiatives

Within the Phoenixville Region affordable housing initiatives have been limited but, as housing affordability becomes a bigger issue throughout the Region, more initiatives to address the challenges are being seen. In 2017 the Borough of Phoenixville created an Affordable Housing Task Force (Task Force) to address rising rents and housing prices. The Task Force prepared a report with four key focus areas summarized as follows:

- Finance-
  - Mitigate financial risk for landlords to encourage them to provide affordable housing units
  - Develop a program to offer reduced interest rate loans to landlords to assist them with providing upgrades to rental units
  - Provide incentives for affordable housing developments
- Properties/Landlords-
  - Consider allowing mini/tiny houses or accessory dwellings as housing alternatives
  - Use borough owned properties for affordable housing
- Policy-
  - Adopt flexible area and bulk standards for development of affordable housing
  - Work with adjacent municipalities to develop an affordable housing plan.

- Community Education-
    - Establish coordinated mechanisms between local agencies, landlords, and residents regarding available resources
    - Establish an ownership education program to help renters become homeowners

The Task Force hopes to use this report as the basis for developing an implementation plan to address the key challenges associated with affordable housing.

As the Phoenixville Region continues to see housing become less affordable, residents who can no longer afford to live in the Region may move elsewhere. Regional affordable housing agencies will likely see more demand for limited financial assistance resources, and households may seek more shared housing scenarios, or downsizing to be able to stay in the Region. In an effort to address housing affordability on a regional basis, municipalities within the Region should consider the following:

- Participate in the development of a Regional Affordable Housing Plan.
- Consider amending ordinances to include the following, if not already allowed:
    - allow accessory dwellings in association with existing single-family dwellings,
    - consider provisions for tiny houses,
    - density bonuses for affordable housing units
    - flexible area and bulk standards for development that includes affordable housing units.
- Include links on municipal websites for organizations that provide housing assistance.

6.5 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following policy recommendations will implement the goals and objectives of the Housing Plan:

H-1 Utilize zoning to concentrate residential development within and adjacent to existing developed areas or to designated growth areas.

Coordinate housing policy and regulation with the Future Land Use Plan in order to accommodate population growth while protecting open space.

H-2 Create zoning provisions that discourage exurban sprawl development and create vibrant areas with mixed unit types and sizes and supporting non-residential land uses.

Promote infill housing in developed areas, and walkable cluster/mixed use new developments with functional interconnected networks of open spaces and conservation areas. Coordinate development with trails and public transportation.

H-3 Coordinate municipal zoning so that the Region offers a full diversity of housing choices with an adequate supply of each unit type.

Assure that the Region offers housing choices accessible to a socioeconomically diverse and dynamic work force.

H-4 Create zoning and permitting incentives to facilitate infill development, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of industrial and commercial buildings as alternatives to Greenfield development.

Incentives could include density bonuses, relief from certain requirements, and procedural shortcuts to the normal permitting process in exchange for development that revitalizes derelict areas, restores and adaptively reuses historic structures, and promotes establishment of permanently protected open space.

H-5 Ensure that municipal zoning includes adequate provision for housing for the elderly and infirm.

Locate such housing in areas where neighborhood amenities are accessible by walking and to the disabled. This could include access to public transportation or private shuttle services.

H-6 Develop a Regional Affordable Housing Plan.

Utilize the report created by the Borough of Phoenixville's Affordable Housing Task Force as a basis for an implementation plan to address the Region's affordable housing challenges. Include zoning provisions and incentives for affordable housing units, as well as finance and community engagement strategies. Coordinate with the Future Land Use Plan.

H-7 Amend zoning provisions to incentivize creative solutions to regional housing affordability challenges.

Implement the recommendations in the Regional Housing Plan (strategy H-6) to promote development that creates diverse and accessible affordable housing options.

CHAPTER SEVEN – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Given the dramatic historic and anticipated shifts that the PRPC Region has experienced in business and employment, planning is essential to revitalization of depressed areas and creating a durable and dynamic economy. The Regional economy that once depended heavily on manufacturing and agriculture now is more based on current technologies, business/professional services, and health care. Growing and potential business sectors rely on integration of uses, place-making, lifestyle pursuits, and adaptability to sudden and dramatic changes.

7.1 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Support Phoenixville Borough as the economic center of the Region, while promoting economic development areas throughout the Region. This goal is to be advanced through the pursuit of the following specific objectives:

1. Continue to support revitalization of Phoenixville's downtown as the cultural, entertainment, and retail hub for residents of the Region.
2. Promote cultural tourism within the Region.
3. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant and underutilized non-residential properties throughout the Region.
4. Utilize principles of place-making to promote vibrant mixed use/commercial areas.
5. Encourage shopping enclaves and commercial services in mixed-use village settings.
6. Encourage businesses to emphasize services and the shopping experience not available through the internet to support long-term success.
7. Promote the Phoenixville Region for employment center opportunities.
8. Advocate innovation in practices to sustain the viability of agriculture in the Region.
9. Provide a diversity of housing types to assure the availability of an adequate workforce for area employers.

7.2 REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The PRPC Region is economically diverse and overall reflective of the relative affluence of Chester County. The population is overall highly educated and prepared for service in more lucrative businesses and professions of the modern workplace. In addition, there are of course a number of lower wage jobs on which the Region depends, and a sufficient local workforce for those jobs.

Income Characteristics

Despite the impacts of the recession, the median household income in the four townships of the Region has remained above the median household income of Chester County, as summarized in the following table. While Phoenixville has a lower median household income than the County at 65 percent of the

County median household income, this proportion remains comparable to the ratio of the 2000 Census, which was also 65 percent.

2016 ACS Median Household Income Summary		
Municipality	**Total Households**	**Median Household Income**
Charlestown Township	1,838	$ 133,594
East Pikeland Township	2,951	$ 95,798
Phoenixville Borough	7,444	$ 57,769
Schuylkill Township	2,961	$ 126,182
West Vincent Township	1,722	$ 132,381
Chester County	**186,721**	**$ 88,995**

Table 7.2-1 Median Household Income (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

Employment Data

The overall unemployment rate for the Region in 2015 was estimated at 5.7 percent, which was slightly higher than the Pennsylvania unemployment rate of 5.4 percent in June of 2015 and the national unemployment rate of 5.5 percent in March of 2015. The following table provides the breakdown of employment status by gender.

2011-2015 ACS Employment Status						
Municipality	**Male employed**	**Male unemployed**	**Male not in labor force**	**Female employed**	**Female unemployed**	**Female not in labor force**
Charlestown Township	1,449	94	500	1,370	38	755
East Pikeland Township	1,974	149	774	2,032	120	930
Phoenixville Borough	4,902	339	1,272	4,621	355	1,924
Schuylkill Township	2,187	120	948	2,130	79	1,090
West Vincent Township	1,493	33	445	1,001	76	712
Regional Total	**12,005**	**735**	**3,939**	**11,154**	**668**	**5,411**

Table 7.2-2 Regional Employment Status (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

The following table provides the employment forecast for each of the municipalities of the Phoenixville Region from 2015-2045. The forecast estimates an additional 6,813 jobs in the Region during this time period.

2011-2015 ACS Employment Forecast										
Municipality	**Emp 2010**	**2015 Estimate**	**2020 Estimate**	**2025 Estimate**	**2030 Estimate**	**2035 Estimate**	**2040 Estimate**	**2045 Estimate**	**Absolute Change 2015 - 2045**	**% Change 2015 - 2045**
Charlestown Township	2,454	3,134	3,309	3,483	3,661	3,818	3,947	4,050	916	29.23%
East Pikeland Township	2,570	2,836	3,040	3,268	3,499	3,687	3,845	4,025	1,189	41.93%
Phoenixville Borough	6,781	6,835	7,419	8,119	8,823	9,378	9,835	10,456	3,621	52.98%
Schuylkill Township	3,837	4,530	4,706	4,840	4,977	5,124	5,197	5,247	717	15.83%
West Vincent Township	1,263	1,476	1,552	1,623	1,695	1,759	1,816	1,846	370	25.07%
Regional Total	**16,905**	**18,811**	**20,026**	**21,333**	**22,655**	**23,766**	**24,640**	**25,624**	**6,813**	**36.22%**

Table 7.2-3 Regional Employment Forecast (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

The following summary shows the occupational breakdown of each of the municipalities within the Region and the Regional totals. The top occupational categories include management, sales & office, education, computer/engineering/science occupations, food preparation, and health care.

2016 ACS Occupation Summary						
Occupation	Charlestown Township	East Pikeland Township	Phoenixville Borough	Schuylkill Township	West Vincent Township	**Regional Total**
Management, business financial	964	1,223	1,799	1,216	948	**6,150**
Computer, engineering, and science occupations:	301	352	892	408	289	**2,242**
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations	312	460	1,222	548	315	**2,857**
Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations:	135	221	458	314	120	**1,248**
Healthcare support occupations	16	36	125	29	26	**232**
Protective service occupations:	30	33	171	34	62	**330**

Occupation	Charlestown Township	East Pikeland Township	Phoenixville Borough	Schuylkill Township	West Vincent Township	Regional Total
Food preparations	158	134	679	230	94	**1,295**
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	16	99	416	95	82	**708**
Personal Care and service	140	102	262	145	6	**655**
Sales and Office	748	945	2,237	1,037	323	**5,290**
Farming, fishing, forestry	20	-	36	32	153	**241**
Construction and extraction	26	82	144	165	77	**494**
Installation, maintenance and repair	34	154	222	46	25	**481**
Production	33	120	286	111	18	**568**
Transportation	16	104	243	30	29	**422**
Material moving	5	78		12	32	**127**

Table 7.2-4 Regional Occupation Summary (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

Education Characteristics

According to the 2011-2015 ACS Educational Attainment estimates, approximately 95 percent of the population 25 years and older has a high school diploma and 54 percent of the population has at least a bachelor's degree. This is slightly above the 2016 estimate for Chester County overall, which estimates 93 percent of the County population has a high school diploma and 50 percent has at least a bachelor's degree.

2011-2015 ACS Educational Attainment								
Municipality	**Population =/> 25 years**	**Less than 9th grade**	**9th-12th- no diploma**	**HS Grad (includes equivalency)**	**Some college, no degree**	**Associate's degree**	**Bach's Degree**	**Grad or Prof Degree**
Charlestown Township	3,437	4	24	293	289	169	1,346	1,312
East Pikeland Township	5,443	74	153	1,354	614	246	1,969	1,033
Phoenixville Borough	11,911	335	605	3,874	1,615	764	3,310	1,408
Schuylkill Township	5,639	39	91	1,059	564	385	1,924	1,577
West Vincent Township	3,358	92	120	418	483	188	1,229	828
Regional Total	**29,788**	**544**	**993**	**6,998**	**3,565**	**1,752**	**9,778**	**6,158**

Table 7.2-5 Regional Educational Attainment (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

Industry and Occupational Characteristics

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) provide a generalized employment description of the area by sector and occupation. The largest employment categories in Chester and Montgomery Counties are as follows:

Employment Sector	**Share of Workforce**
Health/Social Services	15%
Manufacturing	12%
Retail	11%
Educational Services	10%
Professional/Scientific/Technical	10%
Financial Services/Insurance	8%
Food Services	5%
Construction	5%

The Chester and Montgomery County data is reinforced by DVRPC's September 2014 Regional Economic Cluster Analysis, wherein and Economic Cluster is defined as "a group of companies and institutions co-located in a specific geographic region and linked by interdependencies in providing a related group of products and/or services". In the greater Philadelphia Region, there is a significant Economic Cluster in Life Sciences and Health Care, which are represented locally in the pharmaceutical industry, hospitals, medical offices, and related supporting professions, services, and manufacturers. Economic Clusters in business services and education also are among the most prominent employers in the greater Philadelphia area, and are well represented in the PRPC Region.

Commuting

A central consideration of regional economic development planning is commuting behavior and patterns. This describes the extent to which Phoenixville area residents also work within the Region, and if not, where the significant area centers of employment are. In addition, it gives a picture of the environmental impact of the Regional economy, and how that impact can be mitigated by effective transportation planning.

Region wide, approximately three quarters of working residents leave the PRPC region for employment. Of those employed within the Region, nearly two thirds commute from outside of the PRPC municipalities. Overall, 1.78 times as many leave the Region for employment as arrive from elsewhere to work within the Region. In this sense, the PRPC provides a significant work force to employers outside of the Region. Although the PRPC Region functions more as a bedroom community than as an employment center, to a lesser but still significant extent PRPC employers create jobs for those living outside of the community.

Commuting behavior and patterns are described in the following tables:

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from Charlestown	Percent of Total
Charlestown Township	372	14%
PRPC, outside Charlestown	184	7%
Chester County, outside PRPC	1041	40%
Delaware County	149	6%
Montgomery County	398	15%
Philadelphia	165	6%
Other	312	12%
Total	**2621**	

Table 7.2-6 Work Commuting from Charlestown Township (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from East Pikeland	Percent of Total
East Pikeland Township	444	12%
PRPC, outside East Pikeland	547	15%
Chester County, outside PRPC	1438	39%
Delaware County	87	2%
Montgomery County	830	23%
Philadelphia	103	3%
Other	212	6%
Total	**3661**	

Table 7.2-7 Work Commuting from East Pikeland Township (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from Phoenixville	Percent of Total
Phoenixville Borough	1616	17%
PRPC, outside Phoenixville	705	8%
Chester County, outside PRPC	3128	34%
Delaware County	317	3%
Montgomery County	2882	31%
Philadelphia	380	4%
Other	296	3%
Total	**9324**	

Table 7.2-8 Work Commuting from Phoenixville Borough (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from Schuylkill	Percent of Total
Schuylkill Township	606	15%
PRPC, outside Schuylkill	393	10%
Chester County, outside PRPC	1063	26%
Delaware County	136	3%
Montgomery County	1303	32%
Philadelphia	273	7%
Other	257	6%
Total	**4031**	

Table 7.2-9 Work Commuting from Schuylkill Township (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from West Vincent	Percent of Total
West Vincent Township	517	24%
PRPC, outside Schuylkill	75	3%
Chester County, outside PRPC	874	40%
Delaware County	101	5%
Montgomery County	233	11%
Philadelphia	192	9%
Other	195	9%
Total	**2187**	

Table 7.2-10 Work Commuting from West Vincent Township (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Destination	Number of Trips from PRPC Region	Percent of Total
PRPC	5459	25%
Chester County, outside PRPC	7544	35%
Delaware County	790	4%
Montgomery County	5646	26%
Philadelphia	1113	5%
Other	1272	6%
Total	**21824**	

Table 7.2-11 Work Commuting from PRPC Municipalities (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Commuting Trip Origin	Number of Work Trips to PRPC Region	Percent of Total
PRPC	5459	37%
Outside PRPC	9158	63%
Total	**14617**	

Table 7.2-12 Work Commuting to PRPC Municipalities (Source: American Community Survey 2013)

Communting mode also is relevent to the discussion of economic development, and this topic will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 10. Overall, the Region is heavily car dependent, with nearly 85% of work trips in single passenger cars or car pools, and less than 3% relying on public transportation. However, over 8% of PRPC workers have home employment, and this figure could grow thanks to communication and information technology advances and evolving employer-workplace relationships.

MCD Name	Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transportation	Walk	Other Means	Work at Home	TOTALS
Charlestown	2145	167	88	115	9	413	**2937**
East Pikeland	3466	121	28	61	0	369	**4045**
Phoenixville	7271	918	189	473	28	587	**9466**
Schuylkill	3359	274	201	209	31	291	**4365**
West Vincent	1842	107	102	149	28	325	**2553**
PRPC TOTALS	**18083**	**1587**	**608**	**1007**	**96**	**1985**	**23366**

Table 7.2-13 Work Commuting Mode (Source: American Community Survey 2016)

7.3 CURRENT TRENDS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The early 21st century and the Great Recession of 2007-2009 have changed the Regional economic development picture drastically. Phoenixville has seen a remarkable resurgence following decades of decline with the loss of the steel industry, and is now the fashionable urban and economic hub of the Region built on dining, entertainment, services, and specialty retail. Commercial development in the PRPC Townships has changed as highway oriented business has fallen off, with some transitions from industrial and strip retail to mixed use and boutique centers, generally with a significant residential component. The Chester County Planning Commission (CCPC) has recognized these trends and authored the following series of reports including analysis and recommendations to promote revitalization of commercial/industrial brownfields and greyfields, as well as mixed use redevelopment for declining office parks:

Stimulating Community Revitalization Through Brownfields, CCPC 2017
Transforming Greyfields Into Dynamic Destinations, CCPC 2017
Reinventing Office Parks for the 21st Century, CCPC 2017

Commercial Development

Perhaps no sector of the economy has undergone a greater transformation than commercial use. With the exponential growth of on line business, traditional retail has declined in both downtown areas and along highways, in many cases leaving vacant or underutilized buildings and a trend toward blight. In the broadest sense, traditional retail where people drive to commercial centers for their daily needs is no longer viable. In its place are diverse centers with a mixture of dining, specialized retail, entertainment, recreation, and personal/professional services focused on a holistic lifestyle experience. Some of the best examples also include a mix of residential types and high end office components interconnected with the broader community and environment with trails and natural greenways.

Phoenixville’s renaissance built on dining, culture, and specialty trade has proven to be a Regional success story. Similarly, the commercial centers of the Region’s townships now include greater emphasis on dining, specialty retail, and personal/professional services occupying space that decades ago would have been dedicated to consumer goods. Examples are gourmet and natural grocers, health and professional services, grooming services, and fitness clubs. Many of these occupy traditional strip retail centers, while others are located in mixed use commercial village settings, some with a residential component. In other locations, existing and approved commercial centers are being transformed to be mostly or wholly multifamily residential communities. It has been nearly two decades since the Region has seen an application for a traditional retail center or mall.

Industrial

The Phoenixville Region has seen a decline in traditional manufacturing-type industry for many decades, particularly with the closing of the Phoenix Iron & Steel Company in the early 1980s. The Chester County Landscapes 2 Comprehensive Policy Plan acknowledges the economic base in Chester County as a whole has shifted from one dominated by manufacturing enterprises to a retail and service based economy. Additionally, technological advances have resulted in major changes to the industrial sector with many light-industrial uses having little to no impact beyond what is typically associated with commercial or office uses.

The combination of less emphasis on traditional manufacturing and new technologies resulting in low-impact industrial creates an opportunity for certain light industrial-type uses to be integrated into mixed use developments or flexible developments that are open to a wider range of uses. While the current emphasis remains on commercial, retail and service uses within the Phoenixville Region, demand for space that can accommodate small-scale start-ups and business incubators of a variety of uses is growing. To accommodate these incubator/small business start-ups zoning flexibility could allow such uses to flourish in the Phoenixville Region.

An industrial base can help ensure diverse employment and economic growth opportunities within the Region. There continues to be a need in the Region for industrial uses that have higher-impacts such as heavy truck traffic. The Land Use Chapter addresses the need to preserve the remaining industrial areas for those industrial uses that may not to be compatible with residential and other commercial uses. Providing continued support to these businesses is critical to retaining them in the Region and maintaining strong employment diversity. Preserving the industrial areas of the Region also provides opportunities for new and existing industrial businesses to grow and expand and stay within the Region.

Due to the expansion of online retail and other uses dependent on trucks and equipment, there is still significant demand for flex and warehouse space. Here, the critical issues are transportation access and locations that do not present use conflicts with residential, commercial, and high end office space. These facilities could bring life back to derelict and underutilized industrial sites.

Office

Office development has not historically been a significant component of the PRPC economy, as the demand has been met (or surpassed) by large employment centers beyond the Region, specifically in the Great Valley, Eagleview, and Pharmaceutical companies in Montgomery County. Throughout the Philadelphia suburbs and exurbs, the office market has been saturated for some time, and there are no new office parks with spec space being built. Instead, individual buildings or campuses are occasionally built for specific occupants. As in retail, the places in highest demand are those with walkability and an integration of residential, office, and commercial/lifestyle uses in a physically attractive environment either in an urban area or with natural areas and greenways.

Office use in the PRPC Region is largely comprised of health care and professional service practices in Phoenixville and around the Region. Common professional services include insurance, financial services, counseling, and law. The Phoenixville Hospital creates a locally significant Economic Cluster in health care, with medical offices, testing labs, and clinics located nearby.

As in retail, the successful office development relies on an integration of compatible residential and commercial/lifestyle uses within an attractive and walkable setting. For businesses to lure employees, it has become increasingly essential to offer them a setting that enhances their overall lifestyle. These ingredients can be found in successful urban environments and in suburban/exurban settings that offer good accessibility and a similar sense of a complete and fulfilling place.

A factor that may drastically alter the complexion of the office environment in the future is the self-driving vehicle. Automated buses and cars can drastically reduce the need for on-site parking, and combined with the decades-long trend to reduce office floor space per worker due to electronic records, telecommuting, and flex scheduling, the need to design office environments around copious amounts of parking could be greatly diminished. The result can be greener yet denser office campuses in both urban and exurban settings, with a greater emphasis on a high quality pedestrian experience.

Health Care

Health care plays a significant economic role in the Phoenixville Region. Within the Borough of Phoenixville, the largest employer is Phoenixville Hospital with 775 employees as summarized on the Borough of Phoenixville's website, which identifies the top ten employers in the Region. Including Phoenixville Hospital, four of the top ten employers within Phoenixville are associated with health care. Combining this with an aging population and an increase in the development of age-restricted communities within the Region it appears that the health care industry will continue to grow into the foreseeable future.

In 2008 the Phoenixville Hospital expanded to include a three-level parking garage and tower expansion which included emergency room improvements, surgery expansion, diagnostic imaging/cath lab expansion, women's services expansion, and a new central mechanical plant. The expansion increased the number of beds from 143 to 153.

In 2013 the Cancer Center located on the Phoenixville Hospital campus underwent an expansion, further strengthening the role of the health care industry in the Region. Surrounding the Phoenixville Hospital campus are many small businesses related to health care. Given the strong presence of Phoenixville Hospital in the Region and the potential for growth and impact on the economy, strategies for growing this industry in a manner that blends with the community should be considered. The Borough could initiate a planning study in coordination with Phoenixville Hospital to look at the area surrounding the hospital for opportunities to support the growth of a healthcare district within the Borough. In addition to healthcare opportunities around the Phoenixville Hospital, the villages within the Region provide opportunities for small-scale health services being conveniently provided to communities.

Agriculture

Agriculture has maintained a key role in shaping the landscape of the Region, despite its decreasing economic importance in the last half century. Dairy and cattle operations that were once common have given way to horse farms, specialty crops and organic farming, and community supported agriculture

(CSA). Along with this change, traditional agriculture supporting businesses including farm equipment and supply stores have left the Region.

According to Chester County's 2017 Local Farm Guide, the PRPC Region includes one CSA, two specialty farms with retail components, and the weekly in season Phoenixville Farmers Market. Numerous other CSAs and specialty farms surround the Region, making the area an Economic Cluster for these activities. In addition, horse farms are numerous in West Vincent and Charlestown Townships, and some facilities facilitate boarding, instruction, and trail rides. In addition, contract farmers from outside the Region actively lease lands for cash crop production including soybeans, corn, and small grain.

By promoting policies that maintain large areas of contiguous arable lands, the Region can help to assure that agriculture remains viable into the future.

Culture and Lifestyle

After decades of suburban development lacking a sense of place, demand is shifting back to development that offers an experience beyond just driving from business to business, which is often referred to as place-making. This shift has fueled the revitalization of downtown Phoenixville, which has a classic downtown form with buildings oriented to the street in a compact manner combined with wide sidewalks that encourage pedestrians to stroll up and down the streets. This shifting of priorities has also encouraged the appreciation of the uniqueness of existing historic villages. The ongoing revitalization of downtown Phoenixville and the villages contributes to the growing desirability of the Region.

As Phoenixville continues its revitalization it becomes more of a regional destination and the cultural center of the Region. The greater mix of retail, food and breweries combined with walkability, access to the Schuylkill River Trail, historic character, and entertainment resources creates a great opportunity for downtown Phoenixville to be a premier destination of the greater Philadelphia Region.

While the Phoenixville downtown continues to see redevelopment at a rapid pace, this has also given rise to certain challenges:

- Relatively high turnover in many smaller, older nonresidential spaces
- Low foot-traffic/customers on weekdays
- Increased competition from new large-scale development within a few miles of the Phoenixville downtown. Two noteworthy developments include Providence Town Center and the King of Prussia Town Center.
- Perceived parking inadequacy

In an effort to address the perceived parking problem, the Borough undertook a parking study titled Park Phoenixville to assess the existing conditions and development recommendations and strategies for the future. The Park Phoenixville report was published in November of 2017 with a comprehensive range of short-term and long-term parking recommendations.

The Borough should continue to investigate solutions for parking adequacy, including the use of strategically located structured parking on the perimeter of downtown, possibly linked by shuttle service via taxi, Uber, trackless trolley, or bicycle/motorbike rickshaw service. This could solve the problem of parking adequacy and convenience, while simultaneously decreasing traffic on Bridge, Gay, and Main Streets, creating a more pedestrian friendly downtown.

To continue strengthening the downtown revitalization process, consideration should be given to conducting a study assessing the constraints and opportunities associated with the continued revitalization of the downtown. A document titled, *The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown* published by the Destination Development Association in 2017 provides a summary of key elements associated with successful downtowns. The following table outlines the 20 elements that are considered to contribute to the success of downtowns. Many of these elements are already an integral part of downtown Phoenixville, but this document could be used as a resource to determine downtown priorities moving forward. This document is also a useful tool for communities wanting to support the vibrancy of villages within the Region.

The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown	
1. Have a plan	2. Develop gathering places
3. Define a strong brand and retail focus	4. Create gateway signage
5. Recruit a critical mass of like businesses	6. Develop wayfinding system
7. Have anchor tenants	8. Create a unique district gateway
9. Lease agreements with defined hours and days	10. Have retail signage rules and regulations
11. Encourage people living/staying downtown	12. Encourage sidewalk cafes and intimate surroundings
13. Investors who are patient with return on investment	14. Invest in retail beautification
15. Focus on one or two blocks to start	16. Provide activities and entertainment
17. Solve the parking dilemma	18. Give the downtown a name
19. Public washrooms	20. Focus marketing on activities, not buildings.

Emphasis should continue to focus on attracting a variety of businesses and addressing any infrastructure deficiencies, such as parking, that may be discouraging people from choosing downtown Phoenixville or the villages. Downtown Phoenixville and the villages each have a unique collection of businesses and organizations that contribute to these unique economies. Each municipality should encourage the preservation of these villages and look at potential zoning amendments and other improvements that could enhance the vitality of these areas.

The following chart was prepared by Project for Public Spaces and it provides a useful breakdown of the four areas considered to make a great place. The key attributes are informed by intangible component characteristics whose positive influence can be ascertained through objective measurement. This chart can be beneficial for the municipalities of the Region looking for opportunities to support the villages and downtown areas.

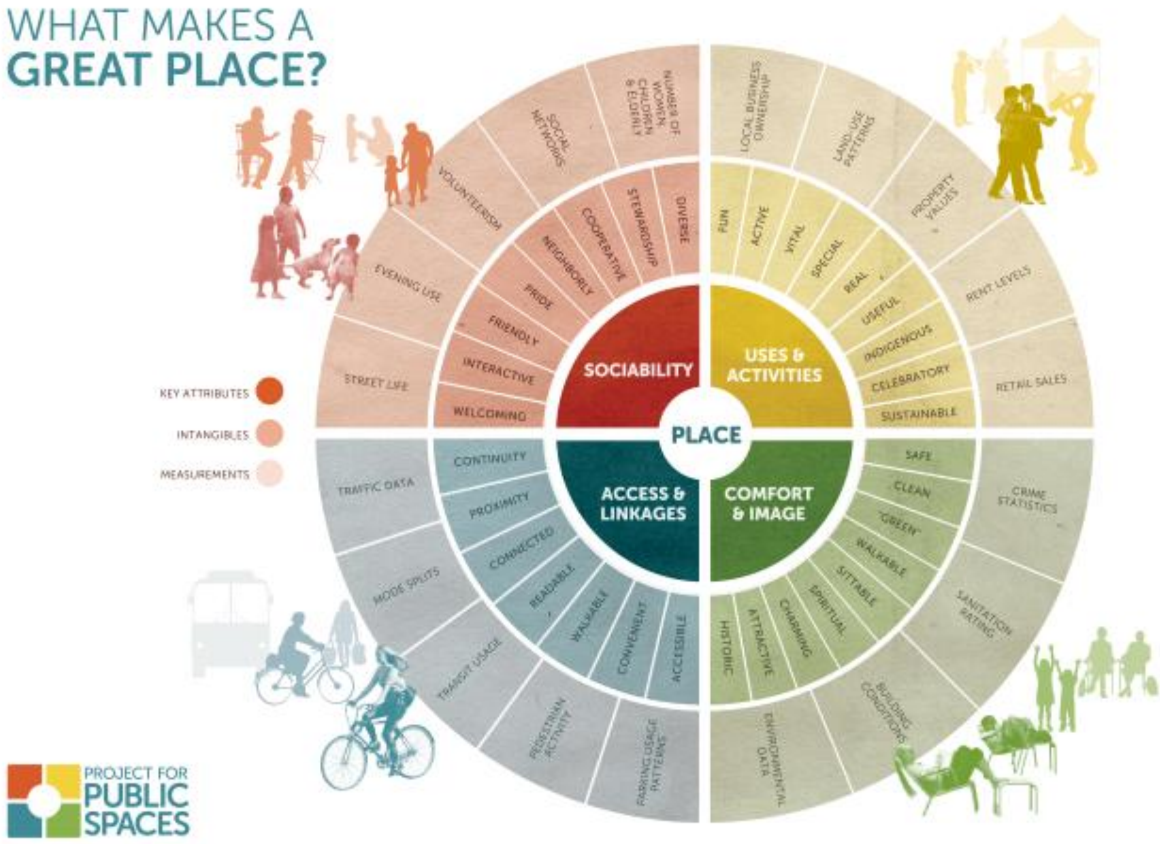


Figure 7.3-1 Attributes of a Great Place (Source: Project for Public Places)

7.4 INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is a necessary component of successful development and redevelopment. This includes public sewer and water service, road improvements, streetscape aesthetic enhancements, pedestrian accessibility, and accommodation of mass transportation.

In order to obtain the intensity of use to make extensive redevelopment viable, public sewer and water service is necessary. Existing service areas and recommendations for improvements and extensions are addressed in Chapter 8. Sewer and water service areas should be extended to all commercial development and redevelopment areas, especially in areas where higher intensities of development are to be considered as catalysts to revitalization.

Coordinated road improvements should also be undertaken to facilitate economic revitalization and redevelopment. Specifically, Complete Streets should be created to combine pedestrian, bicycle, mass transit and automobile capacity within a context of landscaping and traffic calming measures. Sidewalks should be extended on both sides of streets in commercial areas, with well delineated crosswalks at intersections and a safe and comfortable setback from the cartway wherever vehicle speeds are high. Bike lanes should also be provided within a paved shoulder area, with clear pavement markings and signage, especially at street intersections and busy driveway entrances. Pedestrian and vehicular ways should be fully integrated with Regional and municipal trail plans to facilitate access between commercial areas and the recreation system, to encourage commerce by recreational users. Vehicular left turning movements can be accommodated in appropriate areas in the center lane, and controlled with a landscaped median where such turns would be unsafe. Bus stops with weather shelters should be provided at areas convenient to concentrations of employments and commercial development at intervals conducive to foot traffic. By creating truly multi-modal safe streets, the Region can create more lively commercial environments and calmer traffic speeds while actually increasing the road capacity in terms of the various ways by which visitors would enter the area to conduct business.

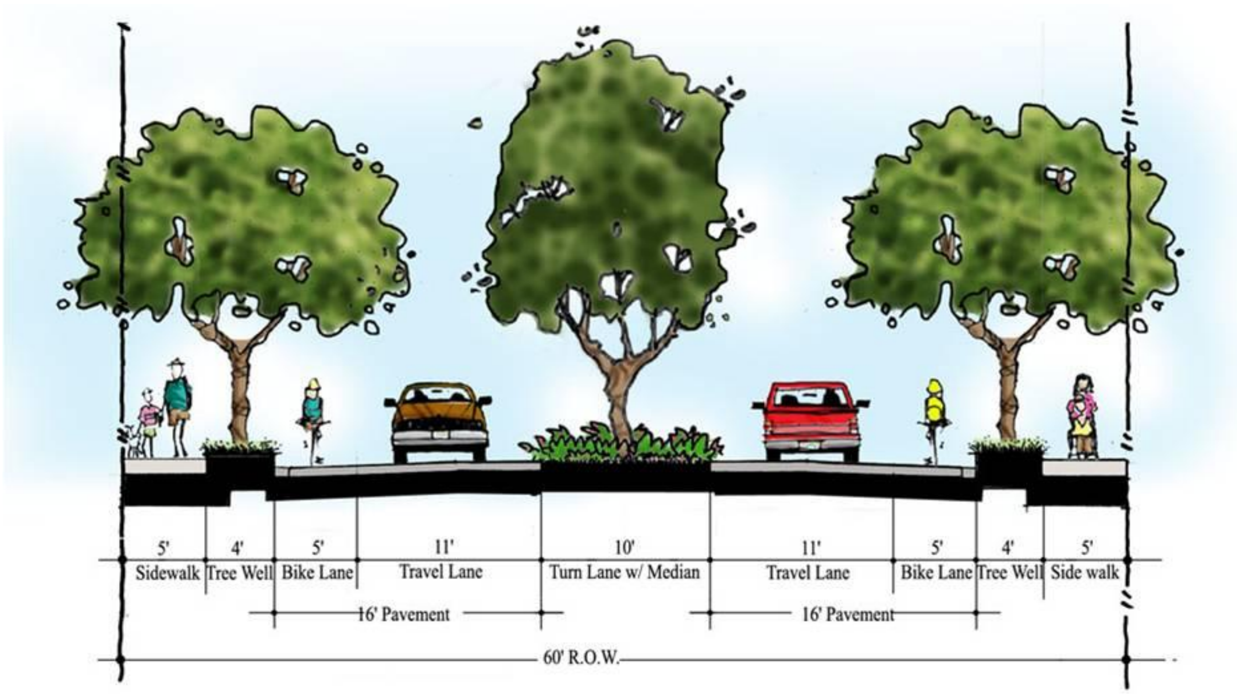


Figure 7.4-1 Complete Street Diagram (Source: Columbus, OH Blog Archives 2016)

Aesthetic standards for streetscape furnishings, including lights, signage, bus stops, bike racks, and curbing/sidewalk materials can be developed and placed into zoning or in land development ordinances as required design elements in commercial, residential, and mixed use economic growth areas. Streetscape elements should be used to create a defined visual character and richness of detail; to help in establishment of local identity and sense of arrival at a place worth visiting. Villages may benefit from unique design standards reflective of their historic ambiance. Consistent themes for signage within commercial and village areas could also reduce clutter and thereby improve the visual presence of individual businesses.

In situations where there is insufficient incentive for private funding, infrastructure improvements could be financed by developers in exchange for increased development intensity, or through tax increment financing (TIF) on the part of the municipalities.

7.5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES AND FUNDING SUPPORT

There are a variety of funding, incentive, and support opportunities available. For municipalities that are willing to consider tax abatement programs for the revitalization of deteriorated areas, programs such as the Pennsylvania Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) could be considered. There are limited funding opportunities such as the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) for large scale projects, such as a parking structure.

Local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Phoenixville Area Business Association (PABA) provide networking and other support to new and existing businesses. The Chester County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) provides assistance with Small Business Administration and other loans, grants, attracting private and public investment, training, and industry partnerships.

Municipalities can also consider a variety of incentives such as density bonuses for certain amenities in villages and downtown, transfer of development rights, and reduced permit costs. Some programs are discussed in more detail as follows:

- **Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Program (LERTA**) is a program intended for industrial, commercial, or business property owners who are contemplating repair, construction, or reconstruction of industrial, commercial, or other deteriorated business property. The portion of the assessment of a property attributable to new construction or improvements to deteriorated property as determined by the Assessment Agency is exempted from taxation each year for a given period of time. The Borough of Phoenixville established the LERTA Program on September 28, 2010 with an expiration date of September 28, 2020. In Phoenixville the program can be applied to properties in four designated areas of the Borough. For those properties approved under the LERTA program real estate taxes to be exempted shall be in accordance with a schedule established by the Borough. East Pikeland Township also has a LERTA district along the Route 23/724 corridor that has helped to spur redevelopment.

- **Neighborhood Improvement District (NID)** is an area designated by a municipality to have an additional assessment to pay for needed programs, services, and improvements within the NID. In addition, the municipality may advance funds to the management association of the NID and issues bonds, notes or guarantees to finance needed improvements in the NID. Improvements within the NID may include streetscape enhancements, sidewalks, parking, and other traditional improvements, as well as recreation and open space facilities, sewers, water lines, and the acquisition, rehabilitation, or demolition of blighted buildings or structures. Funds can also be used to provide group advertising, public relations programs, NID maintenance and security services, and free or reduced-fee parking for business customers.

- **Transferable Development Rights (TDR)** is the practice of developers buying building rights from lands to be conserved to increase allowable density on areas targeted for development. The practice works best when development rights can be purchased for far less than the value of the additional improvements thereby facilitated. Under typical TDR programs, the developer has to find and negotiate directly with the owner of the conservation lands, which has resulted in low rates of participation in most areas that have tried this strategy.

  To address this difficulty, East Pikeland in a Conservation Development Incentive (CDI) program whereby developers contribute dedicated fees to the Township's conservation fund in exchange for increased development rights within a designated revitalization/mixed use area. Under CDI, East Pikeland can "bank" TDR funds to use where and when open space planning and opportunity dictate, thus creating much more flexibility in the program. To date, East Pikeland's CDI incentives have not been employed by any developer.

- **The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP)** is a Commonwealth grant program administered by the Office of the Budget for the acquisition and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects. RACP projects are authorized in the Redevelopment Assistance section of a Capital Budget Itemization Act, have a regional or multi-jurisdictional impact, and generate substantial increases or maintain current levels of employment, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity. RACP projects are state-funded projects that cannot obtain primary funding under other state programs.

- **Business in Our Sites Grants/Loans (BOS)** is a Pennsylvania DCED program for speculative projects on properties planned or zoned for development. The funding covers all activities to make a project "shovel-ready", but is not available to projects that are primarily residential or recreational. Funding of up to $4,000,000.00 or 40% of the combined grant/loan amount is available to municipalities, municipal authorities, redevelopment authorities, or industrial development agencies. Private developers are eligible for loans only.

7.6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION AREAS

Within the PRPC Region, there are a number of areas identified as suitable for economic development and revitalization. These are identified as Economic Redevelopment Areas (ERA) on Map 2, Future land Use:

- Charlestown, Devault – Remaining infill areas along Whitehorse and Morehall Roads, suitable for commercial and mixed uses. This formerly industrial zoned area has had significant recent residential growth, and is adjacent to extensive office, commercial, and apartment development in East Whiteland Township. It is also directly adjacent to the PA Turnpike slip ramp.

- East Pikeland, Schuylkill Road Corridor – Continued revitalization of blighted and underutilized properties, in concert with LERTA and recent zoning changes to promote redevelopment. This area is served by SEPTA bus service and is adjacent to large residential projects under construction in the northern part of the Township.

- East Pikeland, Cromby – The idle Cromby electric generating facility is zoned industrial presents an opportunity for re-use as a light industrial area or other compatible uses. This area has rail access, but is outside of the Township's sewer and water service areas.

- East Pikeland, Kimberton Village – Long subject to planning efforts to promote mixed uses and walkability, recent zoning changes in Kimberton and surrounding lands are intended to implement these policies with context appropriate design standards. Residential, limited commercial, office, and cultural uses are permitted.

- Phoenixville, West Bridge Street – This area contains various commercial and residential uses, and includes a number of vacant and underutilized former industrial buildings and sites. It is the logical extension of the Borough's revitalization process.

- Phoenixville, East Side Industrial – This area hosts some industrial type uses and the Borough sewer plant, but also includes 15 +/- acres of vacant/underutilized land.

- Phoenixville, Phoenixville Hospital – Health care complex to facilitate possible expansion of Phoenixville Hospital, medical offices, labs, and other supporting businesses.

- Schuylkill, Valley Forge – There has been developer interest in lands occupied by Freedoms Foundation and Valley Forge University, comprising approximately 120 acres. These could be mixed use and residential communities integrated with the Valley Forge Post Office, historic Valley Forge Village, and Valley Forge National Historic Park with sidewalks, greenways, and trails.

- West Vincent, Ludwigs Corner – Possible reuse and revitalization of commercial/light industrial landscape into an integrated residential/commercial office mixed use area with pedestrian access and trail connectivity.

7.7 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The following policy recommendations will implement the goals and objectives of the Economic Development Plan:

ED-1 Adopt mixed use economic redevelopment zoning that focuses on integration of high end office, lifestyle/commercial, and residential uses and employs pedestrian integration and the principles of place-making.

ED-2 Preserve the remaining industrially zoned areas for flex space and other industrial uses, with targeted growth initiatives in blighted and underutilized areas.

ED-3 Assure that zoning regulations contain sufficient flexibility to encourage incubator/start-up businesses and that can accommodate changes in the economic and workforce environment.

ED-4 Conduct a long-term assessment of the area immediately surrounding Phoenixville Hospital for development of a healthcare district.

ED-5 Encourage satellite healthcare in the villages to allow basic healthcare services to be convenient for residents throughout the Region.

ED-6 Support Regional Agriculture with favorable zoning, land preservation initiatives, and marketplaces for locally produced farm products.

ED-7 Utilize signage, identity branding, streetscape features, pedestrian enhancements, and other elements of place-making to create successful downtown, village, and exurban redevelopment centers.

ED-8 Promote cultural tourism as an element of place-making and a lifestyle-based economy.

ED-9 Encourage businesses oriented towards experiences, families, and children as components of a diverse and inclusive lifestyle economy.

ED-10 Coordinate sewer, water, roads, and public transportation infrastructure with development.

ED-11 Connect developers with outside funding support for revitalization/redevelopment projects, and when necessary investigate zoning and local tax relief incentives.

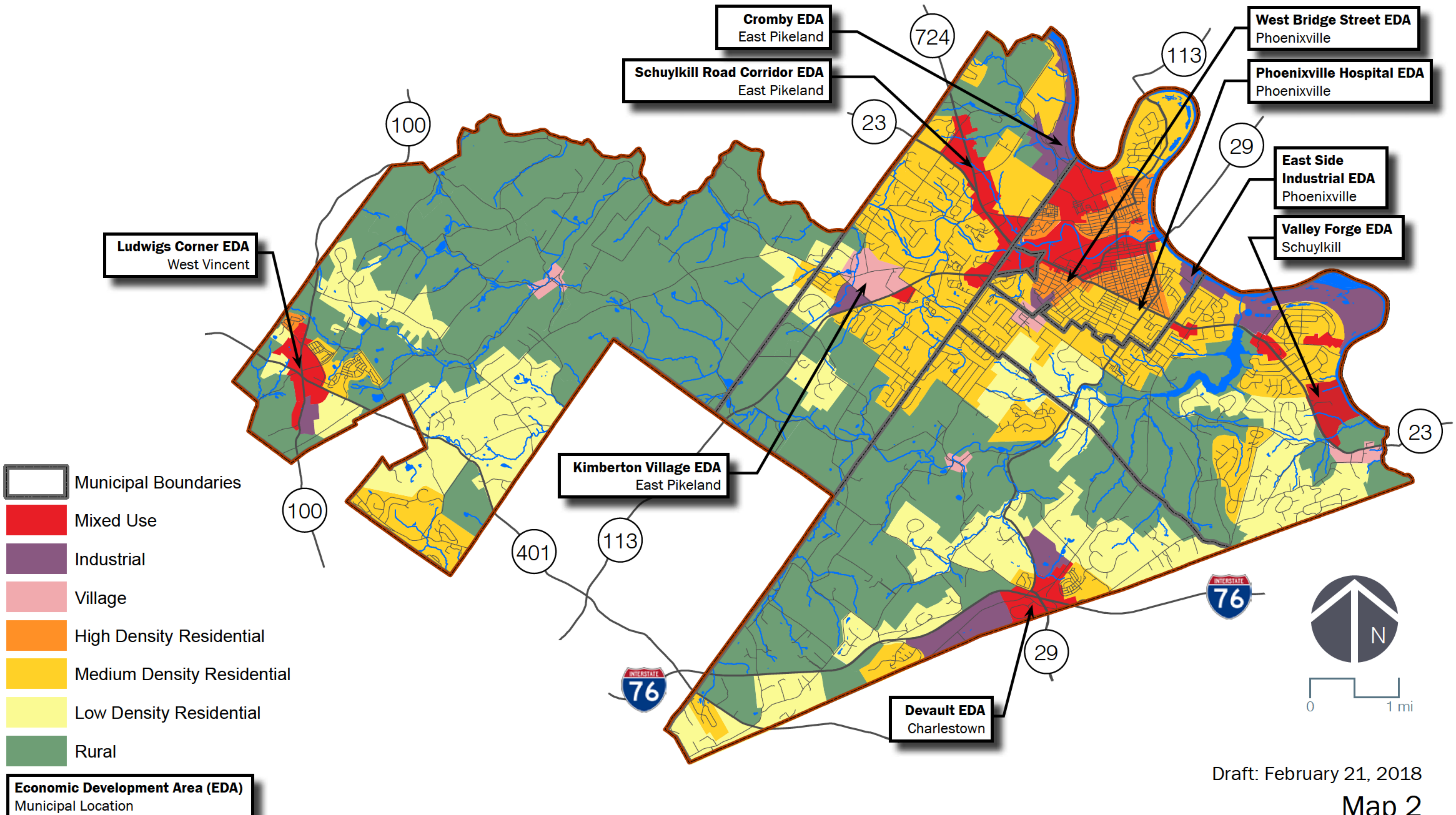
ED-12 Focus zoning efforts and other stimulus/incentives on identified economic redevelopment areas.

ED-13 Promote the adaptive re-use of historic, commercial, and industrial spaces as viable contemporary uses.

ED-14 Provide incentives to accommodate a different types and affordability of housing suitable to a diverse and dynamic workforce.

PRPC 2017 Comprehensive Plan

Future Land Use



Draft: February 21, 2018

Map 2