

# PALMER TOWNSHIP

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ADOPTED BY THE PALMER TOWNSHIP  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON  
MARCH 17, 2003

REVISIONS ADOPTED DECEMBER 27, 2011

This Plan Was Prepared Under the Direction of the  
Following Palmer Township Citizens - 2002-3

Board of Supervisors

David Colver, Chairman  
Robert Lammi, Vice-Chairman  
Virginia Rickert, Secretary  
K. Michael Mitchell  
Ann-Marie Panella

Planning Commission

Robert Smith, Chairman  
Ronald Grandinetti, Vice-Chairman  
Jo-Ann Stoneback  
Charles Fuller  
Richard Wilkins  
Jeffrey Young  
Thomas Grube

Township Staff

Robert Anckaitis, Township Manager  
E. Ted Sales, Jr., Director of Public Services  
and Planning  
Paul Hosking, Director of Public Utilities

Township Solicitor

Charles Bruno, Esq.

Township Engineers

The Pidcock Company

Comprehensive Plan Focus Group

Barry Albertson  
Robert Anckaitis  
Robert Cahill  
Bernard Carman  
Bob Daws  
Bruce Fretz  
Charles Fuller  
Ronald Grandinetti  
Delmar Grube  
Chris Hess  
Hans Hoeflein  
Paul Hosking  
Linda Iudicello  
Joseph Kelly  
Mark Knox  
Robert Lammi  
Chuck Lewis  
K. Michael Mitchell  
Ron Nunamaker  
Ann Marie Panella  
Thomas Pursel  
Jeff Raub  
Virginia Rickert  
Charlie Roseberry  
E. Ted Sales, Jr.  
Mark Schultz  
Robert Smith  
Jo-Ann Stoneback  
John Stoneback  
Robert Walker  
Craig Weintraub  
Rich Wilkins  
Alicia Wood  
Jeffrey Young



Community Planning Consultants

Urban Research and Development Corporation  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

**CONTENTS**

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction .....	1
Palmer’s Location Within the Region .....	2
Choosing Our Direction: Major Goals .....	3
Land Use and Housing Plan .....	5
Plan for Conserving the Natural Environment .....	30
Community Facilities Plan .....	36
Plan for Transportation .....	50
Plan for Conserving Energy .....	57
Putting This Plan Into Action .....	60
Appendices	
A Concise History of Palmer Township .....	A-1
The Natural Features of Palmer .....	A-2
The People and Housing of Palmer .....	A-3
The Comprehensive Plan Process .....	A-7
Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats .....	A-12
The Conservation Design Process .....	A-20

## **INTRODUCTION**

A community can only be strong and stable if it is willing to continuously improve. To continuously improve, it must accept and address change. As conditions and trends change over time, the community must be in a position to make thoughtful decisions that are framed by the changing situation.

To deal with these changes, Palmer Township needs a strategic Comprehensive Plan that addresses the challenges and opportunities that come with growth. This Plan builds upon a history of over 50 years of community planning in the Township. This Plan is consistent with provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code that state that a municipal comprehensive plan must be updated every 10 years.

The process of updating the Comprehensive Plan followed a well-designed process to make sure that the work was completed in an efficient and timely manner. This process is illustrated with a flow-chart in the Appendices.

As part of this Comprehensive Planning Program, a focus group of 30 Township officials and residents was brought together. This committee had two main tasks:

- to analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) that affect Palmer Township's future; and
- to challenge the content of the Comprehensive Plan recommendations as they were prepared, to make sure that the Plan addressed various viewpoints and the best thinking that could be brought to bear.

The conclusions of this SWOT analysis are included in the Appendices of this Plan. This analysis was an integral part of the preparation of this Plan.

The members of the Palmer Township Board of Supervisors sincerely express our appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the citizens who participated in the preparation of this Plan.

**Interrelationships of the Plan Elements** - The various elements of this Comprehensive Plan are closely inter-related. The Land Use and Housing Plan was designed to respect the natural features of different areas described in the Natural Environment section. The improvements described in the Transportation Plan section are important to support the new development projected in the Land Use and Housing Plan. The Land Use and Housing Plan proposes incentives to preserve buildings described in the Historic Preservation section. The Community Facilities and Services Plan section describes projects that are needed to support the Land Use and Housing Plan.



**CHOOSING OUR DIRECTION:  
Major Goals**

*“Where There Is No Vision, the People Perish.”*

The decisions we make or fail to make today will influence our lives for many years ahead. Through this Plan, we are envisioning the type of community we want to have in the future. Then, we are deciding how to achieve this future vision - taking into consideration the resources available and the challenges and opportunities that may be encountered.

**Mission**

Building upon a history of over 50 years of community planning, Palmer Township will continue to emphasize well-planned growth, while carrying out the Township’s primary mission of protecting the health, safety and general welfare of our residents and persons visiting our community.

**Vision**

Palmer Township is a community that emphasizes balanced well-planned growth, while continually guiding changes to serve the public interest, and providing residents with a very high quality of life that is affordable.

**Goals**

The following goals provide overall direction for the growth and conservation of Palmer over the next decade and beyond. We must meet these goals in order to achieve the vision, as stated above. The Plan then includes recommendations to achieve these goals, through both public, non-profit and private efforts.

- Provide highly compatible land uses, with an emphasis on protecting the livability of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Make sure that sufficient road capacity and utilities are in place before new development occurs.
- Make sure that development fully respects the natural features of each site, with special attention upon sinkhole concerns.
- Preserve lands along the Lehigh River, the Bushkill Creek, the Schoeneck Creek and other environmentally sensitive areas in permanent open space.
- Work to preserve substantial areas of open space within new development, with a special emphasis upon interconnected greenways along the Schoeneck and Bushkill Creeks.
- Provide opportunities for a variety of housing types, including encouraging neighborhoods specifically designed for older persons.

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

- Promote well-planned commercial uses where there is suitable road access, while avoiding strip commercial development along major roads.
- Promote light industrial, research and office development in appropriate locations to provide wider employment choices and additional tax revenues.
- Promote reuse and redevelopment of older business sites, particularly including "brownfield" industrial sites.
- Avoid allowing residential development in the northwestern part of Palmer to avoid conflicts between residential and agricultural and business uses.
- Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner.
- Provide a wide range of recreational areas and facilities that are well-distributed throughout the Township.
- Provide a safe and efficient transportation network that is closely coordinated with the Land Use Plan.
- Encourage modes of transportation, patterns of land uses, designs of sites and other actions that conserve energy.
- Continue to stress coordination, regular communications and close cooperation with neighboring communities and County and State agencies.
- Regularly involve Palmer citizens in continuously carrying out the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

## **THE LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN**

**GOAL: Provide highly compatible land uses, with an emphasis on protecting the livability of residential neighborhoods.**

This Land Use and Housing Plan is intended to make sure there is compatibility between future development and existing development. This Plan builds upon the 2001 Existing Land Uses Map on the next page. This map is followed by a map highlighting Land Use Issues, including proposed developments. A third map, the Comprehensive Plan Map, is then provided. The Comprehensive Plan Map mainly illustrates the Land Use and Housing Plan policies.

The Palmer Comprehensive Plan strongly endorses continued flexibility within reason in all Township development regulations in order to allow individual initiative and innovation to flourish.

**GOAL: Promote light industrial, research and office development in appropriate locations to provide wider employment choices and additional tax revenues.**

**GOAL: Allow well-planned commercial uses where there is suitable road access, while avoiding strip commercial development along major roads.**

**GOAL: Avoid residential development in the northwestern part of Palmer to avoid conflicts between residential and agricultural uses and business uses.**

**GOAL: Work to preserve substantial areas of open space within new development, with a special emphasis upon interconnected greenways along the Schoeneck and Bushkill Creeks.**

**GOAL: Continue to stress coordination, regular communications and close cooperation with neighboring communities and county and state agencies.**

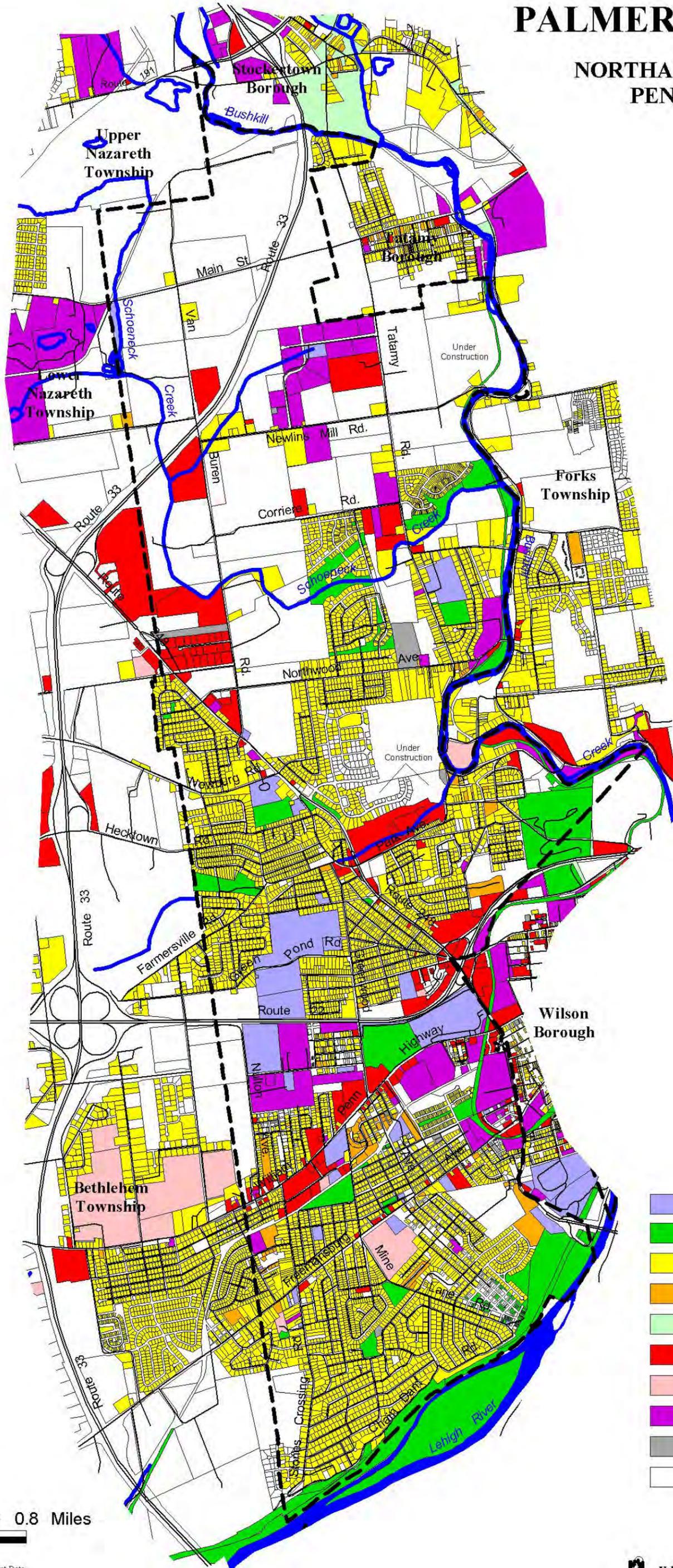
This Plan encourages continued communication and cooperation between Palmer and the many neighboring municipalities. This cooperation will build off of Palmer's long leadership over the past in many cooperative efforts among area governments to provide adequate transportation improvements, public water and sewage services. A good working relationship with the officials of neighboring governments will be important to avoid conflicts in land uses. Also, the governments should continue to work together on issues on regional concern. The governments might also work together to lobby for specific actions by the County, State or Federal governments.

### **Coordination with Adjacent Municipalities**

The Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan has been developed with careful attention to the zoning ordinances, road system and comprehensive plans of the neighboring communities. Upper Nazareth and Stockertown along northern Palmer's border is mainly zoned for industrial and commercial uses. Tatamy is mostly residentially zoned abutting Palmer, except that a Light Industrial District adjoins Palmer's Light Industrial district. A proposal has been submitted for commercial and apartment development north of Main Street in Tatamy. The Lehigh River and the Bushkill Creek provide significant land use buffers between Williams and Forks Townships and Palmer. Forks Township has established a conservation-type of zoning district along most of its border with Palmer.

# PALMER TOWNSHIP

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA



## 2002 Existing Land Uses

- Public / Semi-Public
- Public Recreation
- Single Family Residential
- Attached Residential
- Mixed Residential / Commercial
- Commercial
- Commercial Recreation
- Industrial
- Utilities
- Undeveloped & Agricultural



0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles

Source: Northampton County Assessment Data, and Field Work by URDC

Community Planning Consultants

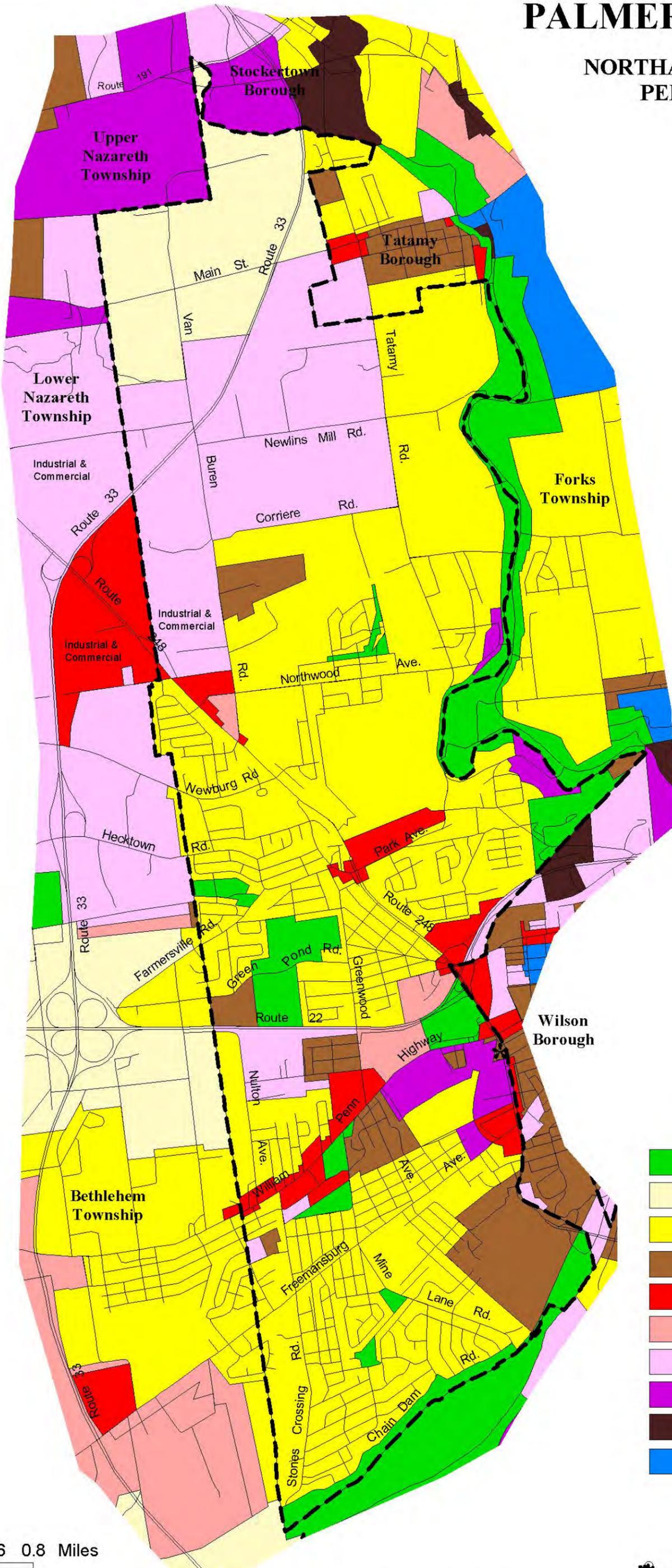


**Urban Research & Development Corporation**  
28 West Broad Street • Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 08180 • 610-865-0701



# PALMER TOWNSHIP

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA



## Generalized Zoning 2001

- Conservation & Recreation
- Rural
- Low & Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Commercial
- Office/Business
- Light Industrial
- Heavy Industrial
- Mixed Uses
- Institutional



0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles



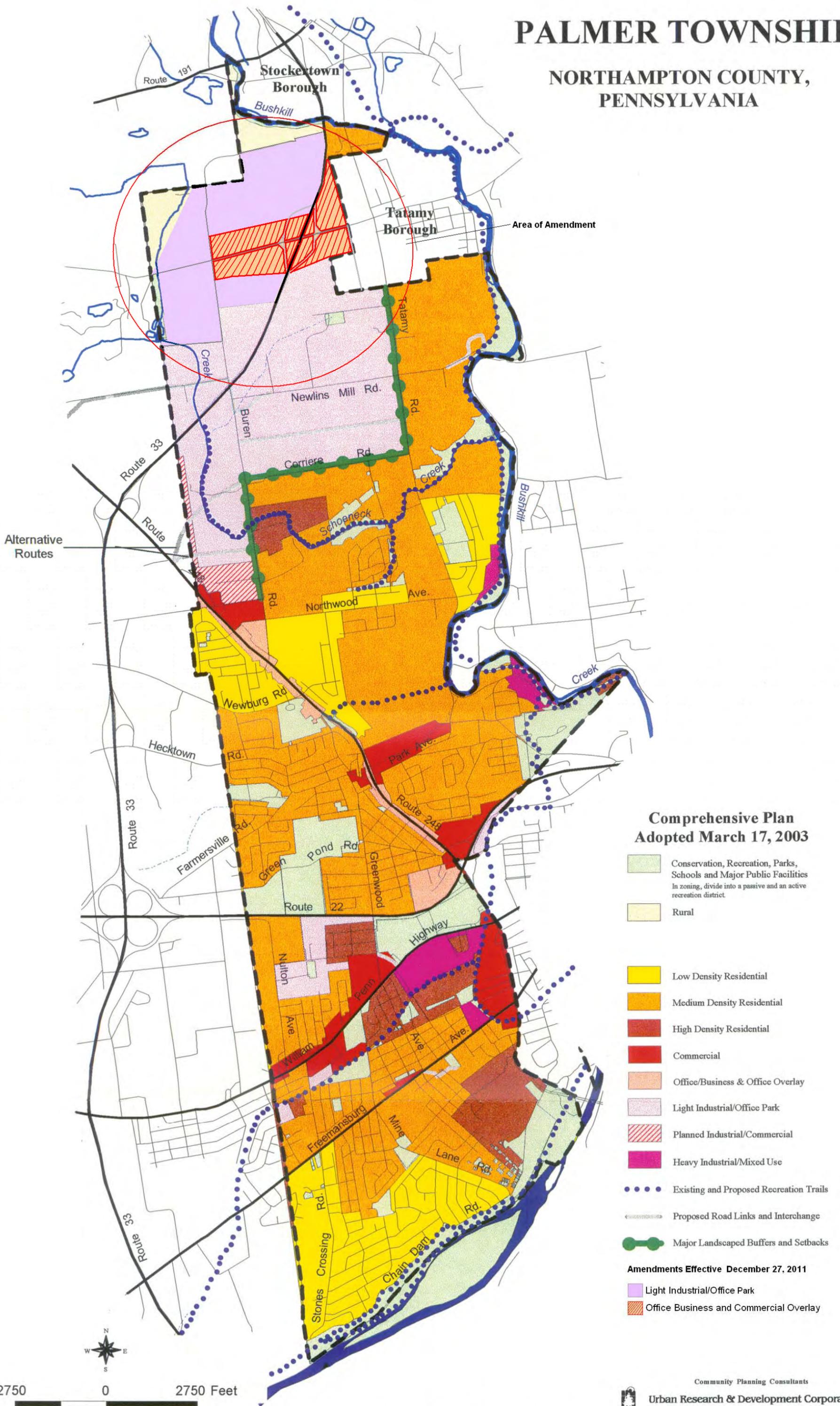
Source of Base Information: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 2002.



Community Planning Consultants  
**Urban Research & Development Corporation**  
 28 West Broad Street • Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 0818 • 610-865-0701

# PALMER TOWNSHIP

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA



## Comprehensive Plan Adopted March 17, 2003

Conservation, Recreation, Parks,  
Schools and Major Public Facilities  
In zoning, divide into a passive and an active  
recreation district.

Rural

Low Density Residential

Medium Density Residential

High Density Residential

Commercial

Office/Business & Office Overlay

Light Industrial/Office Park

Planned Industrial/Commercial

Heavy Industrial/Mixed Use

Existing and Proposed Recreation Trails

Proposed Road Links and Interchange

Major Landscaped Buffers and Setbacks

### Amendments Effective December 27, 2011

Light Industrial/Office Park

Office Business and Commercial Overlay

2750 0 2750 Feet

Source of Base Information: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 2002.

Much of Wilson along the Palmer border is zoned industrial and commercial. East of 25th Street and north of the Lehigh River, Wilson is zoned residential. Bethlehem Township along the Palmer border is zoned mostly residential, except for an office zoning district north of Farmersville Road. Lower Nazareth is mostly zoned light industrial and light industrial/commercial along Palmer's western border. In many cases, Lower Nazareth has light industrial zoning immediately adjacent to existing homes in Palmer.

The existing zoning policies of Palmer and adjacent municipalities are illustrated on the map on the preceding page. Careful controls upon intense uses, placement of trucking operations as far from homes as possible, intensive plant screening, earth berms, buffer yards and larger setback requirements will avoid conflicts between intensively developed areas and any adjacent residential areas.

### **Coordination with the Regional Plan**

An emphasis is needed upon coordinating Palmer's development policies with policies of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC). LVPC is charged with coordinating development, preservation and transportation policies across municipal borders throughout Lehigh and Northampton Counties. LVPC is currently working to update the Comprehensive Plan for Lehigh and Northampton Counties ("the Regional Plan").

As of 2002, the Regional Plan recommends that almost all of the Palmer Township be planned for "Urban Development." The term Urban Development includes what is typically known as suburban development with public water and sewage services. The only areas of Palmer where the LVPC does not recommend Urban Development are: a) along the Lehigh River, Bushkill Creek and part of the Schoeneck Creek corridors, which are recommended for Natural Resource Protection, and b) the northwest corner of Palmer, which is recommended for Agricultural Preservation.

This Township Plan recommends that the northwest corner of Palmer be changed on the Regional Plan to recommend "Future" Urban Development conditioned upon the availability of public water and sewage services and adequate road capacity, which may include a new interchange of Route 33 at or near Main Street. It is understood that these conditions are unlikely to met for at least ten years into the future. However, in order to obtain the necessary State and Federal permits and approvals, it would be helpful if the policy would be endorsed as a long-term goal in the Regional Plan. This Township Plan also recommends that the Regional Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan recommend the construction of this new interchange.

### **Land Use Plan Categories**

The following describes the land use plan categories that are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. In many cases, these categories are intended to generally related to zoning districts. More detailed policies and standards are provided in the Township Zoning Ordinance and more specific land areas are designated on the Township Zoning Map.

**Conservation, Recreation, Schools and Major Community Facilities** - This category includes existing parks, schools, municipal buildings and areas recommended for creek corridor preservation.

- A major objective is to acquire additional public open space and a complete recreation trail along the length of the Bushkill and Schoeneck Creeks. As described in the Community Facilities Plan, recreation trails are particularly needed to connect existing parks and neighborhoods. Therefore, side trails should extend from the main trails along the creeks. These trails should not only be provided in residential areas, but also in business areas, particularly to provide an amenity to employees over their lunch-times.
- In the Zoning Ordinance, this land use category should be separated into different zoning districts. One district should mainly include schools, public buildings and active recreation complexes. A separate conservation zoning district should address areas that are primarily intended to remain in woodland and other natural vegetation, as opposed to being regraded or deforested. Public lands in these conservation areas should mainly provide for non-motorized trails, nature study and other types of passive recreation.
- Thick natural vegetation should be preserved or planted along waterways to filter out pollutants from runoff, avoid erosion and maintain good water quality. These are known as "riparian buffers."
- The Township should work with all property-owners along the Bushkill and Schoeneck Creeks and owners of adjacent woodland to find ways to preserve the most valuable features of the land. In some cases, where there is a willing seller, this should involve purchase of parkland. In other cases, parkland could be provided through the Conservation Design process described below. In additional cases, the Township should seek that the property-owner provide a "Conservation Easement" (see discussion under "Recreation and Open Space" below).

**Low Density Residential** - These areas are recommended for single-family detached houses at densities of approximately two homes per acre. Consideration should be given to allowing one-third acre lots under the Conservation Design option (described below) if a significant percentage of the tract (such as 30 percent) is preserved as parkland.

**Medium Density Residential** - These areas should primarily provide for single-family detached houses. Side-by-side twin homes and townhouses should also be allowed with a minimum tract size, to avoid the scattered construction of attached housing in the middle of established single family detached neighborhoods. Densities of approximately three dwelling units per acre should be provided. Consideration should be given to allowing one-fourth acre single family lots as an option. This option is described in the "Preserving Open Space in New Development" section on page 22. These one-quarter acre lots should only be allowed if a significant percentage of the tract (such as 30 percent) is preserved as open space.

The current border between the residential and industrial development in the north-central part of the township runs down the center of Corriere Road between Tatamy and Van Buren Roads. Wherever this border exists, a significant buffer is needed with earth berms, dense landscaping and large setbacks to avoid conflicts between industries and homes. If the industrial/residential border

remains along Corriere Road, then a new east-west road should be constructed parallel to Corriere Road to handle traffic from the business development. Corriere Road is not suitable for industrial traffic, primarily because of the closeness of homes to the road and the power lines that obstruct a major road widening. If the residential zoning district is moved north, then types of residential development should be emphasized that will result in the permanent preservation of substantial areas of open space along the industrial district border.

**High Density Residential** - In these areas, a variety of housing types should be encouraged. These land areas should continue to be divided into two different zoning districts, which are not separately shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map, which is more generalized than the Zoning Map. The HDR district should provide for all housing types at up to 6 homes per acre, while the HDR-2 district should provide for most housing types except apartments, with densities of approximately 5 homes per acre. Particular attention should be paid to preserving the majority of the woodland along the Schoeneck Creek.

Reasonable maximum densities should be used of approximately 4 to 7 homes per acre to avoid crowding, to provide open space and to allow a well-designed layout. High quality site design is essential, including making sure that garage doors are not an overly prominent feature of the streetscape, that a majority of the front yards are not covered with paving, and that a substantial amount of landscaping is provided. Provisions could be made to allow density bonuses for highly superior site design and amenities. Efforts must be made to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses, especially single-family detached houses.

Allowing medium and high densities will help to provide affordable housing. This is especially important for young families and senior citizens. This residential environment is also designed to help fulfill Palmer's legal obligation to allow its "Fair Share" of all housing types.

**Housing for Persons 55 and Older** - Palmer Township is particularly concerned about making sure that there are plentiful housing opportunities for persons age 55 and older. This includes making sure that there are developments designed for the needs of existing residents who are no longer able or willing to maintain a traditional single family home and yard. Palmer Township includes an usually high percentage of residents who are age 65 or older - 21 percent of the total population in 2000. In 2000, 31 percent of Palmer Township residents were age 55 or older. This percentage is higher than all of the neighboring municipalities.

Density bonuses should be considered for developments limited to persons age 55 and older and their spouses, with no children under age 18. These density bonuses are logical because the typical household of older persons generates less traffic, less need for parking and less water and sewage usage compared to other types of housing. Housing for older persons also does not generate additional public school students, thereby avoiding negative impacts upon school finances.

The township has recognized this need for housing for persons age 55 and older by amending the zoning ordinance to allow active adult residential developments in the Medium Density Residential District.

**Commercial** - These areas are primarily intended to provide for retail, service and office development. In the Zoning Ordinance, the Commercial areas should be divided into various zoning districts. This should include:

- A new NC Neighborhood Commercial District should be primarily intended to provide for light commercial uses in areas that are close to existing neighborhoods. The NC District should not allow for the heavier types of commercial uses.
- The GC General Commercial District should provide opportunities for a wide variety of commercial uses. Along William Penn Highway, special controls should continue in place through an overlay district.
- The PC Planned Commercial District should also provide for a wide variety of commercial uses, but is designed for larger tracts where traffic access onto adjacent streets should be very carefully controlled.
- The PIC Planned Industrial Commercial District should provide for the same types of uses and development as the Light Industrial Office District described below. In addition, this district is intended to provide for a range of commercial uses.
- The current William Penn Highway Overlay District should continue to be used to make sure that commercial development addresses community concerns, such as compatibility with homes and management of vehicle access onto major roads.

Commercial development should be encouraged to occur in well-designed centers that have the character of an older village. This includes use of shared parking, coordinated signs and a limited number of driveways from the development onto adjacent streets. Architectural styles should be encouraged that are reminiscent of older downtowns, such as pitched roofs, colorful awnings and display windows.

This Plan strongly encourages the redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Corporation industrial tract and adjacent areas along the west side of 25th Street adjacent north of Freemansburg Avenue for new commercial uses. Intense commercial development will only be appropriate if the developer is able to prove that sufficient road improvements will be made to off-set the traffic impact.

The potential developer(s) of the Bethlehem Corporation site should be expected to accomplish a substantial amount of the needed improvements along the 25th Street corridor. In addition, County, State and Federal grants should be sought to fund a reasonable share of the costs of the improvements that are already needed to 25th Street to handle existing traffic. These traffic concerns extend north through the Route 22 ramps. Continued cooperation is needed between Palmer and Wilson to resolve these complex traffic problems, in a manner that minimizes impacts upon residential neighborhoods.

Any redevelopment of the Bethlehem Corporation site should only be allowed in a way that provides adequate buffers for nearby residents.

**Planned Office/Business** - This area primarily encourages business, professional and medical offices and financial institutions. Certain limited commercial uses, such as exercise clubs, hotels, non-fast-food restaurants and banks, are appropriate to complement the office uses. Great care is needed to address the high peak hour traffic that commonly results from office uses and to avoid conflicts with any adjacent residential areas.

**Nazareth Road Office Overlay** - The current Nazareth Road Overlay zoning district should continue to allow offices along most of Nazareth Road/Route 248 provided that a set of conditions are met, including proper access controls for vehicles onto roads and compatibility with adjacent homes.

**Planned Industrial/Office Park** - This area provides for carefully planned and designed light industrial and office parks. This area includes much of the northern part of Palmer, including the Palmer Industrial Park.

- Standards should be maintained to greatly limit large warehouse/distribution centers that typically generate enormous amounts of tractor-trailer traffic and only modest amounts of jobs. Large warehouse/distribution centers also require special care because they often have intensive late night and weekend operations that can cause serious nuisances to nearby residents. See the discussion below concerning "Promoting Quality Development."
- Flexibility should be provided in most business zoning districts to allow business development to be clustered in the most suitable portions of a tract, while preserving other areas in permanent open space. This process can be particularly valuable to provide attractive parks and trails along the Schoeneck Creek and to provide large buffers alongside residential development (such as along Corriere Road). For example, a subdivision could be allowed to have an increased building and impervious coverage on certain lots, provided it is offset by permanently preserved open space on other parts of the tract. (The impervious coverage is the maximum percentage of a lot that can be covered by buildings and paving.) The goal is not to increase the total amount of development possible on a tract, but instead to cluster the development on the most suitable portions of a tract.

This category is also proposed to include large areas in the northwest part of the Township that are currently zoned Rural Agricultural. In these areas, the intent is for the Township to change the zoning to allow intense new business development provided that all of the following conditions are met:

- a) Transportation improvements will be made, following an overall transportation plan that is acceptable to the Township, that will ensure that sufficient capacity will be available to handle the resulting increased traffic and that will result in efficient connections for the business traffic to reach a new interchange with Route 33 at Main Street,
- b) Vehicle access onto major roads will be properly coordinated, in order to minimize the number of driveways onto major roads, and
- c) Public water and sewage services will be provided, in a manner that avoids increased expense to existing customers.

Once the Township is assured that the conditions described above will be met, then this area should be rezoned to allow uses similar to the Planned Industrial/Office Park. This could include changing the zoning district or creating an overlay zoning district with a set of conditions that must be met if a developer wishes to develop an optional set of land uses. These areas should greatly limit large warehouse/distribution centers; however, it may be appropriate to allow some types of warehouse/distribution centers that are necessary to support other area industries. For example, a large refrigerated warehouse may be useful in attracting major food manufacturers. Such limited warehouse/distribution centers should be restricted to locations that are north of Main Street.

Any zoning change should occur early enough in the development process to encourage a developer to spend the necessary funds on engineering. Otherwise, a developer may not be willing to spend large sums towards meeting the conditions if the developer has little assurance of being allowed intense business development.

New residential development should be prohibited in this area to avoid conflicts with future business development.

**Main Street Overlay** - A new Main Street Overlay zoning district should be implemented along Main Street on both sides of Route 33 to allow for a new planned commercial area. However, business development would only be suitable in this area if the same conditions are met that are described above for the Planned Industrial/Office Park category.

In addition to a planned commercial area in the adjoining portion of Tatamy, this area is primarily intended to serve persons working in the northern part of Palmer Township. The goal is to avoid the need for employees to have to travel long distances through congested areas for everyday needs. This area should provide for small retail stores, personal services and restaurants. This area could also serve motorists along Route 33, including gas stations. Any new commercial development should be required to have shared parking lots and rear road access. This would allow most traffic to enter Main Street at one or two carefully located intersections, as opposed to numerous driveways.

**Light Industrial** - These areas provide for light industrial development. All uses will be required to meet careful performance standards under the Zoning Ordinance. These areas include land along Hollo Road north of Route 33 and lands adjacent to existing light industrial uses in central Palmer.

**Rural** - Limited areas at the extreme northern boundaries of the Township should be retained as Rural/Agricultural, primarily to provide for uses such as campgrounds, agriculture, livestock operations and plant nurseries. These areas should also continue to be used to meet Palmer's obligation under State law to allow locations for certain heavy industrial uses, such as quarries and solid waste facilities. These heavy industrial uses should be controlled by a comprehensive set of regulations.

New residential development should be discouraged in this area to avoid "nuisance" complaints against farmers. New homes should be limited to a maximum of one home on each pre-existing lot. Also, see the discussion about the preservation of open space on page 40.

**Heavy Industrial/ Mixed Use** - This area includes the former Taylor-Wharton plant and adjacent lands. It also includes smaller areas around existing industries. An emphasis is needed upon buffering between business and residential uses to avoid conflicts.

Over the long-run, it may be appropriate to consider alternative uses of portions of the former Taylor-Wharton Plant. Any proposed non-industrial use of this tract should be carefully integrated into a completely planned and coordinated development. These developments should include safe and efficient traffic access.

### **Residential Development Issues**

This Comprehensive Plan promotes a total living environment, with a balance of quality housing that is near shopping areas, schools, parks, places of worship and other places to enjoy leisure time activities. The goal is to offer a wide range of opportunities for persons of all ages and different types of households.

New single-family detached houses have become priced out of the reach of many persons of average income, especially young couples just starting out and retired persons on fixed incomes. Therefore, this Comprehensive Plan provides for a variety of affordable housing types in appropriate locations. Efforts will be made to encourage types of housing that will require reduced maintenance by the homeowners, especially for senior citizens, including condominiums. Higher densities of homes will be limited to selected lands that are physically suitable, have good highway access and are convenient to shopping and community facilities.

Developers should be encouraged to build subdivisions in patterns that create well-defined neighborhoods. This can help build community spirit and cohesiveness as residents find it easy to identify with their neighbors. Neighborhoods can be defined by street patterns and open spaces, including treelines, drainage swales and parks.



This photo illustrates an earth berm with evergreen trees that was planted 15 years ago to provide a buffer between a residential development and a high traffic road. This concept can also be particularly useful to provide compatibility when residential and industrial uses are planned for opposite sides of a road.

The modification process in the Subdivision Ordinance can be useful to find ways of logically adjusting specific requirements to reduce housing costs while maintaining very high quality construction and design. The Subdivision Ordinance allows modifications in cases where an applicant proves to the Board of Supervisors that an alternative would result in a better site design. In comparison, a provision in the Zoning Ordinance can only be waived through the granting of a zoning variance by the Zoning Hearing Board. Under State law, a zoning variance can only be granted if the applicant proves that they have an unnecessary hardship. Therefore, for matters that affect site design (such as landscaping), it would be preferable to place most standards in the Subdivision Ordinance and not the Zoning Ordinance.

### **Business Development Issues**

This Plan provides carefully planned locations for commercial, office, service, research, light industrial uses and limited heavy industry. These uses will provide wide employment opportunities close to the homes of Palmer residents, reducing commuting distances. This development also will expand the variety and competitiveness of goods and services that can be conveniently purchased. In addition, these uses can be expected to generate significantly more in tax revenue than they will require in additional services, helping to keep Township and School District taxes reasonable.

Where possible, traffic from business development in northern and central Palmer should be directed towards Route 33, through the Nazareth Road and Stockertown interchanges, and hopefully a new interchange near Main Street. This will help avoid additional congestion on roads in southern and central Palmer. The extension of rail spurs from existing rail lines to industrial areas could help attract employers and decrease truck traffic.

See the discussion below about "Attracting Quality Development."

This Plan seeks to direct commercial development into well-designed shopping areas, preferably with fully coordinated traffic access that allows a person to visit multiple businesses without having to re-enter a major road. This Plan avoids uncontrolled "strip" commercial development along major roads to: a) minimize conflicts with adjacent homes and b) allow the efficient and safe flow of traffic. As discussed in the Transportation Plan, if traffic access is not carefully controlled, serious safety hazards will result. The William Penn Highway and Route 248 Overlay Zoning Districts were specifically written to make sure that new business development along these roads is compatible with nearby homes.

### **Traditional Neighborhood Development**

This Plan encourages forms of "traditional neighborhood development." This involves recreating the best features of the older areas of desirable boroughs in new neighborhoods. This concept is illustrated on the sketch on the following page. Traditional neighborhood development primarily involves the following:

- Street trees should be planted to eventually provide a canopy of shade over streets. Studies show that mature street trees can increase the value of homes up to 10 percent.

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

- Sidewalks should be provided. There should be an orientation to pedestrians, with an ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks.
- A modest density should be encouraged that is similar to the typical development that occurred during the 1930s through 1940s. This density (such as 4 to 8 homes per acre) will make best use of available land, while avoiding overly dense development and parking problems.
- Whenever practical, parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings, so that the front yard can be landscaped. At best, parking and garages would be placed to the rear of lots, with access using alleys. This design avoids conflicts between sidewalks and vehicles backing into the street, and allows the entire curbside to be available for on-street parking.
  - Care is needed to discourage new twin and townhouse development that has numerous driveways entering directly onto a street from the front. Garage doors should not be an overly prominent part of the views of housing from the front. Where garages and parking cannot be avoided in the front yard, larger lot widths should be required to make sure that there is green space in the front yard. Regulations are needed to make sure that the majority of the front yards of housing developments are not covered by paving.
  - Where garages cannot be accessed from alleys, narrow driveways should be encouraged along a side of a home to reach a garage back behind the home. In this way, driveways can widen out closer to the garage.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

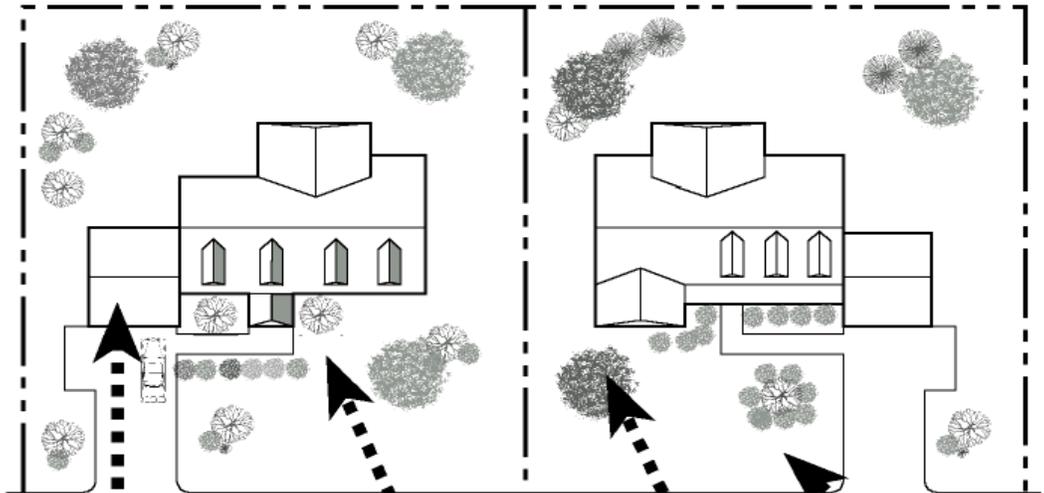
A density bonus could be provided if a development incorporates the features of a "Traditional Neighborhood."

In Palmer, Traditional Neighborhood Development could work particularly well in the higher density residential neighborhoods. For example, developers could use this option to build single family detached houses on relatively narrow lots in place of building townhouses. Traditional Neighborhood Development can be promoted through modest density incentives, such as those already in place in the Palmer Zoning Ordinance.

Traditional Neighborhood Development can be particularly attractive to developers by allowing single family lots that are more narrow than would otherwise be allowed. This reduction in lot width can result in dramatic reductions in the average costs of improvements per housing unit.

# Suburban vs. Neotraditional Design

## Suburban Design

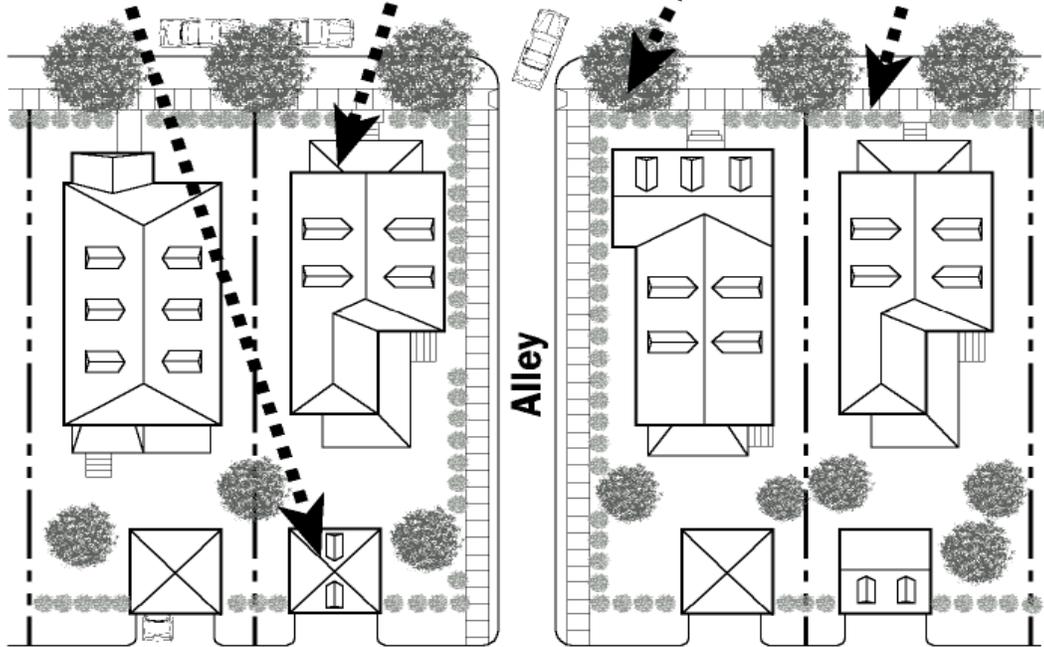


Garages forward  
Garages on alleys

Deep front yards  
Shallow yards,  
porches

Trees in yards  
Trees along  
street

No Sidewalks  
Sidewalks



Alley

Alley

## Neotraditional Design

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

The following photos illustrate the Traditional Neighborhood Development for residential development. These photos are from the largest Traditional Neighborhood Development in Pennsylvania - Eagleview, which is west of Route 100 south of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.



*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*



This photo illustrates how the Traditional Neighborhood Development concept can also apply to commercial development.



### **Preserving Open Space in New Development**

Throughout the nation, there is increased emphasis in permanently preserving important open spaces as part of new development. This concept has been promoted by the Natural Lands Trust and the State Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Attractive incentives are needed so that any development of the large open tracts of land in the Township would be developed with substantial areas of preserved open space (such as 35 to 50 percent), as opposed to standard "cookie-cutter" type lots.

The intent is to design development in a manner that conserves the important natural, scenic and historic features of a site. Large percentages of a tract are permanently preserved in open space. The Natural Lands Trust refers to this concept as "Conservation Design Subdivisions." In comparison, "Conventional Subdivisions" typically involve very little or no open space preservation. Conventional Subdivisions are also known as "Cookie Cutter Subdivisions" because every lot is typically the same size and shape, regardless of the features of the land.

Advantages of Conservation Developments - Based upon the work of the Natural Lands Trust, the following are some of the major advantages of Conservation Subdivisions:

- *Important natural features can be preserved.* Conservation subdivisions should include standards that direct buildings away from steep slopes, wetlands, waterways and other important natural features. As a result, homes are placed on portions of the tract that are most environmentally suitable for development - as opposed to being evenly spread across the land. Large contiguous areas can remain in woods and other natural vegetation - which are important as wildlife corridors. Thick natural vegetation can be preserved along creeks - which is essential

to filter out eroded soil and other pollutants from runoff before it enters the creek. This vegetation along creeks is also important to maintain high quality fishing habitats.

- In comparison, if an entire tract is divided into lots, it is likely to mostly be in mowed grass - which is a “mono-culture” that does not have the same environmental benefits.
- With open space preservation, stormwater runoff can be managed in a more natural manner that encourages recharge into the groundwater.
  
- *Scenic features can be preserved.* Conservation subdivisions can place homes on less visible portions of a tract, while maintaining scenic views. For example, many conservation subdivisions setback homes from main through-roads and limit placement of homes on major ridgelines. As a result, the main angle of vision along major roads involves green space.
  
- Mature woods can be preserved in locations that hide views of development. The preservation of open space also provides visual relief from seeing continuous development.
  
- Stormwater runoff can also be managed in a more attractive manner - as opposed to within deep man-made channels and detention basins.
  
- *Recreational opportunities can be increased.* Conservation subdivisions typically include attractive areas for walking, jogging, cross-country skiing and nature study. In some cases, active recreation facilities can be included. These open spaces can also increase interaction among neighbors.
  
- *Developers can achieve lower costs* for grading, lengths of roads, lengths of utilities and other improvements.
  - Developers may also be able to save time and money by avoiding wetland alterations and waterway crossings.
  - Conservation Subdivisions can provide the flexibility in layout to move homes off of steep slopes, which are more expensive to build upon. Avoiding steep slopes can also reduce the need for blasting.
  - By allowing flexibility in placement of buildings, it is easier to find suitable sites for septic systems.
  
- *Municipalities can save on maintenance costs.* Shorter lengths of roads, utilities and other improvements mean there is less to maintain. It is expensive to maintain and plow snow from steeply sloped roads. Conservation Subdivisions can result in roads being placed at more modest slopes.
  
- *Developers can often achieve higher sales prices.* More and more developments are stressing in their advertising that homes are adjacent to preserved open spaces. Developers can often receive a premium price for lots that are adjacent to or overlook preserved open space. The presence of trails and other open space amenities can also spur sales.
  - Studies have also shown that homes near preserved open space are likely to increase in value faster than other homes.

The following major policies will be emphasized to encourage Conservation Subdivisions:

1. *Strong incentives and disincentives* are needed to encourage open space preservation in new development. It typically is not sufficient to allow the same density for a Conservation Subdivision as for a conventional subdivision. This is because developers prefer to build what has been successful in the past, as opposed to trying new concepts. Also, developers may feel (often inaccurately) that the homes on larger lots may have a higher market value than homes on smaller lots with open space. Therefore, density bonuses are needed for open space preservation. A community needs to trade-off a modestly increased number of dwelling units in return for substantial open space preservation.
2. The process for approval of a Conservation Subdivision must not be much more burdensome or time-consuming than the process for a Conventional Subdivision. Where practical, the process to gain approval for a desirable type of development will be easier than the process for a Conventional Subdivision. Discipline is needed in writing Conservation Subdivision standards to make sure that they are not overly restrictive. If Conservation Subdivision standards are too detailed or too extensive, they may not allow enough flexibility for a good design. If the standards get in the way of a developer's marketing plans or cause excessive costs, a developer may choose to do a Conventional Subdivision.
3. Proper standards are needed to make sure that the preserved open space is well-located and improved so that it serves important public functions. In many cases, mature woods, steep slopes and creek valleys should simply be preserved in their natural state. In other cases, the open spaces may be intended for active recreation. In still other cases, trees should be planted in the open spaces and trails should be installed. The key is to avoid a process in which the "open space" is simply the land that is left over after the most economical set of lots and roads are laid out. Narrow strips of open space will be avoided, unless they would preserve a scenic tree line or provide an important trail link.

A description of the four-step Conservation Design site planning process is included in the Appendices.

### **Promoting Home Ownership**

To promote neighborhood stability and property maintenance, the Township should promote home ownership. A variety of programs are available through area financial institutions, non-profit agencies and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to assist first-time homebuyers in financing the initial settlement costs in purchasing a home. The Zoning Ordinance should also work to promote types of housing that are most likely to be owner-occupied. For example, twin housing units that are separated by a vertical wall and that have each housing unit on its own lot should be encouraged instead of one housing unit above a second housing unit.

Care is also needed to make sure that the maximum density allowed for single family detached houses is not much stricter than the density allowed for other housing types. Otherwise, the Township's policies would be working to discourage detached housing. This is currently the case

in the High Density Residential zoning district where the maximum density for apartments is twice as high as the maximum density for singles.

Care should be taken to make sure that excessively large side and rear setbacks are not required in older residential neighborhoods. Large setbacks can make it difficult for a homeowner to expand an under-sized older home, or to add amenities such as decks. If homeowners cannot expand their home, they are more likely to move out of an older neighborhood.

### **Maintaining Strong Neighborhoods**

Much of the housing stock in Palmer is over 40 years old and will need increasing amounts of maintenance and repair. At the same time, much of this housing stock is occupied by older persons who may have difficulty affording proper home maintenance and/or may not be physically capable of accomplishing home repairs. In addition, many of the older housing units are relatively small, and may not be attractive to families. As current older residents move out of these older homes, it will be desirable to attract new homebuyers to avoid a major increase in the percentage of rental units.

A single blighted property can severely discourage new investment on an entire block and can cause responsible residents to move out or not invest in improving their own homes. A single problem property can also become a cancer in a neighborhood that drives away prospective homebuyers. A problem property can also become a fire hazard or an attractive nuisance to children.

To stop deterioration before it occurs, Palmer Township should continue to enforce its Basic Property Maintenance Code. This Code primarily emphasizes important matters that affect the structural soundness of a building and basic health and sanitation issues.

The enforcement of a basic property maintenance codes is intended to require property-owners to: a) properly maintain their buildings or b) sell the buildings to another party who will make the needed improvements. The goal in code enforcement is to intervene before buildings deteriorate to the point where it is no longer cost effective to repair them. If property-owners are forced to complete basic maintenance and repairs in a timely manner, severe deterioration can be avoided.

Consideration should be given to additional methods for code enforcement. For example, the City of Bethlehem requires that every building be inspected before it is sold. This inspection is particularly aimed towards identifying safety hazards, and requiring that the problems be corrected before the deed can be transferred. For example, these inspections often find dangerous electric wiring or unsafe venting of wood burning stoves.

Some communities, such as Allentown, target inspections towards rental properties, which are the primary source of most code enforcement problems. Allentown now requires a codes inspection of all rental properties once every three years.

Some communities only require inspections of rental properties prior to a change in the tenants. This method targets the properties with high turnover rates of tenants. Those properties are most likely to have code enforcement problems. This method also avoids intruding upon existing tenants, particularly stable long-term tenants.

## **Traffic Impacts**

A major consideration in reviewing any development proposal that would generate significant traffic should be whether the existing road system can handle the traffic and what improvements are proposed to be made at the expense of the developer. Specific requirements and conditions concerning traffic impacts are addressed within the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

## **Ensuring Quality Development**

Palmer will require that all development be well-planned to prevent future problems for the developer, the Township and neighboring uses. Palmer will seek highly attractive industrial and office parks. Standards will be used to make sure that new development is compatible with existing development, particularly to avoid nuisances to neighboring uses. The heights and sizes of signs will continue to be carefully controlled.

Palmer is committed to land use regulations that insure that all new development will involve the highest quality of site design and landscaping. The Township will also work to encourage attractive architectural designs, although that cannot typically be controlled through zoning.

Quality residential development attracts new quality homes nearby. Moreover, a quality business development in a well-landscaped campus-like setting is important to attract additional desirable types of business development. Many offices, for example, are seeking prestigious and attractive locations that will benefit the image of the company and help attract the highest quality of employees to their firm. Therefore, an emphasis should be placed upon proper site design of new businesses, particularly involving substantial landscaping.

Subdividers should be strongly encouraged to place deed restrictions on each lot to control the appearance of new buildings, such as the standards that are used by the Lehigh Valley Industrial Park. LVIP's standards emphasize minimize the visibility of truck loading docks and truck parking, and requiring that the majority of the front of each building include glass and decorative masonry (such as brick). Metal sides and trucking activities are typically required to be placed in less visible locations, including in the middle of "U-shaped" buildings.

## **Attracting More Jobs to Palmer**

To attract more light industries and offices to Palmer will require a great deal of organization by the Township and the business community, cooperating fully with many institutions and agencies. A major leader in this area has been the Business Industrial and Professional Association of Palmer. Close cooperation is needed with the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation, the Easton Area Industrial Development Corporation, the Two Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Ben Franklin Technology Center and Lehigh University's Small Business Center.

The business community and Township officials should periodically study Palmer's greatest strengths and most serious constraints in attracting new employers. The goal is to build upon these strengths and minimize the constraints.

It is essential that attention be paid towards helping existing employers to stay in business in Palmer and to expand. In this area, regular communication is important between major employers, Township officials, business lenders and economic development agencies in the area. At times, an employer may be suffering from problems that could be reduced by local effort. For example, an employer may be suffering because a rail spur closed down, or because it cannot find enough employees in a certain skill area, or it is suffering flooding problems. Close communication with Palmer's employers will not only help them resolve problems but it will help them know that their community cares about their concerns. This is a major component of ensuring a healthy "business climate" in Palmer.

Additional efforts need to be made to market Palmer as a business location. Also, Palmer needs to increase recognition of its name throughout a wider area. In addition, Palmer should seek ways of making best use of the area's technical and educational resources through close relationships between schools and businesses. This especially refers to Lafayette College, Lehigh University, Northampton Community College and the Career and Technology Center.

Attention must be paid not only to attracting major employers from outside the area, but also to helping local entrepreneurs get started. A major factor in this area is helping small business persons to develop basic business skills to let them make the most of their initiative. This can be accomplished by sponsoring workshops in areas such as accounting, marketing and crime prevention.

The goal is not only to create large numbers of jobs, but also to create types of jobs that provide incomes sufficient to support a family and that provide important benefits. Too many Palmer residents find that they must commute long distances to find employment that generates sufficient income and benefits to support a family.

### **Timing of Development**

The timing of development will depend upon many factors, including mortgage interest rates, migration of persons from New Jersey, employment growth in the region and the availability or unavailability of competing development sites in neighboring municipalities. Any construction of a new interchange on Route 33 in the northern part of Palmer is not likely to occur until at least 2012, if not 2020. This Comprehensive Plan recommends that intensive business development not be allowed in the northwestern part of the Township if adequate transportation infrastructure is not in place.

### **Promoting Use of Public Transit**

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's report Community Planning and Transit includes recommendations to promote use of public transit. Many of these recommendations can also promote walking as an alternative to short vehicle trips. These recommendations are important to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. These recommendations include:

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

- considering allowing higher intensities of development near bus routes, so that the bus routes are more convenient to more persons,
- allowing residential development in close proximity to business development, so people can live close to their work,
- promoting the placement of buildings relatively close to roads served by public transit, as opposed to forcing persons to walk long distances across parking lots to reach the building,
- improving pedestrian access so people can easily walk from their homes, workplaces or other destinations to bus stops, including:
  - providing well-maintained sidewalks or pathways, particularly to complete "missing links" between existing safe pedestrian routes,
  - installing sufficient lighting for security and for motorists to see pedestrians,
  - avoiding unsafe conditions in crossing roads (such as "walk" signals and well-marked crosswalks),
  - avoiding excessively wide intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to cross and which promote high speed turns by vehicles that are a hazard to pedestrians,
  - considering raised islands in the middle of wide roads, which provide a safe refuge for pedestrians crossing the road,
  - providing safer conditions in crossing large parking lots,
  - minimizing the number of cul-de-sac streets and/or providing pedestrian connections at the end of cul-de-sacs, to avoid long circuitous walks,
- providing pedestrian entrances to businesses and stores as close to transit stops as possible,
- providing wheelchair accessible curb cuts,
- encouraging the placement of transit shelters, which are particularly important during periods of snow, rain, high winds and extreme heat, or at least shade trees at transit stops, and which are typically funded by advertising,
- carefully locating transit stops as part of road improvements and major new developments, in consultation with LANTA and in coordination with sidewalks,
- publicizing State laws about when motorists must allow pedestrians the right-of-way,
- publicizing the availability of public transit services and how persons can obtain information about schedules, and
- considering incentives for employers that commit to long-term subsidies of public transit or vanpooling use by their employees, such as reduced parking requirements.

## **Historic Preservation**

Palmer includes a significant number of historic buildings, many of which were farmhouses. These include a number of stone farmhouses that are well-preserved. One notable example of a sensitive expansion of a historic building for a modern use is the bank on the east side of Nazareth Road at Northwood Drive Extended.

Most of the historic buildings are scattered throughout the Township along older roads, such as Tatamy Road, Greenwood Avenue, Newlin's Mill Road, Stocker Mill Road, Chain Dam Road, Freemansburg Avenue and Van Buren Road. One of the oldest buildings in the Township is the 1818 Tavern in Seipsville. The Palmer Township Historical Society has prepared a book about the Township's history and is currently completing an inventory of historic buildings.

A summary of the history of Palmer Township is included in the Appendix.

Palmer Township should consider providing incentives in the Zoning Ordinance to promote the sensitive rehabilitation and preservation of important historic buildings. This could include adopting a list of Township-designated historic buildings in the Zoning Ordinance. Within these buildings, an additional set of land uses could be allowed if the exterior building was sensitively rehabilitated and if a permanent preservation easement was established on the outside of the building. In return, an owner of a historic building could receive approval to convert a historic building into a bed and breakfast inn or an office, even if the property is within a residential district. A building in an industrial district might be allowed to be converted into a restaurant or an antique store.

The Township could also adopt regulations that would prohibit demolition of historic buildings that are identified in the ordinance. An applicant would have to prove that there is no reasonable alternative to demolition. Or, the Township could simply require a delay of up to 90 days before a historic building could be demolished. This delay is intended to provide time to convince the owner that there are alternatives to the demolition.

## **THE PLAN FOR CONSERVING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

*"The people have a right to clean air, pure water and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."*

- *Pennsylvania State Constitution*

**GOAL: Make sure that development fully respects the natural features of each site, with special attention upon avoiding sinkholes.**

**GOAL: Preserve lands along the Lehigh River, Bushkill Creek, Schoeneck Creek and other other environmentally sensitive areas in permanent open space.**

A description of the important natural features in the Township is included in the Appendix. The map on the following page illustrates some of the most important Natural Features in the Township, including steep slopes, wetlands, forested areas and flood-prone areas. The Ridgelines and Drainage Patterns Map on the page after the next page shows drainage patterns and the boundaries of watersheds.

Different sites are suitable for different levels of development. The slope of land, the tendency of the soils to erode, the depth to the water table and the vulnerability to flooding all should influence how a site is allowed to develop.

As part of the Natural Features Background Study to this Plan, the natural limitations of different areas of Palmer were studied and mapped. Palmer is fortunate that most of its land is excellent for development. Under this Comprehensive Plan, development that is more intensive will be directed towards lands with the best natural characteristics. Areas that have the most severe limitations should be kept in open space. This allows us to work with Nature, instead of against her.

The Palmer Comprehensive Plan recommends that special attention be paid to the special natural features of Palmer, especially steep sloped areas, wooded areas, creeks and streams, natural drainage channels, groundwater and agricultural areas.

### **Agricultural Conservation**

This Plan supports the efforts of farmers who wish to continue farming. Residential development is discouraged throughout northern Palmer to avoid future nuisance complaints against farmers.

Large areas of central and northern Palmer will continue to allow business and light industrial development in order to attract jobs and tax revenue. However, any decision to sell their farms for development will remain the choice of the property owner. This Comprehensive Plan strongly encourages farmers who wish to continue farming to do so with the support of the Township. Certain areas in north, northeastern and northwestern Palmer are designated as "Rural". In the future, if lands

currently designated for development become substantially developed, then more intensive uses will be allowed in the areas presently designated as Rural. Again, efforts will be made to ensure that any farmer wishing to continue to farm will be able to continue successfully.

This Plan will help preserve farmland throughout the region by avoiding sprawled development in Palmer Township and other parts of Northampton County. Efforts will be made to cluster and concentrate development at moderate densities, to avoid excessive use of important farmland. Unreasonably large lot sizes will not be required in residential districts. Also, this Plan encourages development to be directed towards “infill” areas already surrounded by development that makes them less appropriate for agriculture.

### **High Water Table Areas**

Development should be steered away from areas that have a shallow depth of soil to the water table. This can help avoid severe construction problems and flooded basements.

### **Floodplains**

Palmer Township will continue to prohibit almost all types of development in the 100-year floodplain. Most of these areas are along the Bushkill Creek and the Schoeneck Creek. This not only helps to protect lives and property, but it also helps avoid the need for expensive flood control measures.

### **Groundwater**

"Best Management Practices (BMPs)" are measures that should be used to avoid pollution of creeks and groundwater from stormwater runoff and to promote recharge of groundwater supplies. These methods should be required wherever practical. A wide variety of alternative measures are described in detail in the handbook "Best Management Practices for Developing Areas in Pennsylvania."

The groundwater supply of Palmer must be protected to ensure safe drinking water for those homes with private wells and to protect the water quality of all of the creeks in the area. Impervious surfaces should be minimized to allow stormwater to naturally recharge groundwater supplies and to prevent problems with stormwater runoff. Where practical considering the vulnerability to sinkholes, measures should be required to promote recharge of stormwater runoff into the ground. Efforts should be made to prevent road salts, petroleum products, pesticides and other chemicals from polluting groundwaters and surface waters.

### **Surface Waters**

Surface waters, including creeks and natural drainage channels, are important to preserve for four major reasons:

- They affect the quantity of water resources. Increased runoff and sedimentation can cause irregular flow in streams and choke connections with groundwater resources.
- They affect the quality of water resources as a source of groundwater recharge and stream flow.

# PALMER TOWNSHIP

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA



## Natural Features

- Wetlands
- Woodlands
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Important Natural Areas



0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 Miles

Source: Northampton County Assessment Data,  
and Field Work by URDC



Community Planning Consultants  
**Urban Research & Development Corporation**  
28 West Broad Street • Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 08180 • 610-865-0701

**PALMER TOWNSHIP**  
**NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,**  
**PENNSYLVANIA**



**RIDGELINES AND**  
**DRAINAGE BASINS**

-  RIDGELINES
-  DRAINAGE CHANNELS
-  WATER FLOW



- They are the major corridors for transporting nutrients in the environment and provide habitats for wildlife.
- They are a scenic asset.

To preserve the quantity and quality of water resources and to maintain the general health of its environment, the Township must continue to plan and regulate development to control the amount and rate of runoff, erosion and sedimentation and chemical and biological pollution. Township regulations should strongly discourage development within natural drainage swales. Swales should remain in open space. If swales are to be built upon, suitable storm drainage structures of adequate capacity must continue to be required.

This Plan seeks to protect the water quality and aquatic life along the Lehigh River, the Bushkill Creek and the Schoeneck Creek. Lands along these waters should remain in open space, as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map.

### **Woodland**

Treelines and areas of woodlands in Palmer, especially along the Lehigh River, should be preserved. In addition, trees should be used as buffers to increase the compatibility of different land uses, including different housing types. Also, trees have some limited potential as buffers against noise along major roads. However, trees should be encouraged everywhere simply for their beauty. One of the most significant areas of privately-owned woodland in Palmer is east of Van Buren Road along the Schoeneck Creek.

### **Steep Slopes**

Almost all of Palmer's land is generally level, which avoids severe problems with steep slopes. The few steeped sloped areas (over 15 percent) should be kept in open space with intact natural vegetation. Areas with slopes over 15 percent should be limited to low density residential uses. This will help minimize problems with soil erosion, water runoff, road construction and utilities.

### **Open Space Preservation**

Issues involving trails, parks and open space preservation are discussed in the Community Facilities section of this Plan.

### **Avoiding Sinkholes**

Most of Palmer Township and adjacent municipalities have limestone-based geology that is prone to sinkholes. This geology is also known as carbonate or karst geology. The lands in the northern part of Palmer are of particular concern because of number and severity of past sinkholes (particularly along Route 33 and the Bushkill Creek), the impact of adjacent mining activities, and the very large land areas that are proposed for development.

Stormwater runoff has a major role in the creation of sinkholes and other subsidence. The most important issue is usually to carefully design stormwater facilities and to use great care near isolated

low spots in the ground, which are known as topical depressions. Water line breaks also often result in very severe sinkholes.

The Township is preparing new development regulations to address this issue. A study by a specialist in this type of geology should be required before any significant development is approved. This type of study may require soil borings. This study should consider the most vulnerable locations for sinkholes and state what types of measures should be carried out during development to reduce the threat of sinkholes. This study should then be reviewed by a second expert selected by the Township but funded by the developer.

Detention basins should be required to have a clay or synthetic liner. Where development is proposed near a sinkhole, the sinkhole should be required to be remediated. This often involves excavating the area and filling it with concrete or other approved material. Sinkholes should be repaired as soon as possible before they expand in an uncontrolled manner. Stormwater should not be directed towards a sinkhole that has not been remediated.

### **Sludge Disposal**

The Nazareth Municipal Authority has acquired 80 acres of land south of Main Street in Palmer Township east of their treatment plant to apply sewage sludge to the ground. Palmer Township is particularly concerned that sludge disposal in this area may make adjacent areas less desirable for new business development, such as restaurants and some other businesses. Particular attention needs to be paid to avoiding sludge disposal in areas that are prone to sinkholes, which represents most of the northern part of Palmer. Unfortunately, State law generally pre-empts many types of municipal regulations on sludge disposal.

## **THE PLAN FOR COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**GOAL: Provide High-quality Community Facilities and Services in the Most Cost-effective Manner.**

**GOAL: Provide a Wide Range of Recreational Areas and Facilities That Are Well-distributed Throughout the Township.**

A community's responsibility is to provide its residents with an adequate and efficient system of public services and facilities to protect their welfare and to promote their social and cultural well-being. The buildings, parks and other facilities necessary to carry out these basic services are the concern of this Community Facilities Plan.

### **Government Administration**

Palmer flourishes from an overwhelming amount of involvement by its citizens in volunteer efforts to move their community forward. This strong community spirit must be fully encouraged. The Township Newsletter should continue to stress the opportunities available for residents to get involved.

The decisions and actions that the Township's elected and appointed officials make help shape Palmer's growth and development and largely determine what community facilities and services will be provided. These decisions and actions are obviously important to present and future Township residents and landowners. Township staff and consulting professionals can frequently provide information, insights and advice to the elected and appointed officials to help make sound decisions and take logical actions.

The Township needs to continually work to provide quality services in the most cost-effective manner and to attract new business development to minimize the tax burden upon residents and businesses.

Palmer's 2002 budget projects total annual revenues of \$7.4 million, not including funds carried over from the previous year. This budget estimates that \$2.4 million will be received in annual real estate taxes, which is approximately 33 percent of annual revenues. The second largest source of revenues to the Township is the 0.5 percent annual tax on earned income of residents. This tax was projected to generate approximately \$1.8 million in 2002, which is 25 percent of annual revenues. The next largest revenue source was fees for solid waste services, which are expected to generate approximately \$900,000 a year. The fourth largest revenue source is the business privilege tax, which is based upon gross receipts of certain types of businesses. This tax was projected to raise approximately \$600,000 a year. The fifth largest source of revenue is the real estate transfer tax, which is equal to one-half of one percent of the value of property that is sold each year. This tax typically generates between \$300,000 to \$500,000 a year.

In the 2002 budget, the following are the major projected categories of expenditures. These expenditures have been rounded off and combined into generalized categories for easier understanding:

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

Sanitary Sewage System (separate account primarily funded by user fees, and with \$1,230,000 of this amount paid to the Joint Authority for sewage treatment, and with \$540,000 of this total amount in a reserve fund)	\$3,100,000
Police	\$2,020,000
Public Works, Public Services and Engineering (includes State Liquid Fuels maintenance funds)	\$1,400,000
Solid Waste and Recycling	\$ 870,000
Parks Maintenance and Recreation Programs	\$ 600,000
Parks Capital Improvement Accounts	\$ 470,000
General Administration	\$ 350,000
Traffic Control, Curbing and Street Lighting	\$ 250,000
Fire Protection (includes hydrant costs)	\$ 240,000
Building Inspections, Planning and Zoning (not including development escrow accounts)	\$ 200,000
Street Cleaning and Snow Removal	\$ 170,000
Swimming Pool	\$ 160,000
Building and Grounds Maintenance	\$ 130,000

**Municipal Buildings**

Palmer Township has a modern set of municipal buildings, including the Administrative Building, Police Headquarters and Library on the 27-acre Weller tract south of Newburg Road. A project is underway to expand the Police Headquarters, which is expected to provide for the Police Department's needs for at least the next 10 to 15 years. There also have been discussions about the need to relocate or expand the Public Works complex, which currently is on Hartley Avenue.

**Police**

As of 2002, the Palmer Police Department includes 34 sworn police officers and 4 civilian employees. The Police Chief reports that this level of staffing is currently sufficient, but will need to increase as the numbers of residents, amount of business development and volume of traffic increases in the future.

In addition to having a sufficient total number of police employees, it is also important to make sure that staffing is concentrated during the times of the day and week when there typically are the most calls for police assistance.

One of the greatest methods to deter crime and apprehend criminals is through citizen involvement. This includes motivating residents to provide thousands of additional "eyes" for the police by reporting any suspicious activity, and building a high level of trust between police and young persons.

In addition to preventing and responding to crime, the police also have important roles in responding to traffic accidents and assisting in other emergencies, such as fires and emergency medical calls.

The Palmer Police Department receives over 9,000 calls a year. Emergency calls are handled through the County's 911 dispatch system.

### **Fire Protection**

High quality fire protection can save human lives, homes and property. In addition, the home insurance industry studies the quality of a community's overall fire protection when determining home insurance rates. Palmer's excellent Municipal Fire Department helps keep home insurance costs low.

The Fire Department operates from an older station along Freemansburg Avenue and a more modern station on Old Nazareth Road west of Route 248. A new station would be desirable in the northern part of the Township as the land develops. Because of the elongated shape of Palmer, continued close cooperation with neighboring fire companies is essential.

It has been increasingly difficult to find sufficient numbers of volunteer firefighters, particularly during weekday mornings and afternoons. This is because of the increased time required for training and the fact that many persons work outside of the area. The Township should consider offering some financial incentives to attract additional volunteers. For example, some municipalities offer pension benefits to those volunteer firefighters who provide the highest numbers of hours of service. Incentives could also be offered to Township employees to encourage their involvement as volunteer firefighters. This system is particularly beneficial because Township employees work locally, as opposed to having to drive long distances from work to respond to calls.

Over the long-run, it may be necessary to consider hiring some paid firefighters. A limited number of paid firefighters can be particularly beneficial as drivers during weekday morning and afternoons. This allows volunteers to respond directly to the scene of an incident without having to first travel to the fire station. The paid firefighters can also relieve the volunteers of some of the burden of maintaining apparatus, equipment and the stations and completing paperwork.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

The Suburban Emergency Medical Services (SEMS) provides emergency medical, ambulance and medical transport services from its headquarters on Freemansburg Avenue. SEMS is a non-profit organization that uses a mix of paid and volunteer personnel. SEMS serves Wilson, West Easton and Palmer.

SEMS's station in the southern end of Palmer requires several miles of travel through congested roads to reach the northern part of Palmer. This issue will become important once additional development occurs in the far northern end of Palmer. As a short-term solution to this concern, SEMS has provided automated defibrillators to the Palmer Police Department so they can serve as a first response. As a longer-term solution, SEMS is studying the possible construction of a new station in the northern part of Palmer. It might be possible to design a coordinated site in which SEMS could lease space within a new Palmer Fire Department sub-station, or visa versa.

In the future, as development moves into the northern part of the township, SEMS will have to demonstrate that they can provide EMS service from their existing facility or provide another facility

in that section of the township. If this does not occur, the township will have to determine the most effective solution to providing emergency medical and paramedic services to reduce response times.

### **Library**

As the world moves continually towards an economy based more on information, libraries will become increasingly important in many aspects in addition to providing enjoyment. The residents of Palmer have realized the important educational and economic roles of information and books by funding the Palmer Memorial Library south of Newburg Road. This library operates as a branch of the Easton Area Public Library, but it is only open during limited hours. The main facility of the Easton Area Public Library is located on Church Street north of Northampton Street in Easton.

### **Recreation and Open Space**

Palmer has developed an excellent system of parks and playgrounds throughout the residential areas in the southern and central sections of the Township. The challenge will be to assure that adequate “close-to-home” recreational facilities are available to serve future residential areas, while avoiding major municipal expenses.

Palmer’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires developers of subdivisions to provide recreation land within their developments, or to pay recreation fees to the Township. All land is required to be suitable for active or passive recreation. The Township should require additional amounts of open space if the land being offered is not prime for active recreation purposes. In addition, the Conservation Design form of development (described earlier) can also be used to preserve land for recreation. This method is not only appropriate for residential development, but also can be used to provide open space in an industrial or office park. This open space can serve as a buffer alongside nearby residential development.

Within existing wooded areas and immediately along creeks and rivers, the emphasis should be upon passive recreation, including trails, preserved woods and informal activities.

This Plan encourages the continuation by the Township of its excellent and diverse recreational programs. The programs should be directed towards all skill levels and all age groups, including senior citizens. Through these programs, residents will be able to learn skills, perform abilities and enjoy interests.

This Comprehensive Plan strongly encourages the preservation of open space as part of the township’s land use strategy. Open space can be provided through the following methods, among others:

- innovative housing lot layouts that provide substantial open space in return for the township allowing smaller lots,
- conservation easements on environmentally sensitive lands, which can either be purchased or donated,
- dedication of open space or payment of recreation fees as part of new development, which is currently being required by township ordinances (as described above),

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

- preservation of substantial open space in new business developments, in return for smaller lot sizes or more intense development of certain lots,
- open space within business/industrial development as part of their normal development design, and/or
- purchase of land by the Township or another governmental agency.

This Plan recommends that the township's 1991 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan be updated. To make the best use of existing township open space, the Weller Tract behind the Municipal Building should be improved with walking paths, benches and a memorial arboretum. A memorial arboretum involves persons donating money to pay for a tree in memory of a loved one. An overall landscaping plan should be prepared that offers choices of tree species.

The Township should continue to actively work to acquire additional parkland. Some needs can be met by a landowner allowing use by the public of trails through privately owned open spaces, such as within business developments in the northern part of the township. There is a need for a wide variety of open space and parkland, but in all likelihood this will not involve one new large public park. For example, some open space needs can be met by landscaping and trails around well-designed stormwater retention ponds. An emphasis should be placed upon trails that interconnect with other parks and trails.

If an applicant provides a major recreation land donation in one area of the township, that donation should be able to count towards meeting obligations for a certain amount of the developer's future development projects in other parts of the township.

Palmer should periodically publish an insert to Palmer's newsletter to make residents fully aware of all the varied recreational facilities and programs available to each resident, including major nearby facilities such as Louise Moore County Park. Information might also be included to explain how residents can volunteer to help coach or organize these programs.

As the Township continues to grow, there will be a need for additional park and recreation land and facilities. The Township is currently working on two main projects: a) the development of a park along the Bushkill Creek south of Tatamy within the Village at Mill Race development, and b) the purchase of land to allow the development of a new indoor community center and related outdoor facilities west of the Palmer Elementary School and north of Route 22.

Most land along the Bushkill Creek is highly scenic, forested and worthy of protection. As shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map and explained further in the Plan for Conserving Natural Resources, this Plan strongly urges the preservation of the Bushkill Creek and Schoeneck Creek stream valleys and lands along the Lehigh River. The areas adjacent to these streams are mostly undeveloped and provide natural areas for wildlife and opportunities for walking, picnicking and other forms of passive recreation. The streams should continue to be emphasized as a recreational and open space network throughout much of the Township.

Most land along the Lehigh River is already owned as parkland by Palmer or the City of Easton. The Township should seek to acquire any remaining privately owned lands along the Lehigh River.

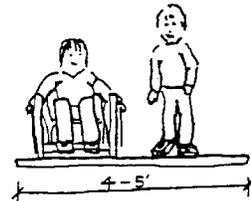
The existing and proposed recreation trails are shown on the Comprehensive Plan Map. Palmer Township has been a leader in the region for years in developing a regional recreational trail network. This includes the on-going extension of the recreational trail along the Bushkill Creek, which will mainly use former railroad rights-of-way. This trail is intended to pass through Tatamy and Stockertown to connect with the seven mile long Plainfield Recreation Trail. There is an intent to connect the Plainfield Trail into the Appalachian Trail, which extends from Maine to Georgia.

Two State laws limit the liability of a landowner who allows public access to a trail or unimproved lands for recreation - provided the landowner does not charge any fees.

The following sketches illustrate design guidelines for trails.

#### *Handicapped Accessible Trails*

- Work closely with disabled persons in the planning of these trails.
- A type of marking system should be incorporated using signs placed at approximately 300' intervals to inform users as to how far they travelled and their location.
- Avoid long straight sections that become monotonous.
- Generally, grades should not exceed 3 percent. 8-10 percent grades are satisfactory if only for short lengths.
- Trail should be cleared of all obstacles (e.g. shrubs, rocks, roots).
- Frequent wide and flat areas should be provided with benches, as rest stops.



#### *Hiking/Walking & Jogging Trails*

- Provide adequate headroom (at least 8').
- Allow adequate access for passing (at least 4'-8').
- Use smooth relatively soft but firm materials.
- Vary sense of enclosure (both long and short stretches).
- Pay more attention to design details in areas of high use by casual walkers.
- Provide resting spots at appropriate intervals and at points of interest.



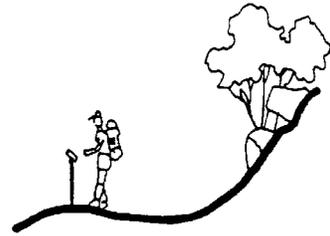
#### *Bicycle Trails*

- Provide adequate headroom (at least 10').
- Allow adequate width for passing (5'-9').
- Use smooth, hard surface material, free of loose gravel.
- Provide bike racks at appropriate locations.
- Design curve radii and gradients for moderate, safe speeds.
- Provide loop trails.



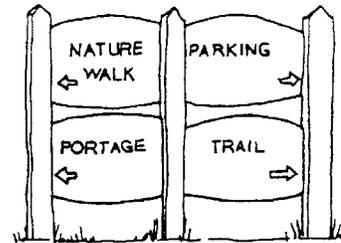
*Nature Trails*

- Use native or naturalized plant materials.
- Highlight areas of interesting natural features (e.g. geological formations, unique plant communities).
- Use plant materials that provide food and shelter for wildlife.
- Direct traffic away from areas sensitive to human activity.
- Maintain a diversity of habitats for plants and animals.
- Leave dead trees, brush and other natural elements that may be home for wildlife.



*Park Furniture and Signs*

- Use materials/forms which don't detract from the environment.
- Use durable materials.
- Use vandal-proof construction technologies.
- Signs should be placed along roadways prior to trail heads.
- Signs should be made as small as possible but not smaller than 2 inches.
- A sign should be placed within a trail head and contain a key map showing the whole trail system.
- Number of signs should be held to a minimum.
- Use park furniture appropriate to environment (e.g. picnic table in small open space areas, benches at viewing areas, trash receptacles at public areas).



Also, continued efforts should be made to connect trails and bikeways in Palmer into routes in Easton, especially along the Hugh Moore Parkway. All of the communities in the region should work together to plan an integrated system of pathways that would provide a very pleasant means of travel and recreation.

State and Federal funding for acquiring open space is expected to be extremely limited throughout the foreseeable future. However, other options exist. Landowners of important natural areas should be encouraged to donate scenic or "conservation easements" to the Township or a conservation organization in exchange for Federal income tax benefits. If an easement or land is sold for less than its fair market value, the difference between the sale price and the market price can also be deducted as a charitable donation for Federal income tax purposes.

A conservation easement allows a person to continue to own their land, but it can never be developed or subdivided. A conservation easement is recorded and legally enforceable. A conservation easement can be combined with a trail access easement that allows the public to use a defined trail. Otherwise, a conservation easement typically does not allow any access or use by the public. A conservation easement is particularly useful when a property-owner wishes to continue to live on land and does not want to sell it for parkland. A conservation easement is most appropriate when the goal is to preserve important natural features or scenic areas, as opposed to providing public recreation.

The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires dedication of recreation land by developers. In place of dedicating land, a system is in place allowing the payment of recreation fees by developers. These fees can be used to purchase or improve parkland in other locations.

Land could also be preserved through the Conservation Design concept, as explained in the Land Use and Housing Plan. In addition to Township efforts to preserve special lands, cooperative efforts are needed with the Wildlands Conservancy and the Bushkill Stream Conservancy.

## **Schools**

The Easton Area School District nine school buildings. The Easton Area High School, Palmer Elementary School and Tracy Elementary School are within Palmer. Two middle schools and four other elementary schools are in Forks Township and Easton. The School District is constructing a major athletic complex on land west of the High School. In addition, many students attend the Career Institute of Technology (formerly known as a vocational-technical school). The Easton Area School District in the 2001-2 school year included over 8,200 students.

As of March 2002, the High School had 2,412 students, Tracy Elementary had 640 students and Palmer had 768 students. Tracy and Palmer are the largest elementary schools in the district. The highest enrollments in the district were between 4th and 9th grades. These large classes will be moving into the senior high school in the next few years. The district has been experiencing steady increases in enrollment over the last 8 years - with a total increase of 1,100 students.

The State Department of Education provides projections for enrollments of each school district. These projections are based primarily upon recent trends, such as the numbers of students entering and leaving at each grade level (such as from new construction and transfers from non-public schools), local birth rates, and drop out rates. These trends are then used to estimate the number of students projected to be added or subtracted each year as students in a grade level advance to the next grades. The State is projecting an increase in enrollment to approximately 8,500 students in the 2004-5 school year, followed by decreases in enrollment to approximately 8,100 students by the 2010-11 school year. It is particularly difficult to project elementary school enrollments more than 5 years in advance because many of the students have not yet been born, and birth rates can vary greatly from year to year.

As of 2002, the school district reported that there are beginning a Facilities Utilization Study that will consider future needs for a new school or school expansions. The district noted that the most severe demand for school space is arising in Forks Township because of the rapid rate of new home construction. The district staff also noted that the Kunkle tract west of the High School will be fully used when the current construction is complete, and does not have any space set aside for a new school building.

The School District monitors trends in births and residential development to determine the need for facilities in the future. Much growth could be accommodated simply by adjusting geographical boundaries among schools and shifting grade levels between buildings. In addition, each of the three public schools in Palmer have land around them to allow expansion if the need should arise.

This Plan endorses the continued cooperation between the Township and the School District to allow the fullest and best uses of the public schools and adjacent facilities. School facilities should be available to responsible individuals and groups outside of the traditional school hours for uses such as recreation, adult education and community events. Coordinated education-recreation centers, such as the adjacent Palmer Elementary School-Palmer Athletic Complex, should be further encouraged.

The fiscal impacts of new development upon the School District are particularly important because the vast majority of a household's real estate tax bill involves school taxes.

In addition, Palmer residents attend a number of private and parochial schools. For example, a new Catholic elementary school is proposed on the St. Jane's Church site along Hartley Avenue.

### **Sanitary Sewage Service**

Palmer Township's Public Utilities Department operates the sanitary sewage collection system within the Township's borders, under the direction of the Palmer Township Municipal Sewer Authority (PTMSA). The wastewater is then transported to the Easton area wastewater treatment plant south of Easton. The Easton area wastewater plant and major interceptors are operated by a joint authority - the Easton Area Joint Sewer Authority (EAJSA). The plant serves the entire Easton area and Tatamy. The treatment plant has a total capacity of 10 million gallons per day, with significant capacity available for future growth. The treated effluent is discharged into the Delaware River.

Palmer Township has an allocation of approximately 2.48 million gallons per day in the Easton area treatment plant. As of 2002, Palmer's current usage was less than 1.2 million gallons per day. As of 2002, an additional 0.5 million gallons per day was expected to be used for developments that have been approved or are under review. This meant that approximately 0.7 million gallons per day was available for development that had not yet been submitted for Township approval.

The Township's Public Utilities Director reports that there are no significant capacity constraints in the current collection system. This is because, over the years, the lines and pumping stations have been designed with capacity for future growth.

The Nazareth Plant has a treatment capacity of 1.3 million gallons per day. Approximately 0.3 million gallons per day of this capacity is not being used and has not been reserved for new development. Most of the available capacity is controlled by Nazareth Borough. The Nazareth plant is located on the Palmer border south of Main Street and has existing interceptor lines through the northwestern part of Palmer.

A 1999 study by the Pidcock Company proposed a set of sewage line extensions to efficiently serve the northern part of Palmer Township with public sewage and water service. This included connecting into Nazareth's existing sewage lines to serve the northwest corner of the Township, connecting to the sewage lines in the Palmer Industrial Park to serve adjacent areas, and connecting to the interceptor line along the Bushkill Creek to serve the far northern part of the Township.

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

That study estimated that the development of land in the northern part of Palmer that are controlled by the Chrin Company will generate approximately 0.36 million gallons per day of sewage flow, 0.15 million gallons per day of which could be most efficiently serviced by Nazareth.

In 2002, the Township Sewer Authority's engineers performed a Sewer System Capacity Evaluation to determine existing flows and capacities, project future wastewater flows from the undeveloped lands in Palmer Township, and evaluate the adequacy of Palmer Township's existing wastewater conveyance and treatment capacities and allocations. That study was approved for a State grant as part of the Township's Sewage Facilities Plan Update (Act 537). That study was delayed until 2002 until the Township's comprehensive planning was sufficiently complete to provide policies about future land uses. During 2002, work on the complete update of the Township's Sewage Facilities Plan Update resumed.

Based upon that study of sewage system capacity, Palmer Township advised the Easton Area Joint Sewer Authority (EAJSA) that Palmer would like to purchase an additional 0.5 million gallons per day of wastewater treatment capacity at the EAJSA Wastewater Treatment Plant. Currently, Palmer has sufficient treatment capacity at the EAJSA plant to meet the projected needs of Palmer Township for the next several years. As stated above, as of 2002, less than 1.7 million gallons per day was used or committed for use out of the 2.48 million gallons per day of capacity controlled by Palmer. Projections indicate that the additional 0.5 million gallons per day of treatment capacity should meet Palmer's needs for another 20 to 30 years. The expectation is that this capacity could be purchased from another municipality that participates in the EAJSA that does not need all of its capacity.

The Northern Tier Sewage Service Areas Map on the following page shows intended service areas of the Easton Area and Nazareth Area sewage systems. A more detailed sewer service areas map will be included in the Township Sewage Facilities Plan Update. That detailed sewer service areas map will show the entire Township, including those properties along the southwest border of the Township that are served by Bethlehem Township. The Northern Tier Sewer Service Area Map shows that all currently sewered properties in Palmer Township's northern tier that are south and east of Route 33 are served by the Bushkill Creek sewage interceptor lines and the EAJSA plant. Any future development in this area will be served by the EAJSA plant.

The properties in Palmer Township that are both north of Route 33 and west of the Schoeneck Creek are proposed to be served by the Nazareth Borough Municipal Authority (NBMA) treatment plant. This appears to be a feasible and logical scenario due to the proposed development of adjacent lands in Lower Nazareth Township. A new inter-municipal agreement would be needed for areas in Palmer to be served by the NBMA plant, because service is currently not authorized in Palmer.

The remaining lands in the northern part of Palmer that are north and west of Route 33 and east of the Schoeneck Creek could either be served by the EAJSA or the NBMA treatment plants. Some capacity was included in the wastewater flow projections that the Township accomplished in 2002 that resulted in the Township's request for 500,000 gallons per day of additional treatment capacity at the EAJSA plant. However, if further study shows that it would be more practical and feasible for the area in the northwestern corner to be served to the NBMA plant, this option should not be ruled out at this time. The use of the NBMA plant may allow wastewater to be transported by gravity to a treatment plant, as opposed to needing more expensive pumping to reach existing Palmer Township sewage lines.

# Palmer Township - Northern Tier Sewer Service Areas

## Legend

- Manhole
- Sewer Main
- Parcel
- Township Boundary

## Sewer Service Area

- Easton Area Joint Sewage Authority (EAJSA) Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Nazareth Borough Municipal Authority (NBMA) Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Either EAJSA or NBMA - to be determined.



Gannett Fleming



Area that Could be Serviced by Easton Area or Nazareth Wastewater Plants - to be determined

Area to be Serviced by Nazareth Wastewater Plant

Areas to be Serviced by Easton Area Wastewater Plant

WOLF CREEK ROAD

SPRING CREEK ROAD

WATERBURY HILL ROAD

SPRING ROAD

NORTHWOOD AVENUE

SPRING CREEK ROAD

WOLF CREEK ROAD

WOLF CREEK ROAD

WOLF CREEK ROAD

WOLF CREEK ROAD

## **Water Supply Plan**

The primary water supply source for Palmer Township is the Delaware River. The City of Easton draws water from the Delaware River north of Easton and treats it at a plant along Route 611. The water is then sold to the Easton Suburban Water Authority, which provides the distribution system throughout most of Palmer.

The Easton water system has a capacity of 12 million gallons per day. Further improvements are being designed that are expected to increase the capacity to 16 million gallons per day, possibly by 2005. An average of 7 million gallons is used per day. Easton Suburban's allocation will soon increase from 8 to 10 million gallons per day, and to 12 million gallons per day by approximately 2005.

Palmer Township is served by a portion of the Easton Suburban water system that also includes the eastern part of Bethlehem Township and southwestern Forks Township, and which connects into the system serving Lower Nazareth. This service area currently uses approximately 3 million gallons per day of water, approximately 1.5 million gallons of which are used by Palmer. Approximately 3.5 million gallons of water storage capacity is available for the Palmer/ Bethlehem Township/ southwestern Forks part of the system. The pumping and transmission capacity in this region was recently upgraded for future growth. Easton Suburban is currently completing a study of additional improvements that may be needed to serve future growth within this service area. There are interconnections with the Pennsylvania American and Bethlehem water systems that can be used during emergencies.

The northern one-third of Palmer (north of the Schoeneck Creek) is within the service area of the Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC). The Northern Tier Water Service Areas Map on the following page shows PAWC's intended service area. PAWC's water system is composed of older smaller systems that have been interconnected. Some lines may need to be upgraded to handle future development, because they were not designed to be part of a larger regional system. A PAWC water main is to be extended from Upper Nazareth Township across Route 33 and the northern part of Palmer to link with an existing PAWC water main in Tatamy. This extension is being made to serve the Chrin Commerce Center development extending across northern Palmer and western Tatamy east of Route 33.

The PAWC system includes a main along Tatamy Road running south from Tatamy and Stockertown through northern Palmer. In addition, the system serves the Nazareth area and large parts of northeastern Northampton County. This system can withdraw water from multiple wells, 4 springs and a surface water intake at Pen Argyl. In addition, up to 1.75 million gallons per day can be withdrawn from the west fork of the Martins Creek. The Company operates a water treatment plant with a 3.2 million gallon per day capacity.

A 1999 study by the Pidcock Company showed a possible water line extension to serve the northern end of the Township. This involved the extension of a "loop" water line from the existing main along Tatamy Road, west along the Main Street corridor, south along Van Buren Road and then east along Newlins Mill Road to existing lines in the Palmer Industrial Park.

*Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

A few properties in the northern part of Palmer are currently served by wells. Although most Palmer residents are not currently dependent upon groundwater, it is important to make sure that the quality and amounts of groundwater are protected. In the long-term future, it may be appropriate for some public wells to be built in northern Palmer to supplement the current sources of water from outside of the Township. Because most of the water sources are located outside of Palmer, regional efforts will be needed to protect the water supplies. Studies have been completed to identify the most likely sources of contamination of each major water supply, including upstream companies using large quantities of possible contaminants. It will be important for the State Department of Environmental Protection to make sure that these facilities comply with environmental regulations. For example, measures should be installed in advance (such as impervious surfaces and containment berms) that will be able to contain any accidental spills before it flows into creeks or the groundwater. Municipalities can also have a role in informing DEP of businesses that may not be in compliance with environmental regulations.

This Plan is consistent with the State Water Plan. This Plan recognizes that mineral extractions and intensive livestock and poultry operations may have negative impacts upon water supplies and are further regulated under State law. Those uses are primarily intended to be limited to the northwest corner of the township.

# Palmer Township - Northern Tier Water Service Areas

## Legend

- Parcel
- Township Boundary
- Water Service Area**
  - Easton Suburban Water Authority (ESWA)
  - PA. American Water Co. (PAWC)



 Gonnert Fleming



PA. American Water Co.

HOLLO ROAD

SPRING LAKE DRIVE

PA. American Water Co.

COMMERCIAL ROAD

NEWLAND MILL ROAD

SPRING STREET

Easton Suburban Water Authority

NORTHWOOD AVENUE

## **THE PLAN FOR TRANSPORTATION**

**GOAL: PROVIDE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT NETWORK THAT IS VERY CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH THE PLANS FOR LAND USES.**

Palmer's road system forms the framework for development. The location and types of roads influence the directions and types of development. The network of roads and highways in the Township should address the following purposes:

- The road system should permit safe movements of traffic within and through Palmer without excessive delay or congestion.
- The network should provide at least two methods to move between any two areas so that no one route becomes congestion and so there are alternatives in case of construction or accidents.
- Local residential streets should handle lower speed traffic, while through-traffic and truck traffic is directed to more suitable routes. This involves making sure that the through-roads are sufficiently free-flowing - so that motorists are not encouraged to seek alternative routes through residential neighborhoods. Traditionally, local residential streets have been designed in a curvilinear fashion that does not provide direct through-routes and thereby discourages through-traffic.

### **Road Classifications**

The Township should continue to carefully plan road patterns and access from development according to the function each road is intended to serve within the overall road network. Roads in the Township are classified by four major types: Expressways, Arterial Roads, Collector Roads and Local Roads.

Expressways - These major highways connect cities and metropolitan areas. An expressway only allows traffic access at interchanges. These highways service high volumes of traffic at high speeds. The expressways are Routes 22 and 33.

Arterial Roads - These roads provide access between major commercial developments and parts of the metropolitan area. Arterials are designed for high volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. Arterial roads include Nazareth Route/Route 248, 25th Street and William Penn Highway.

Collector Roads - These roads provide connections between arterial roads, connect together residential neighborhoods and gather traffic from local roads. Collector roads are intended to provide for moderate volumes of traffic at low speeds.

Local Roads - These roads provide direct access from many adjacent properties, and channel traffic towards collector roads.

## **Traffic Accidents**

The following is a list of the most accident-prone intersections in Palmer Township between June 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002, as compiled by the Palmer Township Police Department. This list only includes accidents reported to the police.

Route 248/Sales Road - 53  
William Penn Highway/Greenwood Avenue - 34  
25th Street/Northampton Street - 33  
Route 248/Park Avenue - 31  
Route 22/25th Street Ramps - 29  
Northampton Street/Wood Street - 26  
25th Street/Wood Street - 15  
25th Street/William Penn Highway - 15  
William Penn Highway/Stones Crossing - 15  
Route 248/Northwood Avenue - 15  
William Penn Highway/Kingwood - 14  
Route 248/Newburg Road - 13  
Tatamy Road/Hackett Avenue - 11  
Freemansburg Avenue/Greenwood Avenue - 11

## **Road Improvements**

Cost-effective solutions are needed to address problem road segments, in cooperation with PennDOT and adjacent landowners/developers. The following road improvements are critical to allowing safe and efficient traffic movements throughout the Township:

- New Route 33 Interchange - As discussed in the Land Use and Housing Plan section, a new interchange of Route 33 should be constructed before any intensive development is allowed in the northwest corner of the Township, northwest of Route 33. The expectation is that this interchange would occur with the full cooperation of the adjacent property-owners, including providing a substantial percentage of the funding. However, this interchange appears to be at least 10 to 15 years away. In the interim, the land areas needed for ramps should be kept open, which is the stated intent of the landowner of most of the affected land.
- There are two logical locations for an interchange along Route 33: a) along Main Street, and b) west of the Palmer Industrial Park using a westward extension of Danforth Road. An extension of Danforth holds an advantage because: a) all of the adjacent land is controlled by one property-owner, and b) PennDOT already owns substantial excess right-of-way on the west side of Route 33 at this location. If a decision is made to locate an interchange at Main Street, then this excess PennDOT right-of-way should be traded for the land that will be needed for an interchange at Main Street.
- The intent is to extend McFadden Road north from the Palmer Industrial Park to reach any new interchange at Main Street.
- Hollo Road Improvements - There is a need for a better connection between the northern part of Palmer and the Route 248 interchange with Route 33. An industrial developer is currently

planning to reconstruct Hollo Road in Lower Nazareth Township from Route 248 to Palmer Township. This will involve an entirely new intersection with Route 248 near the Saturn dealership. If cooperation can be obtained with the affected property-owners, it would be very desirable to improve Van Buren Road between Newlins Mill Road and Hollo Road, and to improve the remainder of Hollo Road. If all of the existing homes at the intersection of Newlins Mill and Van Buren Road would remain, then this could involve a new road link running around these homes to Van Buren Road.

- These improvements to Hollo Road, Van Buren Road and Newlins Mill Road are the highest priority to resolve traffic problems in the northern part of Palmer. This is because these improvements could provide dramatic benefits at a very modest public cost.
  - These improvements would provide a very good east-west route through the northern part of Palmer. This route would also direct traffic onto Route 248 at a location that can access Route 33 with minimal congestion.
  - In 2002, the Pidcock Company conducted an extensive transportation study of the northern part of Palmer Township, as well as surrounding areas in other municipalities. That study identified many transportation and zoning issues that need to be considered as planning for future development continues. That study's recommendations will be incorporated into more detailed planning and engineering for northern Palmer. That study is available for review in the Township Offices.
- 
- Corriere Road Extension - Most traffic from the northern part of Palmer currently travels along Van Buren Road to the congested intersection of Route 248 and Northwood Road. It would be desirable to have a better connection to Route 248 from Van Buren Road. A segment of a new road was constructed south of the Walmart east of Route 248 to allow this connection. If cooperation cannot be obtained from the property-owner west of the Van Buren Road/Corriere Road intersection to allow a new east-west extension of Corriere Road, then a new east-west road connection should be built south of the Schoeneck Creek.
  
  - East-West Road Parallel to Corriere Road - As discussed in the Land Use and Housing Plan section, the current border between the residential and industrial development in the north-central part of the township runs down the center of Corriere Road between Tatamy and Van Buren Roads. If the industrial/residential border remains along Corriere Road, then a new east-west road should be constructed parallel to Corriere Road to handle traffic from the business development. This road should be constructed in phases by developers as each tract is developed. The existing Corriere Road is not suitable for industrial traffic, primarily because of the closeness of homes to the road and the power lines that obstruct a major road widening.
  
  - 25th Street Corridor - Some traffic on 25th Street/Route 248 has been diverted by the completion of Route 33. However, the entire 25th Street corridor is still seriously congested and needs major widening along the length of the road and at most intersections. A comprehensive set of improvements has been designed for the corridor by traffic engineers working for the proposed Palmer Town Center on 25th Street. These extensive improvements extend from the intersection of 25<sup>th</sup> St./Freemansburg Avenue to the intersection of 25<sup>th</sup> St./Sales St.

- All of the improvements required by the Township and PennDOT to accommodate two commercial developments will be funded by those developers, with some financial assistance intended to be provided from County economic development funds.
- However, these improvements do not address the changes that are necessary to 25<sup>th</sup> Street to the south between Freemansburg Avenue and the Lehigh River Bridge. Those improvements along the southern part of 25<sup>th</sup> Street should be considered by PennDOT for funding.
  
- Route 33/191 Ramps - There is a need to signalize one or both sets of Route 33 ramps at Route 191. These ramps are in Stockertown Borough.
  
- Turn Lanes and Traffic Signals - The Circulation and Recreation Improvements Map highlights a number of locations where new turn lanes and/or traffic signals have been proposed by developers or were found to be needed in traffic studies. These improvements should be carried out by nearby developers whenever feasible.

It is important for municipalities to take the lead in identifying needed improvements on State roads. An improvement to a State road is much more likely to be funded by PennDOT in a timely manner if the Township takes the initiative to pay for the initial engineering of improvements. A project is even more likely to receive State funding if the adjacent property owners donate the needed right-of-way. In such case, the value of the engineering and the donated right-of-way count as a “local match” that allows a project to receive priority for State funding.

Palmer should work with neighboring municipalities to jointly plan road improvements and jointly seek funding for the projects.

### **Access Management**

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has published an excellent report recommending ways to manage traffic access in new development. This section highlights a few of the recommendations in that report.

Special attention needs to be paid to controlling the number, design and location of driveways onto major roads. PennDOT controls the actual engineering of a driveway onto a State road after a lot is created or a use is allowed by the Township. However, the Township has the primary control over where different uses are allowed and how land is allowed to be subdivided. This authority can be used to control traffic access management onto major roads.

For example, rear or side driveway access should be used where practical to reduce the number of turning movements directly onto major roads. This method works best when uses are able to gain access to a traffic signal. Connections between adjacent uses should be completed parallel to main roads to allow traffic to enter the road at carefully designed locations, where feasible.

The Township should seek inter-connections between adjacent non-residential uses along major roads, including interconnected parking lots or use of a rear service road. These interconnections allow motorists to visit more than one use without needing to enter and re-enter major roads.

These inter-connections can be required for a new development. If an existing adjacent use will not allow an inter-connection, then the new development should be required to provide the link as a stub. This stub can then be opened in the future when any development approval is sought on the adjacent lot.

### **Traffic Impact Fees**

The current system of traffic impact fees that is authorized under State law is cumbersome and includes many limitations. It is also rather expensive to complete the studies that are needed to justify the fees. Many municipalities believe that they can more efficiently obtain road improvements from developers through a process of negotiation than through a formal fee system.

However, an impact fee system may make sense in the northern part of the Township to fairly distribute the costs of constructing a new interchange among different property-owners. If the Township would consider establishing traffic impact fees, State law allows the levying of interim impact fees during a period of up to 18 months. This 18 month period allows time to complete all of the studies that are required by the State law.

The Board of Supervisors should evaluate the pros and cons of establishing an official traffic impact fee system.

Most traffic impact systems are based upon a fee charged at the time of development approval. The fee is typically based upon the amount of traffic that a development is expected to create during the afternoon peak hour.

### **Comprehensive Traffic Study**

The Township recognizes that there is a need for a Township-wide traffic analysis. In addition, a major traffic study will be needed at some point before plans for a new interchange could start to advance through the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) and PennDOT approval and funding processes. However, the Township does not wish to delay the adoption of this Comprehensive Plan until after a Township-wide traffic study is completed.

Over 20 traffic studies have been completed in recent years in Palmer Township. Most of these studies have been completed by developers, but they did analyze most of the traffic congestion bottlenecks in the Township. These existing traffic studies provide a wealth of information as a starting point for completing a Township-wide traffic study. These existing traffic studies were carefully considered in the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan.

### **Public Transit**

Public transit services are provided by the LANTA Metro system, mainly through fixed-route bus service. Center Square Easton and Center City Bethlehem serve as major transfer centers between different bus routes. Bus service is generally provided between Easton, Wilson, Route 248, Palmer Park Mall, Nazareth, Bethlehem, William Penn Highway, Freemansburg Avenue and Greenwood Avenue. Limited service is also provided to the Slate Belt. Service is also provided to the Lehigh

Valley Industrial Parks I through V, but it requires transfers in Bethlehem and/or Allentown. Service is also provided to the Forks Industrial Park, but in most cases it requires a transfer in Easton.

Opportunities should be sought to continue to expand bus service from major residential centers to expanding employment centers. This is not only important to reduce traffic, but also to increase access of lower income persons to jobs. The Land Use and Housing Plan section includes recommendations to promote use of public transit.

In addition, flexible "para-transit" service is available through the Metro-Plus service. This service is primarily intended to serve persons with disabilities that make it difficult for them to use the regular bus routes. Although there are no restrictions on the purposes of the trips, this system is particularly valuable to help persons reach medical offices, human services and other necessary services. Advance reservations are required, but door-to-door service is possible.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel**

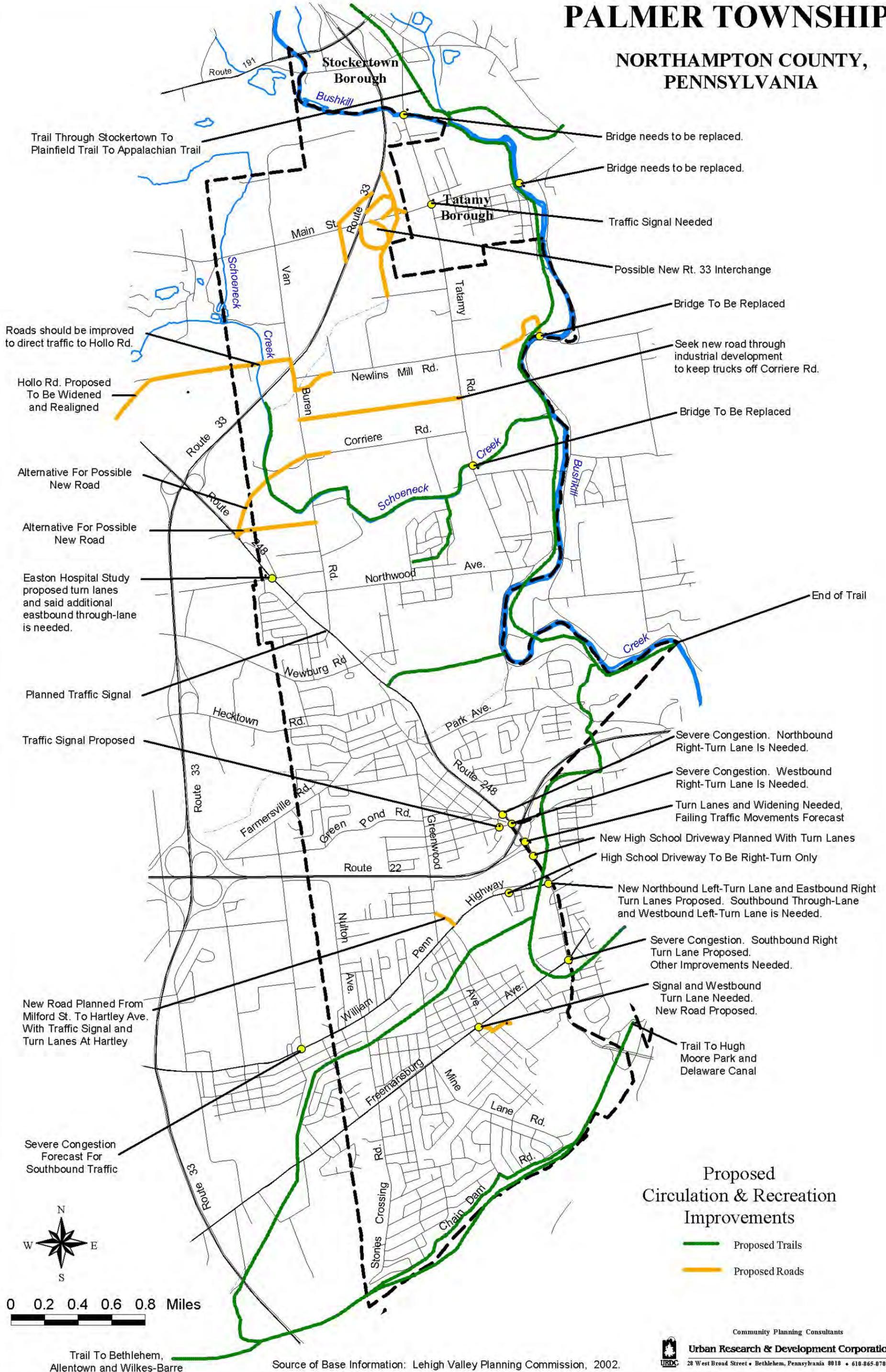
The Community Facilities Plan section (see above) addresses recreation trails for bicycling and walking. However, bicycling and walking can also be important methods of transportation.

Efforts are needed to improve opportunities throughout the region for safe bicycle and pedestrian travel. In most new developments along most roads, sidewalks should be required. However, where sidewalks are not practical, new development should include cleared flat grass pathways along roads that are suitable for safe walking.

Roads should be wide enough to provide room for bicyclists. Where curbing is not provided, shoulders should be provided that are wide enough and smooth enough for bicyclists. Cooperative efforts are needed with PennDOT to seek shoulders along the most heavily traveled State roads. These shoulders should be separated from the travel lanes by white lines.

# PALMER TOWNSHIP

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY,  
PENNSYLVANIA



## **THE PLAN TO CONSERVE ENERGY**

### **GOAL: Encourage Modes of Transportation, Patterns of Land Uses and Designs of Sites and other Actions that Conserve Energy.**

The increasing costs of energy, concerns about air pollution and the desire to reduce American dependence on foreign fuel sources generates the need for energy conservation. Energy costs are also a major part of the Township's annual expenses, including to heat buildings, light streets and operate vehicles.

The Township officials should conduct a study of ways to reduce energy consumption in each Township-owned building. Improvements should be carried out that are shown to be cost-effective over the long run. Any new building should be designed to minimize its energy consumption, including making use of passive solar technology and making maximum use of natural light.

The Township should also evaluate current street lighting and other outdoor lighting to determine the possibilities of using more energy-efficient methods. New street lights should only be installed where there is a clear need. In some cases, reflective devices can be used to identify hazards to motorists at a much lower cost than a street light.

The Township should also promote land use patterns that are energy-efficient. This includes encouraging opportunities for close-to-home shopping, employment and recreation. Bicycling and walking opportunities should be emphasized, as well as expanded public transit service to reduce dependence on individual motor vehicles.

Carpooling should be promoted, particularly through the provision of park and ride lots. Federal funding is available for PennDOT to develop new park and ride lots.

The zoning ordinance should continue to provide opportunities for attached housing. Attached housing (such as townhouses) typically require substantially less energy for heat than single family detached houses, because they are less exposed on the sides to the elements. The zoning ordinance should also allow windmills and height modifications if needed for solar energy devices. The Township's development regulations should also promote site layouts that allow homes to be clustered on the most appropriate portions of a tract.

New buildings should be oriented to take maximum advantage of a southern orientation. Evergreen landscaping should be emphasized on the northern side of buildings to provide protection against Winter winds. Deciduous landscaping should be emphasized on the southern side of buildings to allow the sun to provide warmth during the Winter, while providing shade during the Summer.

The Township's Construction Code and accompanying State regulations already establishes minimum insulation requirements for new homes.

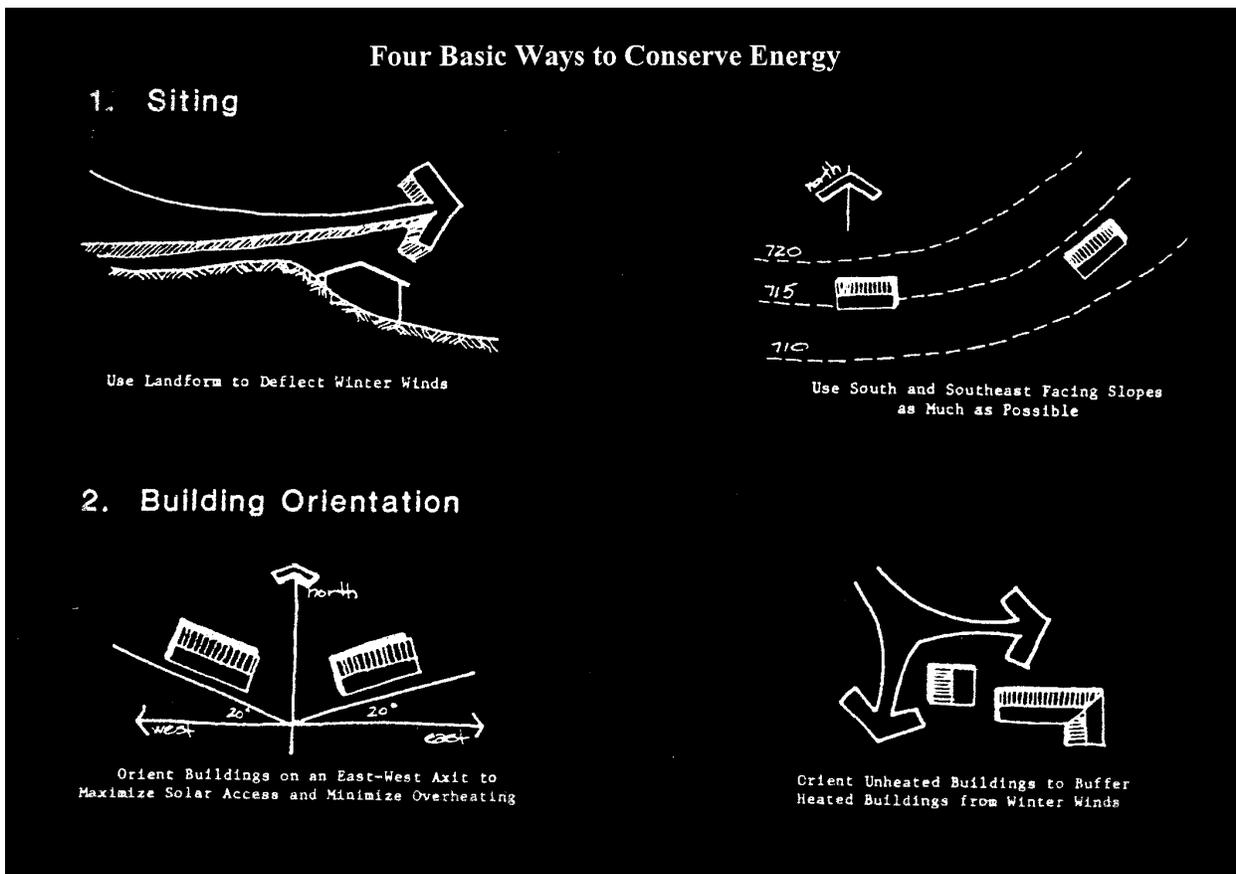
## Public Awareness and Education

Township officials should work toward making residents, property owners, builders and developers more aware of the need for energy conservation in Palmer Township. The following techniques are examples of what can be used to educate the public about the need for and value of energy conservation:

- Continue to encourage the use of bicycles and walking.
- Provide information on energy conservation and water conservation methods, including through the Township newsletter. This should emphasize simple and low-cost ways of conserving energy.
- Encourage lower-income residents to take advantage of Federal and State grant programs to weatherize their homes to reduce home heating costs.

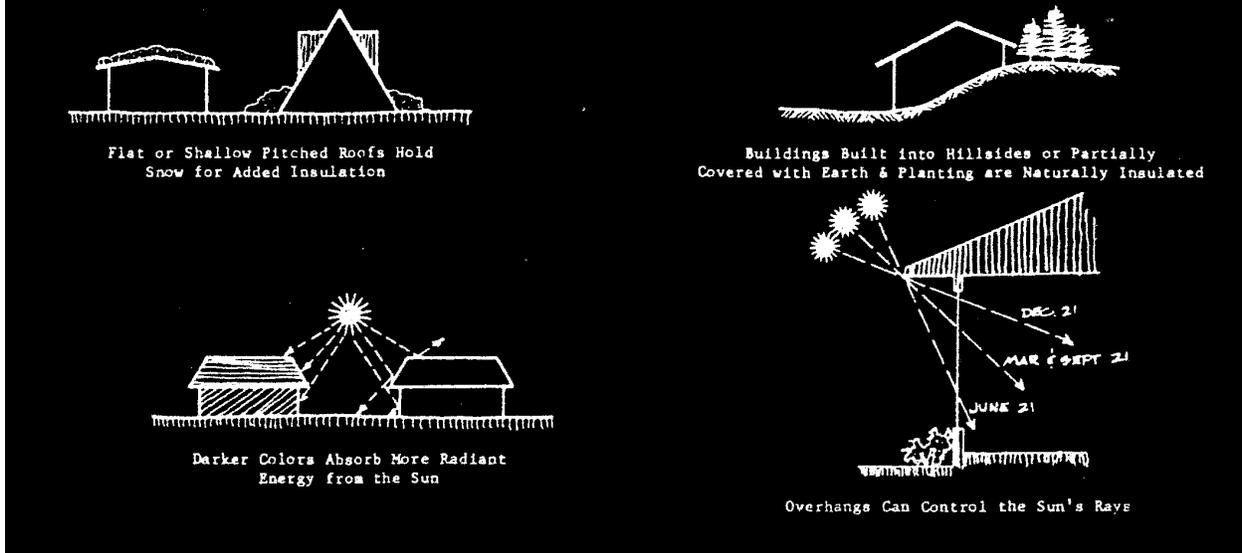
## What Can Developers and Builders Do?

Developers and builders should be encouraged to use the following principles and objectives which illustrate examples of how the natural elements such as the sun, wind, landform and vegetation can support heating and cooling systems.



Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan - Revised Draft August 30, 2002

### 3. Building Design and Construction



#### Planning for Solar Access and Shading

The term "solar access," refers to the availability of sunlight during the period of the day and year when the sun's energy can be most usefully employed by solar energy collection systems. Solar access consists of two basic principles:

- proper orientation to the sun, and
- freedom from shading by obstructions.

A general southern exposure is essential for solar systems to be effective, but the ideal orientation will vary according to the nature of the solar application and micro climatic conditions. An exposure within the range of 20 degrees east to 20 degrees west of south is generally acceptable for most solar applications.

This implies orienting streets in a general east-west direction. In areas already platted in a manner detrimental to solar utilization, building additions, infill developments and redevelopments should be permitted to be solar-oriented.

The term "solar skyspace," refers to the space which must be free of obstructions to protect a given area from shading. Protection of the solar skyspace need not be absolute for solar energy systems to be effective. But land use controls should protect that portion of the solar skyspace necessary for the economical operation of solar energy systems without unreasonably burdening adjacent landowners.

## **PUTTING THIS PLAN INTO ACTION**

This section of the Plan includes policies to carry out the Plan. These include actions that should be accomplished by the Township Government, State agencies, residents and many other agencies and organizations.

**GOAL: Maintain regular communications and cooperation with neighboring municipalities and the County government, particularly to result in compatible development and road patterns.**

**GOAL: Continually work to put this Plan into action through a program of updated planning and many short-term actions within a long-range perspective.**

This Plan should be consistently used as an overall guide for land use, community facility and transportation decisions. In addition, the Plan needs to be reviewed periodically and, if necessary, updated to reflect changing trends.

Planning is an on-going process. This Plan should be implemented through a continuous process of follow-up planning and action. The most immediate action will be the updating of the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, which is underway.

The Township Government cannot implement this Plan alone. Involvement is needed by residents, homeowner associations, businesses, institutions, property-owners and many other groups.

To be effective, community development efforts need wide participation. A close working relationship is needed with Federal, State and County agencies and adjacent municipalities.

Maximize communications, coordination and cooperative efforts between Palmer Township, adjacent municipalities, the County and other agencies and organizations.

### **Tools to Implement this Plan**

This Plan establishes overall policies for guiding the future development and preservation of Palmer. However, this Plan is not a regulation. The following major tools are available to help implement this Plan:

- Citizen involvement,
- the Zoning Ordinance,
- the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance,

## *Palmer Township Comprehensive Plan of 2003*

- the Construction Codes,
- an Official Map,
- computerized mapping,
- Capital Improvements Planning, and
- the Township's annual spending and the seeking of additional grant funds.

### Citizen Involvement

The volunteer efforts of boards, committees, homeowner associations are essential to further improve Palmer and to carry out this Plan. The objective is to strengthen community pride and emphasize volunteer efforts for residents and property-owners to improve their surroundings.

It is essential to keep citizens informed and provide opportunities for meaningful citizen input, while making use of new technologies for communication.

The Township internet site should be regularly updated with information that will help spur public interest, enthusiasm and involvement. Opportunities for citizen involvement should also be highlighted through the newspaper and other media.

### Zoning Ordinance

The Township's Zoning Ordinance is the primary legal tool to regulate the uses of land and buildings. The Zoning Ordinance includes a Zoning Map that divides the Township into different zoning districts. Each district permits a set of activities and establishes a maximum density of development. The Zoning Ordinance and Map should be updated to carry out the Land Use Policies of this Plan.

In addition to regulating land uses and densities, zoning also controls the following:

- the heights of buildings,
- the percentage of a lot that may be covered by buildings and paving,
- the minimum distances that buildings may be placed from streets and property lines,
- the minimum size of lots,
- the maximum sizes and heights of signs, and
- the protection of important natural features.

### Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

The Township's SALDO mainly regulates the creation of new lots and the construction of new streets by developers. It also regulates the engineering of new commercial, industrial and institutional buildings.

### Construction Codes

A modern set of construction codes apply in the Township. These codes are particularly important to minimize fire hazards. Care is needed that these codes are not excessive when applied to the renovation of historic buildings.

### Official Map

The State Municipalities Planning Code grants municipalities the authority to adopt an “Official Map.” An Official Map can designate proposed locations of new roads, intersection improvements, municipal uses and parks. The Map may cover the entire Township or only certain areas. The proposed locations do not need to be exact surveyed boundaries.

Once an Official Map is officially adopted by the Supervisors, then the Township is provided with a limited amount of authority to reserve land for the projects on the map. If the land affected by the proposed project is proposed for development, then the Township would have one year to either purchase the land for its fair market value or decide not to go forward with the project. This one year period is intended to provide time to raise funds to acquire the land, and avoid lost opportunities. If this one year period is not in effect, a person could obtain a building permit almost immediately in many cases and construct a building that could obstruct an important project. An Official Map also serves to provide notice to property-owners about the Township’s future plans.

### Capital Improvements Planning

The Township has a process to plan and budget for major capital expenditures. “Capital” improvements are projects involving a substantial expense for the construction or improvement of major public facilities that have a long life span and that are not annual operating expenses. Examples of capital projects include major road improvements, acquisition of parkland, and major stormwater improvements.

A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) can help the Township identify projects that will be needed, prioritize them, identify possible funding sources and then budget for their completion. A typical CIP looks five years in the future. A CIP should identify major street reconstruction projects that will be needed, which can help coordinate the reconstruction with underground projects by utilities. A CIP can help a community minimize the total number of bond issues that are needed, which will minimize borrowing expenses. It also can allow the Township to carefully time any bond issues to take advantage of the lowest interest rates.

### Other Implementation Tools

Many other tools are available to carry out the Comprehensive Plan, including the following:

- priorities decided as part of the Township’s annual budget, and
- aggressively seeking Federal and State grants to reduce the burden upon local taxpayers.

**Role of the Planning Commission**

Some of the Planning Commission's greatest responsibilities are to oversee the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the preparation of Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance revisions. On a monthly basis, the Planning Commission also reviews proposed developments. The Planning Commission also has a role in reviewing proposals of other government agencies.

**Role of the Board of Supervisors**

The final decision on nearly all matters affecting the growth and preservation of Palmer rests with the Board of Supervisors. Therefore, close communications and cooperation between the Planning Commission, the Township Staff, and the Supervisors will be essential in continuing to improve quality of life in Palmer.

**APPENDICES**

**A SHORT HISTORY OF PALMER TOWNSHIP**

Based on past research of the Palmer Township Historical Society  
and Morris Knowles, Inc.

Originally, the lands that are now Palmer Township were inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape and Delaware Indians. In 1737, the infamous “Walking Purchase” occurred through which the Indians were deceived out of large amounts of lands. The lands that are now Palmer became held by descendants of William Penn.

Without permission from the Penn Family who owned it, German immigrants in the 1740s cleared much of the land for farms and their homes. In 1759, the settlers petitioned the Province of Pennsylvania to allow them to pay a “fit and reasonable” price for the lands, but their request was denied. The families continued to “squat” on the lands until 1795 when the Penn Family finally agreed to sell. Meanwhile, Nazareth and Bethlehem had been founded in 1741 and Easton in 1751. The Seipsville Hotel was established along the Easton-Nazareth Road in 1760.

During these years, the lands around the present Northwood Avenue were known for some of the best grouse and deer hunting in the region. Many notables were invited by the Penn Family to hunt in the area. Palmer was also known for its fine woodlands of oak, hickory and chestnut trees. The very fertile soil of Palmer provided for excellent farming, although there were problems with sinkholes.

On May 5, 1857, Palmer Township was founded out of parts of Forks Township. At the time, Palmer included about 1,300 people. Palmer was named after George Palmer (1741-1831), who for many years served as the Surveyor General of Pennsylvania. George Palmer’s highly accurate surveying work is still referred to in settling boundary disputes and in tracing titles of properties. A member of the Penn Family noted that George Palmer was “a man of conscience”.

By 1850, most of the major roads of modern Palmer were already being used. These included William Penn Highway, Freemansburg Avenue, Nazareth Road, Hecktown Road, Newburg Road and Tatamy Road. Mine Lane Road carried iron ore from a mine hole to the Lehigh Canal and the Glendon Iron Works. The Bushkill Creek provided a good source of power for small industries and grist mills.

When Palmer was founded in 1857 it included 14 square miles, compared to the 10.4 today. The village of Mutchlertown separated from Palmer in 1920 to become the Borough of Wilson. The village of Otelweldertown became a separate borough, West Easton, in 1898. After the cement industry developed around Tatamy, it became a separate borough in 1893. Stockertown had been established in 1774 but did not become separate from Palmer until 1900.

Palmer remained generally a farming community until innovations in transportation occurred across the nation. First, street trolley lines were built from Bethlehem to Easton and Easton to Nazareth. This allowed people to live farther from their work in the cities. Then the automobile greatly expanded people’s choices in where they could live. More and more people chose the amenities and

space of living in Palmer. Industry, no longer tied to the railroads, also moved into Palmer as roads improved.

## **THE NATURAL FEATURES OF PALMER**

Slope of the Land. The slope of the land can limit the type and intensity of development that a site can accommodate. Most of Palmer township has a level to gently sloping topography with slopes of 0 to 10 percent. Some areas with steep slopes over 15 percent, however, do exist near the Lehigh River, Schoeneck Creek, Bushkill Creek and at scattered locations in the central portion of the Township. Fifteen percent slopes and greater are best suited for uses that occupy a small percentage of a lot. Ideally, these areas should remain open.

Waterways and Drainage Basins. Palmer Township has a distinct drainage system that consists of two major drainage channels: 1) the Lehigh River, and 2) the Bushkill Creek. In addition to these two major waterways, there are several other small drainage channels and natural drainage basins located in the Township. The drainage basins, delineated by ridgelines, are logical areas for planning and designing water treatment and storm drainage facilities.

Alluvial Soils. Alluvial soils deposited in the past by flooding are a reliable indication that heavy runoff conditions will probably create flooding in the future. Flood prone areas exist along the Lehigh River, Bushkill Creek, Schoeneck Creek and some of their tributaries. Most of the alluvial soil areas are within the 100-year floodplain areas, as mapped in the official Federal floodplain mapping. Because of their vital natural function in absorbing stormwater runoff and because of potential flooding, these soils should remain open.

High Water Table Soils. High water table soils also are found in Palmer Township. Most of these soils are located in the lower lying areas adjacent to the streams and drainage channels. Development of these wet soil areas could result in poor foundation stability, ponding and chronic wetness in homes and other buildings.

Soils Types. Except for the wet and steep areas described above, the majority of soil types in Palmer Township are considered prime for raising crops. These deep, well-drained and gently rolling soils are also generally considered to be physically well-suited for development.

Woodland. Wooded areas are not only attractive, but they provide shade and help to reduce soil erosion. The majority of the wooded areas in Palmer are located along the Lehigh River and Bushkill Creek. Smaller areas of woodland are scattered throughout the Township, including along part of the Schoeneck Creek.

Sinkholes. Concerns about sinkhole hazards are discussed in the Natural Feature Plan section.

**THE POPULATION AND HOUSING OF PALMER**

This section describes the characteristics of Palmer Township’s population and housing, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, unless otherwise noted. Some information from the 2000 Census has not yet been released.

**Total Population**

Changes in population provide important information on how an area changes over time. Population trends also help in making assumptions about future growth in an area. Palmer Township’s population was 16,809 in 2000, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data. This was an increase of 1,844 residents (11.0%) since 1990. The Township’s housing market was more active in the 1990's than in the 1980's, during which 1,039 residents were added.

**TOTAL POPULATION  
Palmer Township and Northampton County - 1960-2000**

Municipality	1960 Population	1970 Population	1980 Population	1990 Population	2000 Population	# Change 1990 to 2000	% Change 1990 to 2000
Palmer Township	8,823	12,684	13,926	14,965	16,809	1,844	11.0
Northampton County	201,412	214,545	225,418	247,105	267,066	19,961	7.5

**Age Distribution**

Age trends provide important information about a community’s residents. Palmer Township’s median age was 42.7 years in 2000, which was considerably older than the Northampton County’s age of 38.5 years. Residents 45 and older accounted for 46.3% of the Township’s total population in 2000. This high proportion of middle age to elderly people, is typical of an older more developed municipality. This same age group accounted for 39.2% of the county’s total population for the same time period. In 2000, 5-19 year olds were the largest age group in both Palmer Township (18%) and Northampton County (21%).

**AGE DISTRIBUTION**  
**Palmer Township and Northampton County - 2000**

Age	Palmer Township		Northampton County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under 5	922	5.5	14,862	5.6
5-19	2,973	17.6	55,857	20.8
20-24	561	3.3	16,213	6.1
25-34	1,926	11.5	32,026	12.0
35-44	2,664	15.8	43,636	16.3
45-54	2,522	15.0	38,039	14.2
55-64	1,783	10.6	24,403	9.2
65-74	1,737	10.4	20,825	7.8
75+	1,721	10.3	21,205	8.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,809</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>267,066</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Gender**

Gender refers to the number of males and females in a population. There are no special conditions in Palmer Township that have altered the traditional 50/50 balance between total males and total females.

**GENDER**  
**Palmer Township and Northampton County -2000**

Area	Total Population	Males		Females	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Palmer Township	16,809	8,118	48.3	8,691	51.7
Northampton County	267,066	129,961	48.7	137,105	51.3

**Household Size**

Households refer to all persons living in a housing unit, whether related or not. Average household size is another indicator of the difference between Palmer Township and Northampton County. Palmer had an average of 2.46 persons per household in 2000, compared to 2.53 in Northampton County. This correlates with the Township's proportion of older residents, many of whom live in one or two-person households. Later marriages, more divorces, fewer children and more elderly households have contributed to a drop in average household size across the nation since 1970.

**AVERAGE PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD  
Palmer Township and Northampton County -1990-2000**

Area	Average Persons Per Household	
	1990	2000
Palmer Township	2.67	2.46
Northampton County		2.53

**Total Housing Units**

Trends in total housing units mirror population trends. However, even areas losing population tend to add housing units to accommodate new households being created by singles, divorced people and the elderly. Between 1990 and 2000, Palmer Township added a significant number of housing units increasing their housing stock by 17.7%. This was higher than Northampton County's increase of 10.7% for the same time period.

**TOTAL HOUSING UNITS  
Palmer Township and Northampton County -1999-2000**

Area	Total Housing Units		1990-2000 Change	
	1990	2000	Number	Percent
Palmer Township	5,647	6,865	1,218	17.7
Northampton County	95,345	106,710	11,365	10.7

**Housing Ownership and Vacancy**

The amount of rental housing in an area affects housing affordability and the ability to accommodate the life cycle changes described earlier. More rental housing usually signifies an area more affordable to singles, young families and older people. Areas with high rates of owner-occupied housing may be less accessible to singles, starter families and elderly.

According to the 2000 Census, approximately 85 percent of the homes in Palmer Township were owner-occupied. This is a much higher rate than Northampton County's 70 percent of owner-occupied units for the same time period. In addition, Palmer Township had a lower percentage of vacant housing units compared to Northampton County in 2000.

**HOUSING OWNERSHIP AND VACANCY  
Palmer Township and Northampton County -2000**

Area	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Vacant		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Palmer Township	5,788	84.3	928	13.5	149	2.2	6,865	100
Northampton County	74,464	69.8	27,077	25.4	5,169	4.8	106,710	100

**Race and Hispanic Origin**

In the 2000 Census, 393 residents reported they were of Hispanic or Latino origin. In 2000, 428 residents reported they were at least partly African-American. These two groups may overlap.

**Education Levels**

In 2000, of Palmer residents age 25 or older: a) 88 percent reported that they graduated high school, and b) 24 percent reported they held a college bachelor's degree or higher levels of education.

**Place of Residence**

As of 2000, 65 percent of Palmer residents were living in the same house as they did in 1995. From 1995 to 2000, 10 percent of residents reported that they have moved to Palmer from a different State.

**Travel Time to Work**

In 2000, the average travel time of Palmer Township residents to work was 25 minutes. While a high 10 percent of residents reported that they carpooled to work, only one-half of one percent said they used public transit to reach work.

**Income**

According to the Census, the median household income of Palmer residents in 1999 was \$55,419. This means that half of households had total incomes over this amount, while half had incomes under this amount. This income was 23 percent higher than the County-wide median. As of 1999, 6 percent of families in Palmer reported that they had incomes below the poverty level. Among households with children under age 5, this percent was 11 percent.