



Lower Paxton Township Comprehensive Plan

As Adopted August 8, 2018



prepared by:



Urban Research & Development Corporation
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018

Lower Paxton Township

Comprehensive Plan

A Plan for the Development and Conservation
of Lower Paxton Township

This Plan was funded in part through a grant from the Dauphin County Gaming Grant Program.

Prepared by
Urban Research & Development Corporation
Community Planning Consultants
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Adopted by the Lower Paxton Township Board of Supervisors on
August 8th, 2018.

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INTRODUCTION

This Comprehensive Plan is presented to the citizens of Lower Paxton Township as a guide for development of the community, as well as conservation of features that are worthy of being maintained. Since 1972, the Township Supervisors have directed the nine-member Township Planning Commission to prepare and recommend a Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission has encouraged involvement from other Township officials, business-persons and other citizens to improve this Plan. This Plan is intended to be implemented through many short-term actions that are carried out within a long-term perspective.

This Comprehensive Plan is authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The MPC also guides the Township’s development regulations and the processes to approve new development. The MPC provides valuable tools to municipalities to enhance the lives of residents. We should continually monitor positive and negative trends, and update this Plan and the Township development regulations as needed in the future. Therefore, this Plan should be considered a living document, that should be revised as necessary as our dynamic Township continues to evolve.

Introduction to Lower Paxton

Lower Paxton Township is the largest suburban municipality by area in the Harrisburg Region. After Harrisburg, Lower Paxton is the region’s second most populated municipality, and is the 19th most populated municipality in the Commonwealth. Located northeast of Harrisburg, Lower Paxton is highly desirable as a residential and business location. With a variety of residential neighborhoods, business centers and recreation amenities, Lower Paxton offers a high quality of life. The Township is highly accessible via Interstate 81, Interstate 83, Route 22 and other major routes.

The western border of Lower Paxton is three miles from Center City Harrisburg. The Township includes 28.1 square miles, which makes it one of the largest municipalities by land area in the region.



What is the Comprehensive Plan?

This Comprehensive Plan provides an overall set of policies and recommendations for the future development, redevelopment and conservation of Lower Paxton Township over the next 10 to 15 years.

This Plan helps to ensure that Lower Paxton Township retains the qualities that make people want to live, work and enjoy recreational activities within the Township. This Plan is not a regulation, but instead provides the basis for suggested changes and associated strategies related to the Township's development regulations.

How Was This Plan Prepared?

This Plan was developed in draft form during monthly meetings of the Township Planning Commission with participation by the Township Staff and individual Township Supervisors. First, maps showing existing conditions were prepared, as well as summaries of previous plans and reports. Information was collected on existing conditions.

A Vision Statement, Mission Statement and a set of Goals were then prepared to provide overall direction for the Plan. A public meeting was then held to discuss the initial set of overall recommendations. The Plan document was then prepared.

Next, public meetings were held by the Township Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to obtain public input on the Plan, prior to adoption.

Major Benefits of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan offers many benefits, including the following:

- Addressing land uses in coordination with transportation issues, to avoid future traffic problems;
- Avoiding conflicts between different types of development, such as not allowing intense business uses adjacent to a residential neighborhood;
- Considering development policies in a comprehensive and coordinated manner for an entire area, as opposed to piecemeal review of individual parcels or lots;
- Recommending ways that natural features should be preserved and conserved, and so that storm water management may be turned into a resource, and
- Encouraging the setting aside and preservation of open spaces in the Township and along the streams.

MAJOR FINDINGS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Appendices include information about existing conditions and trends in Lower Paxton Township. The following are highlights of those findings:

- While most of the Township is residential in nature, there are business uses concentrated along Route 22, Old Jonestown Road, Union Deposit Road, Linglestown Road and East Park Drive.
- Dauphin County's Comprehensive Plan seeks to direct most growth to locations in designated growth areas, such as Lower Paxton Township, that have public water and sewage services and highway access. By making the best use of these areas that are suitable for development, it will be possible to minimize sprawl in outlying areas that consumes excessive amounts of farmland or forest land per house.
- The US Census estimated that Lower Paxton Township in 2016 included 48,740 residents, which was estimated to be a 2.9 percent increase (1,380 persons) from the 2010 census population of 47,360. Lower Paxton's population increased by 169 percent from 1950 to 1960, by 51 percent from 1960 to 1970, by 31 percent from 1970 to 1980, by 12 percent from 1980 to 1990, by 14 percent from 1990 to 2000, and by 7 percent from 2000 to 2010. (As the total population increased, a similar numeric population increase could result in a decreased percentage increase from decade to decade.)
- The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission has prepared population and household projections that forecast that 7,870 new residents and 3,362 new occupied housing units will be added in Lower Paxton between 2010 and 2040. For instance, 1,067 new occupied housing units are projected for the 10 year period from 2020 to 2030.
- The largest area of flood-prone lands are along the Beaver Creek (which forms much of the eastern border), Spring Creek (which is near Spring Creek Road), and Paxton Creek (which runs parallel to Crums Mill Road).
- Almost all intensely developed areas of Lower Paxton Township are served by the SUEZ water system. Lower Paxton Township is served by two wastewater treatment plants—the Harrisburg plant and the Swatara Township plant. Each wastewater treatment plant has capacity for future growth based upon average flows, but work is continuing to reduce peak flows during extreme wet weather conditions.
- Several bus routes serve Lower Paxton Township, with most routes intersecting in Center City Harrisburg.
- I-83 is being widened in phases to result in three travel lanes in each direction. The nearby Eisenhower interchange is to be reconstructed in a few years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following are highlights of major recommendations in this Plan.

- Update the Township’s development regulations to carry out the Future Land Use and Housing Plan.
- Improve the economic vitality and appearance of the Route 22 corridor. Encourage the development of a website to jointly market businesses along the corridor. Promote the use of decorative banners, additional landscaping and decorative street lighting. Consider allowing a complementary mix of commercial and residential development on larger sites, such as portions of the Colonial Park Mall and the former K-Mart sites. Encourage new development that creates more of an “experience” in order to attract customers. Improve the pedestrian access, including working with PennDOT to have carefully designed pedestrian crossing improvements installed, with pedestrian refuge islands in medians where feasible.
- Seek improved designs in new residential development, including a greater emphasis on landscaping, designing homes to face onto neighborhood green areas, promoting boulevard-style entrances with landscaped medians, seeking use of decorative street lights, installation of sidewalks on both sides of most streets, and incorporation of traffic calming measures (such as raised speed tables).
- The Open Space Development option involves allowing homes on smaller lots than would normally be allowed, in return for the permanent preservation of a substantial percentage of the tract in open space. Allow this option in selected areas in new residential development, after updating standards to make sure that the open spaces serve valuable purposes. The update standards are intended to make sure the open spaces serve valuable public purposes and will be attractively landscaped. Promote open space to be provided as an intensively-planted buffer between homes and I-81 and between homes and intensive business.
- Linglestown is a historic center of activity in Lower Paxton. Continue to strengthen Linglestown as a mixed use village, including promoting village-style residential development to the north, and seeking to extend the streetscape improvements to the south along Mountain Road, as funding allows.
- Promote additional investment in underused business areas, including through streamlining of development regulations and procedures and through well-targeted tax incentives.
- Carry out a full set of efforts to improve sustainability, including promoting renewable energy (including solar energy, such as over vehicle parking), seeking additional carpool parking areas in the region, providing zoning incentives for certain environmentally sustainable building features, improving the quality of stormwater runoff, promoting groundwater recharge, adding and protecting natural plantings along creek corridors, and emphasizing tree planting throughout the Township.
- Continue to make needed improvements to Township Parks in phases, including Wolfensberger Park, the proposed new park at Nyes and Conway Roads, and the proposed new park in the Blue Ridge development.
- Continue to work to carry out the Greenways Plan, with new trail connections.
- Make cost-effective road improvements, in cooperation with adjacent property owners and PennDOT, including adding traffic signals and road connections as shown on the Transportation Plan Map.

- Make the Lower Paxton Township area safer and more convenient for bicyclists and pedestrians along with traffic calming where appropriate. Add additional bus passenger shelters and complete missing links of sidewalks along higher traffic streets and new schools and parks.
- Consider adopting an "Official Map" to seek to reserve land that is expected to be needed to improve existing intersections or other public improvements.

THE OVERALL DIRECTION OF THIS PLAN

The following draft Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Goals provide overall direction for this Comprehensive Plan. The objectives provide more specific intent.

Community Vision Statement

Lower Paxton will be vibrant in all respects. Lower Paxton Township will guide development and redevelopment to protect residential neighborhoods and important natural features. An emphasis will be placed upon strengthening existing business areas, while improving their functionality and appearance. Lower Paxton will continue to provide a variety of highly livable neighborhoods that offer a choice of housing to meet various needs, with high quality community services.

While maintaining safe traffic flow, Lower Paxton will also improve accessibility by public transit, walking and bicycling, as well as providing safe places for children. Greenways and trails will connect neighborhoods, including along creek corridors. Environmental sustainability will be a priority in many different efforts. This Vision will be carried out with the involvement of residents and businesspersons in planning efforts and by thoughtfully prioritizing community needs.

Mission Statement

Lower Paxton Township is a center for safe residential living, business activity, health care and community activities. Lower Paxton promotes economic vitality through well-planned growth, in a manner that maintains a high quality of life for residents, preserves the natural environment, and supports business activity.

The Township will continue to diversify the local economy by strengthening the village of Linglestown, enhancing existing business corridors, expanding our network of parks and trails, and completing needed transportation improvements, while ensuring the wise use of the Township's natural resources.

Lower Paxton will also work to improve the community identity, the community character, and the sense of place.

Major Goals and Objectives

The following are the major goals and objectives of this Plan:

Land Use and Housing Plan

GOAL L.1. Provide for orderly patterns of development that provide compatibility between land uses, particularly to protect the livability of residential areas.

Objective: Provide areas for a range of housing types and densities, to meet needs of various types and ages of households, including older persons and persons with disabilities.

Objective: Offer incentives for development of housing for older persons, and for facilities that care for them.

Objective: Encourage Cluster/ Open Space Development that preserves substantial areas of interconnected open spaces that serve a valuable public purpose, such as providing recreation areas, preserving important natural areas or buffering homes from major highways.

Objective: Maintain an attractive rural character in outlying portions of the Township, such as along the base of the Blue Mountain and along the Beaver Creek corridor.

Objective: Strengthen and protect older residential neighborhoods, with an emphasis on encouraging home-ownership, rehabilitating older buildings, and avoiding incompatible development.

Objective: Support the development of Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TNDs) in the Township. TNDs involve standards that work to recreate the best features of older development in new neighborhoods.

GOAL L.2. Promote various ranges of types of business development in different areas, to increase tax revenues and employment opportunities, while promoting entrepreneurship.

Objective: Seek a full range of business, retail and service opportunities that are conveniently available for residents. Promote new ways to fill any vacant retail spaces with new tax-paying uses.

Objective: Use landscaping, street trees, highly visible crosswalks, banners, streetscape improvements and other methods to improve the appearance of the Route 22 corridor, in order to promote new investment in the Township.

Objective: Use a full range of methods to promote desirable types of business investment, including flexible zoning, and coordination with County and Regional economic development and marketing efforts.

Objective: Examine ways to streamline development regulations to offer an inviting business climate, to reduce uncertainty for applicants and to avoid unnecessary delays, while targeting regulations to address important public concerns.

GOAL L.3. Encourage compatible mixes of land uses, in a way that reduces dependence upon motor vehicles for everyday needs and to promote a more enjoyable and healthy lifestyle.

Objective: Continue to improve Linglestown as a traditional village, and emphasize lower-intensity neighborhood-oriented businesses and offices along the Linglestown Road corridor.

Objective: Strengthen Route 22 as a commercial corridor that also offers mixed use opportunities in selected locations.

Natural Resources Conservation Plan

GOAL N.1. Protect important natural features, including the Blue Mountain, creek valleys, flood-prone areas, wetlands, steeply sloped woodlands, and groundwater and surface water supplies.

Objective: Improve the quality of storm water runoff, and treat it as a resource, by slowing it down and allowing it to infiltrate into the ground.

Objective: Continue to use development regulations to conserve important natural features.

Historic Preservation Plan

GOAL H.1. Work to preserve important historic buildings and promote suitable adaptive reuses within these buildings.

Objective: Consider using the Zoning Ordinance to require Township pre-approval before an important historic building can be demolished. Avoid excessive regulations upon routine changes to older buildings, in order to respect private property rights.

Objective: Promote greater interest in Lower Paxton’s historic buildings and heritage, and promote rehabilitation of older buildings, in a manner that preserves historic features.

Community Facilities and Services Plan

GOAL C.1. Provide high-quality community facilities and services in the most cost-efficient manner.

Objective: Ensure that adequate public water supplies, sewage treatment allocations and transmission capacities continue to be available.

Objective: Emphasize coordination of municipal and emergency services across municipal borders, and expand and update services to meet changing needs.

Objective: Carry out the Wolfensberger Park master plan in logical phases of construction, while making other park and recreation area improvements where appropriate and as funding allows.

Transportation Plan

GOAL T.1. Make well-targeted cost-effective road improvements while improving safety, in cooperation with PennDOT, adjacent landowners and developers.

Objective: Complete short-term improvements (such as improving sight distances) while seeking funding to complete longer-range improvements.

Objective: Where practical, consider retrofitting streets to incorporate "complete streets" principles that place a priority on pedestrian and bicycle travel, and traffic calming, while encouraging safe traffic flow and the relationship to the allowed traffic speeds.

Objective: Use an adopted “Official Map,” which can be used under State law to reserve land needed for road and trail connections.

GOAL T.2. Make Lower Paxton more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly, including offering safe connections between residential areas and stores, schools, parks and trails within Lower Paxton and neighboring municipalities.

Objective: In addition to requiring sidewalks or paths as part of most new development, consider making public pedestrian improvements targeted to areas near parks and schools.

Objective: Emphasize improving the pedestrian safety in order to cross Route 22 at a few selected locations, particularly where there can be a center median and where there are pedestrian signals.

GOAL T.3. Promote expanded use, availability and frequency of service of public transit, while also promoting greater use of car-pooling.

Objective: Work with PennDOT and other providers to increase understanding of the availability of transit services and the park and ride lots available to CAT bus riders.

Objective: Support increased usage of the CAT system and support the additional bus shelters along major roads where appropriate.

Objective: Promote mixed use development in selected areas that are well-served by public bus routes.

Energy Conservation Plan

GOAL E.1. Encourage modes of transportation, patterns of land uses and designs of sites and other actions that conserve energy.

Objective: Increase public awareness of energy conservation methods.

Objective: Promote building orientations and designs and landscaping that maximizes access to solar heating in the winter and provides shading in the summer.

Objective: Promote appropriate use of alternative energy, such as wind energy and geothermal energy.

Putting This Plan Into Action

GOAL A.1. Promote citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and have adequate opportunities to provide their opinions on Township matters.

GOAL A.2. Coordinate transportation, development and infrastructure across municipal borders, and seek opportunities for additional shared municipal services.

GOAL A.3. Continually work to put this Plan into action through a program of updated planning and short-term actions in accordance with a long-range perspective oriented to implementing the strategies of the Plan.

Objective: Develop a Capital Improvements Program to identify major needed projects and to prioritize them.

LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN

The Land Use and Housing Plan includes recommendations for land development and conservation policies in various areas. The main tool that the Township has available to carry out these policies is through its zoning ordinance.

Strategy L.1. – Work to improve the economic vitality and appearance of the Route 22 corridor, while considering mixtures of commercial and residential uses in selected locations.

While the vast majority of the Route 22 is economically healthy and continues to see new investment and the opening of new businesses, there are concerns about a few areas. The area of Route 22 west of Route 22 has received little investment in recent years, and includes uncoordinated driveways and is less attractive.

All retail businesses are experiencing increased competition from online sales, and many shopping centers are experiencing a loss of stores. Large numbers of anchor stores and smaller chain stores have closed in recent years throughout the country, including the K-Mart in Lower Paxton. While the Colonial Park Mall is more healthy than many indoor malls, it has recently lost one of its anchor stores. The loss of an anchor can reduce the numbers of customers for smaller stores and causes other closures.

A proactive approach is needed to avoid future problems, particularly considering commercial businesses generate a substantial amount of the Township's tax base and employment. The Route 22 corridor should continue to be improved in appearance, pedestrian and transit accessibility, transit services and economic vitality. A more detailed corridor plan should be prepared, in cooperation with PennDOT.

It would be desirable for commercial businesses along the Route 22 corridor to join together in certain joint marketing and promotion efforts. This could include a website that is intended to publicize the restaurants, stores and services along the corridor. Persons may be more likely to visit one business if they know there is a second business nearby that interests them. This corridor website could then provide links back and forth with the websites of individual businesses, such as to highlight menus of restaurants and coupons. This type of website would be especially valuable to highlight new businesses that have opened.

The Route 22 corridor could also be enhanced with the addition to decorative banners that can serve to tie the corridor together for branding purposes. Mounting brackets could be added to utility or street light poles for the banners. Consistent seasonal decorations along the road would be desirable, as well as additional landscaping to make the area more visually appealing.

Larger and more standardized street address numbering may make it easier for customers to find businesses.

In addition, attractive signs surrounded by landscaping could be added at entranceways to the corridor.

Improvements are needed to improve pedestrian safety. In particular, there is a need to improve the safety of north-south pedestrian crossings. These crossings are not only needed so that residents can walk to businesses, but also so that residents can travel to schools and parks on the other side of the Route 22 corridor, and so that bus riders can access buses traveling in each direction. While it is difficult to improve pedestrian access at the busiest and widest intersections, improved pedestrian crossings could be added at some of the less busy signalized intersections. These improvements should include button-activated pedestrian crossing signals, highly visible crosswalks, and places of refuge in the median where a pedestrian, bicyclist or person in a wheelchair can wait to safely cross. It is much easier to cross one direction of traffic at a time along Route 22, which requires a safe median area.

As part of any new development, sidewalks should be completed along the Route 22 corridor. Where sidewalks do not exist, lines could be painted on existing asphalt within the public right-of-way to designate a pedestrian route, and to keep it clear of parked vehicles.

Street trees should be planted, with reasonable flexibility on their location. As street lights need to be replaced, they should have a traditional style that can support decorative banners, as seen to the right. Businesses should be encouraged to use complementary styles of lighting for their own properties.



On selected larger commercial sites, opportunities should be offered for redevelopment that allows a mix of commercial and apartment development. This could include a portion of the Colonial Park Mall tract (such as the former Bon-Ton store site or if the Mall would be converted back to an open-air center). On the former K-Mart site, new commercial uses could be clustered closer to Route 22, with new residential development on the north side, adjacent to Brightbill Park and the Friendship Center. Any apartments would have to be coordinated with compatible business uses within the same development tract. The apartments may be a part of mixed commercial/service uses in the same building or be in adjacent separate buildings.

The following photos illustrate the type of mixed commercial-residential building that might be encouraged as part of the potential redevelopment of portions of the Colonial Park Mall or K-Mart sites. Those photos are of a successful development named Birkdale Village in Huntersville, North Carolina.



To compete with online retail, it is desirable to convert older commercial centers into places that offer more of an experience to customers. This involves a greater number of restaurants and entertainment uses, places for civic events, and well-landscaped outdoor seating and walking areas. The development

of nearby apartments also provides a steady base of customers for the commercial businesses. The following photos illustrate how a commercial development can include designs and amenities to create an experience.



Ideally, redevelopment of the Colonial Park Mall site would also include provisions for a CAT bus transfer facility, so that riders can transfer from one bus to another, without needing to travel into Center City Harrisburg. This increase in convenience would be beneficial to serve new residents, as well as customers and employees of the businesses. However, it is recognized that it may not be feasible, considering financial limitations of the CAT system.

In selected geographic areas that are underutilized and have the risk of becoming blighted, the Township has the option of offering real estate tax abatements. This includes the State-authorized LERTA tax abatement program. These tax abatements help reduce the costs of new business development, by reducing the initial real estate taxes that would otherwise apply to new construction and improvements. The increases in real estate taxes are typically phased in over a ten year period. For example, in the first year, a property owner is often only required to pay 10 percent of the increase in real estate taxes that would result from the project. This percentage usually increases 10 percent per year, until the full real estate taxes must be paid after ten years. These tax abatements are most effective when the School District and the County also agree to offer similar real estate tax benefits.

Tax increment financing (TIF) can also be used to provide financing for infrastructure to support new business development. Under TIF, new real estate tax revenues from a new development are allowed to be used to pay for street improvements, sidewalks, public recreation areas and public parking facilities that are needed to support a new development. Typically, a bond is issued to pay for those public improvements, and then the new real estate tax revenues are diverted to make the bond payments until the bond is paid off. After the bond is paid off, the new real estate taxes flow in a normal fashion to the jurisdictions.

Strategy L.2. – Base land use policies substantially upon the Land Use and Housing Plan Map and the following categories, and update development regulations to carry it out.

Maps on the following pages show the existing uses of land throughout the Township, as well as showing lands that remain available for development. Then, a map is provided that shows the main zoning districts of the Township, as of 2017. The following sections describe the Land Use and Housing Plan categories, as are shown on the Land Use and Housing Plan Map on a following page.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a regulation. The Township's development regulations are anticipated to be updated to carry out this Plan, and should be generally consistent with this Plan. Zoning is the most valuable tool available to the Township to carry out land use and housing policies. In most cases, the land use and housing categories in this Plan relate to an existing or proposed zoning district.

The Zoning Ordinance primarily regulates: a) the uses of land and buildings, and b) the densities of development. Different types of land uses and different densities are allowed in various zoning districts that are shown on the Zoning Map. Some districts are primarily residential, some are primarily commercial and some are primarily industrial. Other districts promote a mix of uses.

Zoning is primarily intended to protect existing residential neighborhoods from incompatible development. However, it also can be used to avoid traffic problems, improve the appearance of new development, preserve historic buildings, and protect important natural features.

Lower Paxton Township has conventional zoning districts, in addition to overlay zoning districts. The overlay districts provide provisions that are more permissive or more restrictive than the regular zoning districts in various land areas.

Land Use Plan Categories

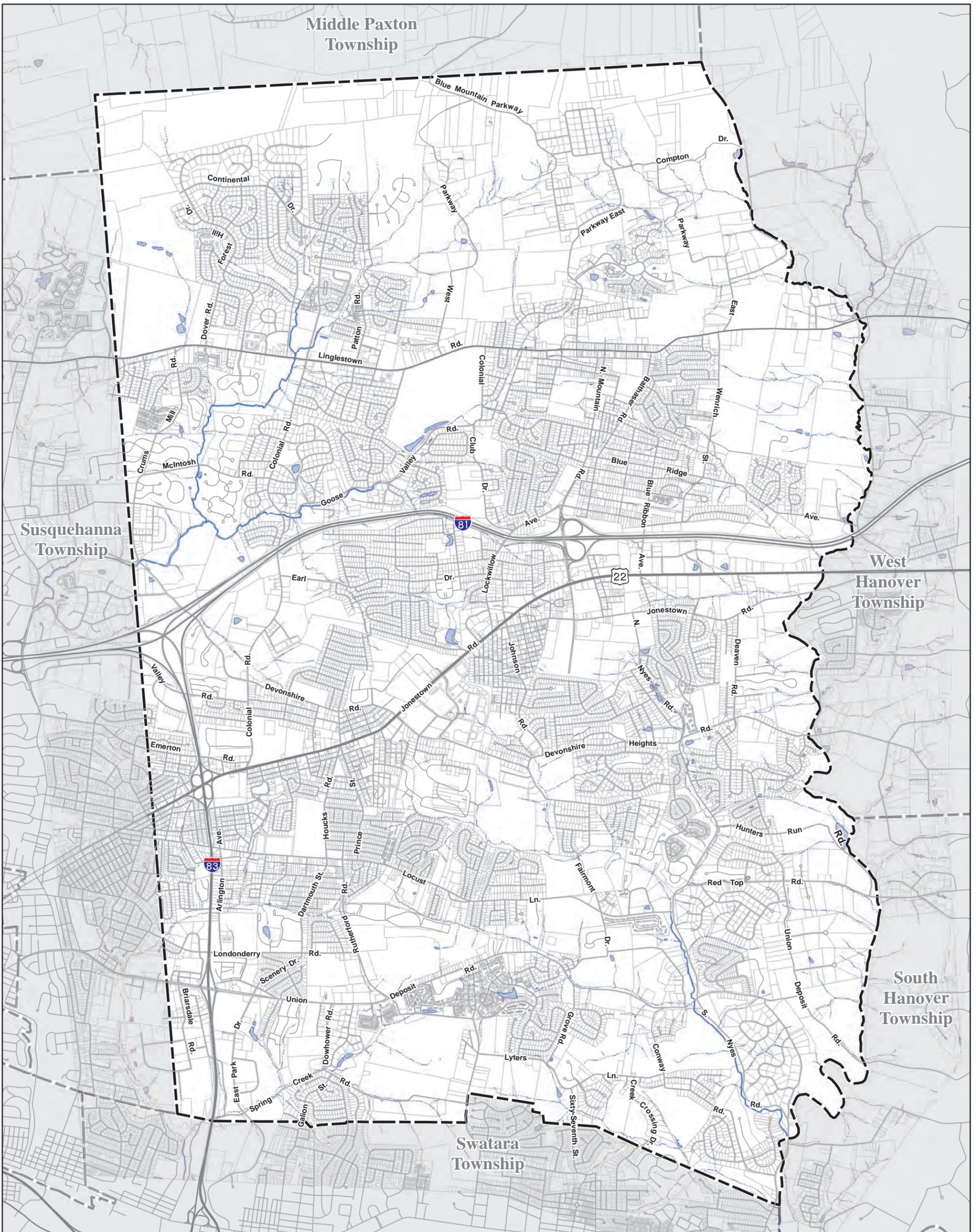
The following highlights major policy matters concerning the Land Use Plan categories, most of which relate to existing or recommended zoning districts.

Conservation (Relates to the CO District) – There are sections of the Blue Mountain in Lower Paxton that are not in public ownership, while most of the Blue Mountain in other municipalities is in public ownership. The Township should cooperate with nature conservancy organizations, hunting and fishing groups and State agencies to seek to preserve all of the Blue Mountain in public ownership that allows public recreation. Where acquisition is not practical, then conservation easements should be sought, so that the land remains preserved, even though it is privately owned.

These areas should only allow development of very low intensity. The lot size and intensity should continue to vary with the slopes of the land. Currently a 2 acre minimum lot size applies on slopes of less than 15 percent, which increases to 5 acres if the building area includes slopes of 15 to 25 percent. The Township prohibits the construction of a new principal building on very steep slopes of over 25 percent slopes.

Selected portions of these lands may be suitable for an Open Space Development Option, as described below. For example, some one acre minimum lots may be suitable if a minimum of 60% of the tract is preserved in open space. The number of allowed homes need to be carefully limited, with a slight bonus above the number of homes that would be allowed under conventional development.

Agricultural Residential (Relates to the AR District) – This district includes many undeveloped or very low density residential areas in the northeastern, northwestern and eastern part of the Township. Most of these areas are not planned for public sewage service. These areas should continue to require a 1.5 acre minimum lot size for conventional development. In selected portions of these areas (such as along I-81 or where useful recreation land could be provided), an Open Space Development Option should allow 1/2 acre minimum lots if a minimum of 40% of the tract is preserved in open space.



LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP

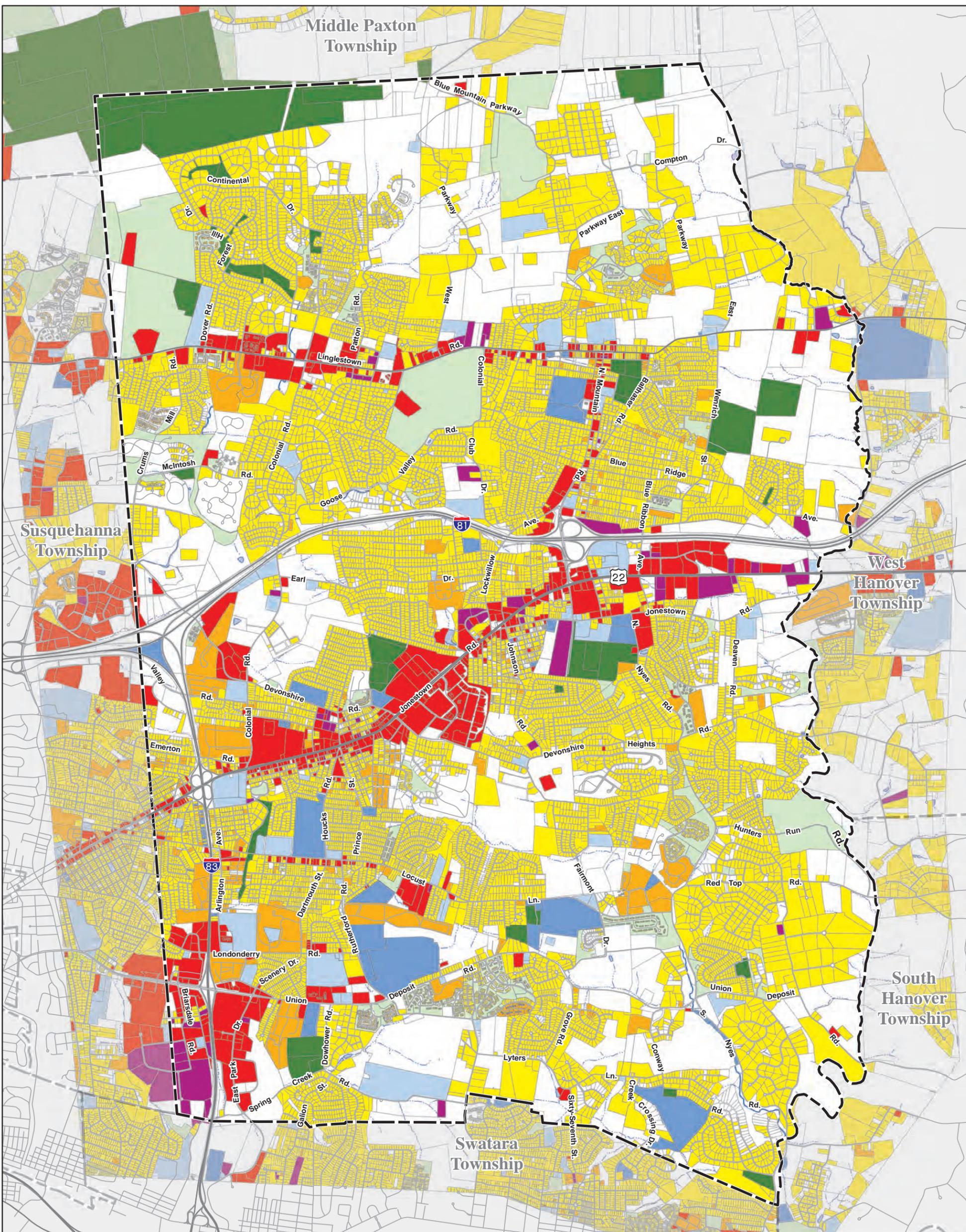
Base Information Provided by
Dauphin County, 2017.



0 3,000 6,000 Feet

BASE MAP


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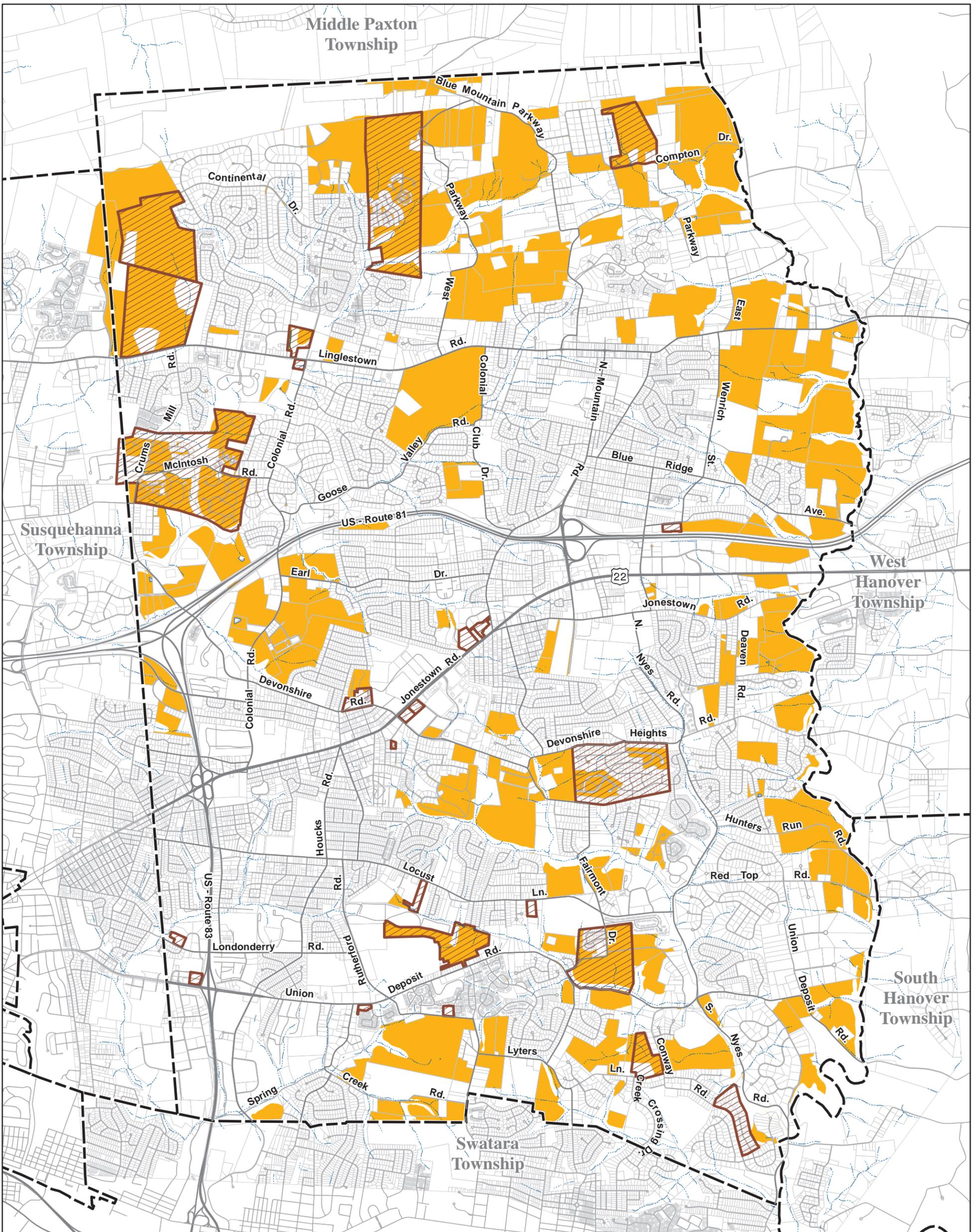
LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP

SOURCE:
Dauphin County, 2017, with field checking and compilation by URDC.

Residential (other than Apartments)	Private Recreation
Apartments and Manufactured Home Parks	Commercial
Institutional	Industrial
Public/Semi-Public	Undeveloped or Agricultural
Public Recreation	

2016 Generalized Existing Land Use
Corrected January 29, 2018

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LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP

Base Information Provided by
Dauphin County, 2017.



Developable Lands (Not including floodprone and steeply sloped lands).



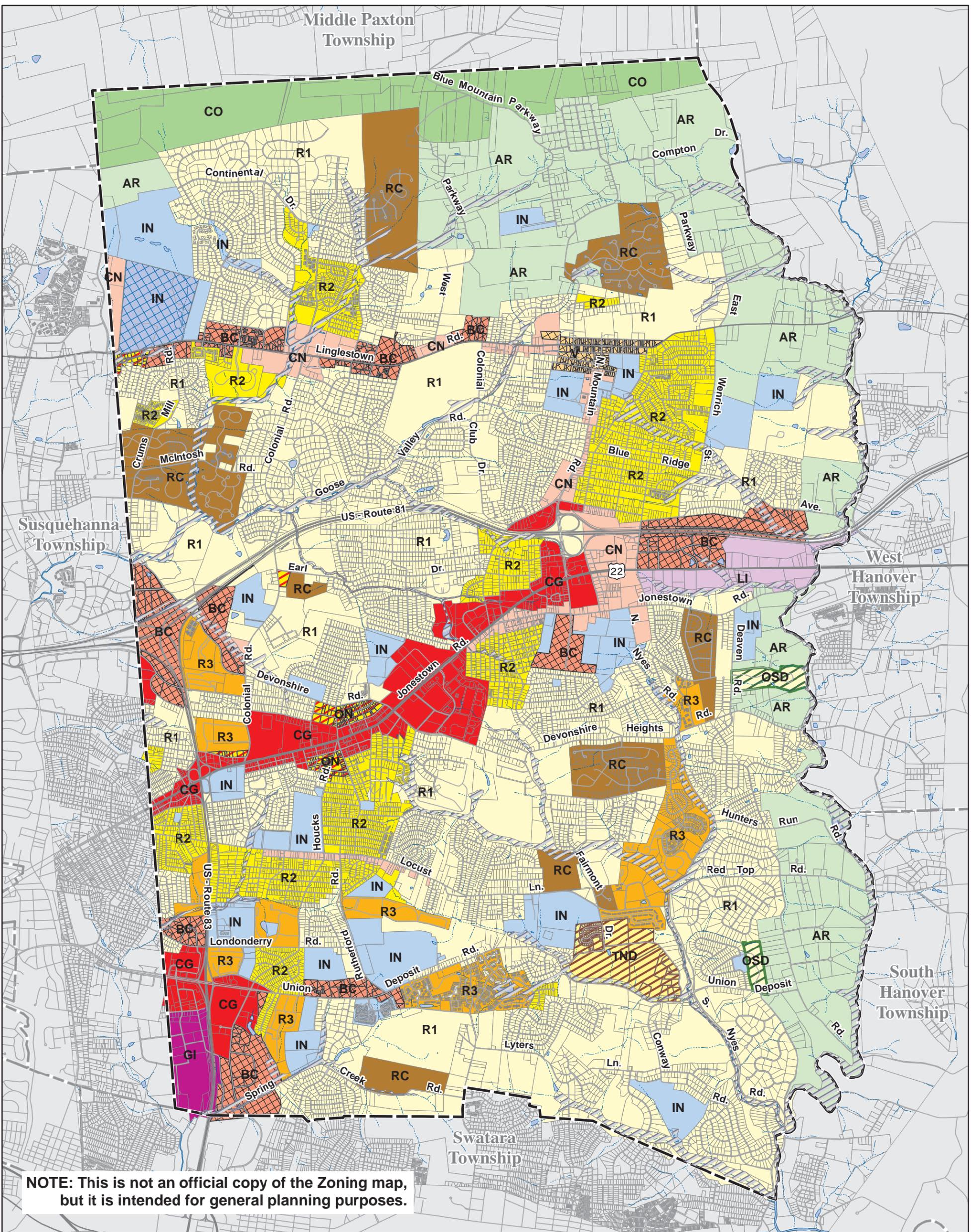
Approved, Proposed and/or Ongoing Developments

**DEVELOPABLE LANDS
AND PROPOSED AND
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS
February 2018**

0 3,000 6,000 Feet

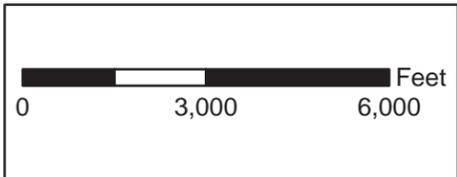


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LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP

SOURCE:
Based upon a Compilation by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, 2017.



ZONING DISTRICTS

- CO Conservation
- AR Agricultural Residential
- R1 Low Density Residential
- R2 Medium Density Residential
- R3 High Density Residential
- RC Residential Cluster

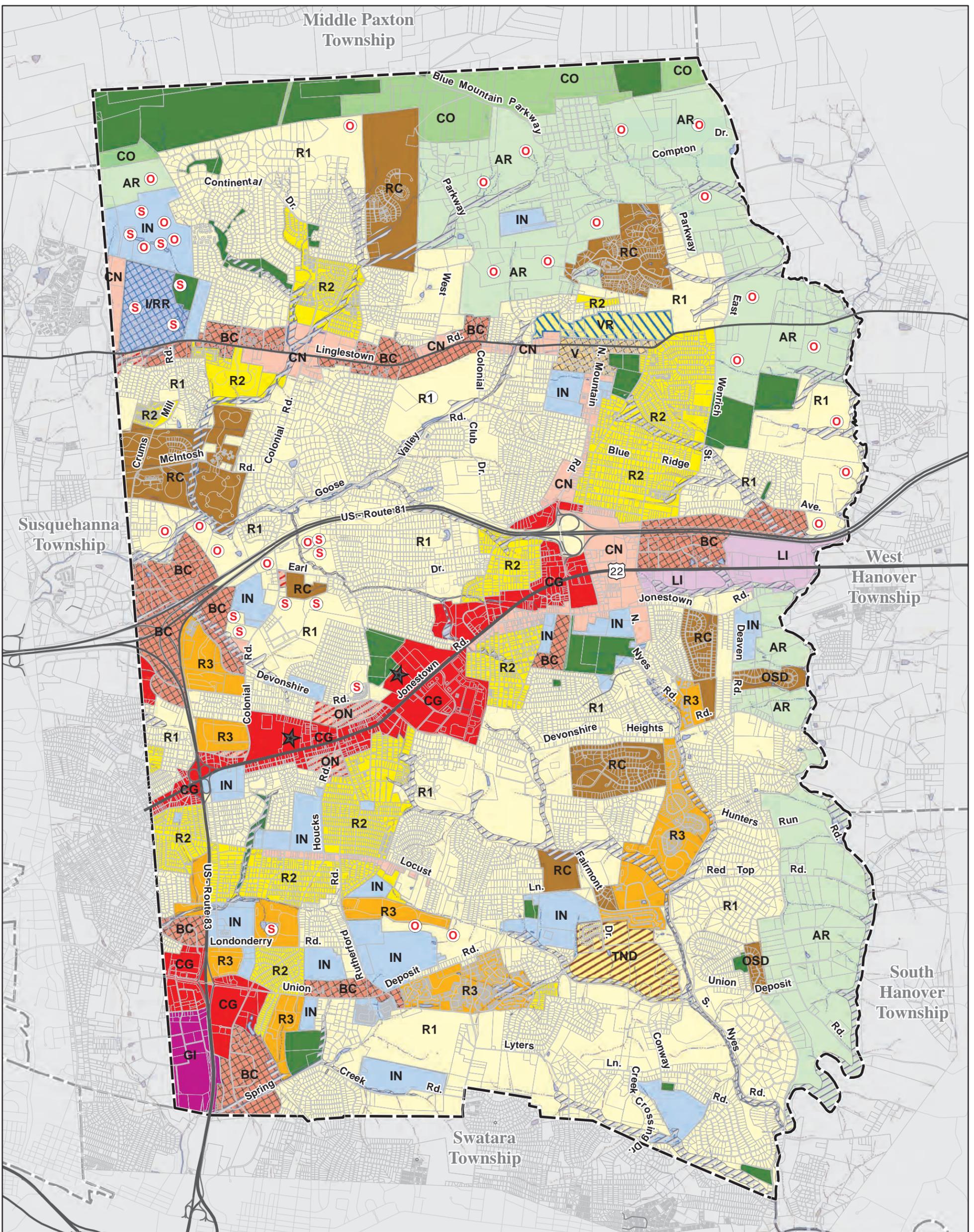
- TND Traditional Neighborhood
- Village
- OSD Open Space Development Overlay
- ON Office Neighborhood
- BC Business Campus
- CN Neighborhood Commercial
- IRR Institutional/Residential Retirement

- CG General Commercial
- IN Institutional
- LI Light Industrial
- GI General Industrial

FLOODPLAIN
 Approximate 100 Year Floodplain

January 2018
EXISTING ZONING

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LOWER PAXTON TOWNSHIP

Base Information Provided by
Dauphin County, 2017.



0 3,000 6,000 Feet

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| CO Conservation | ON Office Neighborhood | ★ Residential-Commercial Option |
| AR Agricultural Residential | BC Business Campus | S Senior Housing Encouraged |
| R1 Low Density Residential | CN Neighborhood Commercial | O Open Space Development Encouraged |
| R2 Medium Density Residential | CG General Commercial | FLOODPLAIN |
| R3 High Density Residential | IN Institutional & Public Uses | Approximate 100 Year Floodplain |
| RC Residential Cluster or Open Space Development | LI Light Industrial | |
| TND Traditional Neighborhood | GI General Industrial | |
| V Village | P Public Recreation & Protected Open Space | |
| VR Village Residential | I/RR Institutional/Residential Retirement | |

March 28, 2018
DRAFT LAND
USE PLAN

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Low Density Residential (Relates to the R-1 District) – These areas should mainly provide for single family detached houses at an average of two homes per acre. Selected portions of these areas should allow an Open Space Development Option. Then the lot sizes could be reduced to 1/4 acre with 40% of the tract preserved in open space.

This Plan recommends adding an additional Low Density Residential area north of I-81, west of the Beaver Creek, and east of Wolfensberger Park. The intent is that additional Low Density Residential areas should be considered on adjacent areas that are south of Linglestown Road and east of Weinwich Road, as needed in phases in the future. Any major development in the area should be required to be accompanied by the reconstruction by the developer of the adjacent Weinwich Road.

Medium Density Residential (Relates to the R-2 District) – These areas should mainly provide for single family detached houses, twins and townhouses. These areas are intended to provide for an average of four to five homes per acre.

High Density Residential (Relates to the R-3 District) – These areas are intended to provide for a range of housing types, including apartments, at an average density of eight homes per acre.

Residential Cluster (Relates to the R-C District) – These areas recognize developments that were previously approved under Residential Cluster zoning. That zoning was designed to allow a mix of housing types on larger tracts of land, provided that open space was preserved.

Village Residential (A proposed new district) – These areas north of Linglestown are intended to provide for residential development that would be designed to serve as an extension of the village. This should include an extension of streets and alleys, so that residents can easily travel to businesses in the village. It should provide for a mix of housing types at up to six homes per acre. A traditional pattern of development should be required, including inclusion of front porches, alleys and placement of most garages to the rear or side of homes.

Residential Retirement (Relates to the RRD District) – These areas provide for a mix of housing types for older persons, plus nursing homes and personal care centers, at densities of approximately 12 homes per acre.

Office Neighborhood (Relates to the ON District) – These areas are mainly intended to allow offices and other light business uses in areas between commercial and residential areas.

Village (Relates to the V District) – In these areas, the emphasis is upon preserving the best features of Linglestown and to making sure that new development fits in well within the existing character. These areas mainly provide for less intensive commercial uses (not including auto sales or gas stations), as well as residential and institutional uses.

Consideration should be given to relaxing a few of the zoning standards in these areas, especially to promote activities and housing that will be attractive to younger residents. For example, it may be advisable to allow small hotels, taverns, micro-breweries and micro-distilleries. The maximum size of a building is currently 5,000 square feet. This standard could also be relaxed, possibly with Zoning Hearing Board approval, provided that a larger new building should be required to appear to be two smaller buildings, as viewed from the street.

General Commercial (Relates to the CG District) – These areas include the shopping centers and most of the land along Route 22, and are intended to provide for a wide range of commercial uses. Improvements to the Route 22 corridor are discussed earlier in this chapter.

Residential/Commercial Option (Proposed New Provisions) – Along selected portions of the Route 22 corridor, there should be an option to include some new apartment development into a commercial development tract, provided that the commercial and residential uses are designed to be fully compatible and complementary. This option is envisioned to be applicable as part of potential

redevelopment of the former K-Mart site and portions of the Colonial Park Mall tract, as described previously in this chapter.

Neighborhood Commercial (Relates to the CN District) – These areas are not appropriate for the most intensive commercial uses, but instead should provide for commercial uses that are compatible with nearby homes.

General Industrial (Relates to the GI District) – The General Industrial areas should allow a wide range of uses, including uses that are not suitable in most of the Township. These areas are used to meet requirements of State law that a zoning ordinance needs to allow a location for every legitimate land use. These potentially troublesome uses are carefully regulated, including using the conditional or special exception approval process.

Light Industrial (Relates to the LI District) – These areas should provide for most types of industrial uses, but does not allow for the heaviest uses, such as chemical plants, asphalt plants and trash transfer stations. The goal is to promote high-quality light industrial parks in a campus-like setting. This includes making sure that tractor-trailer parking, outdoor storage and loading docks are screened by landscaping.

Business Campus (Relates to the BC District) – These areas mainly provide for office and research uses, and some institutional uses. A limited amount of commercial uses are appropriate, such retail stores, services and restaurants that occupy a maximum of 15% of a building. It is useful to allow some commercial uses within these areas to address everyday needs of the people who work in that area. A few very light types of industrial uses may also be appropriate. Consideration should be given to allowing a few additional uses, in recognition of the limited market for new office buildings in the region. This category is particularly important to avoid the over-commercialization of the Linglestown Road corridor.

Institutional (Relates to the IN District) – These areas mainly include the UPMC Pinnacle Community Campus and certain retirement communities. It provides for a mix of institutional uses, medical offices and age-restricted residential developments.

Age-Restricted Housing – It is desirable to continue to allow density bonuses for housing that is limited to persons age 55 and older, with no residents under age 18. Age-restricted housing has a very positive financial impact upon the school district. Age-restricted housing bonuses can also be justified because statistically it generates less traffic, less need for parking, less water use, less sewage use and less crime than other types of housing.

Additional Housing Choices - There is a need for a wider range of housing choices to meet the needs of various types of households. In particular, concerns were expressed about the difficulties of young persons being able to afford to establish their own households. Existing Township development standards should be reviewed to consider whether they could reasonably be revised to lower housing costs. For instance, the minimum size of a dwelling unit might be reduced from 600 to 500 square feet of floor area.

Lower Paxton has worked to meet various housing needs. According to the 2010 Census, 25 percent of existing housing units in the Township had two or more units in the structure (as apartments and townhouses). In 2017, the Township enacted a zoning amendment to allow a substantial new apartment development to be built along Linglestown Road, along with adjacent facilities to serve older persons. Lower Paxton's Open Space Development options and Traditional Neighborhood Development options are designed to allow lower improvement costs per housing unit, such as by allowing narrower lots that result in less street, curbing and utility costs per unit. This Plan endorses continued and expanded density and dimensional incentives for housing that meets the needs of older persons. The Township also has worked to comply with federal requirements regarding housing for persons with disabilities.

Currently, the Township Zoning Ordinance allows a “Unit for Care or Supervision” to be a second dwelling unit on a property. This unit is allowed if it is inhabited by relative who needs care and supervision by the residents of the primary housing unit on the property. The second unit can currently be attached to the main house, or if space allows, it can be a modular cottage in the back yard. Consideration should be given to removing this restriction, and instead allowing a second unit if it will be inhabited by at least one close relative of the residents of the primary housing unit. The second unit would not have a minimum size, but could be up to 1,000 square feet in floor area. The second unit should be limited to a maximum of two adults.

Consideration also should be given to promoting “Co-housing” alternatives. This arrangement typically involves relative small housing units that are arranged around a central green space, and that offer a community center where residents can share meals and enjoy recreation together.

Strategy L.3 - Seek improved designs in new residential development.

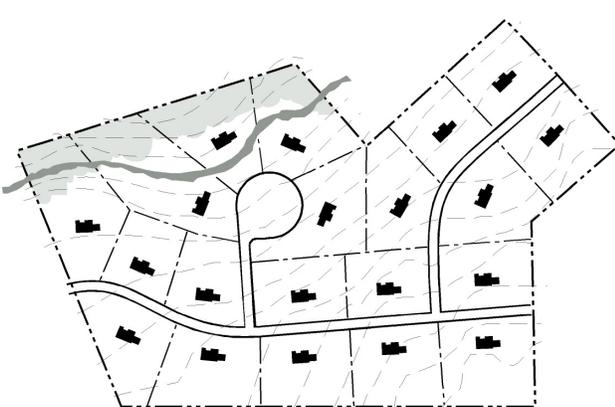
Development regulations, guidelines and plan reviews should be implemented to strongly encourage a higher level of design in new residential development. The intent is to promote:

- decorative pedestrian scale street lights,
- boulevard-style entrances to developments with landscaped medians,
- homes that face onto prominent well-landscaped central greens,
- incorporation of traffic calming devices (such as speed tables or narrowing of portions of streets where on-street parking is not needed),
- substantial numbers of street trees, and
- intensive landscaping of preserved open spaces and around stormwater facilities.

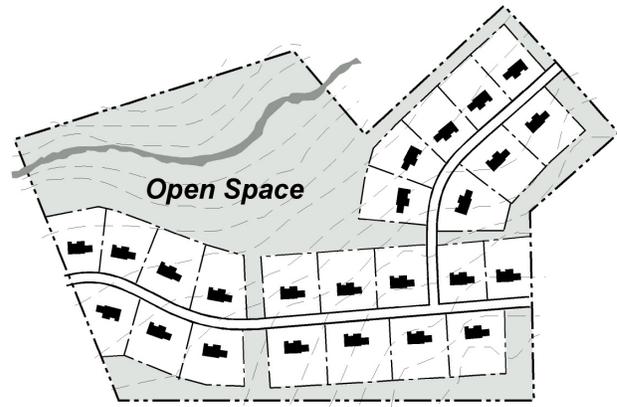
These elements would be particularly targeted towards areas zoned R-1 residential, but could also be useful in other areas.

Strategy L.4. – Allow the Open Space Development Option in selected areas, after updating standards to make sure that the open spaces serve valuable purposes.

“Open Space Development” is also known as “cluster development” or “conservation development.”



Example of Conventional Development



Example of Open Space Development

The goal is to have substantial areas of open space permanently preserved within any new development. New homes have to be located on the most suitable portions of a tract, in a manner that protects important natural features, including maintaining natural stream corridors. In comparison, conventional subdivisions usually result in little or no preserved open space because the entire tract is subdivided into building lots. Often most of the building lots in a conventional subdivision are virtually the same size and shape—hence the nickname “Cookie Cutter Subdivisions.”

The Open Space development option allows developers more flexibility in site layout. For example, developers can make better use of site topography and avoid soils that are not suitable for septic systems. Open Space Subdivisions also permit the developer to cluster building lots thereby reducing road lengths, grading and utility extensions - each of which saves on construction and maintenance costs.

Open Space development can help to maintain the scenic character of the Township by preserving ridgelines, creek valleys and woodlands. These green spaces then provide visual relief between developments. Preserved open space can often increase values of adjacent homes. Open Space development also can avoid stormwater problems by reducing alterations to the environment.

Stronger zoning standards are needed to make sure that the open space serves a public purpose, as opposed to simply being fragments of "leftover" lands with little development or recreation value. The areas of the tract that are to be preserved as open space should be determined very early in the site design process, and not as an afterthought. Narrow and unusable lands should not count towards the required open space. Greater attention needs to be focused on intensive landscaping of the preserved open spaces, and selecting open space locations that are more visible to the public and to residents.

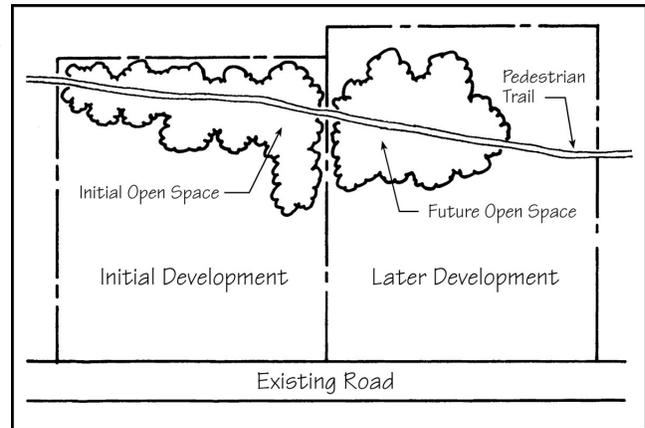
Portions of the required open spaces should be located in central "greens" with houses that surround and face onto the open space, as opposed to open space that is entirely located at less visible locations.

The following photos show examples of how houses can be designed to face onto landscaped common open space, and how the appearance of a development can be improved with design features.



Wherever feasible, open space should be provided in locations that can connect to existing public or semi-public open spaces or preserve land along creeks and the Blue Mountain. Open spaces should include trails that will connect with neighborhoods and public lands.

The sketch to the right shows how preserved open space from one development can be placed along the edge of an undeveloped lot so that it can eventually be interconnected with future open space when the adjacent lot is developed.



It is important to make sure that allowing Open Space Development does not greatly increase the number of homes that are allowed on a tract. Therefore, the density of an Open Space Development should continue to be based upon a “Yield Plan.” This sketch plan shows how many homes would have been permitted on the tract if it had been development under the conventional development regulations. Once the Township accepts this Yield Plan, then the Open Space Development allows an incentive in most cases of 10 percent more homes than would have been allowed under the conventional development.

The Township made a policy decision in 2006 to only allow Open Space Development where land has been zoned to be within an OSD Open Space Development Overlay District. Where this type of an overlay district would be allowed, an applicant has a choice of developing under the provisions of the regular zoning district or the optional overlay district.

Advantages of Open Space Developments – The following are some of the major advantages of properly designed Open Space Developments:

- On larger tracts, land can also be preserved for uses such as horse farms, plant nurseries, or Christmas tree farms.
- Houses can be located further away from highways, industrial uses, and pipelines. This is because a developer will not lose any housing units if they move the houses further away from those facilities. The Open Space Development option would be particularly valuable to provide space to maintain or plant substantial numbers of trees along I-81, with larger setbacks for new homes from the highway. This buffer area would not only be valuable to preserve woodlands and make the corridor more attractive, but it also would increase the livability and market values of homes by avoiding noise conflicts.
- Important natural features can be preserved, particularly along creek and river valleys. Open Space Developments 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. 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.
- With open space preservation, stormwater runoff can be managed in a more natural and attractive manner that encourages recharge into the groundwater.
- Scenic features can be preserved. Open Space Developments can place homes on less visible portions of a tract, while maintaining scenic views. For example, many open space 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.

- Recreational opportunities can be increased. Open Space Developments can include attractive areas for walking, jogging, bicycling, cross-country skiing and nature study.
- 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. Open Space Developments can provide the flexibility in layout to move homes off of steep slopes, which are more expensive to build upon.
- The Township and utilities can save on maintenance costs, because there are shorter lengths of roads, utilities, curbing and other improvements.
- Developers can often achieve higher sales prices. More and more developments are stressing in their advertising that homes are adjacent to preserved open spaces.

The Chester County Planning Commission has prepared the Cluster Subdivision Design Guide. That publication (which is available for free on the CCPC website), includes many examples of successful cluster housing developments in Chester County. It also describes lessons that have been learned from various projects.

The Design Guide reported that there have been disappointments with clustered housing developments that included open space that was too fragmented or that was located where it was not highly visible to the public. The most successful projects often preserve an aspect of community character, such as a historic house, a farmstead, scenic views or mature woods.

The Design Guide also describes how cluster ordinance provisions can be written to assist in preserving historic buildings, and to provide context around a preserved building. For example, a farmstead with a barn can be preserved with sufficient land around it to make it practical to allow new uses of the barn.

Conservation easements involve a legal tool that is used to make sure the open space could never be subdivided or developed in buildings. Several alternatives exist for long term maintenance of the preserved open space, including ownership by a legally-binding homeowners association, the Township, the County, or a land conservancy. In most cases, the preserved open space could be low-maintenance woods that would be owned by homeowner associations. However, in some cases, it may be suitable to seek Township parkland. The ordinance could also allow a golf course to count as open space. If there are not other alternatives to manage the open space, then the Township could allow the open space to be part of one very large private lot, with conservation easements to make sure that the vast majority of that lot will remain preserved.

Strategy L.5. – Consider use of the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) concept in additional areas.

"Traditional neighborhood development" involves: a) making sure new development fits into the character of existing older neighborhoods and b) encouraging new development that incorporates the best features of older development. In areas near Linglestown, it is particularly desirable to extend the best features of the older areas into new neighborhoods. The TND concept promotes a pedestrian-friendly environment.

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. If it is not appropriate to have shade trees in the right-of-way, they can be required immediately outside of the right-of-way.
- Requiring that new street lights meet a certain design standard that is similar to older styles of street lights.

- Sidewalks should be provided (or asphalt paths along main roads in rural areas). There should be an orientation to pedestrians, with an ability to walk or bicycle to stores, schools and parks. Overly wide residential streets and intersections should be avoided to discourage speeding and to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the street.
- A modest density should be encouraged that is similar to the typical development that occurred prior to 1940. This density should 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.
 - If rear access to garages is not practical, then garages should enter onto the side of homes whenever possible, particularly on corner lots. If a front-entrance garage is proposed, it should be designed so that it is not an overly prominent part of the street. For example, a one lane driveway can pass along the side of a house and then widen to enter a two-car garage that is setback from the front of the house. "Snout" houses should be avoided that have a front entrance garage as the home's most prominent feature.
- Buildings should be placed relatively close to the street, with front or side porches, to encourage interaction among neighbors. On a corner lot, a side porch can have the same effect. If residents spend time on their front porch, they can help oversee the neighborhood and report suspicious activity to the police.

Under the State Planning Code, a municipality can require some of these features in zoning ordinances. Alternatively, a municipality could offer density incentives for this type of traditional development.

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. Allowing relatively narrow single family detached lots can also provide an alternative to building townhouses - at the same density.

The TND provisions are currently available when the Zoning Map is changed to include a TND Overlay District. TNDs currently allow singles, twins, townhouses and limited types of apartments. Currently, a minimum of 20 percent of the tract would be required to be in open space, which could be reduced to 15 percent if recreation improvements are made. The maximum density is currently four dwellings per acre, which could be increased through the use of density bonuses. A portion of the tract is currently allowed to be used for limited types and intensities of commercial uses. The current regulations should be reviewed, such as to consider the proper phasing and timing of commercial portions of a TND.

Strategy L.6. – Promote use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) in selected areas.

This concept is currently an option that is offered to developers. If a developer of one tract of land pays an owner of another tract to permanently preserve their land, then the developer could receive approval to build at a higher density on the developer's tract. The tract that receives the higher density would need to be in an area that the Township has designated as being suitable for a higher density. The tract that would be permanently preserved would need to be in an area that the Township has targeted for preservation. The developer and the owner of the open land would negotiate on their own to determine how much the developer pay to the other landowner for the preservation.

This method allows development to be shifted from locations where preservation is desired to allow a higher density on other tracts in a township that are well suited for development.

The Township would then approve the development at a higher density at the same time as a conservation easement went into effect to preserve the other land. The preserved land would remain

privately owned but could never be developed. The preserved land could be re-sold and could be used for agriculture or certain open space uses.

This process is intended to promote preservation of land in the Conservation and Agricultural-Residential areas, in return for allowing a higher density in certain residential areas. The number of homes that could be transferred from one tract to another tract would be based upon a “Yield Plan.” This sketch plan would show how many homes would have been permitted on the tract that is to be preserved. Once the Township accepts this Yield Plan, that number of homes could be transferred from one tract to another tract. However, there could still be limits on the density of the tract being developed to make sure that it is not excessive.

One of the main benefits of Transfer of Development Rights is that it allows the Township to meet its obligation to provide for medium density housing in a manner that also preserves land in outlying areas.

TDR can greatly minimize the amount of land that is consumed by each new house, because it shifts development from large lots in outlying areas to smaller lots in designated growth areas.

TDR can also be used in combination with commercial or industrial development. For example, for every housing unit that is transferred from one area of the Township, an additional amount of building coverage or impervious coverage could be allowed in a business district.

Strategy L.7. – Cooperate with other agencies to improve the condition of older housing and to increase home ownership rates.

While most housing in Lower Paxton is well-maintained, there are pockets of older housing towards the west-central areas of the Township that are in need of rehabilitation.

Lower income resident owners of older homes should be connected with information about available programs to fund rehabilitation. This type of information can be coordinated with property code enforcement efforts.

The Dauphin County Department of Community and Economic Development and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency provide funding for counseling to prospective homebuyers, for weatherization and insulation programs, and for assistance to moderate income households in paying for the initial closing costs of a home purchase. These programs should be publicized within the Township. Many households could afford the monthly costs of a mortgage, taxes and insurance if they bought a home, but they cannot save sufficient up-front dollars to pay real estate transfer taxes and other settlement costs.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION PLAN

GOAL N.1. Protect important natural features, including creek valleys, wetlands, steeply sloped woodlands and groundwater and surface water supplies.

Objective: Improve the quality of stormwater runoff by managing it at its source, allowing it to infiltrate into the ground and slowing it down.

Objective: Continue to use development regulations to conserve important natural features. Encourage cluster / open space development incentives to maintain sensitive natural areas in permanent open space, where the open space will serve a valuable public purpose.

Objective: Continue to update flood plain ordinance to ensure the implementation of adequate flood plain measures, while considering whether limited development under strict regulations should be allowed in the flood plain fringe.

This section is intended to promote the conservation of natural features. The maps of natural features are included in the Appendices. In addition to standard development regulations, natural features can also be protected through use of Open Space Development options, as described in the Land Use and Housing Plan.

This section also seeks to improve the quality of stormwater runoff by managing it as a resource. This involves allowing it to soak into the ground and slowing it down.

Strategy N.1. – Encourage the implementation of a full set of sustainability initiatives, in cooperation with area businesses and other entities.

Sustainability needs to be promoted through many actions that will conserve energy, reduce air pollution and reduce the consumption of natural resources. While some actions can be carried out by the Township, many other elements should be part of a public education program.

The use of more fuel-efficient vehicles can have the greatest effect in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficiency can also be accomplished through more efficient indoor and outdoor lighting (such as LED or solar-power lights), as well as increased insulation and more efficient HVAC systems. Residents and businesses should be encouraged to upgrade to more energy-efficient appliances, lighting, heating and air conditioning systems. Any available State or Federal funding assistance or incentives should be publicized. Continued efforts are needed to convert outdoor lighting to LED fixtures.

Sustainability also needs to involve promotion of walking and bicycling and use of public transit as alternatives to many types of vehicle trips. Sustainability involves greater use of renewable energy (such as solar, wind and geothermal). It involves increased use of recycling and reducing the amount of waste that is generated, as well as promoting composting. Trees are critical to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen.

These efforts should encourage use of more energy efficient lighting and appliances, promoting green practices in new development (which could include some zoning incentives), purchase by the Township of more fuel efficient vehicles, providing information to residents, businesses and non-profits, and holding energy conservation workshops.

There are several additional actions that could be undertaken at the local level to promote sustainability, including:

- Additional bicycle racks should be installed, which can also be required as part of larger new developments. Residential developments should also be encouraged to provide secure bicycle lockers.
- There should be efforts to promote a greater amount of composting by residents and businesses. This can involve selling composting barrels at wholesale prices, as well as providing educational information about the proper ways to compost in order to avoid odors and vectors. Restaurants should also participate in efforts to collect their food waste for composting or other purposes.
- Solar-powered outdoor lights can be valuable in parks, particularly if they avoid the need for expensive or unattractive electrical wiring.
- Solar canopies can also be encouraged to be placed over parking lots, which helps to keep vehicles cool on hot summer days. Buildings should also be encouraged to install light colored roofs, which in the aggregate can reduce the overall heat in the town on hot summer days.

An example of solar panels installed over a parking area.



- The Township should make sure that development regulations do not unnecessarily interfere with the installation of solar panels on roof tops and over parking. For example, solar panels could be allowed to extend five feet above the height limit on the top of existing flat-roofed buildings. That additional height is often needed to allow panels to be angled for maximum solar exposure. Solar canopies attached to buildings should be allowed to extend into building setbacks. Minimum setbacks should be relaxed as needed to allow solar canopies over parking areas.
- Carpooling is one of the most energy efficient methods of commuting. Carpool matching services of Commuter Services of South Central Pennsylvania should be promoted. If a person participates in that carpool or vanpool service, they may be eligible for an emergency ride home, if needed in the future. Employers could offer preferential parking for carpoolers. There are no official carpool lots within Lower Paxton Township, but there are several commercial parking lots that allow free parking for persons riding CAT buses. Additional owners of shopping centers with excessive parking should be encouraged to allow use of part of their parking lots for carpooling and for park and ride services for bus riders. In many cases, those drivers will then patronize businesses in the shopping center before or after work, because it will be convenient.
- The Township should consider offering development regulation incentives for buildings that meet LEED certification or certain other environmentally sustainable building features. This type of incentive could include allowing an increased maximum building or impervious coverage if certain features are used. In general, a municipality in Pennsylvania cannot add additional requirements to the statewide Construction Codes, but can provide incentives.

Strategy N.2. – Carefully manage stormwater and other water resources.

Like many similar municipalities, Lower Paxton Township is experiencing substantial new requirements under the federal MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) program.

The following methods should be used to reduce stormwater runoff and improve the water quality of runoff:

- Infiltration of stormwater into the ground needs to be promoted, such as using porous pavement wherever practical. Porous pavement can involve types of asphalt, concrete or paving blocks. Where materials are regulated, the Township should consider establishing a set of specifications for pervious sidewalks and parking that can receive quick permits. However, care is needed to make sure that infiltration does not result in an increased risk of sinkholes and does not increase the risk of flooded basements.
- Methods using vegetation to absorb and slow runoff and filter out pollutants and sediment, such as rain gardens that are low-lying areas with plantings above a sand or gravel infiltration bed.
- Methods to capture and reuse runoff, particularly to water plants, such as by using cisterns or water barrels.
- Methods to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that enters storm sewers, such as installing vegetated green roofs on top of buildings, and disconnecting downspouts from storm sewers and directing the water instead over vegetated areas.

Vegetated curb extensions can be installed where pavement width can be reduced along segments of a street. These curb extensions can be placed where no parking areas already exist, such as near intersections. They can be combined with bulb-out curbs to reduce the width of street that must be crossed by pedestrians.

Streetscape improvements should also be designed with stormwater management in mind. Porous brick pavers are now available. Also, brick pavers can be installed without the use of mortar, which reduces runoff and also allows easier removal and reinstallation when underground utilities need repair. Where the main pedestrian pathway is constructed of concrete, un-mortared pavers can be used between the main sidewalk and the curb.

Strategy N.3. – Minimize the disturbance of steeply sloped lands.

It is important to minimize alteration of steeply sloped lands in order to avoid steep driveways that are difficult to use in snow and ice, to avoid stormwater problems and to minimize soil erosion.

In areas with steep slopes, the Township's current zoning ordinance reduces the intensity of development on moderately steep slopes of 15% to 25%, and very steep slopes of 25% or greater. One intent is to effectively reduce the percentage of a lot that can be covered by buildings and paving that do not allow most runoff to soak into the ground. There also are limits on road construction on steeply sloped areas.

Strategy N.4. – Carefully manage flood-prone areas and preserve wetlands.

The 100-Year Flood plain is the area expected to be flooded during the worst storm in a 100-year period. More recently, this has also been described as having a one percent chance of being flooded each year. However, throughout the region, the frequency and severity of severe storms have been increasing.

The Flood plain is comprised of the Floodway (which is the main flood channel) and the Flood plain-fringe (which typically has more shallow floodwaters).

Lower Paxton should consider requiring a higher freeboard for new buildings. This could mean that a new building must be built with its lowest enclosed floor at least 2 or 3 feet above the expected 100 year flood elevation. Lower Paxton currently requires a 1.5 feet freeboard. That type of higher freeboard could be used (along with other provisions) to gain a reduction in flood insurance premiums for all properties in the Township, through the Federal Community Rating System.

Hydric soils are indicators of possible wetlands, and help identify areas where a more detailed wetlands delineation is needed. Wetlands are required to be identified as part of development plans for individual sites. A minimum 20 feet setback should continue to be considered between delineated wetlands and new buildings or parking areas.

Strategy N.5. – Improve the creeks as natural corridors and possible recreational assets.

It is essential to have trees and thick vegetation along the creeks to filter pollutants from runoff, minimize erosion, maintain habitats for aquatic life, and protect water quality. A 75 feet wide minimum setback is currently required from the center of a perennial creek for buildings, paving and outdoor business storage. If existing vegetation is removed from along a creek, it should be required to be replaced with new vegetation that serves the same or better ecological purpose. Also, if development occurs along a creek, the Township could require the planting of “stream trees” in the same way that street trees are required. To assist in meeting federal MS4 obligations, the Township is working on tree planting and bank stabilization improvements along creeks. Funds can be sought through the County Conservation District or the State TreeVitalize Program for additional plantings along the creek.

Strategy N.6. – Promote tree plantings and pervious sidewalk materials around trees.

Trees improve air quality, add natural beauty, reduce air conditioning costs, and increase property values. With proper selection of species and proper installation, conflicts between trees and sidewalks and utility lines can be avoided.

The more open area that is provided around tree trunks, the less chance there is that the tree roots will damage sidewalks. Un-mortared pervious pavers that resemble brick or tree grates should be used near street trees, where a hard surface is needed. These pavers allow more air and water to reach the tree roots, which reduces the likelihood that the tree roots grow in a manner that heaves the sidewalk. If a tree root heaves these pavers, the pavers can be easily removed, the root can be trimmed, and then the pavers can be laid back into place.

Where there is insufficient room for a street tree within the public right-of-way, street trees should be encouraged to be planted with the trunks immediately outside the right-of-way, where feasible.