

**DRAFT**  
**January 2019**



*Hermitage*  
**2PA30**

**Comprehensive Plan**

CITY OF HERMITAGE, MERCER COUNTY, PA



EXISTING GATEWAY ON PA 18 HEADING  
NORTH INTO HERMITAGE  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



FNB



FNB BUILDING ON PA 18/STATE STREET  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)

*Hermitage*  
20 PA 30

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*The City of Hermitage Market Study was completed in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and is a companion document, available on the City's website at <https://www.hermitage.net/>. The Study was completed by Fourth Economy to provide the City with an analysis of trends and potential opportunities related to housing, commercial and industrial development.*

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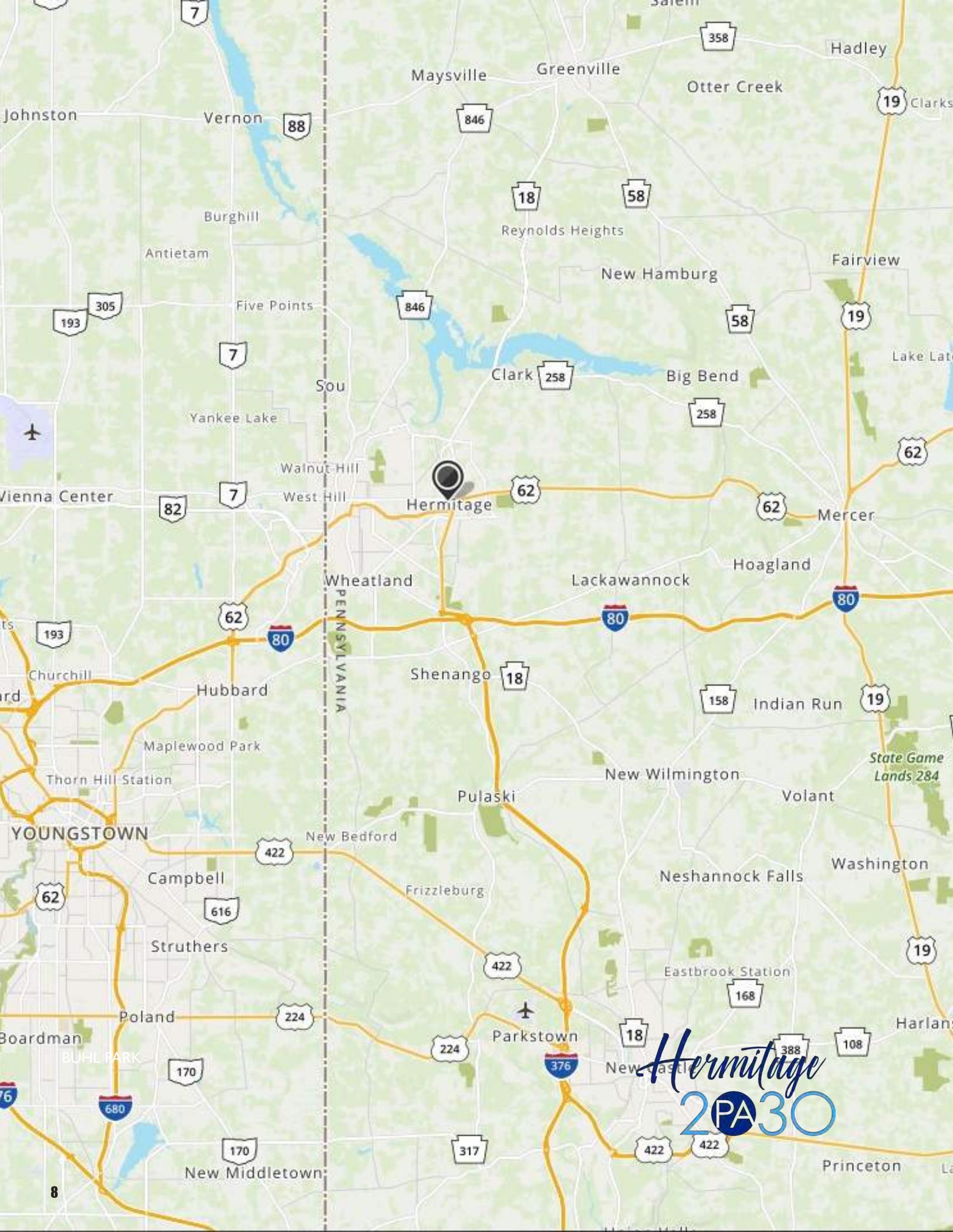


The Avenue of 444 Flags  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)

*Hermitage*  
2030

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**RESOLUTION**



Hermitage

YOUNGSTOWN

Parkstown

*Hermitage*  
2PA30

# INTRODUCTION

# Planning Context

*The City of Hermitage last updated its comprehensive plan in 1993. What has changed since then? What is the vision today?*

## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Municipal planning is authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). A comprehensive plan is a municipality's official statement of its vision, goals and objectives as well as the guide for the future development. It serves as a reference point for the governing body's development and budget decisions and capital improvements priorities as well as for the Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission's policies and initiatives. It is also a guide for private-sector decision-making and it provides guidelines for planning commission reviews of subdivision and land development applications. The comprehensive plan is the basis for the community's land use regulations and updates.

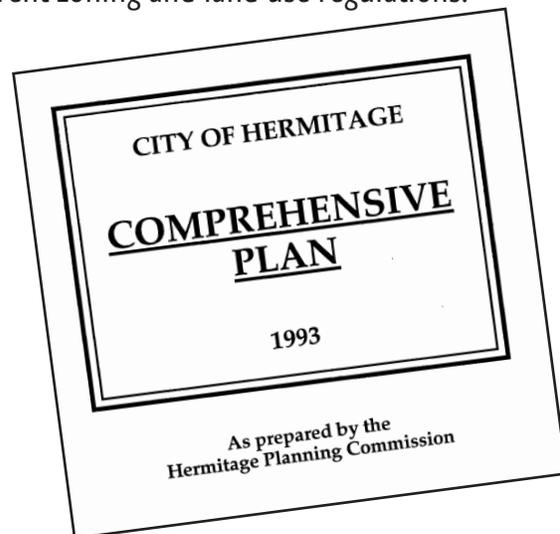
A Comprehensive Plan is not a stand alone document. In conjunction with the Plan, a Market Study was completed in by Fourth Economy to provide the City with a realistic picture of the City's housing market; retail gap analysis; commercial and industrial market analysis; and spotlight areas (the downtown, Shenango Valley Mall,

LindenPointe and industrial areas). The Market Study is a companion document to the Comprehensive Plan and is available for review on the City's website.

## Why is the City updating its plan?

The MPC requires that municipalities review their plans at least every ten years. The City of Hermitage last adopted a complete comprehensive plan in 1993, although several targeted plans have been undertaken since then. These plans have been reviewed to determine what projects have been completed and what recommendations are still valid. A summary can be found on pages 12-15.

The purpose of a comprehensive plan update is to identify what has changed since the last plan and re-evaluate the City's vision, goals and strategies for guiding future development. Re-establishing the vision allows the City to identify the most pressing issues for the next 10-20 years and related impacts on current zoning and land use regulations.



- Key recommendations from the 1993 Comprehensive Plan included an extensive list of transportation system improvements, including intersections, bridges and the widening of PA Route 18. Most of these projects have been completed. The 1993 Plan also recommended improvements – which have now been realized - to the City’s Water Pollution Control Plant and collection system. Plant capacity has been increased from 5.5 million to 7 million gallons per day and now includes a cutting-edge food waste to energy facility. Infiltration removal and upgrades have been also accomplished throughout the collection system.
- The Plan called for the creation of a 70-100 acre business park, which has been fulfilled with the creation of the LindenPointe Business Campus, including the eCenter business incubator and the Training and Workforce Development Center. Recommended investments have also been made in Buhl Park and Hermitage School District recreational facilities.
- Recommendations in the area of housing emphasized rehabilitation of older existing neighborhoods and individual housing units, which is an ongoing City effort by way of the Neighborhood Investment Program and the Housing Rehabilitation Program. These programs have accounted for \$3.5 million worth of investments over 20 years to improve the City’s neighborhoods and housing stock and they are still ongoing. The Plan also suggested that the City partner with other entities to provide more senior housing, which was accomplished by the creation of Carol Gurrera Village in 2005-2009, in conjunction with the Mercer County Housing Authority.
- The 1993 Plan also recommended additional zoning districts as transitional areas between traditional residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. This recommendation was accomplished in the concurrent zoning ordinance update, which created and implemented the R-3 and R-4 mixed-use districts.

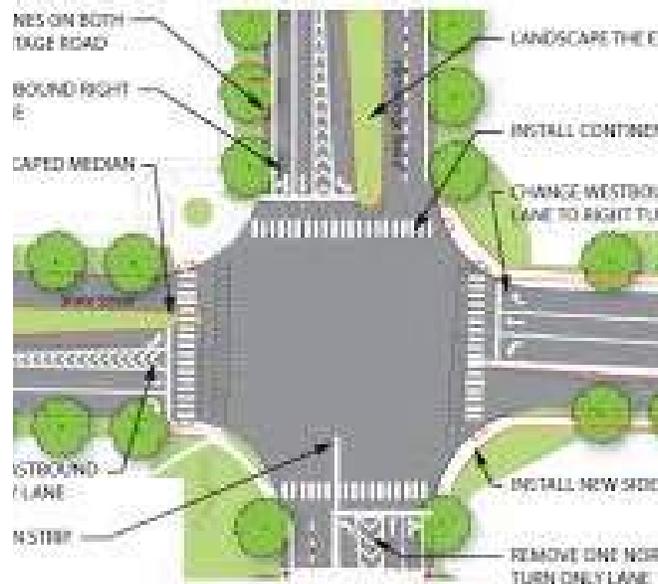


The City of Hermitage kicked off the planning process with a meeting of the Steering Committee and a bus tour of the City. Key sites within the City were visited and discussed.



The 1999 Route 18 South Corridor Study

- This plan studied land use along the then-recently widened corridor of South Hermitage Road (PA Route 18) from the Shenango Township boundary near Interstate 80 to the US Route 62 (Shenango Valley Freeway) intersection. The Plan emphasized the need for site design standards for new non-residential development and the incorporation of landscaping, pedestrian facilities and access management strategies into development design.
- The Plan was followed by adoption of the Route 18 South Corridor Overlay Zoning District in 2002, and by adoption of similar City-wide site design standards shortly thereafter.
- The Plan also recommended the promotion of the area near US Route 62 as a regional commerce center. From approximately 2011 – 2015, LRC Realty developed a large previously-vacant parcel at the southwest corner of Route 18 and US Route 62 into a shopping center, including a Kohl's Department Store, restaurants and other retail businesses. The City of Hermitage Mercer County and the Hermitage School District participated in a Tax Increment Financing initiative for the development which assisted in the improvement of traffic infrastructure in the area of the project.



The 2001 Route 18 North Corridor Study

- Similar to the Route 18 South study, this plan reviewed land use along the second portion of Route 18 to be widened, from E. State Street north to the City line. The recommendations of the Plan emphasized transportation interconnections and access management to relieve pressure on the major highway and improve safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The Plan also encouraged mixed-use development in areas of the corridor and suggested a master plan be developed for the City center area around the intersection of E. State Street and Route 18.

FARRELL, HERMITAGE, SHARON, WHEATLAND  
JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

JULY 2007



City of Farrell, City of Hermitage, City of Sharon, Borough of Wheatland



HERMITAGE TOWN CENTER  
A Community Vision

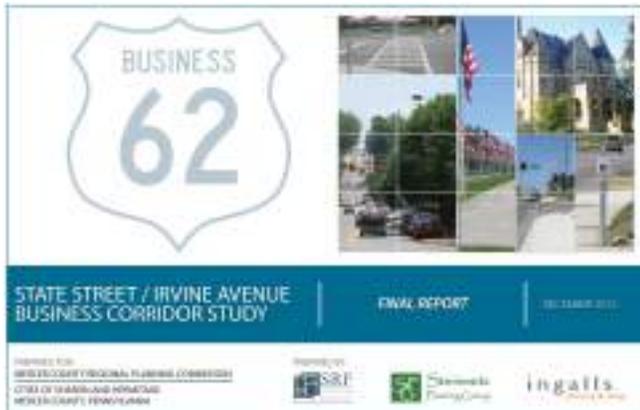
Prepared by  
2008  
The City of Hermitage  
City Manager: Robert J. Thomas, Jr.  
Mayor: 2007

The 2007 Farrell-Hermitage-Sharon-Wheatland Joint Comprehensive Plan, although never officially adopted by the City of Hermitage Board of Commissioners, provides a regional perspective for the Shenango Valley region.

- The Plan called for a study of the East State Street Corridor through Sharon and Hermitage to improve traffic and street design, and that plan has since been completed and many of the recommendations are now under construction. The Plan also recommended mixed-use development in many areas, especially along major highway corridors, gateway enhancements, preservation of open space and agricultural areas and improvement and expansion of recreational areas and opportunities.

The 2008 Hermitage Town Center Plan

- This Plan built on the concepts of the Route 18 North Corridor Study, but concentrated on the area around the E. State Street and Route 18 intersection. The plan emphasized an interconnected street system and visualized the eventual redevelopment of the Shenango Valley Mall into a street-based mixed use town center. The plan showed how the City center area could eventually develop to provide access and desirability for pedestrians as well as vehicles, and design of spaces that promote human interaction and vitality. This Plan also recognized the desirability of a physical landmark and other design and site amenities to establish the identity of the City center, creating a sense of place for the community. The Plan included a conceptual master plan for the area and graphic illustrations of the possibilities of redevelopment.



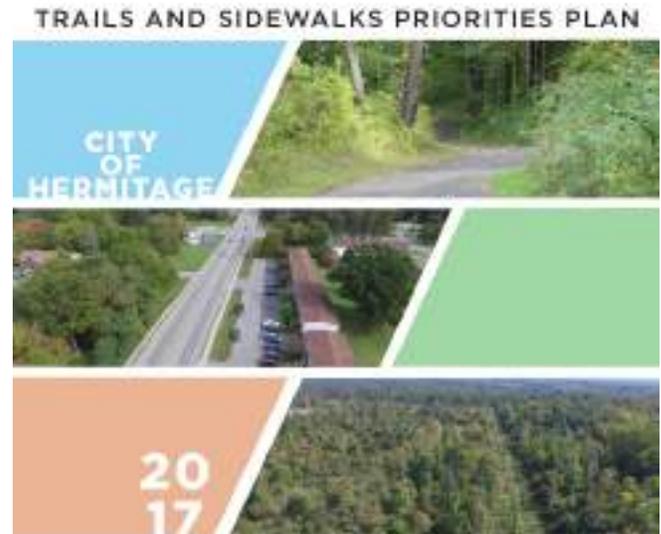
### The 2012 East State Street - Irvine Avenue Corridor Study

- This Plan studied the E. State Street & Irvine Avenue Corridor (US Route 62) from the Ohio state line in the west to Keel Ridge Road in the east. The corridor runs through the Cities of Sharon and Hermitage. The Plan recommended various intersection and streetscape improvements many of which are currently under construction in both communities. The Plan also emphasized pedestrian facilities which are also being upgraded and are scheduled to be constructed in several areas where they did not exist at the time of the Plan. The Plan recommended a roundabout to replace the signalized intersection at the junction of US Route 62 (SV Freeway), E. State Street and the entrance to the Shenango Valley Mall. The roundabout design is complete and construction is scheduled for 2019.



### The 2016 Hermitage Comprehensive Recreation, Parks & Open Space Plan

- This plan was an update to two prior recreation plans.
- The overall mission is to continue providing good, clean, fun recreation in Hermitage, the City has set out on its mission to Enhance and assure the quality of life of Hermitage residents by providing a diversity of park and recreation resources that are: safe, accessible family-oriented, well maintained and/or protected, economically responsible and strategically located.
- Recreation goals are to: engage in outreach, education, communication and cooperation; foster the continued livability and successes of the community's recreation and open spaces; facilitate the protection and promotion of the City's rich natural resources, recreation opportunities and history; encourage recreation-based economic development that complements existing resources and landscape capacities; use a balanced approach in the maintaining and sustaining facilities and fiscal health associated with recreation vitality; and serve all members of the community including all ages, all abilities.



### The 2016 SVATS MPO Mercer County Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- The Mercer County Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) focuses transportation investments and recommended policies to encourage a prosperous future and improve safety and quality of life for Mercer County residents and businesses through the year 2042. The LRTP was adopted by the Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (SVATS MPO) on November 15, 2016. A Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) utilizes public input and stakeholder engagement along with a data-driven approach to consider existing and future transportation, land use, economic, and accessibility concerns within the MPO area. It includes a fiscally constrained set of transportation improvements, recommendations for future studies, and recommended policies to help the region meet its goals and objectives over the next 20+ years.

### The 2017 City of Hermitage Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan

- The vision of this plan is to build upon the 19.2 miles of pedestrian facilities currently in place throughout the City of Hermitage and expand it to approximately 48 miles total. In order to achieve this vision, approximately 28 miles of facilities will need to be constructed to achieve this goal and vision for the City. These facilities range between simple sidewalks to 'share the road' facilities to dedicated off-road paved trails. The type of improvement or facility varies depending on the location within the City, the amount of traffic anticipated and other circumstances.
- The City has also identified three mobility zones in terms of where specific land uses are, where people reside and where development is actively happening. The mobility zones are intended to indicate varying degrees of connectivity.

# History of Hermitage

*Commonwealth Legislature reserved Donation Land Grant Parcels to be given to Revolutionary War officers and soldiers*

## How Hermitage became a City

**1783** - After the Revolutionary War, the federal government awarded bounty lands to citizens and soldiers for services rendered. An act passed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Legislature reserved the area of which is now Mercer County (established on March 12, 1800) to be given to the soldiers; known as Donation lands.

**1833** - Hickory Township was incorporated from portions of Shenango and Pymatuning Townships. As originally established, Hickory included what is now Hermitage, Sharon, Farrell, Wheatland and Sharpsville.

**1841** - the first annexation of Hickory Township occurred when the City of Sharon was incorporated (initially as a Borough)

**1872** - annexations continued when the Borough of Wheatland was incorporated

**1874** - annexations continued when the Borough of Sharpsville was incorporated

**1916** - annexations continued when the City of Farrell was incorporated (initially as a Borough)

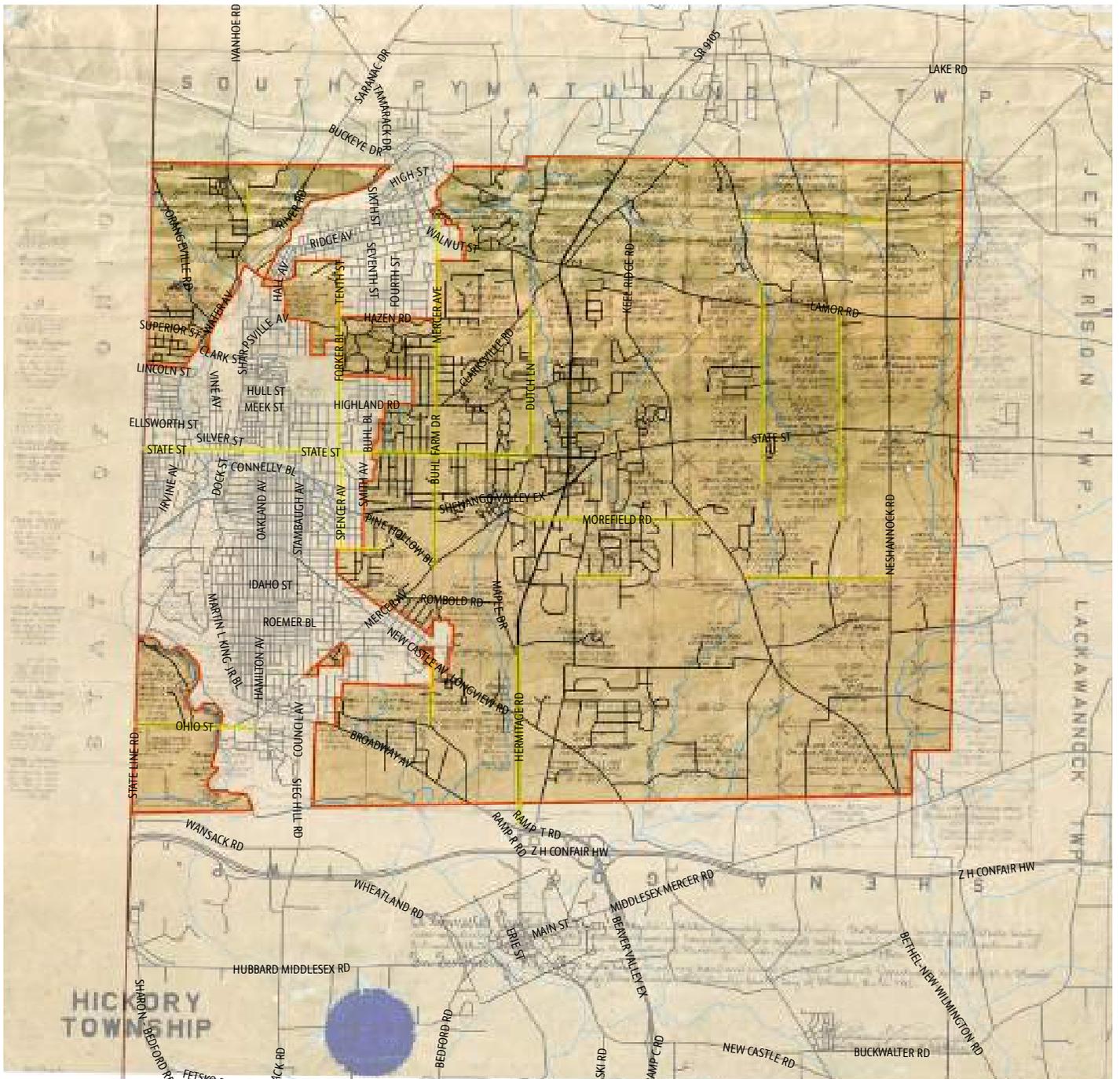
**1955** - Hickory becomes a Township of the First Class and annexations cease

**1976** - Hickory Township adopted a Home Rule Charter and changed its name to Hermitage

**1983** - Hermitage Township was officially reclassified to the Home Rule City of Hermitage

## Other notable events that have shaped the history of Hermitage include:

- Between 1835-1890, there was large growth in industry from coal mining, largely due to the Erie Canal. Neshannock was Hickory's largest coal village (approx 2,000 people).
- In 1915, Buhl Park was created by Frank Buhl, a millionaire industrialist.
- The construction of the Town Plaza in 1955 marks the beginning of large scale retail development. Later, Hermitage Square Shopping center (1962) and the Shenango Valley Mall (1966) are added.
- In 1980, on the 100th day of the Iranian Hostage Crisis (1979 to 1981), Tom Flynn directed the hoisting of 100 flags along the Avenue leading into the Hillcrest Memorial Park (cemetery), adding one each day until the hostages were released on January 21, 1981, 444 days after they were taken.
- In 1982, the Economic Development Commission is formed in response to the downturn of industry.
- An F5 Tornado touched down in Hermitage in 1985, ripping through its industrial corridor and several residential neighborhoods.
- Originally an old airport/landing strip, the LindenPointe campus was purchased in partnership with a private developer in 2004 and sparked the beginning of a major tech campus, including the eCenter (business incubator and accelerator) and the eAcademy (entrepreneurship academy).



*The map above shows a copy of the connected land surveys of the original donation lands for what is now the City of Hermitage, with the current street grid overlaid. The roads highlighted in yellow show how many of the current day roads follow the original land grant lines.*

Source: <http://www.sharonherald.com/community/mercer-county-history/>



BUHL PARK  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)

*Hermitage*  
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# ISSUES & TRENDS

# Development Patterns

*With comprehensive plans completed in 1977, 1993 and 2007, how has development changed?*

Existing land use maps were prepared as part of each comprehensive plan; however, the 1993 map was unavailable so aerial photography was used to make some general estimates.

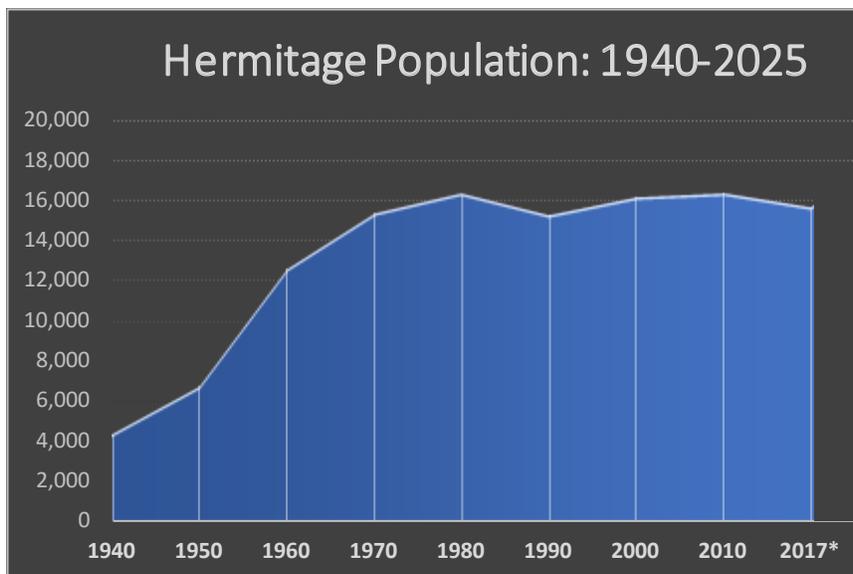


**Land consumption has increased despite a lack of population growth since 1977.**



The City's population stabilized in the 1970s, with total population hovering around 16,000 since 1980.

- Originally Hickory Township, Hermitage is the fourth largest municipality in Mercer County in terms of land area (29.7 square miles). By and large, the bulk of the development in Hermitage is best described as suburban outgrowth from the cities of Sharon and Farrell.
- Despite no population growth, overall land consumption, including residential development, has increased since 1977.
  - » In 1993, developed areas (i.e. residential, commercial, industrial and public lands) accounted for 34% of total land area.
  - » By 2007, that increased to 45%.
  - » By 2018, that increased to 50%.
- As a result, the City has had an overall loss of agriculture and open space; however, as evidenced above, the pace has considerably slowed.



Source: US Census Bureau  
\*2017 is ACS estimates

Note: Population projections were unavailable. Mercer County Regional Planning Commission developed some in 2006 but are not longer accurate and so were not used.



**While the densest residential development is still closest to SR 18, it is creeping into the eastern, rural areas of the City.**

Residential development accounts for the majority of the increased land consumption, as shown in Table 1 below. It needs to be noted that these are not perfect comparisons, due to differences in data collection (parcel-based mapping was used in 2007 and 2018; however, large parcels are sometimes split to show a small area being used for one house, as that parcel could be subdivided in the future to accommodate an increase in housing units).

- In 1977, residential development comprised 17% of all land use in Hermitage. The highest density residential developments were found west of SR 18, along the City borders with Sharon, Farrell and Wheatland (and in Patagonia), in addition to surrounding commercial areas on State Street and SR 18. These developments, although suburban in nature, consisted of smaller lots (between 1/4 to 1/2 acre), compared to the larger rural lots (mostly at least one acre) that were scattered along the main corridors (East State Street, Keel Ridge Road, Hermitage Road Lamor Road, Longview Road).



Example of typical neighborhood pre-1977

- By 1993, residential accounted for 22% of all land use, with many new housing developments constructed. Although the majority of which were east of SR 18, many were extensions of existing neighborhoods.
- By 2007, residential increased to 29%. In comparing the aerial photography in 1993 to the existing land use map from 2007, much of this development occurred in the southern part of the City (between what is now LindenPointe and Longview Road) and off East State Street, around the Hickory VFW Public Golf Course.
- Today, in 2018, residential development accounts for 34% of all land area in the City. It should be noted that some of this increase can be attributed to a change in land use classification (in 2007, only portions of some

**Table 1: Historical Land Use Comparison (as % of total land area)**

	1993	2007	2018
Residential	22%	29%	34%
Commercial	3%	3%	4%
Industrial	2%	4%	3%
Public / Semi-Public	1%	4%	4%
Recreation	5%	5%	6%

Source: 1993 data is from the 1993 Comprehensive Plan; 2007 data is from the unadopted regional comprehensive plan GIS data; 2018 data is from a GIS-based land use survey in conducted in 2018. Note: with the exception of residential data, no other acreage/% land use was available from the 1977 plan.

parcels were classified as residential while today the entire parcel is).

- In terms of total housing units:
  - » 1990 = 6,359
  - » 2000 = 7,109 (11.8% increase)
  - » 2010 = 7,768 (9.2% increase)



### **An aging population combined with decreased persons per household is changing housing needs.**

However, it's not just that there are new housing units being built, much of it can be attributed to a changing demographic.

- The 1993 Comprehensive Plan identified the following priority land use policies for residential development:
  - » Need to provide for more multifamily housing. The 1965 zoning ordinance limited multifamily housing and as of 1993, 25% of all housing units were classified as multifamily.
  - » Need to address housing issues related to an aging population. Issues included an expected increase in available single family homes as seniors retire to alternative housing units and a need for more alternative, market-rate age-based housing developments.
  - » Continue with housing rehabilitation programs; with emphasis on the areas close to the urban municipal borders (Patagonia and neighborhoods near Sharon, Farrell, Sharpsville).

- In looking at building permits from 1995-2006, there were a total of 1,179 housing units constructed, for an average of 107 units per year. Approximately half of all units were single family homes (590), with the rest being apartments and condominiums.
  - » There were nine multifamily developments that (at least began, if not finished) construction between 1995 and 2006.
  - » Of those, four were condominiums, consisting of 245 units; two were senior independent units, consisting of 128 units; two were apartments, consisting of 90 units; and one was an assisted living complex, consisting of 52 units.
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  - » There were nine multifamily developments that (at least began, if not finished) construction between 1995 and 2006.
  - » Of those, four were condominiums, consisting of 245 units; two were senior independent units, consisting of 128 units; two were apartments, consisting of 90 units; and one was an assisted living complex, consisting of 52 units.
- Total number of households has increased (6,158 in 1990 compared to 6,945 in 2015) while persons per household has continually decreased since 1970.



Example of new development in early 1990s



Example of new development in the 2000s

## How has housing changed?

One interesting development pattern that has not seemed to change dramatically over the years is lot size for single family homes. Many of the housing developments that were constructed in the 90s and 00s continue to have similar lot size than the older developments (typical lot size is roughly half of an acre). In contrast, the average size of single family homes seems to have increased (2,000 square feet to 3,000 square feet).

Since 1995, the City has seen six condominium developments constructed, totaling 295 units.

## 49 Median age in Hermitage

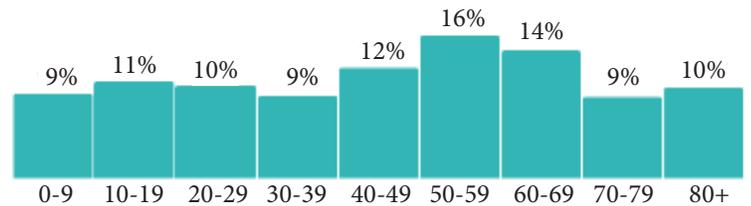


Up from 41.9 in 1990  
~10% higher than  
Youngstown- Warren-  
Boardman OH-PA Metro  
Area (43.5)



~20% higher than  
Pennsylvania (40.5)

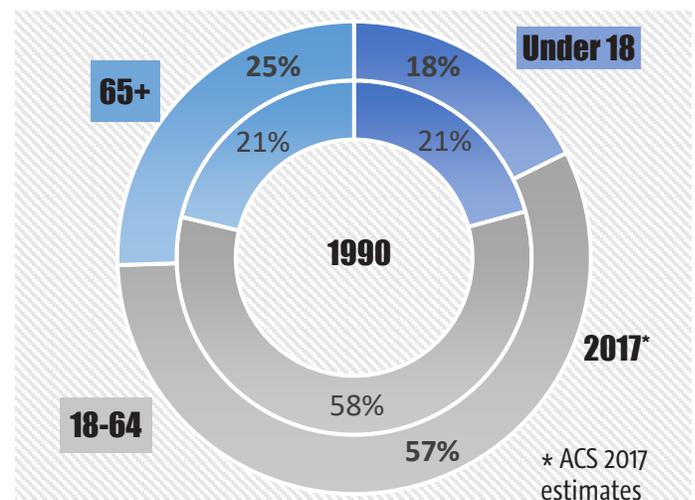
## Population by Age



## 2.3 persons per household



Decreasing since 1960  
Lower than Pennsylvania  
(2.5)

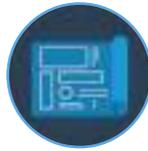




**Although commercial and office uses have expanded in terms of land consumption and footprint, retail closures in the last two years pose concerns.**

Historically, commercial development grew outward from the City of Sharon, along State Street to SR 18, with small pockets concentrated around major intersections. Large scale retail development began in 1955 with the construction of the Town Plaza, with shopping centers and the mall coming in the 1960s.

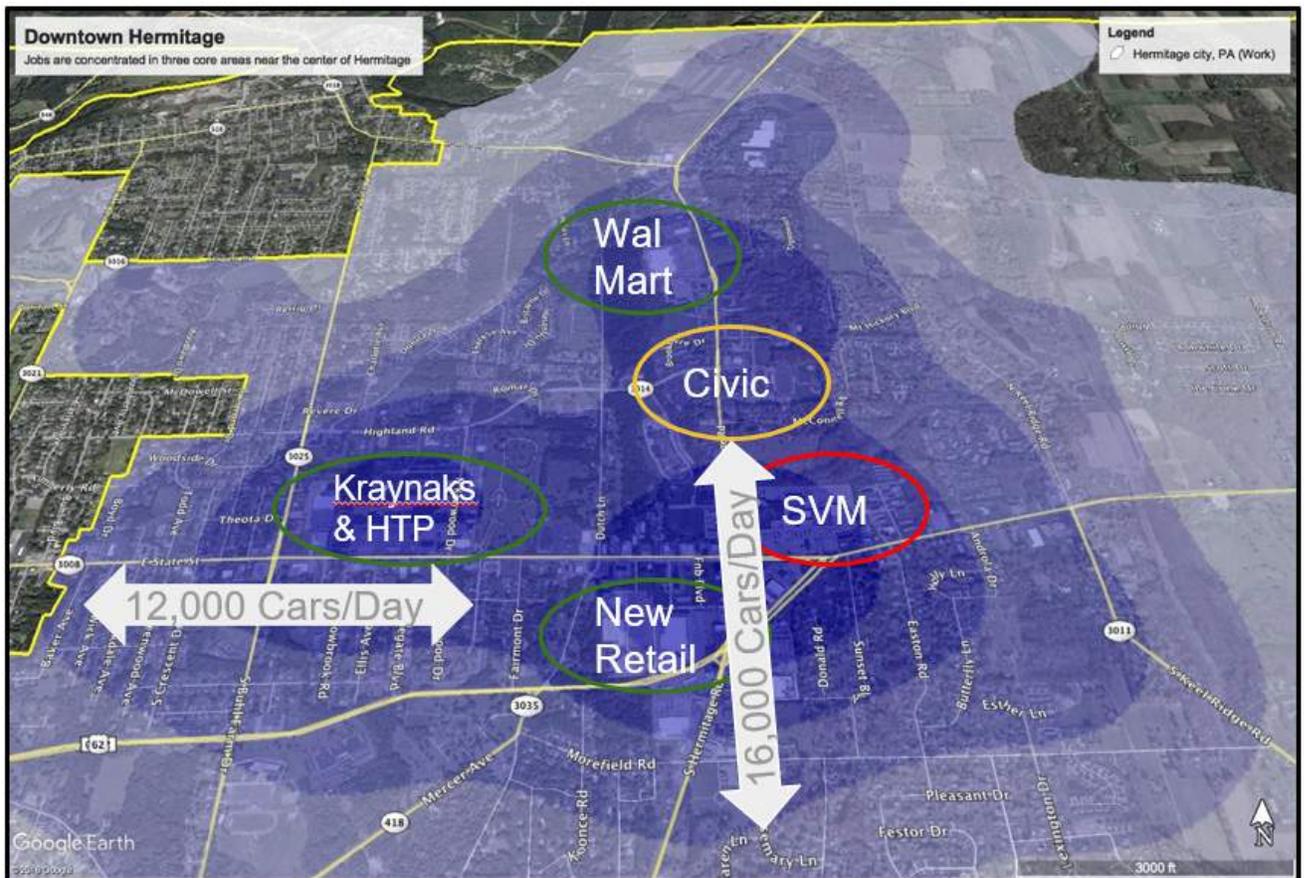
- Commercial development patterns changed slightly between 1977 and 1993. The same pattern of concentration at the primary crossroads as well as lineal development along major corridors, particularly East State Street.
- The first Wal-Mart opened at the corner of Hermitage Road and US Route 62 in 1991. In 2004, the company built a new Wal-Mart Supercenter on a vacant parcel 1.5 miles north on Hermitage Road near Dutch Lane.
- Kohl's opened in 2013, at the corner of SR 18 and Morefield Road. The City, County and school district partnered to establish a tax incremental financing (TIF) plan, which defers 69% of the property taxes generated by the development for 20 years.



**As the look and feel of industrial development changes, it is starting to be woven into the community rather than relegated to the edges.**

Industrial development consisted mainly along Broadway Road (now Broadway Avenue) and the surrounding areas between 1977 and 1993.

- Joy Cone Company relocated to the former Deneen Dairy Plant on Lamor Road after fires destroyed their original factories in Sharon. Major expansions have occurred over the years, with the latest being a 2018, \$25 million, 120,000 square foot plant at the intersection of Lamor and North Keel Ridge Road. Joy Cone employs approximately 350 people in Hermitage.
- One of the biggest changes in terms of office/light industrial land use is the creation of the LindenPointe Business Campus in 2004, which is home to the eCenter business incubator and the Training and Workforce Development Center.



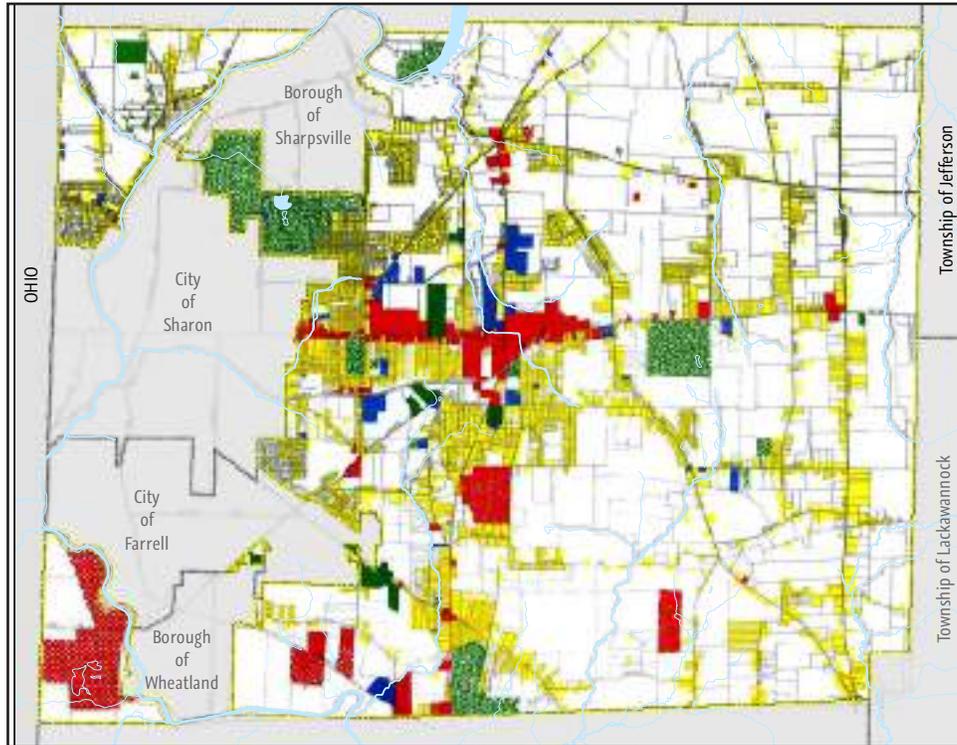
The Hermitage Market Study identified that retail has split between two emerging centers anchored by WalMart (North) and Lowes, Home Depot and Kohl's (South) and two traditional centers anchored by Kraynak's and Hermitage Towne Plaza (West) and Shenango Valley Mall (East)

(source: Hermitage Market Study, Fourth Economy, 2018)



LindenPointe Business Campus  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)

# How has land use changed over the years?



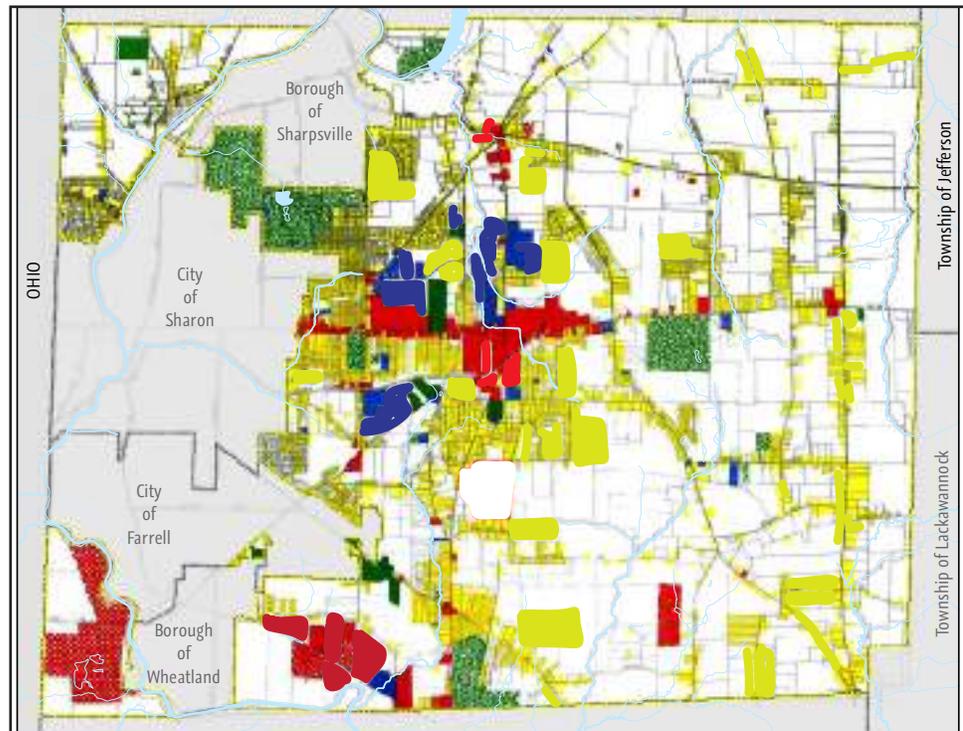
1977

- Residential
- Public
- Semi-Public
- Recreation
- Cemeteries
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Transportation

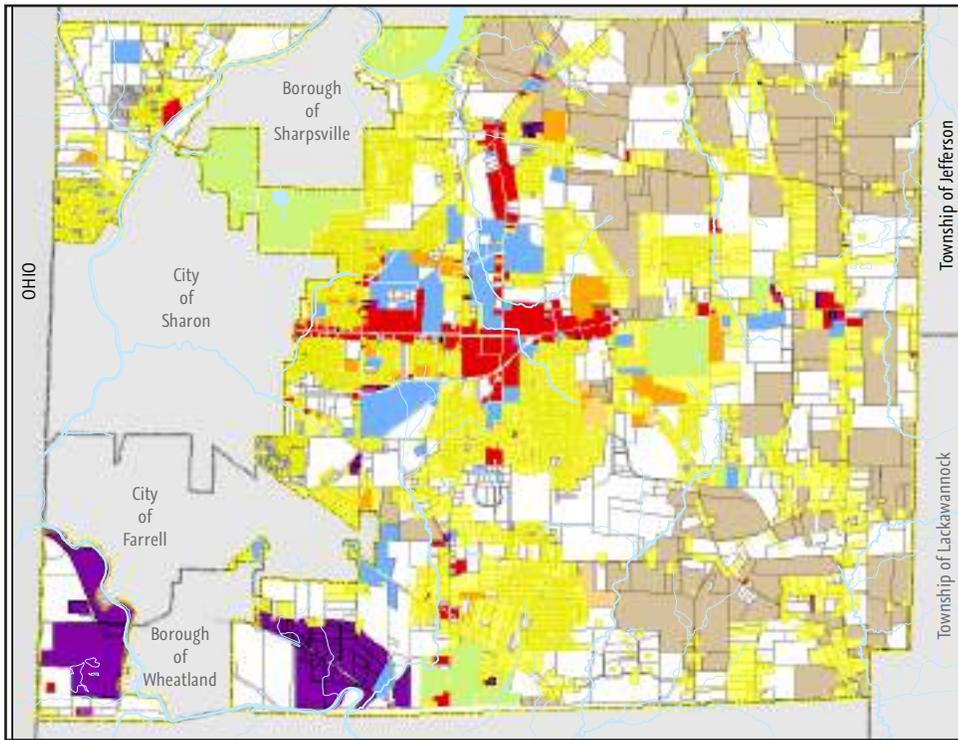
1993

- Residential
- Public
- Semi-Public
- Recreation
- Cemeteries
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Transportation

*Note: the existing land use map from the 1993 Plan was unavailable so assumptions were made using aeriels.*



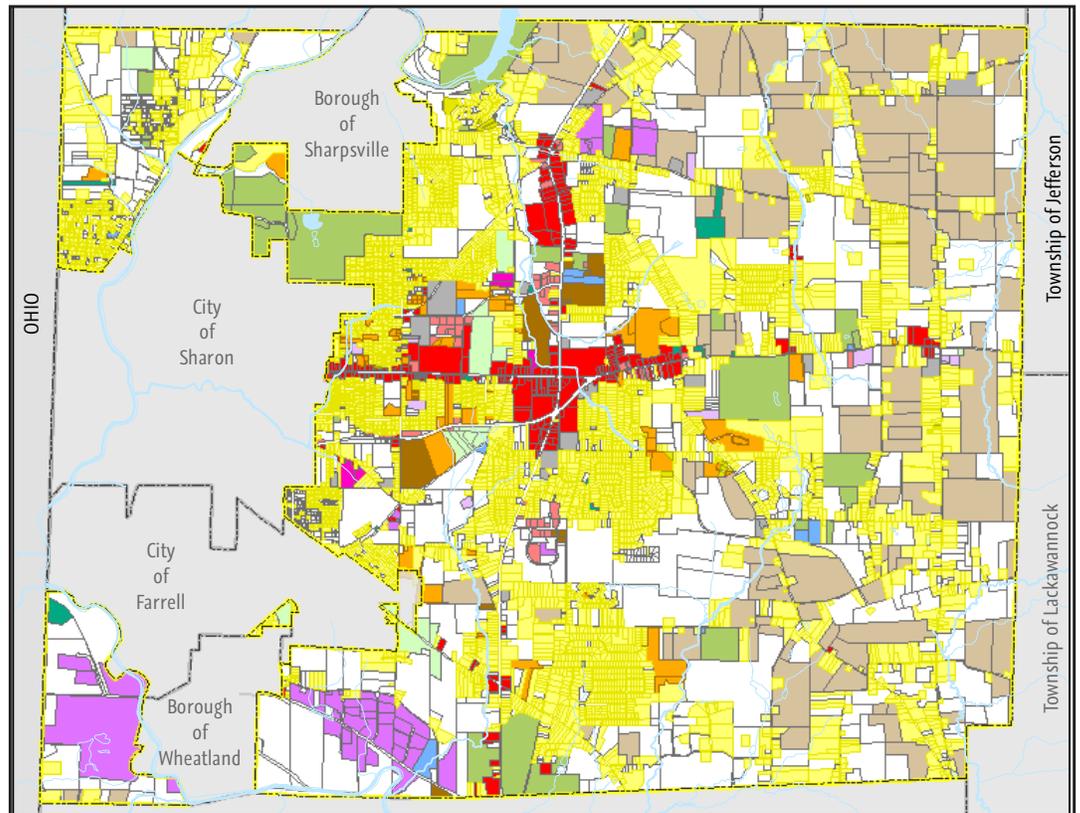
# 2007



- Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Duplex
- Multi Family Residential
- Public
- Recreation
- Commercial
- Industrial

# 2018

- Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Duplex
- Multi Family Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Cemetery
- Church
- Non Profit
- Government
- School
- Utility
- Recreation
- Commercial
- Office
- Industrial





COMMUNITY VISIONING SESSION  
photo credit: Joe Pinchot

*Hermitage*  
2030

# THE VISION

# creating a vision

*The planning process was used to not only establish what Hermitage's identity is today, but what residents would like it to be by 2030.*

The vision for Hermitage must be created by, and for, the residents. How did we do this? The planning process included a variety of outreach methods designed to publicize the plan, generate excitement and get people involved in determining what Hermitage's future should be.

## Steering Committee

Bi-monthly meetings with an appointed committee to oversee the project. The members represented community leaders and organizations, including but not limited to, the Planning Commission, Mercer County Regional Planning Commission, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

## Focus Groups

Focus Group meetings were held with the following groups and organizations:

- eCenter/eAcademy Students / Faculty / Business Professionals;
- Hickory High School Students;
- Economic Development Committee & Planning Commission;
- Mercer County Realtors;
- Developers & Builders;
- Local Healthcare Professionals;

quality public services

good schools

great community

affordable suburb

safe place to raise a family

stagnant

suburban retail sprawl

lacks an identity

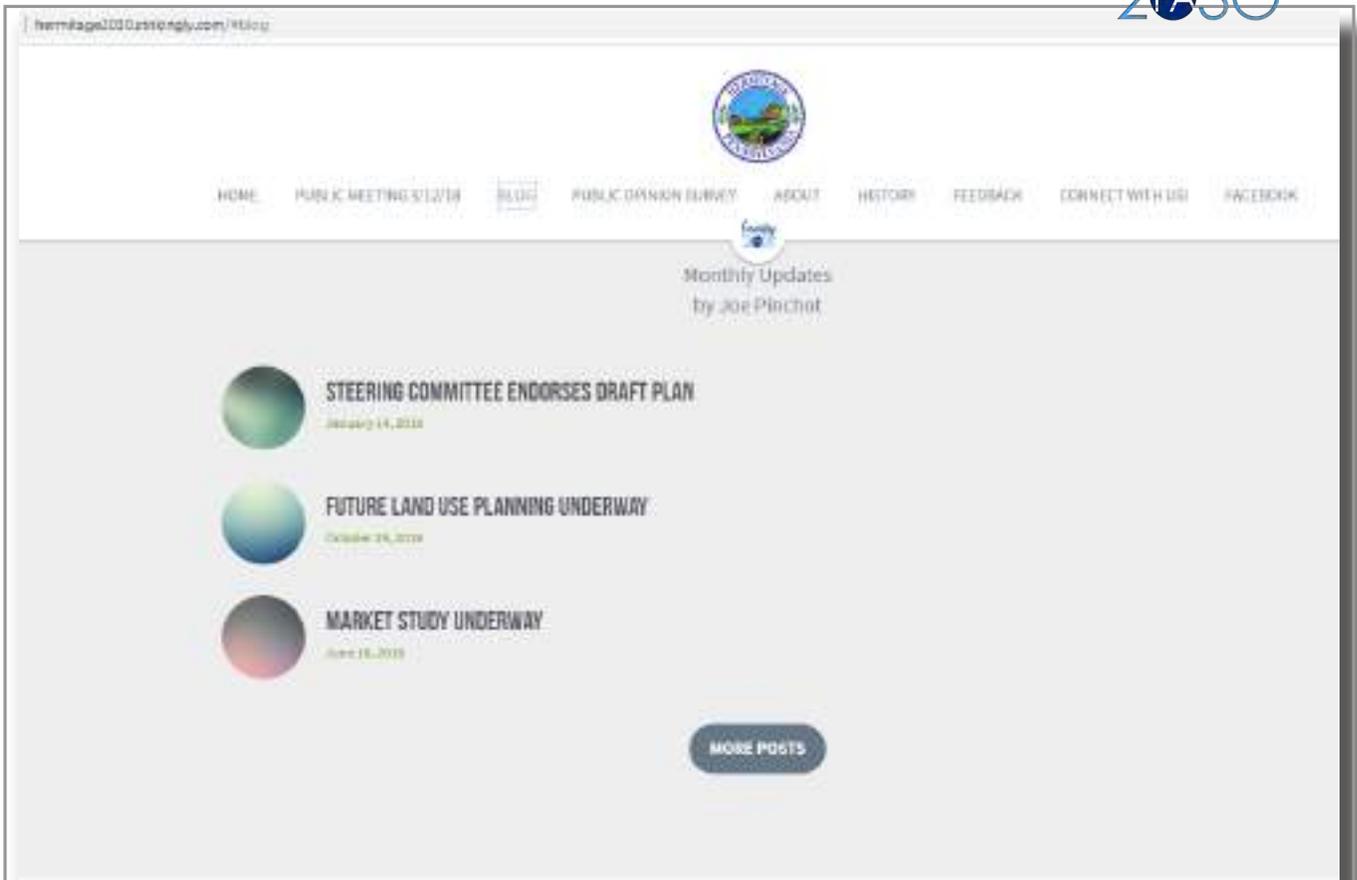
- Seniors & Disabled Community Representatives;
- City Department Heads

## Public Meetings

The Hermitage Community and Economic Development Commission held a public meeting on April 15, 2018 featuring a presentation by the Comprehensive Plan consultant team. A general public meeting was held on September 12, 2018 to present the draft goals and have the public identify priorities. The Planning Commission also held a public meeting on February 4, 2019 to review the draft plan and gather public comments.



Steering Committee meeting (photo credit: Joe Pinchot)



## Website

A project website was created ([hermitage2030.com](http://hermitage2030.com)) to provide content to the public and gather feedback. The site included monthly blogs, upcoming meetings/events, public surveys, information about the plan, feedback section and links to the City's social media sites.

## Social Media

The City also utilized its social media outlets (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to engage the public during the planning process.

## Public Survey

A public survey was conducted in April-May 2018. While it was offered online, advertisements for it were included in the City's newsletter (mailed to every household), on the City and project websites, social media and the newspapers. Over 330 responses were collected.

## CONNECT WITH US!

Post comments and photos on social media and use #Hermitage2030



#Hermitage2030 @HermitagePA #Hermitage2030

## Top Quality of Life Factors:



# City of Hermitage Vision

Based on the feedback received throughout the planning process, the community created a vision statement and with it, a number of core values. The core values represent the recurring, dominant themes expressed by participants in the Hermitage 2030 planning effort. Like the vision statement, they were derived from a reiterative vetting

process involving the City staff, the Steering Committee, stakeholders and members of the public. A vision statement was created for each core value and then with it a set of goals to make this citywide vision a continuing reality.

“ In 2030, the City of Hermitage is committed to providing the highest quality of life for all of its residents; featuring a vibrant and walkable city center, safe and pleasant neighborhoods and prosperous economy. ”

## Core Values



### VIBRANT CENTER

#### The Vision

Hermitage is a vibrant City, featuring a walkable city center that is home to a mix of residential and commercial uses.

#### The Intent

With the retail commercial landscape changing, the time is ripe to focus on creating a walkable City Center that is home to public open space, a mixture of uses and entertainment. Placing a higher emphasis on building form and design can help to establish an identity for what is now, the geographic center of the City.



### HEALTHY CITY

#### The Vision

Hermitage is a healthy City, featuring interconnected neighborhoods, accessible healthcare, high quality recreation and preserved rural landscapes.

#### The Intent

Making Hermitage a healthy city is about creating a holistic approach to land use policies and projects that focus on agricultural and open space preservation; improving health and wellness through recreation and active transportation; quality health care facilities and supportive social networks.



## THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

### The Vision

Hermitage is a thriving City, featuring safe and pleasant neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing types.

### The Intent

One of the City's strongest assets identified by residents throughout the planning process is the quality of its neighborhoods. One priority is finding an appropriate balance between growth and preservation that maintains the overall suburban character. A second priority is ensuring that the housing stock meets the needs of non-traditional families, including allowing residents to age in place.



## PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

### The Vision

Hermitage is a prosperous City, featuring a bustling economy that serves as the commercial and employment hub of Mercer County.

### The Intent

Economic development and building longterm prosperity for all residents was one of the highest priorities as identified throughout the planning process. The City has long been the retail center of Mercer County and in more recent years, has been focusing on attracting more technology-based industry. The focus is on engaging the City and its economic development partners in business retention, attraction and expansion. Its benefits include a strong tax base, a stable job market and ready access to services and goods.



## COMPLETE CORRIDORS

### The Vision

Hermitage is a City that offers complete corridors, that effectively move people through the region.

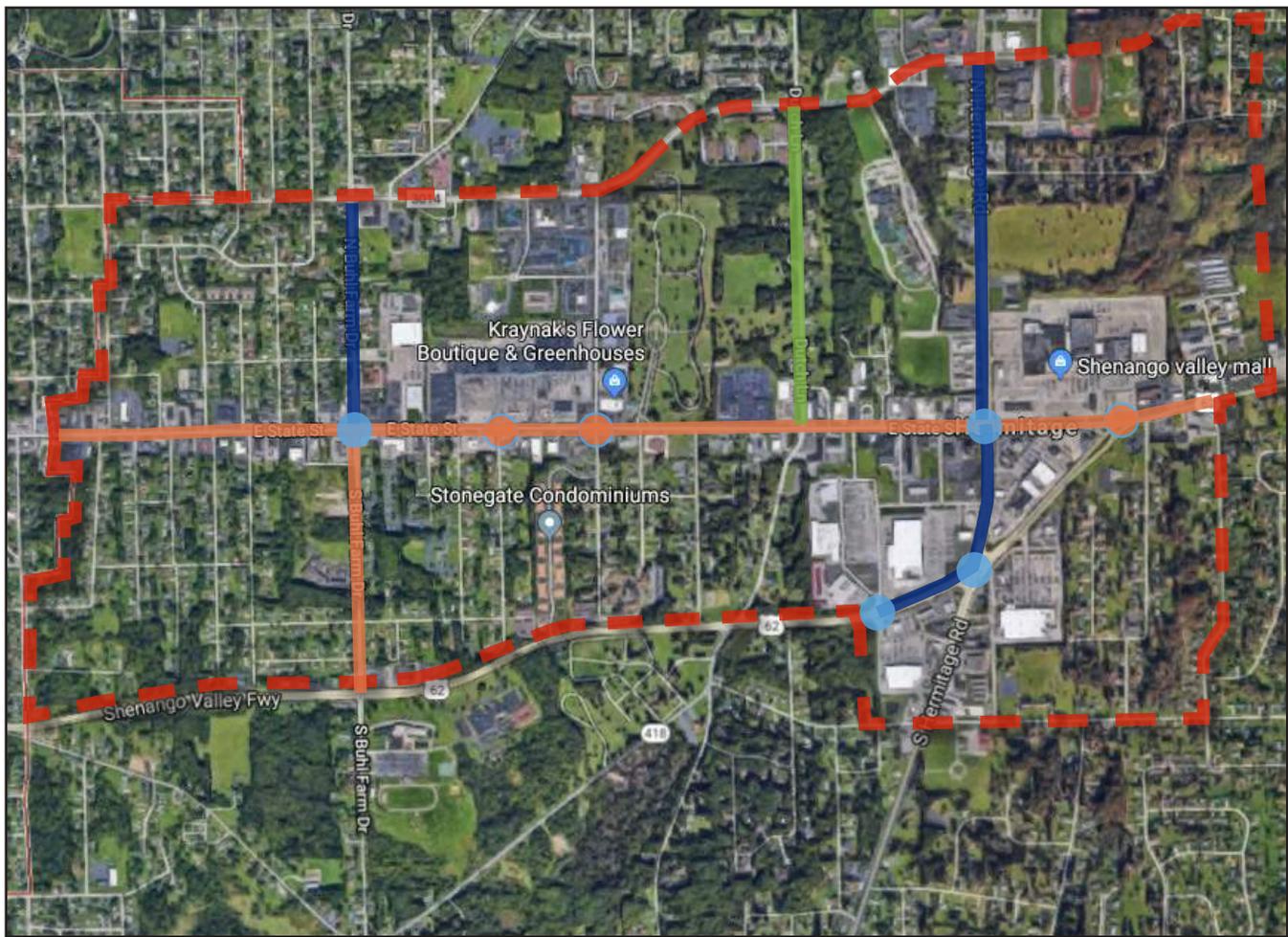
### The Goals

Hermitage is fortunate to be located at the crossroads of several major highways with easy access to all the opportunities and amenities within the Shenango Valley and Ohio. This convenient access comes at a cost, with wide corridors featuring multiple travel lanes and constant traffic. The focus is on creating complete corridors that do more than just move vehicles from one place to another; it's about improving the appearance, increasing connectivity and multimodal options.

# Core Value vibrant center

## THE VISION:

Hermitage is a vibrant City, featuring a walkable city center that is home to a mix of residential and commercial uses.



City Center with planned/proposed pedestrian/bicycle connections

- Planned Intersection Improvement
- Proposed Intersection Improvement
- Downtown Boundary
- Proposed Sidewalk
- Existing Sidewalk
- Proposed Multi-Use

Source: Hermitage Trails & Sidewalks Priorities Plan 2017



## ON THE GROUND NOW:

- The commercial core that comprises the City center of Hermitage is traditional suburban development: non-integrated strip malls, a shopping mall, big box retail stores and vast surface parking lots.
- Hermitage experienced its fair share of the “retail apocalypse” in 2017. Within the City center, the Shenango Valley Mall lost anchor stores Macy’s and Sears (only JC Penney remains). Kmart soon followed, located in the Hermitage Towne Plaza. Sears Auto Center, located on a mall outparcel, closed in 2018.
- Walkability is increasing. The City has demonstrated its commitment to improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
  - » The City constructed a paved walking trail along the east side of SR 18 from the mall north to the municipal offices / MCAR campus.
  - » PennDOT is scheduled to construct sidewalks along East State Street from the Sharon border to SR 18 (expected completion date is Spring 2020).
  - » The City adopted a Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan in 2017, which identifies several pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements, particularly within the City center.

## KEY CHALLENGES:

- Hermitage does not have a well-defined City center. There is no “downtown,” which contributes to a lack of identity.
- The concept of a city center has been discussed and recommended since around 2001, when a master plan was recommended in the PA 18 Planning and Transportation Study. This study was completed in 2007, although it was never officially adopted by the City’s Board of Commissioners.
- There is no public open space in the City center for people to hang out, a commonly heard complaint. However, the City does not own property within the City center to easily make this a reality. One of the challenges will be finding the right developer(s) that is willing to work with the City.
- With increasing vacancies, the Shenango Valley Mall is high on the list for potential redevelopment sites. However, the mall building and the land are owned by separately, with a 14 year lease left on the building, creating barriers to redevelopment. Market conditions indicate that an exclusively retail redevelopment of the 50-acre mall property is unlikely to be viable and that a mixed-use development is more economically feasible as well as preferred by the community.
- Although improving, many people cited the lack of walkability as a needed improvement to establishing a City Center.
  - » One of the common complaints raised during the planning process is that you have to drive from one shopping plaza to the next, even if they are right next door. There are no internal pathways connecting the various retail developments.
  - » Outside of the main roads, the commercial developments are not connected to the neighboring residential streets, limiting the ability to walk or bike.

# HOW TO CREATE A **VIBRANT** CITY CENTER



RENDERING OF THE PROPOSED STATE STREET DESIGN

The concept of creating a Vibrant City Center has long been discussed and continues to be one of the priority goals for the City moving forward. Although not officially adopted by the City, the 2007 Town Center Master Plan contains relevant recommendations that are included and referenced within this section. The full study can be found on the City's website (<https://www.hermitage.net/DocumentCenter/View/446/Hermitage-Town-Center-A-Community-Vision-PDF?bidId=>).

The study includes design principles that are intended to establish a framework which will be used to guide and mold future development and allow Hermitage to grow into the type of place envisioned. The design principles should be used to guide both private and public development initiatives as redevelopment opportunities present themselves. While it is to be expected that there will be divergences from the specifics of the plans presented, following these principles will give shape to a community that conforms to the project goals.



The Bob Evans restaurant on SR 18 in Hermitage is an example of commercial development within the proposed City Center that is representative of the desired design criteria. The site features a landscaped buffer along both roadways, sidewalks, street trees and the parking is located to the rear and side of the building.



The Rockville Town Center (Rockville Town Square in yellow, Rockville Metro Plaza in mauve) site plan. Graphic courtesy City of Rockville.



## Case Study: Rockville Town Square

Located in the Washington, D.C., inner suburb of Rockville, Maryland, Rockville Town Square is a 12.5-acre, transit-oriented redevelopment that replaces a failed shopping mall with a vibrant civic, retail and residential core.

Part of a larger public-private town center redevelopment, Rockville Town Square features a broad town plaza, library, arts and business innovation center and pedestrian-oriented shops and restaurants with condominiums and apartments above.

Rockville is an area that has struggled to find success and identity for the last 50 years. The mall itself was demolished in 1995, following a campaign City officials, who successfully argued that the mall was inhibiting downtown redevelopment. Before demolition, the City officially condemned the structure and relocated a number of businesses. The City spent nearly \$8

million to assist condemned businesses in moving elsewhere, with the goal of having many of the businesses return to Rockville Town Square once complete; several of which did.

The Urban Land Institute reports that the project's positive impact has been economic, as well: "The area's property, sales and income taxes all have risen since Rockville Town Square was completed. As a result, the project's public sector costs will be pretty much recouped within a decade."

The public plaza is home to a myriad of events (summer concerts, farmers markets, wine and music festivals, etc.) that draw Rockville residents as well as visitors from across the metro area. "The goal...is to create a heart and center for Rockville that wasn't there,"

Source: <https://www.terrain.org/2011/unsprawl/rockville-town-square/>

# HOW TO CREATE A **VIBRANT** CITY CENTER

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## Goal V1 - Create a Sense of Place

The public survey asked residents to define the identity for Hermitage. Most people indicated that it doesn't have one. While the intersection of 18 and State Street is the geographic center of town, there is nothing to indicate a sense of place. The City needs to focus on establishing the City Center as a PLACE. A destination. A feeling.

### Strategy V1.1: Create an official “City Center” and install signs / banners to provide visitors a sense of having “arrived.”

- » Enhance the streetscapes within the City Center. Install thematic lighting, street trees, benches and bike racks to encourage more pedestrian and bicycle traffic. See Core Value 5 - Complete Corridors for more information on a branding and wayfinding plan that is recommended for the City.

### Strategy V1.2: Develop a marketing plan for the businesses in the City Center.

Many successful town center developments have their own marketing plans, including websites, brochures and contact information.

- » Create a new business association for the City Center. This could then lead to the formation of a business improvement district to create funding to improve amenities, such as sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, etc.

## Goal V2 - Establish a Central Gathering Place

If Hermitage is going to create a vibrant city center, it needs to offer a central gathering space, somewhere for PEOPLE to hang out. While Hermitage offers great parks, none are located within the City Center.

Towns need places to gather its residents and allow them to come together as a community. These places are typically at the heart of the town. Not only do these public spaces serve important functional needs, but they also create a visual center for the community and visitors alike, helping to establish a recognizable and visible image of the city.

### Strategy V2.1: Acquire land within the City Center and develop as passive open space.

- » This could be done as part of a new development, where the City partners with the developer to incorporate public open space within the development.
- » Offer free wifi in the City Center. Four reasons to do so:
  1. Wifi is crucial for tourism.
  2. Wifi is important to downtown businesses.
  3. Wifi is important for truck- and trailer-based businesses and mobile merchants like vendor booths and food trucks.
  4. Wifi is important for future smart city transportation and other related initiatives.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> <https://smallbizsurvival.com/2016/06/4-reasons-for-small-towns-to-setup-downtown-wifi-areas.html>



# HOW TO CREATE A **VIBRANT** CITY CENTER

## **Goal V3 - Increase the Availability of Entertainment, Arts and Cultural Activities**

While there are many activities and events happening within the City, most take place outside of the City Center. Activities and events draw not only residents, but also visitors into an area. As more events are held in the City Center, it will start giving it a sense of place and serve as a destination for more than just shopping.

**Strategy V3.1: Build upon the momentum and success of ongoing and past events programming to envision and plan new events.**

- » Consider the need for year-round activities. Just because the weather gets cold, doesn't mean that community events have to stop! There are many non-summer events that the City could consider hosting.
- » Work with the City's Police Department to examine the feasibility of staging an Open Streets event on a Saturday or Sunday. Engage local groups and businesses to add fun and creative programming to the day and market the event regionally to attract visitors.
- » Continue to hold the annual Farmer's Market and grow it each year. Consider building a permanent structure to house it.
- » Many young people expressed the desire for a library or a bookstore and food trucks. Food trucks could be offered as part of City events or as events themselves.





Public play areas within the Pearl Street Mall in Boulder CO  
Photo credit: <https://www.restreets.org/case-studies/pearl-street-pedestrian-mall>

## Case Study: Pearl Street Mall, Boulder CO

The Pearl Street Mall is a four-block pedestrian-only street in downtown Boulder, featuring a mixture of locally owned stores, restaurants, public art and public parks/open space. The decision to pave over and eliminate cars from Pearl Street at 11th Street east to 15th Street was made to aid a central business district hit by an exodus to more modern shopping centers with convenient parking.

Since the mall's establishment, Boulder has used planning as a mechanism to ensure the continued success of this public space. For example, standards found in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines work to maintain architectural and design standards. The City of Boulder also works with local organizations such as the Downtown Boulder Business Improvement District to offer incentives for businesses on the mall and help foster growth.

One of the key design concepts of the mall is that each block has a child-oriented amenity, to create space for kids to actively play within the street. The elements include boulders to sit, climb and slide on (ranging from 12" to 4' high), whimsical statues (soft edges for climbing) and pop-jet fountain out of the ground for kids to play in on hot summer days. The park is considered an urban park and as such, maintained by the City's recreation department.

The mall is also home to a large variety of community events and festivals all year round, such as the summer concerts, the Fall Festival, Munchkin Masquerade, Switch on the Holidays, St. Nick on the Bricks, Tulip Fairy and Elf Festival.

Sources: <https://www.boulderdowntown.com/> and <https://www.restreets.org/case-studies/pearl-street-pedestrian-mall>

# HOW TO CREATE A **VIBRANT** CITY CENTER

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## **Goal V4 - Develop a walkable City Center.**

People enjoy being able to walk between destinations when that walk is convenient, pleasant and interesting. This is clearly apparent in historic towns and cities, and through the popularity of new developments that mimic historic shopping districts (“lifestyle centers” and “town centers”). But it is important to remember that people need somewhere to walk to. It’s not enough to just build sidewalks and hope that people use them. They need to connect people to places.

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*“We’re starting to hear buzzwords like walkable and suburban retrofit, but the other day I was talking to a town planner and she said the town plans to be walkable and install sidewalks, but their zoning won’t allow commercial in the area. It’s my understanding that you have to have somewhere to walk to for it to be walkable. They’re using the word walkable, but there’s not necessarily that comprehension of what it actually means.”*

- Katie Selby Urban, cofounder of Charter-Award-winning South Main (<https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2017/03/30/great-idea-traditional-neighborhood-development>)

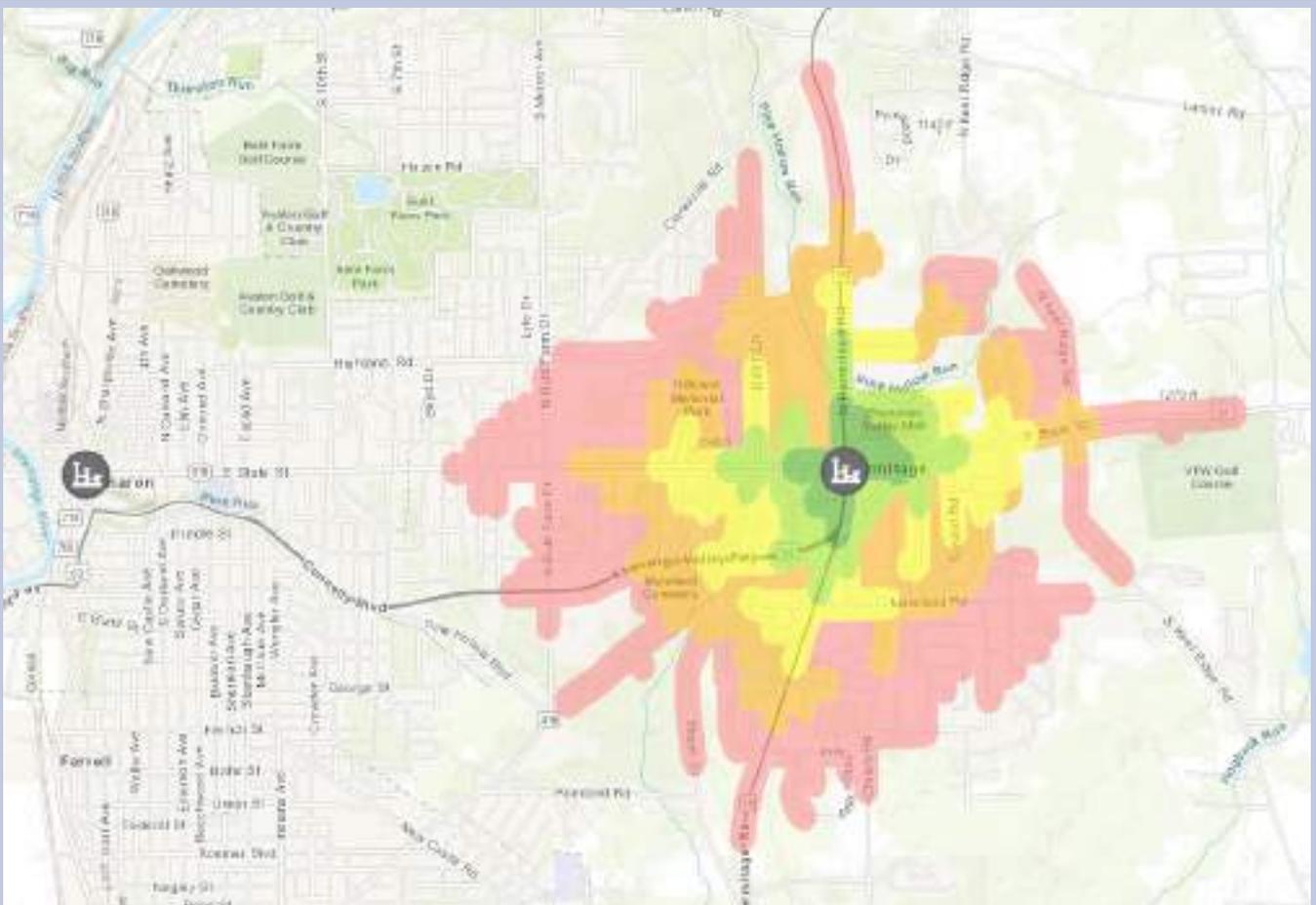
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### **Strategy V4.1: Encourage mixed-use development within the City Center.**

- » Currently, the zoning for most of what is proposed as the City Center is a multitude of different zoning districts, including multiple commercial districts, an office district and several residential districts. Successful suburban redevelopments offer a mix of retail and commercial/office uses at a pedestrian-scale, mixed with high density residential.
- » Within the City Center, consider removing, or reducing, minimum parking requirements or encourage shared parking to reduce the amount of surface parking within the City Center.
- » Utilize the concept of traditional neighborhood development to require thoughtful design for redeveloped spaces (see pages 44-45 for more information).

### **Strategy V4.2: Develop roadway and non-roadway connections between existing developments within the City Center.**

- » The map on page 47 shows the walkability from the intersection of SR 18 and State Street. The dark green indicates a 5-minute walk, light green is a 10-minute walk, yellow is a 15-minute walk, orange is a 20-minute walk and red is a 30-minute walk. This is based on existing roadways. If new connector roads or pathways were developed, the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods would be more likely to walk to the existing businesses or events.



A view of the vast surface parking lots from the FNB headquarters building (Mackin 2018)

Hermitage has a Walk Score of 49 (out of 100), putting it in the “**car dependent**” category. A Walk Score measures the walkability of an area based on the distance to nearby places and general pedestrian friendliness. Amenities within a 5-minute walk (.25 miles) are given maximum points. No points are given to amenities further than a 30-minute walk.

The neighboring city of Sharon has a Walk Score of 55, which means it is “somewhat walkable” and some errands can be accomplished on foot.

In contrast, the neighborhood of Shadyside in Pittsburgh, PA has a score of 88, meaning it is “very walkable.”



The Rockville Town Center (Rockville Town Square in yellow, Rockville Metro Plaza in mauve) site plan. Graphic courtesy City of Rockville.



## Toolbox: Traditional Neighborhood Development

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is a development strategy designed to create complete neighborhoods and communities that mimic those built in pre-1950s America before the shift to low-density, automobile-dependent suburban developments. Several features characterize TNDs: concentrated density, mixed housing types, interconnected street grids, a discernible center (like a town square or plaza), and a variety of commercial establishments to meet the needs of residents. With sidewalks, traffic calming measures, hidden parking, and access to public transportation, TNDs reduce dependence on cars and create safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists. TNDs also emphasize access to schools, parks, churches, civic buildings, and other community spaces.

TNDs can involve development of a previously undeveloped area (greenfield development) or construction on vacant or underdeveloped parcels within an already developed community (infill

development). Adaptive reuse of existing buildings is common in the latter case. Unlike New Urbanism, the broader movement that includes all scales of planning and development, TND is limited to the neighborhood or town scale.

A municipal zoning ordinance can incorporate TND as an overlay district, offering landowners who own tracts so zoned the option of establishing land uses subject to the TND overlay provisions. Alternatively, municipalities can establish TND as a stand-alone zoning district, in which all permitted uses are subject to the TND provisions.

In many—but not all—cases, development of a complete TND will require large tracts of vacant or under-developed land, ideally with immediate or planned access to roads, public transit, and public water and sewer systems. Development of smaller individual tracts rarely provides the critical mass of development needed to support a market for



community amenities or commercial uses on their own, regardless of what zoning may permit.

Because land ownership patterns are fragmented and the real estate market seldom supports town-scale development all at once, a master plan for the entire area zoned for TND is critical in order to designate appropriate locations for the various components that will comprise the TND. As individual parcels are developed in alignment with the master plan, the overall development pattern of the TND will gradually take shape. Incentive zoning provisions, which promote the right TND components in the right places, are just as important as the master plan. They may be accompanied by concurrent disincentives in the base zoning provisions so that properties are held available until the real estate market is ripe for the desired TND components.

Typical TND ordinances should result in development that:

- Has a discernible center. This is often a square, plaza, green, or park. The center is a good location for a public transit hub or stop.
- Includes a variety of residential dwelling types, so that people of different ages and socioeconomic levels can find places to live, and locates most dwellings within a short walk of the community center.
- Supports shops, offices, and restaurants that meet most of the residents' needs.
- Provides two or three-story commercial buildings with street-level retail space and offices or housing on the upper floors.
- Locates a school close enough so that most children can walk from where they live.
- Uses streets to form a connected network, providing multiple route options and reducing traffic congestion. These streets are relatively narrow and shaded by trees; there are sidewalks and possibly bike lanes to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Locates buildings close to the street, creating a sense of place by framing the sidewalk with street trees and building walls.
- Situates parking lots and garage doors at the rear of buildings, accessed by alleys. On-Street parking is desirable.
- Reserves prominent sites for community buildings like town halls, theaters, and churches.
- TND ordinance provisions should also address the following components:

Purpose and necessity of the provisions.

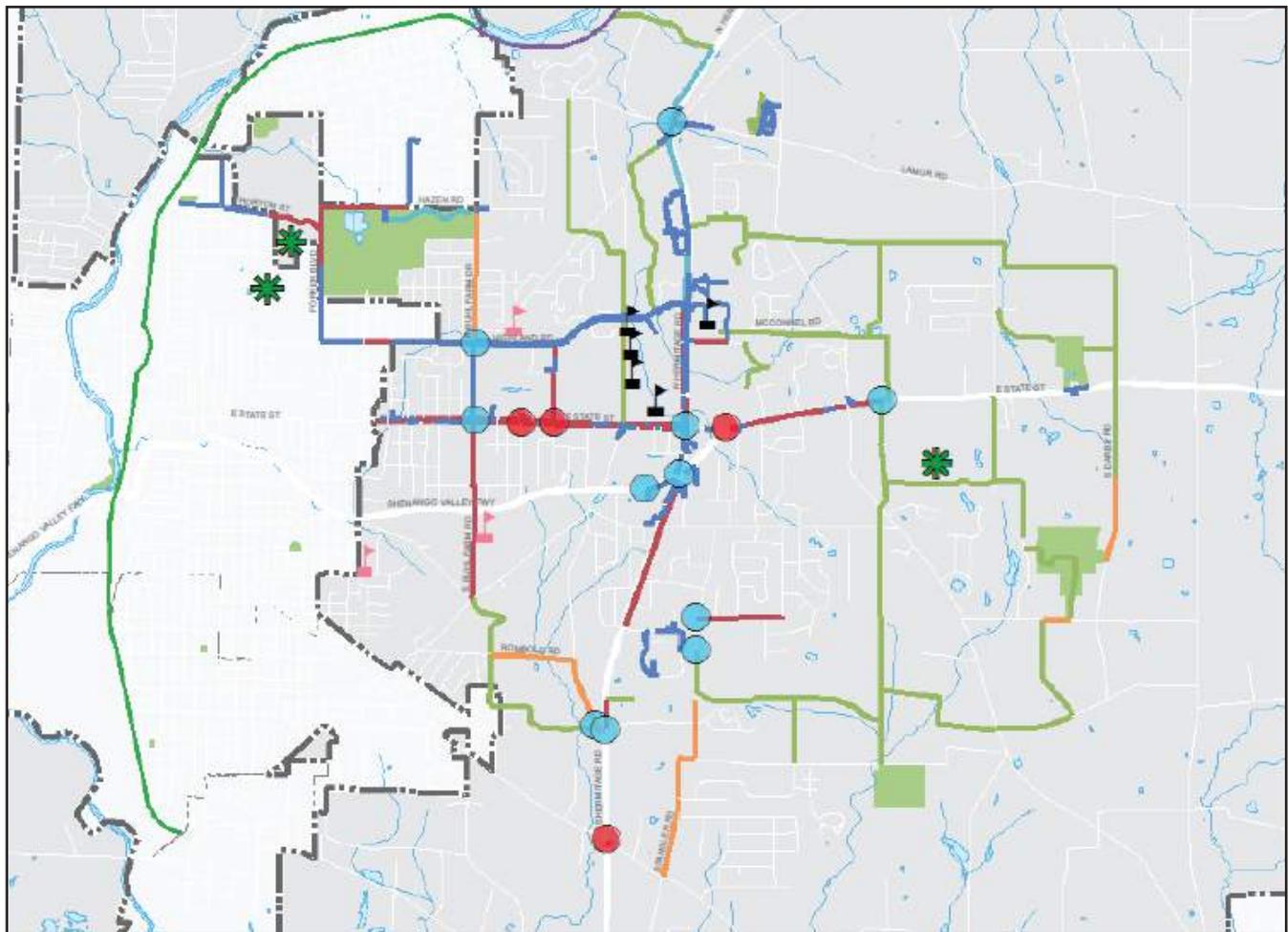
- Applicability and criteria for qualifying uses under the ordinance.
- Actual uses allowed.
- Size, dimensions, and location of building structures.
- Supplemental criteria, such as whether modifications are allowed, specific conservation-related goals, and the relationship between the TND provisions and other provisions related to signs, parking, etc.

Source: <https://conservationtools.org/guides/46-traditional-neighborhood-development>

# Core Value 2 healthy city

## THE VISION:

Hermitage is a healthy City, featuring interconnected neighborhoods, accessible healthcare, high quality recreation and preserved rural landscapes.



City Center with planned/proposed pedestrian/bicycle connections

Source: Hermitage Trails & Sidewalks Priorities Plan 2017



## ON THE GROUND NOW:

- Hermitage is well-served by an excellent network of healthcare providers. Sharon Regional Health System operates a hospital in Sharon and four satellite facilities located in Hermitage. UPMC operates a hospital in Farrell along with several satellite facilities in Hermitage along 18.
- Hermitage has a low percentage of persons under 65 years of age without health insurance (5.6% compared to 7.0% in Mercer County and 6.7% in PA). Similarly, there is a low percentage of residents with a disability (8.1% compared to 11.7% in Mercer County and 9.6% in PA).
- The Trout Island Trail is a 2.4-mile asphalt rail-trail in Sharpsville Borough and Hermitage. It is part of a planned 13-mile rail-trail that will extend south to Orangeville and potentially north to the Shenango River Trail.
- The City recently completed a walk/bike plan that prioritizes projects that will improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity in the City. The City actively partners with developers and property owners to facilitate the construction of sidewalks and other bicycle/pedestrian improvements as funding and circumstances permit.
- The Hermitage Growers and Artisans Farmers Market is held on Fridays in the summer. The Northwest PA Growers Cooperative offers community-supported agriculture (CSA) pickups at Wholesome Fare Natural Foods, which sells local and organic foods. Other grocery stores in Hermitage include Giant Eagle, Aldi, D'Onofrio's Food Center and Wal-Mart Supercenter.
- The City operates a Food Waste to Energy facility, which recycles more than 15,000 gallons of waste per week.

## KEY CHALLENGES:

- Mercer County is unhealthy. It ranks 44th (out of 67) in PA for health outcomes and health factors. Adult obesity is 30% and inactivity levels are high.
- Indoor recreation facility is needed to provide something to do for kids in the winter months.
- Hermitage and the Shenango Valley is an aging population (median age = 49); impact on services.
- Education and support is needed to address opioid crisis.
- Sprawl development - focus on infill, close to public services.
- Approximately 1/3 of the City has public sewer, but there are many areas in the eastern portion of the City that have failing on-lot systems. The extension of public sewer is controversial due to cost, but failing on lot septic makes public infrastructure more of a necessity.

# HOW TO CREATE A **HEALTHY** CITY



What makes a community healthy?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines a healthy community as “one that continuously creates and improves both its physical and social environments, helping people to support one another in aspects of daily life and to develop to their fullest potential.”

In the physical sense, a healthy community provides accessible parks, recreational facilities, active transportation options (pedestrian and bike access), healthy food systems, preserved agricultural lands, high air quality and safety. If a community is adequately providing these items, then its residents are more likely to lead longer, healthier and more productive lives.

## **Goal H1 - Continue to expand the recreation system.**

Parks and recreation has come a long way in Hermitage. Back in 1993, the Comprehensive Plan recommended that the City support the existing community recreation facilities (Buhl Park, YMCA and school district facilities) but not pursue additional neighborhood parks or facilities.) However in 1996, the City’s first Recreation Master Plan recommended additional community and neighborhood parks and recreation facilities.

Since that time, the City has spent significant resources expanding the parks and recreation network and adopted its most recent parks and recreation plan in 2016.

The City currently owns five park and open space sites including 22 acres of the Rodney White Olympic Park, the 22-acre Whispering Pines



Community Park, the Baker Avenue Park, the 53-acre Hermitage Athletic Complex and the Stull Property. In addition, the City maintains trails at LindenPointe and owns two natural resource areas - the Hickory Heights Dedication and the Nature Reserve.

Other significant notes of recreation opportunities include four golf courses (VFW, Tam O'Shanter, Avalon and the Buhl Park Golf Course, the only free golf course in the country), various athletic fields, other ball field complexes, the Shenango Valley YMCA and the Buhl Club.

### Strategy H1.1: Support efforts to develop an indoor recreation center.

- » The 2016 plan recommends that the City conduct a feasibility study to determine the physical need, level of citizen support and financial alternatives associated with a private, public or private/public indoor recreation facility.
- » This continues to be one of the biggest needs identified by the residents of Hermitage. Many people lamented the lack of an indoor facility to take their children to or for the kids to go to on their own.

### Strategy H1.2: Continue to develop the City-owned parks and facilities and programs.

- » The Athletic Complex officially opened in 2011, with two youth softball fields, soccer fields, trails, restrooms and a concession stand. Since then, the City has constructed a second phase, which included lighting one softball field, constructing additional trails and a youth playground. The third phase is currently under construction, which includes additional play fields and trail extensions. Phase four will be bid in 2019, which is the construction of a storage and maintenance building.

- » The Stull Farm was bequeathed to the City by former Commissioner Sylvia A. Stull. A master plan has been developed for an environmental education center and related community activities, which will be developed as funding is identified, hopefully over the next 5 years. A memorial garden has been constructed on the footprint of the former Stull family residence.
- » Whispering Pines is a popular passive recreation facility and complement to the Hermitage Historical Society. Local Eagle Scout candidates and Scout troops have provided improvements over recent years, including trail enhancements, wetland improvements and signage, and a welcome and information sign at the park entrance.
- » The demand for recreation programs and facilities in Hermitage has continued to be significant. A priority of the City Recreation Department is to ensure that the parks provide activities for people of all ages. As such, the Department should look to develop new facilities and activities that may include a bike/cycle track, skate park, pickleball courts, bocce courts and basketball courts.



# HOW TO CREATE A **HEALTHY** CITY

## **Strategy H1.3: Update the subdivision and land development ordinance to include a mandatory dedication or fee-in-lieu-of to support recreation.**

- » Recreational areas and parklands are often designed as part of subdivisions and land developments. Municipalities are authorized under Section 503 (11) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to require property developers to dedicate public open space within proposed subdivision and land developments. An applicant or developer may also agree to construct recreational facilities, pay to the municipality a fee to be used instead of dedicating land (i.e., “fee-in-lieu”) or a combination thereof. The dedicated parkland or fee is to be used to ensure that future residents of the subdivision or land development have adequate park and recreational opportunities.

## **Goal H2 - Increase network connectivity between adjacent neighborhoods and developments.**

Connectivity is a major priority and theme throughout this Plan. The many benefits of increasing connectivity between adjacent neighborhoods and developments include:

- **Energy Conservation:** More direct travel routes and faster travel can reduce fuel use, and pollution can be reduced because of faster travel times.
- **Encourages Walking and Biking:** More roadway connectivity can result in increased

opportunities for walking and biking, thus increasing physical activity.

- **Reduced Congestion:** Decreased traffic on arterial streets can result from increased roadway connectivity.
- **Travel Efficiency:** More roadway connectivity can result in continuous and more direct routes, including more efficient school bus transportation.
- **Better Emergency Service Response:** Improved emergency vehicle access and faster response times can result if emergency vehicles have more access options.
- **Increased Utility Efficiency:** More roadway connectivity can result in improved utility connections, easier maintenance, and more efficient trash collection.

## **Strategy H2.1: Adopt street connectivity standards/goals.**

- » Encourage average intersection spacing for local streets to be 300-400 feet with a maximum of about 600 feet.
- » Limit maximum intersection spacing for arterial streets to about 1,000 feet.
- » Limit maximum spacing between pedestrian/bicycle connections to about 350 feet (that is, it creates mid-block paths and pedestrian shortcuts).
- » Reduce street pavement widths to 24-36 feet and limit maximum block size to 5-12 acres.
- » Limit or discourage cul-de-sacs (for example, to 20% of streets) and limit the maximum length of cul-de-sacs to 200 or 400 feet.



# Increasing Connectivity



The City of Hermitage Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan included examples of how the existing LindenPointe Trail can be continued through undeveloped land using a non-roadway multi-use trail; which can be implemented through a future development plan, mandated by provisional legislature to the SALDO.



Another example is how a share the road and sidewalk typology can be implemented to collect higher volumes of bikes and pedestrians. This route ultimately connects to Hazen Road at the corner of Buhl Farm Park.

(source: Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan, 2017)

# HOW TO CREATE A **HEALTHY** CITY

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- » Require multiple access connections between a development and arterial streets.
- » Require a minimum connectivity index, or rewards developments that have a high connectivity index with various incentives.
- » Favor pedestrian and cycling connections, where through traffic is closed to general automobile traffic.
- » Connect street “stubs,” that is, streets that are initially cul-de-sacs but can be connected when adjacent parcels are developed in the future.
- » Create Pedways, which are walking networks within major commercial centers that connect buildings and transportation terminals.<sup>1</sup>

## **Strategy H2.2: Develop a map that shows all paper streets and City-owned easements to identify potential connections.**

- » The 2007 Town Center Plan identifies paper streets and lots that were set aside at one point for street construction, but the streets were never constructed. Mapping these would allow the City to identify areas that would allow new streets to tie into existing ones without removing any existing buildings. Keeping a record would also make it easier for the City to oversee future land developments to ensure a well-connected layout.

## **Strategy H2.3: Extend the active transportation network.**

- » Active transportation is “any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as walking or bicycling.”
- » Implement the Trails and Sidewalks Priorities Plan. Adopted in 2017, the Plan provides detailed recommendations on strategies to extend sidewalks, trails and other types of multimodal connections throughout the City.
- » Support the efforts of the Mercer County Trails Association to extend the Trout Island Trail. Continued efforts should be made to connect the City’s multimodal network to the Trail, providing additional off-road access to the trail.
- » Connect the Rodney White Walking Trail with the LindenPointe trail network. Students at Hickory High School and the eAcademy would benefit greatly from a connected trail system, in addition to the many residents that use both networks.

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<sup>1</sup> “Roadway Connectivity: Creating More Connected Roadway and Pathway Networks. TDM Encyclopedia, Victoria Transport Policy Institute. January 2, 2017. Retrieved online at <http://www.vtppi.org/tdm/tdm116.htm> in 2018.



## Goal H3 - Protect rural character, agricultural areas and natural resources.

While Hermitage is a City, it encompasses a large amount of undeveloped open space and active farms. However, despite no population growth, overall land consumption has increased since 1977. Although the pace has considerably slowed, there is growing concern that development will continue to spill into the eastern areas of the City and threaten the long-term viability of the farmland and open space without intervention.

### Strategy H3.1: Update land use regulations to encourage the preservation of farmland and open space.

- » Currently, most of the eastern half of the City is zoned R-1-100, which allows for single-family homes on one-acre lots. The City should encourage conservation subdivisions.
- » Conservation subdivisions arrange homes so only half or less of buildable land is used for homes. The same number of homes can be built around an interconnected community-wide network of protected meadows, woodlands, streams and lakes (see pages 58-59 for more information).
- » In some cases, non-common open space can be used to accommodate preserving active farmland as part of a development, as shown to the right.

Equestrian Facility - Summerfield, Elverson, Pennsylvania  
Rather than burdening the homeowners association with the huge weekly expense of mowing extensive grassy recreation areas, this developer utilized the concept of “non-common” open space. This approach also enabled him to enhance his bottom line, not simply giving the land away to an association, but rather selling it to an experienced equestrian operator. Permanent easements and a municipally-approved management plan ensure that the paddocks are never developed, and always kept in good condition. Photo by Randall Arendt.



### Strategy H3.2: Limit infrastructure to areas within targeted growth areas.

- » Identify a future service boundary consistent with the Future Land Use Map, the local wastewater authority’s Act 537 plan and any known potential service expansions. This area would represent a designated growth area served by public infrastructure and by contrast, areas outside of the boundary should be largely preserved as low-density residential or agricultural use.

# HOW TO CREATE A **HEALTHY** CITY

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## **Goal H4 - Encourage environmentally responsible policies and practices.**

### **Strategy H4.1: Address stormwater management issues.**

- » Hermitage is among roughly 1,000 jurisdictions in Pennsylvania classified by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as a small municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) that must develop and implement stormwater management programs.
- » As such, the City must identify best management practices and measurable goals for public outreach, runoff control and other responsibilities. The City will need to complete their mapping of the stormwater collection system and implement the Bobby Run mitigation plan.
- » Seek opportunities to reduce the coverage area of impermeable surfaces. This could involve collaborating with developers and/or offering incentives on site design (such as subdivision layout that reduces the amount of required new road), including low-impact development principles in new road or cul-de-sac design, reducing street width, reducing parking minimums, allowing flexible ways to meet parking requirements, etc.).
- » Update the City's website to provide additional information for residents and businesses on how they can provide best management practices (BMPs) for on-lot stormwater management.

### **Strategy H4.2: Daylight the Indian Run stream corridor.**

- » The Indian Run stream corridor currently goes underground through a culvert on the mall property. The idea of daylighting the stream has been discussed and recommended for years, due to flooding and environmental problems. It could be incorporated into a redevelopment of the mall property and provide both an amenity and a method to collect storm water runoff.

### **Strategy H4.3: Incorporate green technology into public projects and reduce energy consumption.**

- » Continue to utilize rain gardens and other green technology on City property and within new developments (such as LindenPointe) to improve on-lot stormwater management.
- » City parks should employ green technology where feasible (permeable surfaces on courts, rain gardens and bioswales, rain barrels on buildings to collect rain water and re-use for watering plants, composting toilets, etc.).
- » Utilize energy-saving methods such as switching to LED light bulbs, automatic light switches in public restrooms and other areas, constructing green buildings, etc.
- » Develop a street tree planting program to green the City and improve the landscaping along corridors.



# What are BMPs?

Best management practices, as defined for purposes of the NPDES permitting program, are:

- Schedules of activities
- Prohibitions of practices
- Structural controls (such as infiltration trenches)
- Design criteria
- Maintenance procedures
- Other management practices to prevent or reduce pollution

Peak rate control is a classic form of stormwater BMP (detention ponds, tanks, etc.). Volume controls (such as infiltration trenches) remove water from the runoff path, and quality controls (such as treatment via filtering or settling) remove pollutants.

The most proactive form of stormwater BMP is the type of control that avoids the problem: low-impact development principles. These would include such measures as reducing impermeable surface area (removing parking minimums, reducing street widths,



Rain gardens such as this help control the volume of water entering the runoff path.

promoting reduced building footprints, preserving green spaces) as well as promoting green infrastructure such as bioswales, rain gardens, rain barrels, porous pavement and green roofs.

On the whole, it is far less expensive to handle excess runoff by implementing green solutions than to expand water treatment facilities.

Sources: <https://www.boulderdowntown.com/> and <https://www.restreets.org/case-studies/pearl-street-pedestrian-mall>

# Street tree planting programs

The City of Lancaster, PA, offers an affordable Street Tree Planting Program to all residents and businesses. The program is free of charge except for the cost of the tree. Trees are sold to homeowners at-cost and range between \$165 and \$230; it includes the labor for installation by the City, which may involve removing concrete, removing a stump, digging the tree pit, and planting the tree. (<http://cityoflanasterpa.com/resident/planting>)



Source: <https://www.columbus.gov/branch-out/>

The City of Columbus Ohio started a Branch Out Columbus initiative, with a goal of planting 300,000 trees in the next five years. Residents and businesses can get involved by planting a tree, requesting a street tree, donating a tree, adopting a tree, help organize an event, or talk to a tree ambassador.

# HOW TO CREATE A **HEALTHY** CITY

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## **Goal H5 - Focus on diversity and inclusion.**

Social equity is an important component of a healthy City. Ensuring that underserved populations within a community have the opportunity to be heard when City officials are making decisions is key to being a diverse and inclusive City. Underserved populations may include, but are not limited to, seniors, disabled, minorities, etc.

### **Strategy H5.1: Target community outreach efforts to underserved communities to gauge their needs regarding services.**

- » Facilitate collaboration between local service providers, culturally specific organizations and community non-profits to identify and address the community's basic needs for education, training, health care and social services.
- » Ensure that representatives of underserved or marginalized populations are at the table when discussing public projects that impact their communities.

### **Strategy H5.2: Ensure that land use policies and decisions are fair and equitable.**

- » Prioritize street improvements that provide families with safe routes to work, school and recreation, such as mid-block crossings between multi-family housing units and parks, street lighting, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.
- » Prioritize active transportation projects near low-income housing.
- » Prioritize close proximity to parks and recreation centers in land use decisions and City expansion.
- » Ensure that planning in new areas is not car-focused so that new housing options are not limited to the wealthy, but also provide options for low and middle class families.



## Goal H6- Partner with organizations to encourage healthy initiatives and education.

Hermitage is fortunate to be served by two healthcare systems: Sharon Regional Health System and UPMC.

### Strategy H6.1: Coordinate with healthcare providers to identify opportunities.

- » The Affordable Care Act requires all charitable 501(c)(3) hospitals to conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA) and adopt an implementation strategy at least once every three years.
- » As the local hospitals update their assessments, the City should make sure that they are a stakeholder in the process and their needs are included. This will allow for communication determine potential programs and initiatives that make sense to partner.

### Strategy H6.2: Develop partnerships to provide educational outreach programs regarding drugs and support services.

- » The opioid crisis is far-reaching and will take more than local government to address. However, the City needs to be an active partner in combating this crisis and support any efforts that the local hospital, school district, faith-based organizations, social services and/or public safety services are offering.



# Toolbox: Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions differs from traditional “clustering” in three important ways. First, it sets much higher standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of the resulting open space and developable area. Second, communities can exercise greater influence on the design of new conservation subdivisions and benefit from much more than just dense pockets of housing. Rather than leaving the outcome purely to chance, this flexible design approach can be strongly encouraged or even required, particularly where a community has an Open Space Plan or Master Plan. Thirdly, the protected land is also configured so that it will, wherever practicable, contribute to creating an interconnected network of open space throughout the community, linking resource areas in adjoining subdivisions and/or providing buffers between new development and preexisting parklands or forest.

**Recommendation #1:** Boost the emphasis on designing subdivisions to avoid and preserve special environmental resources, including wildlife habitat and travel corridors. To achieve this emphasis, development plans should be designed more compactly with shorter streets so that resources become less fragmented.

**Recommendation #2:** Shape the open space in every subdivision with respect to a community-wide map of potential conservation areas, providing clear guidance for coordinating conservation efforts.

**Recommendation #3:** Specify how common land (open space management) should be maintained (e.g., prairie restoration, farming, no clear cutting). When this occurs, “the proportion maintained as mown grass was significantly lower than in jurisdictions where local ordinances did not have such specifications.”



Photo by Randall Arendt (source: [http://www.greenerprospects.com/PDFs/CSD\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.greenerprospects.com/PDFs/CSD_Overview.pdf)).

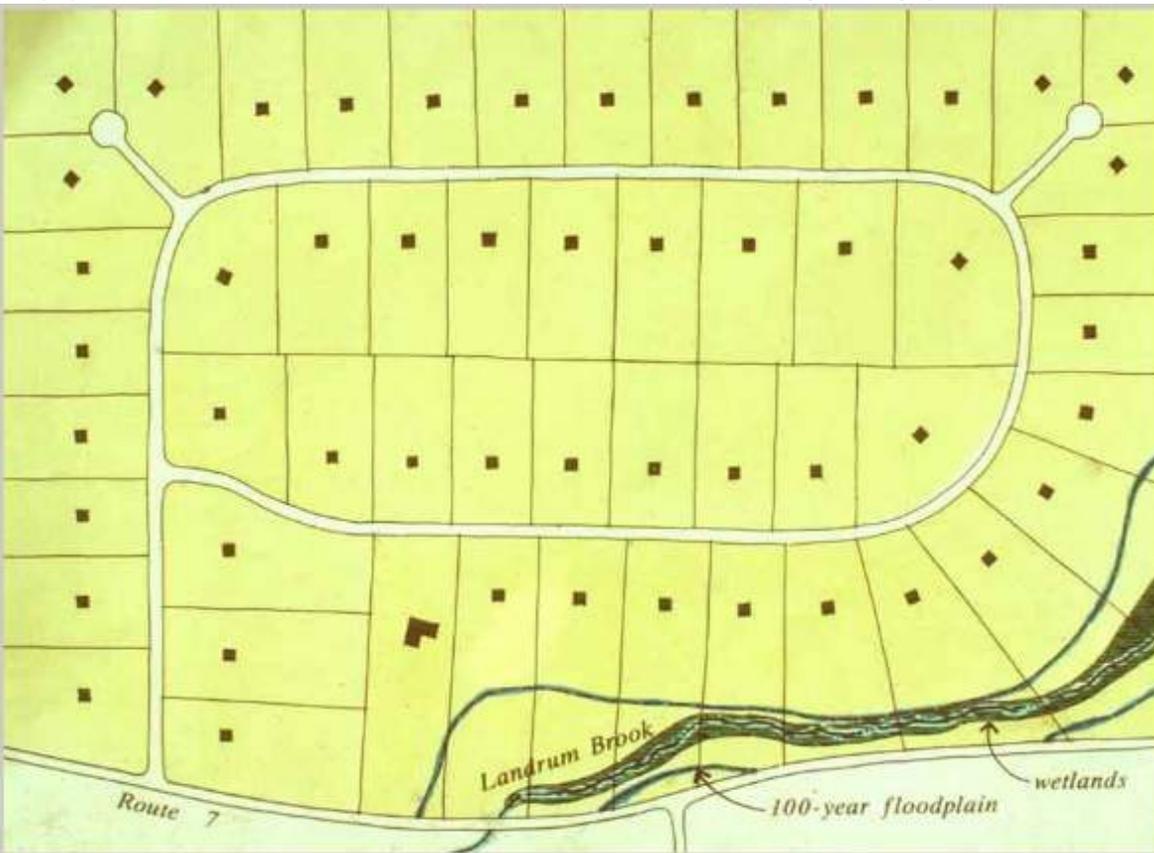
**Recommendation #4:** Update the zoning ordinance to establish density requirements (such as by designating density as three units per acre in sewered areas, or two acres per dwelling in unsewered areas) instead of indirectly (such as through minimum lot sizes).

**Recommendation #5:** Designate conservation subdivisions as a by-right Permitted Use, making applications simple, straight-forward, and relatively easy. Conventional developments can be actively discouraged by re-classifying them as Conditional Uses. The condition to be met is a clear and compelling showing at a public hearing, convincing officials that dividing land into just houselots and streets better implements official Comprehensive Plan policies, such as farmland preservation, habitat conservation, rural viewshed protection, etc.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Conservation Subdivision Design: A Brief Overview.” Randall Arendt, FRTPI, ASLA (Hon.) Retrieved online at [http://www.greenerprospects.com/PDFs/CSD\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.greenerprospects.com/PDFs/CSD_Overview.pdf). 2018.



Conservation subdivision (above) with just under 3/4 of an acre, 30,000 sq. ft., house lots with the SAME number of home sites (55) as the conventional subdivision below on the same 130 acre site. The conservation subdivision preserves almost two-thirds of the site, 62%, 81 acres. Conventional subdivision (above) with 2 acre house lots with the SAME number of home sites (55) on the same 130 acre site as the conservation subdivision at the top of the page.



# Core Value 3 thriving neighborhoods

## THE VISION:

Hermitage is a thriving City, featuring safe and pleasant neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing types.

*"We chose to live in Hermitage for the great school system."*

- survey respondent 2018



Neighborhood in Hermitage  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)



## ON THE GROUND NOW:

- Hermitage has a low cost of living but is accessible to major markets including Pittsburgh PA and Cleveland OH. 75% of the housing is affordable for households making \$60,000/year.
- Hermitage School District is a high quality with test scores and college readiness scores well above the state average (8/10). 2018 enrollment is 2,100 students, down from approximately 2,400 students 10 years ago. Dual Enrollment opportunities, through local colleges and universities, exist for qualifying seniors. Hickory High School offers the full complement of Mercer County Career Center options. HHS students may attend the career center to acquire specific vocational, work-related and college preparatory skills.
- Kennedy Catholic High School is an above average, private, Catholic school located in Hermitage, PA. It has 300 students in grades 9-12 with a student-teacher ratio of 15 to 1. After graduation, 97% of students from this school go on to attend a 4-year college.
- Hermitage started the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) in 2008, with the objective to develop public/private partnerships where property owners and utilities work with the City to improve public facilities. Since its inception, the City has completed upgrades to 5 target block areas and identified areas 6 & 7, with area 6 under design for construction in 2019 – 2020, and area 7 in preliminary design.
- Hermitage also offers a housing rehabilitation program for low-to-moderate income families, including disabled. Funds may be used for basic property improvements, necessary household fixtures and sanitary improvements. To date, the program has invested over \$4 million in housing rehabilitation projects.

## KEY CHALLENGES:

- Large supply of older homes valued below \$150,000 are not what new residents are looking for. There has been job growth but little housing growth.
- Few new housing subdivisions since early 2000's. Lack of housing valued above \$150,000 to meet current demand. 24% of all homes are valued over \$200,000; similarly, 25% of all current homes for sale are listed over \$200,000.
- Lack of short-term rentals for corporate housing.
- Need to offer middle range of housing - \$150,000 - 200,000 (per realtors).

# HOW TO CREATE **THRIVING** NEIGHBORHOODS

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## **Goal T1 - Develop neighborhoods that attract families and young professionals.**

Currently, data shows that 80% of new residents in Hermitage come from within five miles. That shows a regional shift (i.e. residents moving from nearby communities such as Sharon, Farrell, Wheatland, Sharpsville). New residents to Hermitage are split between single family units and multi family units.

The City, along with the Shenango Valley as a whole, is going to need to attract new residents from outside the area in order to grow and to compete, the City will need to continue to expand its availability of housing options, particularly alternatives to traditional single family homes.

Housing construction has declined significantly in the last 10 years in Hermitage. With the exception of 2009 (which had 77 new housing units), there have been less than 30 units per year since 2008. The last few years have shown that the bulk of the units are either condominiums or apartments.

### **Strategy T1.1: Host regular meetings with developers and realtors.**

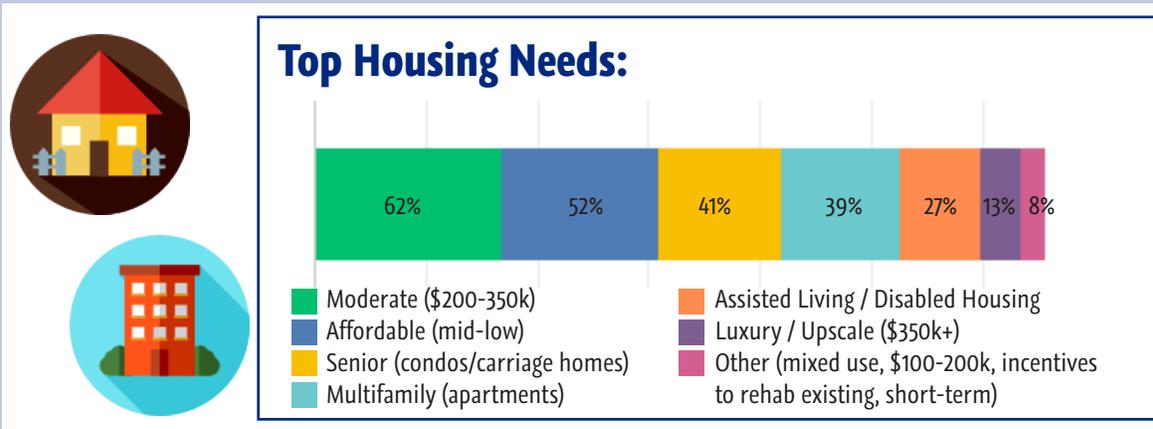
- » Hosting regular meetings with developers and real estate professionals would provide a forum to ensure that City regulations align with the market. The market study shows that the current market could support a shift of 1,115 units valued at \$150,000 and above, with more than half priced over \$300,000. The City can provide data to local developers to encourage the type of housing developments it would like to see.

### **Strategy T1.2: Continue to prioritize housing rehabilitation in older neighborhoods.**

- » Today's housing market offers an abundance of homes priced under \$100,000 (a housing surplus of over 1,000 units). While this speaks to the affordability of the area (75% of the housing is affordable to households making \$60,000/year - median household income in Hermitage is \$53,480), many of these homes are older and may be in need of major maintenance. With a median age of 49, there is also concern that there will be a growing number of these homes put up for sale in the near future.
- » Continued efforts to assist with housing rehabilitation to existing homeowners and expanded neighborhood improvement program efforts will be vitally important over the next 10 years to keep some of the older neighborhoods from falling into decline.
- » These neighborhoods can be marketed to younger people, who may be looking for a smaller single family home and walkable to Buhl Park and other amenities.



The public survey conducted in 2018 revealed the top housing needs to be moderately priced homes, followed by affordable, senior housing and multifamily.



The market study concluded that the data supports these same housing needs. Higher end single family, affordable rental units, senior housing (alternatives to single-family units) and corporate/professional rental units.



Neighborhood in Hermitage  
(photo credit: City of Hermitage)

# HOW TO CREATE **THRIVING** NEIGHBORHOODS

## **Strategy T1.3: Encourage higher-end multi-family housing complexes that offer amenities.**

- » The market study bears a need for affordable senior and workforce rental housing (households making less than \$25,000/year, priced at \$200-500/month) and higher-end corporate or professional rentals (priced above \$1,000/month).
- » Residents, real estate agents and other stakeholders expressed a need for both higher end rentals (apartment/townhouse complexes that offer amenities such as a pool, park, clubhouse, etc.) and short term corporate rentals. With the two hospitals and major corporations nearby, there is a need for upscale short term housing.

## **Goal T2 - Ensure that residents can age in place.**

As the large baby boom generation segment of the population reaches retirement age, more and more, seniors are choosing to work longer years prior to retiring, and also want to maintain their strong ties to the community. Besides retrofitting existing housing stock to better accommodate their needs, the community has also identified the need to incorporate universal design into new construction, offering a greater variety of senior appropriate housing options in the target redevelopment areas of the community.

Senior housing is a term that can be applied to a broad spectrum of housing options to serve everything from active-adult to assisted living. Through appropriate policies and possible incorporation of design criteria into the City's

land development regulations, the development of a greater variety of senior-appropriate housing options will be encouraged.

## **Strategy T2.1: Ensure that seniors and disabled are aware of and have access to available housing programs and services.**

- » Modernize and extend the network of community information available to all residents. Ensure that information on such programs is disseminated to organizations such as the Arc of Mercer County, MCAR, the Shenango Valley Senior Community Center.

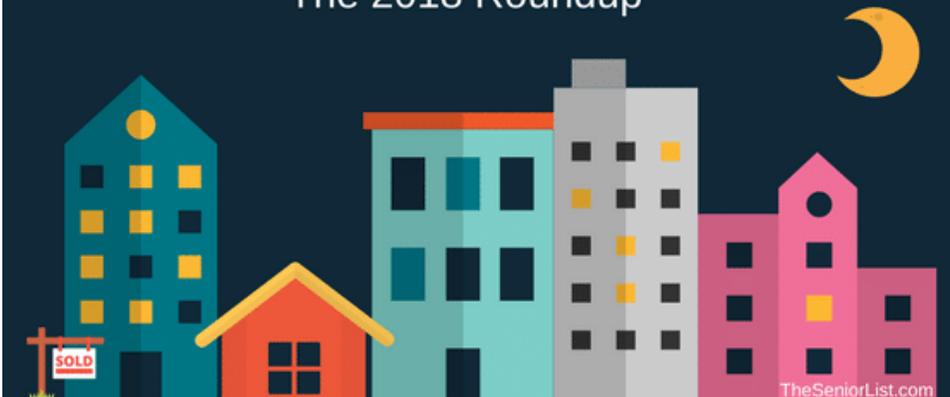
## **Strategy T2.2: Update the zoning ordinance to accommodate a variety of housing options.**

- » Provide housing options near services for the continuum of care needed through aging years. Encourage senior housing to be located along transit lines, near neighborhood commercial centers and close to medical offices/services.
- » Encourage the integration of senior appropriate housing, both active adult and assisted living, into the fabric of the community, thus offering multi-generational or lifelong housing opportunities.
- » Update the ordinance to accommodate alternative senior housing options (see page 87 for more information), such as connected one-story homes (patio, carriage, etc.) and multi-generational housing, such as accessory dwelling units.



# Alternative Senior Housing Options

The 2018 Roundup



Source: <https://www.theseniorlist.com/2018/02/alternatives-senior-housing/>

Few seniors have ever been thrilled at the idea of moving into anything that could be described as a “facility.” “Aging in place,” i.e. continuing to live in the home of one’s own choosing, has generally been seen as the ideal. Now that retirees have the sheer numbers and the money, they have gained leverage and are beginning to wield it.

**Cohousing:** “an intentional community of private homes clustered around shared space.” Each of the community members is financially independent, but they share responsibility for running the neighborhood, and are all engaged in decision-making. There is often a common space – a separate house or apartment that includes a kitchen, laundry facilities, dining room and more.

**Green Housing:** a new model of nursing home or memory care unit that is anything but a warehouse. Instead, each Green House allows only a few residents, who share a home-like atmosphere, hindered by as few restrictions as practicable. As a result, the residents get the personal attention they each need while reducing the stress for their healthcare providers.

**Leisure (or Lifestyle) Oriented Retirement Communities (LORC):** This type of senior housing has existed for several decades and may overlap with the category of Niche Senior Retirement Communities listed below.

**Micro-communities:** These communities are a form of homelike residential/assisted living care. As the name suggests, these are small communities that are suitable for those who wish to avoid a larger, more crowded assisted living facility. This would also be an appropriate choice for a resident whose personality or medical condition requires special attention.

**Multi-gen Housing:** This type of living situation involves a minimum of three generations of family members all living under the same roof or on the same property. Historically, this style of housing is achieved when (a) the living space in the main house that is augmented by adding on or converting existing space, (b) an “in-law” apartment added over the garage, or (c) a separate tiny home has been built on the property.

**Niche Senior Retirement Communities:** This type of senior housing consists of a niche community composed of seniors, or sometimes a broader age range. The members occupy separate or attached homes, or even an apartment building. The binding factor is a shared interest or trait.

**Village Movement:** Neighbors form a village when they agree to take on the responsibility of assessing, coordinating and ultimately delivering the necessary services to each member of the village. A board of directors, chosen from the village, form and manage a non-profit organization. Each member pays membership fees. Villages make it possible for a senior to remain in their own home.

# Core Value 4 prosperous economy

## THE VISION:

Hermitage is a prosperous City, featuring a bustling economy that serves as the commercial and employment hub of Mercer County.



LindenPointe development plan

Source: City of Hermitage



## ON THE GROUND NOW:

- Originally rural Hickory Township, Hermitage incorporated as a city in 1976. Today, Hermitage has become the commercial and retail center of Mercer County. However, there have been several big box anchor stores (Macy's, Sears and KMart) that have closed within the past two years.
- The geographic location of being so close to major highways - Interstates 376, 79 and 80 - is attractive for many manufacturing and industrial businesses.
- Commercial rental rates are low. Commercial and warehouse properties lease for \$2.50 to \$3 per square foot while office space leases between \$10 and \$12 per square foot.
- LindenPointe is a 115-acre innovative business campus that is home to the eCenter and eAcademy, in addition to private businesses.
- Broadway Avenue Industrial Park is located near the Route 18 interchange with I-80.
- Joy Cone Company has been around since 1918 and is the largest ice cream cone company in the world. Employing 350 people, it was the 14th largest employer in Mercer County in 2018.<sup>1</sup> Major expansions have occurred over the years, with the latest being a \$25 million 120,000 square foot plant at the intersection of Lamor and North Keel Ridge Road. It is surrounded by residential neighborhoods and is currently a nonconforming use in an R-1 District.

## KEY CHALLENGES:

- Limited room for industrial expansion in the City.
- Funding for start-up companies
- Regional competition with Boardman (30 min) and Niles (40 min) in Ohio and Grove City Outlets.
- Mercer County is losing population and is aging; commercial and retail development needs to be sustainable.
- City has a local perception of being a "hard place to do business" due to the enforcement of state and local regulations.
- There is a need to update the City's zoning ordinance to provide more flexibility and less separation of compatible uses throughout many areas of the City.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/Documents/Top%2050/Mercer\\_County\\_Top\\_50.pdf](https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/Documents/Top%2050/Mercer_County_Top_50.pdf)

# HOW TO CREATE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

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The economic priority for the City is to protect a diversified, healthy tax base in order to function as a financially responsible government and provide the services and capital improvements desired by its residents and business owners.

## **Goal P1 - Promote Hermitage as a city of small business incubation and innovation.**

Communities across the country are looking to reduce their economic dependency on larger industries, and instead pursue revitalization through locally-grown small businesses. Hermitage has the enviable position of being home to the eCenter and eAcademy, offering a distinct advantage to encouraging the development of local entrepreneurs.

### **Strategy P1.1: Expand and capitalize on LindenPointe and the eCenter & eAcademy.**

- » Publicize programs such as One Million Cups, Business After Hours and Start-up Drinks to help entrepreneurs network.
- » Work with local banks and financial institutions to provide financing for start-up companies. The City could create an innovation fund that provides financing opportunities (grants/low-interest loans) to companies after they have left the eCenter.

### **Strategy P1.2: Improve the perception of the City as being business-friendly.**

- » Potential start-ups often view ordinances and regulations as a hindrance to doing

business in the City. To make it easier for prospective businesses, the City should create a “how-to” guide to starting a local business. It should include an overview of financial and other resources necessary to fully develop their business plans.

- » Provide an overview of the processes, permitting/regulations, particularly that explains the federal/state/local codes, and available local technical resources.
- » Annually review land use regulations and the development review process to determine ways to streamline it, particularly for small business expansions.
- » Evaluate the building inspection and code enforcement processes to identify methods to enhance and improve. Consider options such as the use of multiple agencies for third-party enforcement and/or conducting commercial inspections in-house (currently only do residential).

### **Strategy P1.3: Facilitate the development of co-working and maker spaces.**

- » The City should foster community support for the collective economy and “maker movement.” Vacant buildings can be redeveloped to provide flexible and inexpensive workspace. Shared access to capital-intensive equipment can enable the growth of small scale manufacturers.
- » Co-working spaces can be started as a commercial venture by individuals or created and run by the local government or nonprofits. Typically, co-working spaces use a membership model to fund the space, with monthly or drop-in memberships



# Streamlining the Development Process

Developers and real estate agents like to work in communities in which the regulations are clear, concise and streamlined. Time is money. There are some ways that the development process could be streamlined to make it easier.

- Define and regulate minor land developments. Minor land developments would be exempt from the preliminary plan review period, reducing the approval process by half.
- A sample definition of minor land developments:
  - » The improvement of one lot of less than 20,000 square feet in area for one multifamily residential building or a group of two or more residential or nonresidential buildings.
  - » The improvement of one lot of less than 10,000 square feet for one nonresidential building, regardless of the number of tenants.
- » Any change of use, addition to or structural enlargement of a nonresidential structure which results in either an increase in the gross floor area of the principal building of less than 1,500 square feet or an increase in the gross floor area of the principal building and the paved area of the lot which, in combination, is less than 1,500 square feet.
- » The division or allocation of land or space among two or more occupants by leasehold or condominium.
- Allow for a one-time exemption from the land development review process for any addition to or structural enlargement of a nonresidential structure which results in an increase in the gross floor area of the principal building of 500 square feet or less.

Sources: Collier Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, Allegheny County PA.

## What is makerspace?

A makerspace is a collaborative work space inside a school, library or separate public/private facility for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. These spaces are open to kids, adults, and entrepreneurs and have a variety of maker equipment including (but not required) 3D printers, laser cutters, cnc machines, soldering irons and even sewing machines.

These spaces are also helping to prepare those who need the critical 21st century skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). They provide hands on learning, help with critical thinking skills and even boost self-confidence. Makerspaces are also fostering entrepreneurship and are being utilized as incubators and accelerators for business startups.

Source: <https://www.makerspaces.com/what-is-a-makerspace/>

# HOW TO CREATE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY

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available. Required elements include open working areas with desks/tables/chairs; power outlets; strong wifi; and common spaces such as a conference room.

- » Another option is to encourage the creation of a makerspace, perhaps through a partnership with the eCenter, local high schools, Butler County Community College or other local organizations. Makerspaces differ in that they provide the tools necessary for people to actually create things.

## Goal P2 - Continue to be the commercial and retail center of Mercer County.

A “retail apocalypse” dominated headlines in 2017, with nearly 9,000 major chain stores closing in 2017; a figure which is double that from 2016 and even more than in 2008, the worst year on record during the Great Recession.<sup>1</sup>

Hermitage was not immune. The Shenango Valley Mall lost anchor stores Macy’s and Sears in 2017 (only JC Penney remains). Kmart, located in the Hermitage Towne Plaza and Sears Auto Center, located on a mall outparcel, closed in 2018. Reports indicate that C-class malls will not survive, and closures will increase and gain momentum through 2020.

Increased pressure from online retail accounts for some of the changing retail patterns. eCommerce sales increased 15.5% compared to 4.3% of total retail in 2016. However, not all retail news is bad news. Off-price apparel, discounters, warehouse club stores and dollar stores continue to post

record growth. Grocery stores and most restaurant concepts continue to account for growth; food halls and experiential retail will continue to be a draw for consumers to shopping centers.

### Strategy P2.1: Target retail development to existing sites within the City Center.

- » There is also an ongoing shift among American consumers towards “value-oriented retail and convenience, and on experiences over material goods.”
- » Redeveloping the City Center as a walkable, mixed-use environment will attract people looking for more experienced-based shopping.

## Goal P3 - Ensure that the zoning ordinance aligns with projected and desired non-residential growth.

### Strategy P3.1: Host quarterly meetings with local business/industry.

- » The Market Study shows that while industrial jobs may be declining, the amount of space required for those jobs will increase. As such, it will be important for the City to maintain communication with local industry to ensure that land use regulations are meeting their expansion needs.
- » Allow for commercial uses within industrial areas that allow for supporting businesses (i.e. restaurants, childcare, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> Marketbeat U.S. Shopping Center Q4 2017 Cushman & Wakefield Retrieved online at: [www.US\\_Retail\\_MarketBeat\\_Q417.pdf](http://www.US_Retail_MarketBeat_Q417.pdf)



## Goal P4 - Cultivate healthy, cooperative relationships with nearby partners.

The overall prosperity of Hermitage is inherently tied to that of that of the Shenango Valley. The City will need to cultivate partnerships with regional entities, such as neighboring municipalities, institutions and economic organizations to improve the prosperity of the entire region.

### Strategy P4.1: Enhance workforce training opportunities through partnerships.

- » Coordinate with local institutions such as Butler County Community College (at LindenPointe), Laurel Technical Institute and Penn State University - Shenango Valley campus to develop and/or promote workforce training opportunities.
- » Training programs should directly engage employer and industry partners, or actively guide students to career specific training. Successful training programs often rely on input from or partnerships with employers and industry partners in order to direct trainees to invest in courses and fields of study relevant to available jobs. Without this type of collaboration, newly trained or retrained workers may find themselves without the skills needed by industry, skills that are required for long-lasting labor market success.

### Strategy P4.2: Strengthen the connections between high schools and local businesses.

- » Local high schools have a job shadowing requirement prior to graduation. One of the challenges raised by local students is the perceived lack of local businesses willing to participate.
- » Strengthening the connection between high schools and businesses would better serve students and businesses by potentially connecting the future workforce with locally available jobs/ career paths. With the goal to retain youth, students need to have a better understanding of what local companies exist and what types of careers they could pursue if they want to stay close to home.

# Core Value 5 complete corridors

## THE VISION:

Hermitage is a coCity, featuring complete corridors that are attractive gateways that also effectively move people through the region.



LindenPointe  
development plan

Source: City of Hermitage



## ON THE GROUND NOW:

- Priority transportation projects are included in the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission Long Range Plan.
- US 62 / East State Street is part of a current PennDOT project that will include a road diet from five lanes to three lanes and sidewalks from the City border with Sharon to SR 18.
- PennDOT is designing a roundabout at the intersection of East State Street and the Shenango Valley Freeway. The project will include landscaping and sidewalks.
- Broadway Avenue is the industrial corridor, which experiences high traffic volumes and speeding, which causes some bottlenecking in the City. It has been improved in the surrounding communities.
- North Buhl Farm Drive is an opportunity to provide a pedestrian / bicycle connection between Buhl Park, surrounding neighborhoods and possibly the Trout Island Trail.
- The Mercer County Regional Council of Governments offers the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service, a fixed route bus system, and the Mercer County Community Transit, a door-to-door advanced registration bus service.

## KEY CHALLENGES:

- The main corridors are state roads, necessitating coordination with PennDOT.
- Appearance of gateways / corridors - no “curb appeal”
- SR 18 is a high traffic corridor, many residents expressed concern over unsafe pedestrian conditions.
- Traffic signals on SR 18 are outdated.
- Broadway Avenue is only access to industrial area. A second access would open up the development potential of surrounding area, along with infrastructure expansion.
- Need more reliable public transportation that provides evening service. Look at service to low income areas and child care facilities.

# HOW TO CREATE COMPLETE CORRIDORS

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## Goal C1 - Improve the appearance of SR 18 and State Street as the entrances to the Shenango Valley.

As major gateways into Hermitage and the Shenango Valley, the appearance of the SR 18 and State Street corridors was identified as a high priority for aesthetic improvements.

### Strategy C1.1: Implement the recommendations from previous planning studies.

- » Corridor plans have been developed for both the PA 18 and the State Street corridors. While some of the recommendations have been implemented, not all have. Recommendations include zoning district changes, intersection improvements, streetscape design, road diets and gateway enhancements.

### Strategy C1.2: Work with property owners to improve landscaping.

- » Inspire and organize community members to take ownership of beautification, which could step up the appeal of gateways as well as increase the extent to which people feel invested in the City.
- » Establish a street tree program (see page 59 for case study examples). Benefits include traffic calming, increased pedestrian safety, increased security, improved business revenue and home values, natural stormwater management, improved air quality and longer pavement life.

## Goal C2 - Implement a wayfinding sign network.

Wayfinding is not just signage. Architectural clues are also part of it. Implementing a thematic wayfinding program would help to orient visitors that they have “arrived” in Hermitage. Under Core Value 1 - Vibrant City Center, recommendations include using signage to establish the City Center as a place. This concept should be used Citywide to develop and utilize a thematic branding approach so that all City-owned parks/land are similarly signed and directional signage is installed to direct visitors to key attractions.

### Strategy C2.1: Develop a branding and signage plan.

- » Currently, there are a few standard PennDOT blue signs that direct people to places such as BCC/LindenPointe, but the City could work with PennDOT to develop a thematic system.
- » Wayfinding signage should be installed at key intersections to direct visitors to key attractions/destinations, including but not limited to Buhl Park, the City municipal complex, all City parks, trailheads, etc.
- » Within the City Center, the signage should be oriented to pedestrians and cyclists.



# Wayfinding → Build on this:



# to develop this:



Examples of recommended branding and signage by Main Street Fairmont for the City of Fairmont, West Virginia

# HOW TO CREATE COMPLETE CORRIDORS

## Goal C3 - Focus on developing complete streets.

Complete Streets policies “formalize a community’s intent to plan, design and maintain streets so they are safe for all users of all ages and abilities.”<sup>1</sup> These policies can be implemented through updated ordinances and resolutions, inclusion into comprehensive plans and adopted policies by the governing body. According to Smart Growth America, there are ten elements of a comprehensive Complete Streets policy:

1. Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.
2. Specifies that ‘all users’ includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
3. Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance and operations, for the entire right of way.
4. Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
5. Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
6. Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
7. Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
8. Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
9. Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
10. Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

More information on Complete Streets and what Hermitage can do to implement a Complete Streets policy can be found in the “Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook,” available online at [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org).

### Strategy C3.1: Adopt a complete streets ordinance.

- » By encouraging and promoting a complete streets policy, the City can commit to working with PennDOT and Mercer County Regional Planning Commission to ensure that the design and operations of roadways take into account all potential users and improve safety for everyone.

### Strategy C3.2: Right-size corridors to accommodate new traffic patterns and more users.

- » Evaluate existing roadways to determine if the number and width of travel lanes are necessary to handle current and projected traffic counts. Consider right-sizing these corridors as appropriate to accommodate bike lanes and sidewalks/trails.

<sup>1</sup>“Complete Streets.” Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>. Retrieved online October 2016.



# Complete Streets: Not Just for Cars



Bicycle Lane



Share the Road



Protected Bicycle Lane



Multi-use Path



Riding Sidewalk



Painted Bike Lane

## WHAT IS A COMPLETE STREET?



### ACTIVE SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks should be smooth, wide, feel safe, and have appropriate transitions to the street, making them easy to walk or use a wheelchair on

### DEDICATED BIKE LANES

Simple pavement markings creating a dedicated bike lane make both motorist and bicycle movement more predictable, and therefore safer for both. They may increase the likelihood of casual riders using bicycles for transportation

### ACTIVE ROADWAY

One lane of car traffic going in each direction with a two-way-left-turn-lane (TWLTL) in the center would reduce the amount of car crashes on Government Street by providing turning vehicles a refuge from through traffic, while keeping through traffic moving more efficiently

### SAFE CROSSWALKS

Clearly marked crosswalks allow pedestrians and wheelchair users to cross streets safely, while making sure cars know where to expect them

### PLANTING STRIP

Street trees and landscaping slow speeding traffic, improve the aesthetics of the roadway, provide shade, and create a buffer between cars and people, making a more inviting environment for pedestrians

### GREEN SPACES

Parks and public green spaces create a destination, encouraging community interaction and providing a rest from the surrounding urban environment

# HOW TO CREATE COMPLETE CORRIDORS

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## Goal C4 - Plan appropriately for infrastructure improvements.

### Strategy C4.1: Partner with PennDOT and the County to incorporate new technology for traffic management.

- » Programs, such as Pittsburgh’s “Smart Spine” corridors, outfit roads with adaptive signal technology and sensors, along with physical upgrades to intersections in order to improve mobility and make streets safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.
- » Hermitage needs to position itself so that it can incorporate similar technological advancements into corridor improvement projects. The signals on SR 18 are outdated; this corridor could serve as the pilot project for the region.

### Strategy C4.2: Coordinate infrastructure improvement projects to reduce cost and minimize impacts.

- » Develop integrated GIS mapping systems that track infrastructure needs and improvements to better coordinate improvement projects (i.e. road surfacing, sidewalk/trail projects, water/sewer line replacements).
- » Review and revise the City’s road maintenance plan as needed. The City maintains approximately 90 miles of City streets and has a maintenance plan, although it is outdated.

## Goal C5 - Increase the visibility of public transportation.

Public transportation is a tough challenge for small communities. Hermitage is fortunate to have the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service (SVSS) and the Mercer County Community Transit but large-scale expansions are not financially feasible. However, there are some smaller investments that could be made that may help to increase the visibility of the system along with ridership.

### Strategy C5.1: Develop maps of routes that serve Hermitage and post on the City’s website.

- » Currently, the website lists the routes and stops, but doesn’t include a map.

### Strategy C5.2: Work with the SVSS to develop bus shelters at key locations.

- » Shelters should include maps of the routes with schedules and bike racks. Advertising space on the shelters could be sold to local businesses to help off-set the cost.

### Strategy C5.3: Encourage multi-family and lower-income housing developments to locate near transit service.

- » The transit routes mostly follow the main corridors in Hermitage (SR 18 and State Street). Targeting new multifamily and/or lower-income and senior housing developments along the transit routes would allow for residents who need the service to have better access.



# Improving Public Transit

**Build it up:** Adding bike and pedestrian infrastructure at bus or train stops, and outfitting vehicles with bike carriers, is one way to increase transit access. Integrating secure bike storage racks at transit locations, connecting transit locations with bike paths and walking routes, and making it easier to take bikes along can not only improve visibility and safety, but could also make it that last-mile and first-mile of the journey easier.

**Get found:** Mobile devices are often the tool of choice for searching out information, so increasing the web presence of transit options is key. Having a mobile-friendly website with clear contact info and route details, can make it easier for today's riders to find, and providing printed materials, including schedules, prices, and routes, to municipal agencies, churches, and community organizations will help those without a digital device.

**Make it obvious:** Posting clear and accurate signage for each transit stop, as well as having up-to-date route information and contact info at each location, can help increase visibility, and having a route map will help riders navigate their journey. A well-lit location can also go a long way toward not only being noticed, but also toward helping riders feeling like it is a safe and appealing option.

**Partner up:** Some aspects of rural transit operations can be improved through community partnerships, whether it's by connecting with the local volunteer community to help meet specific needs of an individual or group, or by partnering with a local arts organization for a beautification project. Churches, civic organizations, and other community groups may be a good source for input and feedback on current transit options, or could serve as 'sponsors' of specific projects that enhance the transit experience, such as adding flowerboxes or art to bus stops or transit hubs.



Source: <https://www.nationalexpresstransit.com/blog/how-to-improve-transit-operations-in-rural-communities>



INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG  
BROADWAY AVENUE

*Hermitage*  
20PA30

# FUTURE LAND USE

# Future Land Use

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## Community Policies

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To provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making future land use decisions, a series of community policies were developed that if followed, will ensure that future growth and development are consistent with the established Vision and Core Values.

- Cultivate a healthy community by promoting physical activity, providing quality parks, preserving open space and encouraging social interaction.
- Ensure that future growth and development consider implications on the transportation network, infrastructure systems and open space / rural character.
- Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions, to the extent of where interests are shared, especially for future infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) improvements.
- Preserve the character of existing residential neighborhoods through compatible infill development and housing rehabilitation.

- Promote small scale, conscientious redevelopment of neighborhood commercial nodes designed to enhance the quality of life of our residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage mixed-use development and design standards that enhance pedestrian movement, lifelong communities and healthy living.
- Protect a diversified, healthy tax base in order to function as a financially responsible government and continue to provide the high quality services and facilities.

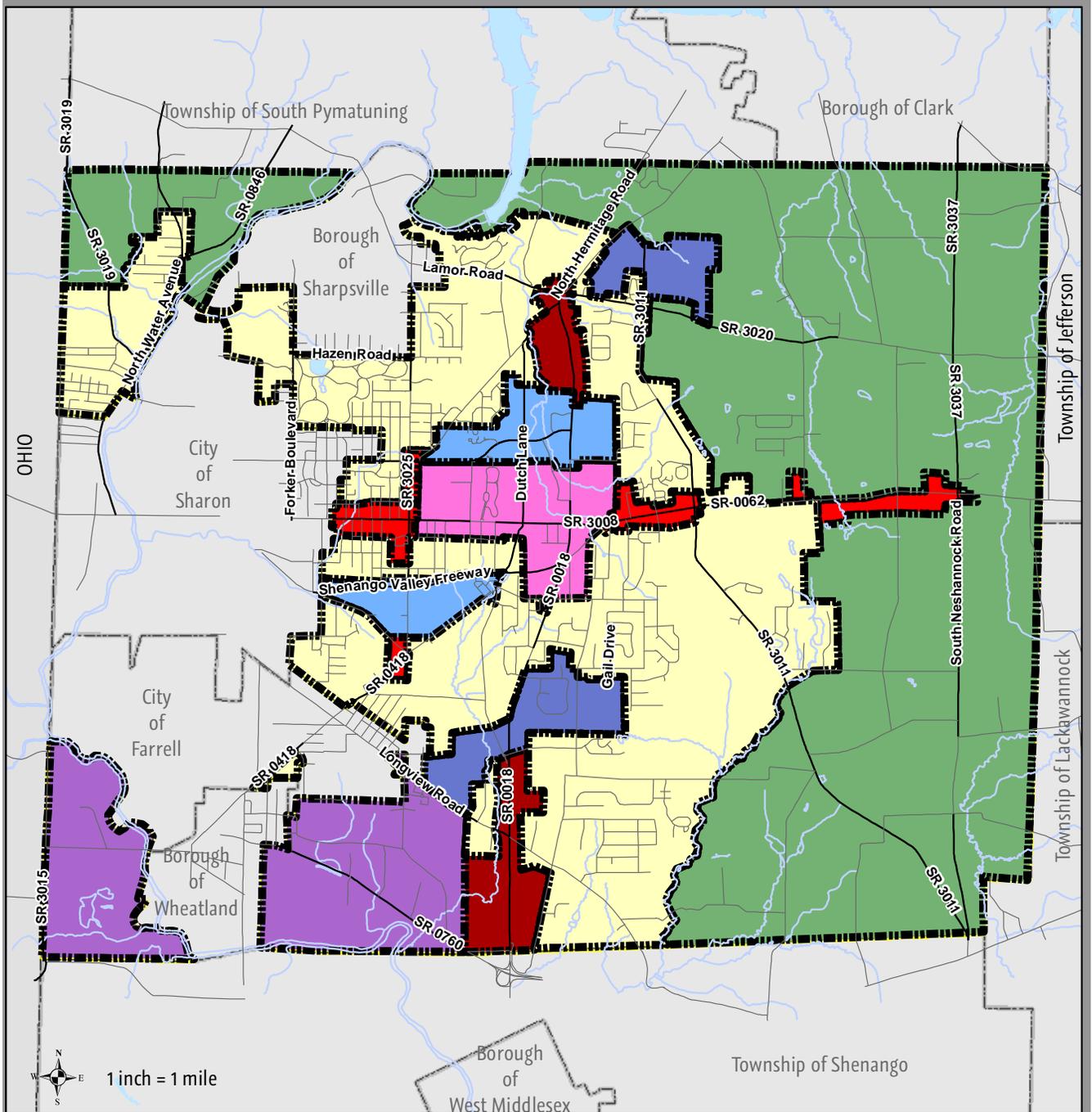
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## Character Areas

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The Future Land Use Map is a visual representation of the City's future development policy. Rather than look at future land use on a parcel level, the City decided to look at the larger picture: what type and what form should new development take in specific areas? The purpose of the character areas is to provide more specific guidance to City officials in making rezoning and capital investment decisions.

The supporting narrative provides policy direction for regulating future scale and design with the goal of furthering consistent character within each area as defined by an orienting "vision." Where appropriate, statements for policy and goals are also established. The City's nine character areas are identified by name and the color used on the map.



**Future Land Use Map**  
**City of Hermitage**  
Mercer County, PA

**Legend**

- Municipal Boundary
- City of Hermitage
- Lake/Pond
- Stream

**Character Areas**

- Rural Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Institutional
- City Center

- Neighborhood Commercial
- Highway Commercial
- Business & Technology / Mixed Use
- Industrial

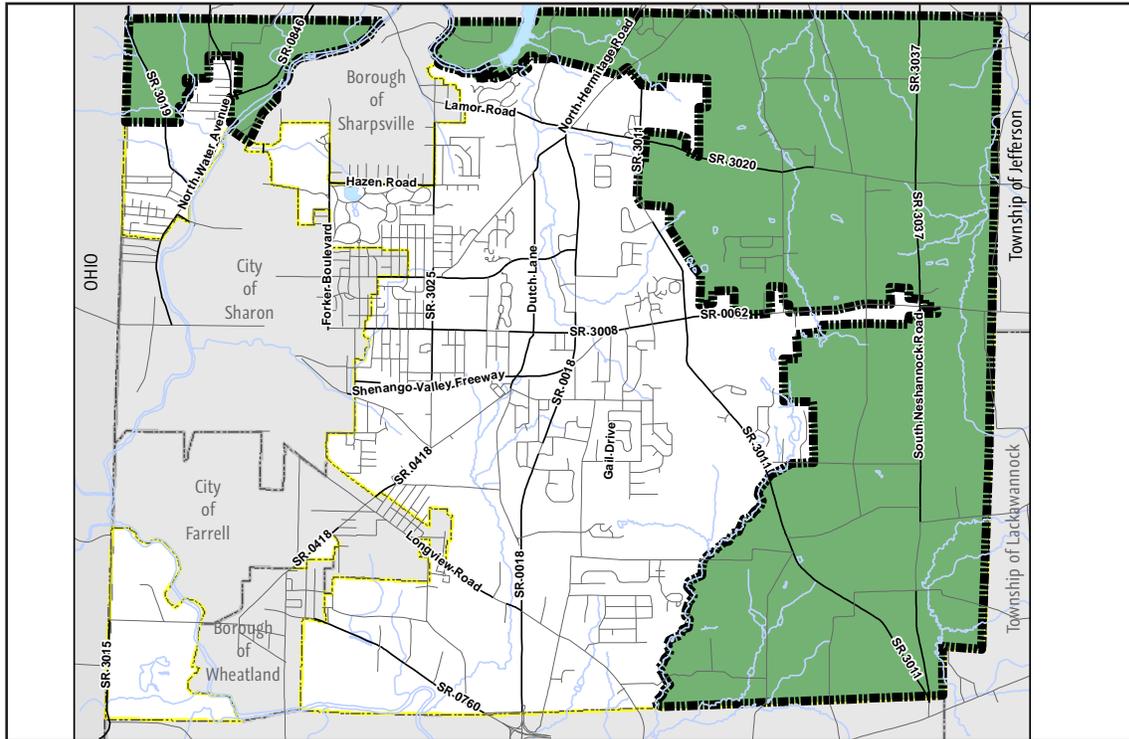
Data sources:  
Mercer County Regional Planning Commission: existing land use  
City of Hermitage: municipal boundary, road centerlines, water bodies  
USGS: streams

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Pennsylvania North FIPS 3701 Feet  
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic  
Datum: North American 1983

Map prepared by Mackin Engineering Company  
Date: 1/8/2019



# Rural Residential Character Area



## Vision / Intent

To protect the eastern portion of the City from suburban sprawl, this area will be reserved for agriculture and rural residential while limiting the expansion of water/sewer infrastructure.

### Use:

- Agricultural uses, including farms and agricultural-related businesses
- Single family homes
- Neighborhood commercial at key intersections

### Form:

- Conservation subdivisions is the preferred development concept, whereby high value greenways, scenic viewsheds and productive

agricultural lands are permanently preserved.

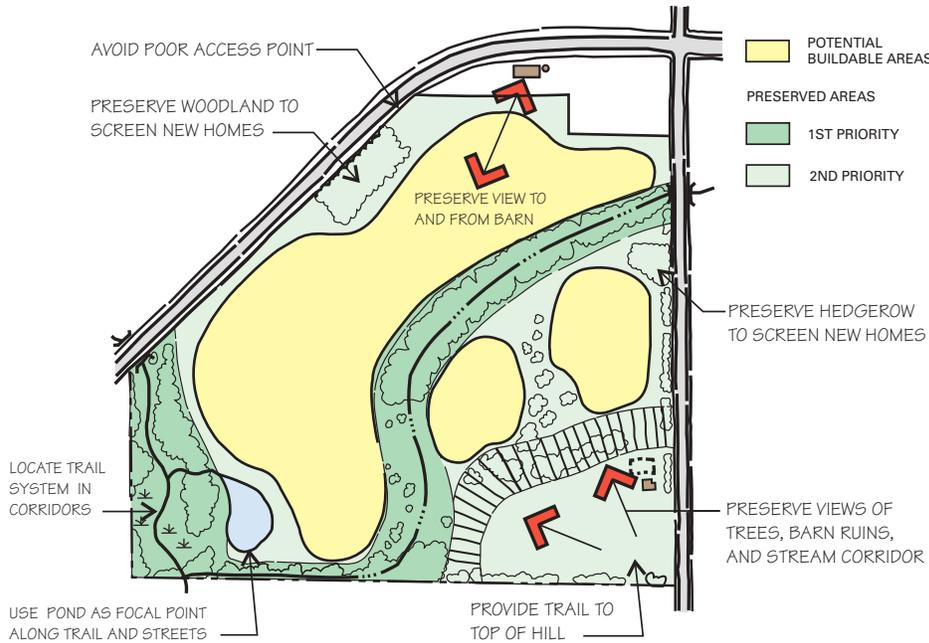
- Neighborhood commercial should be designed to complement the surrounding rural character and not detract from the landscape.

## Action Items:

- Identify greenways to promote connected preservation areas.
- Develop and adopt conservation subdivision language (as a use by right) into the zoning/subdivision and land development ordinances.
- Determine appropriate types of senior housing to permit (i.e. accessory dwelling units, etc.).

## Site Design in Rural Residential

The Conservation Subdivision approach calls for design that consciously intends to create interconnected networks of permanently preserved space. Design, therefore, starts with identification of a site's most important resources and "green-lining" them into open space networks. As shown below, house sites are then fit into the context of existing features to be preserved.



Source: Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission





Source: Kronberg Wall

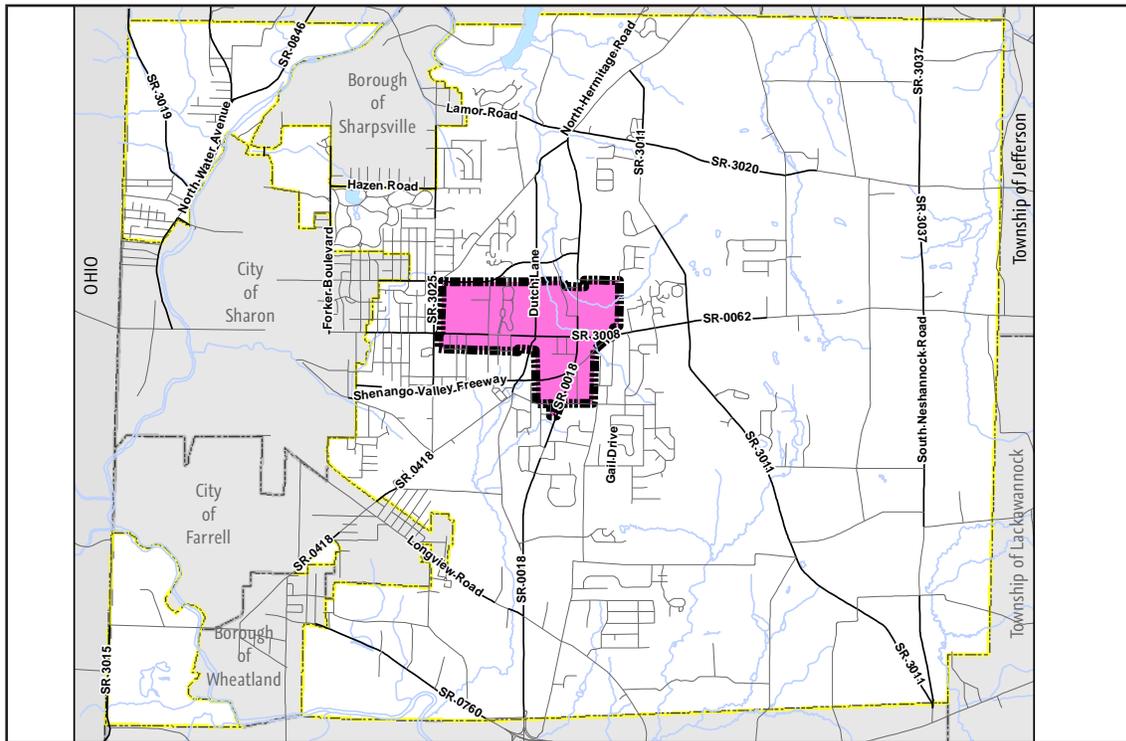
## Suburban Residential Feature: Missing Middle Housing

The images above show Atlanta’s Candler Park neighborhood, where various types of pre-WWII multi-family buildings blend with single-family homes to create inviting residential areas within walking distance of local retail and restaurants. The appeal of this neighborhood is its inclusion of “missing middle” housing. The term was coined in 2000 and refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.

Types can include duplexes side-by-side or stacked, bungalow courts, carriage homes, fourplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments, small multi-plexes, live/work units and other configurations that introduce gentle density, adding taxable value and residents who can support local businesses and amenities. A commercial node such as Candler Park (above) needs about 2,000 households to support it. If the node is a quarter-mile in diameter, a walkable catchment area would cover about 125 acres. Putting enough residents within walkable range of the node would give the area an average density of 16 units per acre, more than single-family neighborhoods within Hermitage provide.

— <http://kronbergwall.com/on-selling-missing-middle-housing-to-communities/>

# City Center Character Area



## Vision / Intent

The City Center Character Area is intended to provide attractive areas where the community can gather to socialize, shop, recreate or live. This area includes diverse, compatible land uses that can be developed on the same site, and where desirable, in the same building.

This area is intended to serve as a mixed use community retail center, similar to downtown areas. Mutually supportive office, civic, cultural, entertainment and residential uses are planned to enhance the viability of this mixed use community retail center. The form of development is compact with tightly grouped buildings arranged around a connected street and sidewalk network that serves vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle transportation.

## Use:

- Retail, high density residential, public uses, cultural and entertainment uses, hotels and motels, and offices.

## Form:

- Traditional neighborhood design, high quality building materials, civic amenities, integrated open space and appropriate transitions from greater to less intense uses

## Action Items:

- Encourage more mixed-use development through zoning and outreach to developers.
- Develop both passive (public open space) and active (community events) recreational

- amenities that draw people downtown.
- Develop a brand for the City Center, add physical markers establishing the area and market
- Utilize traditional storefront design techniques wherever possible; maximize opportunities for street activity by incorporating open and inviting ground floors.
- Establish a “build-to” line along State Street to enhance the pedestrian experience
- Place parking to the outskirts of developments - to the side or rear of buildings
- Create streetscapes and public spaces that feel comfortable to pedestrians by encouraging inclusion of open space and/or green spaces;
- Promote / establish new connectivity, particularly for cycling and pedestrian movement through implementing the Sidewalks and Trails Priorities Plan
- Reduce curb cuts

## Desired Site Design - City Center



# Shenango Valley Mall Site

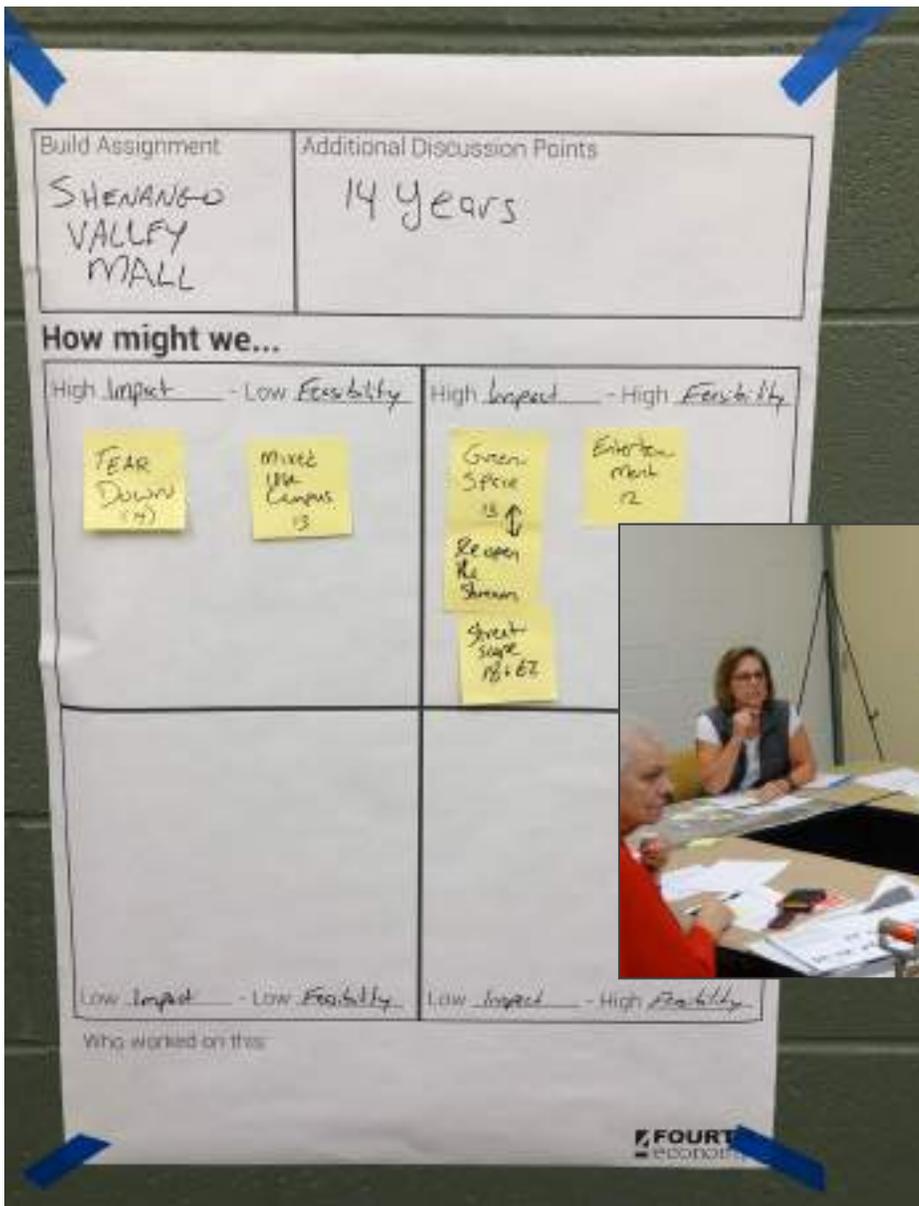


Within the concept of a City Center, much time was spent discussing the potential redevelopment of the Shenango Valley Mall site. The mall site is seen as the prime opportunity to make the vision for a “vibrant city center” a reality.

## Action Items:

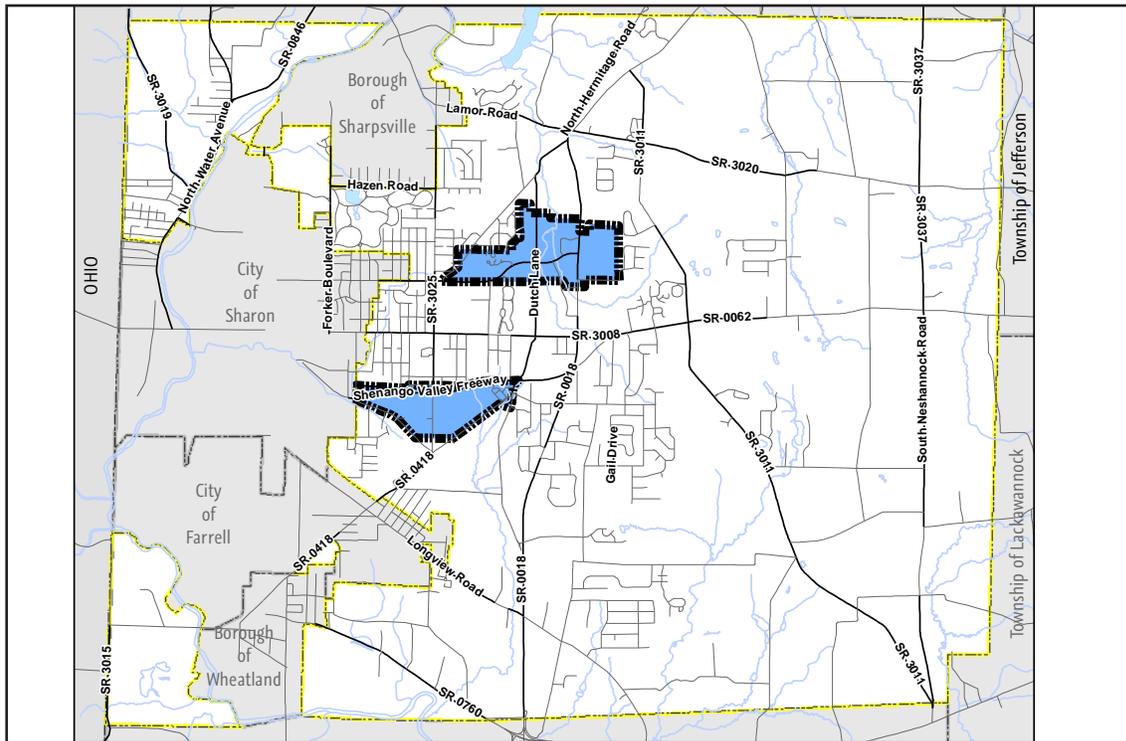
- Work with the property owners and developers to redevelop the site in line with the established vision. As part of the redevelopment, the City's role can include the following:
  - » Update zoning to ensure that it allows the proposed uses and encourages desired design characteristics through traditional neighborhood development principles
  - » Acquire and develop public open space within the site.
  - » Consider offering financing incentives such as tax increment financing (TIF), forgiving tax liens on the property, etc.
  - » Daylight the portion of the Indian Run stream and develop it as part of the passive open space
  - » Develop a traditional street grid through the site that connects to adjacent streets and neighborhoods
  - » Develop sidewalks and bike lanes throughout the site

- Establish a “build-to” line along PA 18 and State Street to enhance the pedestrian experience
- Plant street trees along PA 18 and State Street
- Utilize traditional storefront design techniques wherever possible; maximize opportunities for street activity by incorporating open and inviting ground floors.
- Place parking to the outskirts of developments - to the side or rear of buildings
- Create streetscapes and public spaces that feel comfortable to pedestrians by encouraging inclusion of open space and/or green spaces;



Meeting attendees discuss desired improvements to the Shenango Valley Mall site.

# Institutional Character Areas



## Vision / Intent

Serves as the civic hub of the City, home to the City municipal offices, healthcare and related services, educational institutions and parks and recreation. It also serves as a buffer between the City Center and surrounding neighborhoods.

### Use:

- Civic uses including but not limited to government offices, non-profit offices, parks and recreation (public and private, indoor and outdoor), places of worship, educational institutions, etc.

### Form:

- Connect to City Center and surrounding neighborhoods

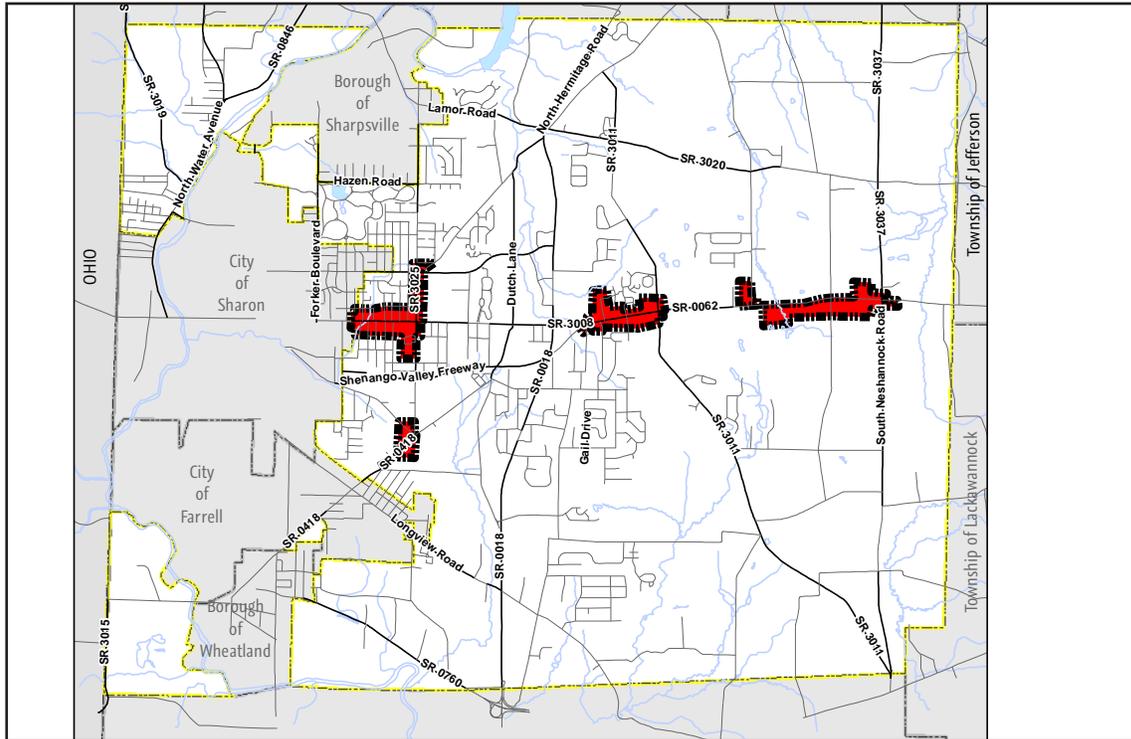
## Action Items:

- Expand the Rodney White Trail to connect to surrounding developments
- Pursue the development of an indoor recreation facility, possible the Armory if it is vacated



Top: the City Building, Bottom Left: Hickory High School, Bottom Right: Artman Elementary School (photo credit: City of Hermitage)

# Neighborhood Commercial Character Area



## Vision / Intent

The Neighborhood Commercial Character Areas are intended to provide areas for convenient neighborhood and community wide access to daily goods and services.

### Use:

- Typical uses include grocery stores, convenient stores, banks, dry cleaners, restaurants and other retail establishments. Residential land uses may be appropriate, particularly as a part of a mixed use development.

### Form:

- Buildings are set back from the road
- Landscaped buffers along roadway

- Designed to be accessible primarily by automobile.

## Action Items:

- Access management to improve connectivity to adjacent businesses and surrounding residential neighborhoods
- Improved parking/site design
- Update the zoning ordinance to address permitted uses, site design, landscaping requirements and signage requirements

## Character of Neighborhood Commercial



*Because of the proximity of nearby downtown areas, Lower Merion encourages buildings to be pedestrian-friendly by bringing them up to the street.*



*The zoning in Lower Merion, a rural-suburban area, that prohibited this car wash requires pitched roofs to fit in with abutting houses and extensive green space to reflect the rural-rural character.*



*This drug store in Norbeth was required to be compatible with a former Friends Meeting House across the street.*

planning for retail development

19

### Determining Desired Character

Individual communities have a choice concerning the character of their general commercial areas. Some communities may prefer a more automobile-oriented commercial setting, while other communities may prefer a more pedestrian-oriented commercial atmosphere. Pedestrian-oriented areas might require buildings to be close to the street, with parking to the side, while auto-oriented commercial areas might allow some parking in front of buildings.

Good commercial developments should fit harmoniously into the visual fabric of the community. This can be achieved by encouraging architectural styles and treatments that are consistent with the surrounding area. These might include pitched roofs, and the use of specific building materials.

In addition to architectural style, there are some basic ordinance requirements that can reflect the character of a community. For example, a rural community might choose a relatively low impervious coverage, perhaps 30%; a more urban community might choose a higher one, perhaps 60%, and a suburban community might choose something in between, such as 40%.

general commercial district

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, developed a General Commercial Model Ordinance to assist communities with planning appropriately for the desired character of commercial areas. The model commercial ordinance provides regulations for standard car-oriented development that allows a wide range of commercial uses with controlled driveway access, interconnected parking lots and good landscaping and extensive buffers. The ordinances can be found online at <https://www.montcopa.org/1443/Model-Ordinances>.



## Desired Site Design - PA 18 North / South

*The Pavilion Shopping Center in Lurline was upgraded with better building design, landscaping, and outdoor furnishings.*

**Building Design Standards**

Building design standards control the visual and functional impact commercial buildings have on neighboring properties. These standards focus on how well new commercial buildings fit in with the architecture of the surrounding area.

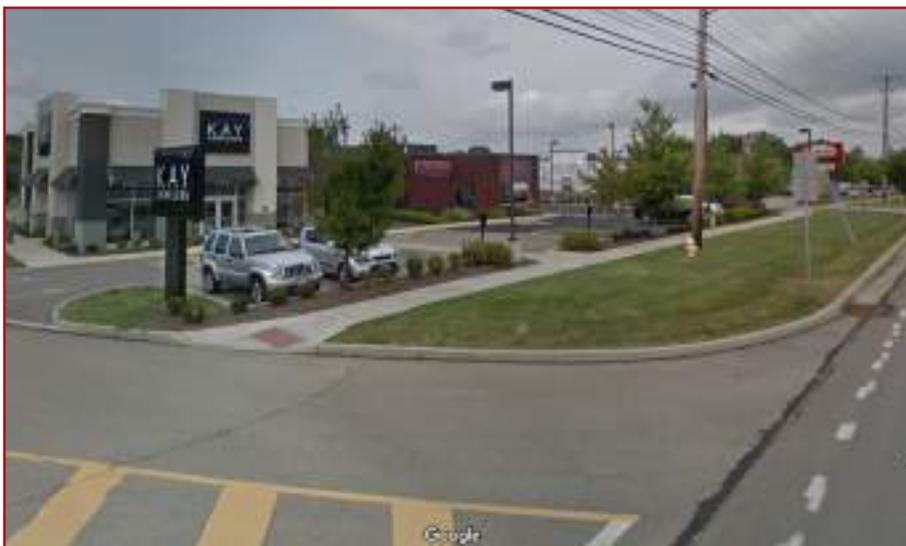
For large scale commercial buildings, these design standards require variations in facades and roof lines.

New buildings are encouraged to use materials, windows, and doors that are compatible with surrounding buildings.

Service station canopies are required to have a reasonable size, height, and appearance.

design elements 19 general commercial district

Source: <https://www.montcopa.org/1443/Model-Ordinances>



The model commercial ordinance provides regulations to address building design for commercial districts. Hermitage has implemented the 18 South Overlay District for newer commercial development that addresses setbacks, sidewalks, landscaping, signage and other design requirements, which has improved the overall building and site design of commercial development in the City.



## Joy Cone Company



Left: View of Joy Cone Company along Lamor Road

Below: View of landscaped, mounded buffers that separate the site from the adjacent residential community



## LindenPointe



One way to create evening/after-work programming at LindenPointe is to develop a food truck event. Increasing in popularity, food truck events offer a great way to utilize existing space off-hours while bringing in a variety of local and regional vendors to support local businesses.

A great example of this being done is the Pittsburgh Food Truck Park. Located in the Millvale Riverfront Park and on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, the Pittsburgh Food Truck Park featured a rotation of the area's favorite mobile food vendors, a beer garden, a performance venue, an event space, and game yard.



Source: <https://www.pittsburghfoodpark.com/>





# Hermitage 2030

This plan was prepared on behalf of the City of Hermitage by:

Mackin Engineering Company



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Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1015

[www.mackinengineering.com](http://www.mackinengineering.com)