

The Northern Venango County Background Analysis

CORNPLANTER TOWNSHIP, CITY OF OIL CITY, AND THE BOROUGH OF ROUSEVILLE



2010

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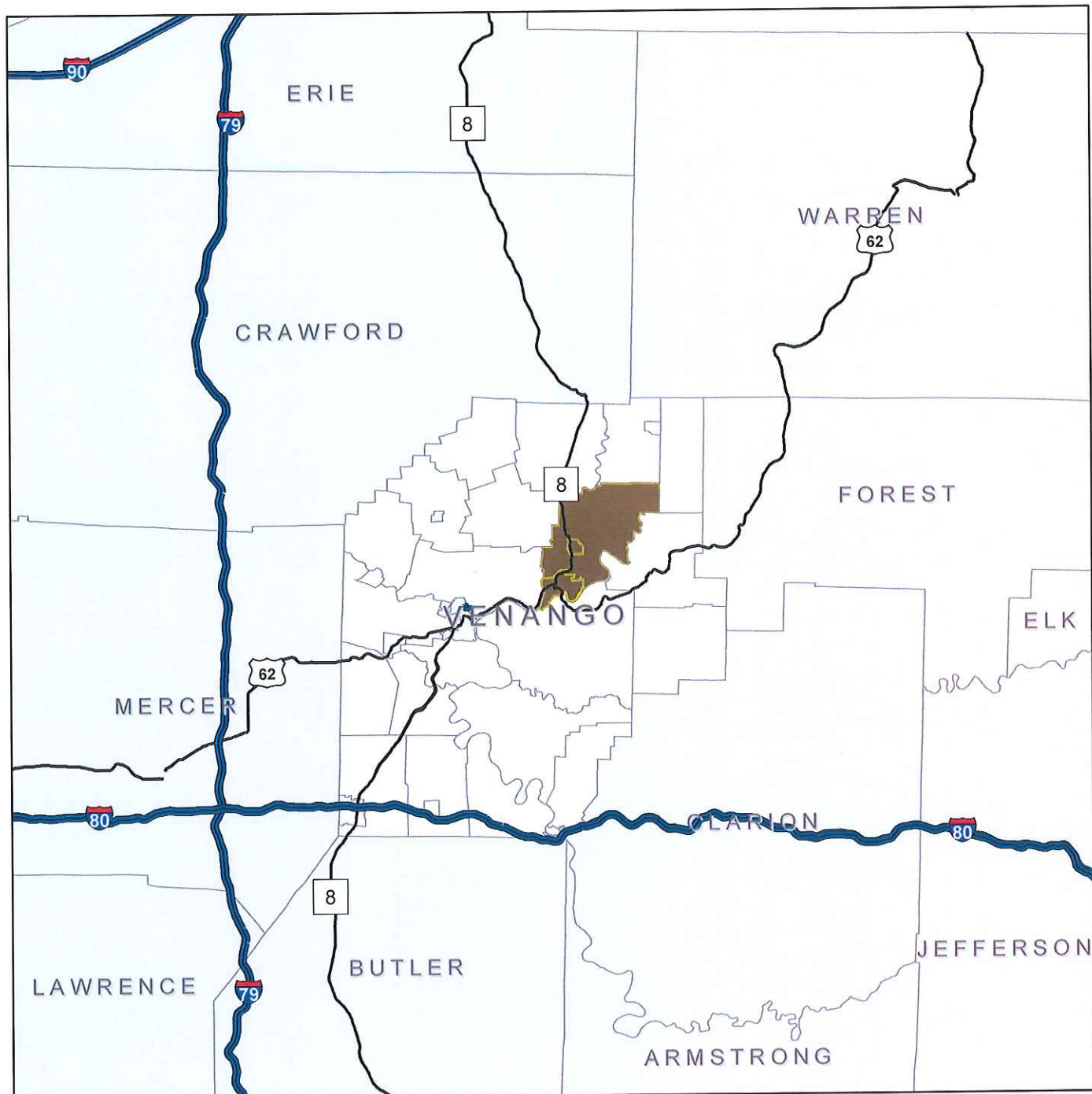
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Chapter 1 – Demographics





Map 1 - Regional Location Map Northern Venango County Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008,
U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005
Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

GCCA
2009

Demographics



The study of people is truly one of the most important parts of any comprehensive plan. Why? Very simply, because the people of our study area—Cornplanter Township, City of Oil City, and Rouseville Borough—are the reason for this Comprehensive Plan.

It must be clearly understood that the process of population study is not static—a review of a Census snapshot. No indeed! A region's demography is a dynamic process showing the past, the present, and allowing informed projection of the future.

Table D-1 is the starting point of this analysis. It shows the population of the three study area communities from 1970 to 2000.

Table D-1: Population, 1970-2000

Year	Venango	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Region
1970	62,353	2,391	15,033	877	18,301
1980	64,444	3,038	13,881	734	17,653
1990	59,381	2,968	11,949	583	15,500
2000	57,565	2,687	11,504	472	14,663
1970 to 2000	-4,788	296	-3,529	-405	-3,638
Percent	-7.7	12.4	-23.5	-46.2	-19.9
1990 to 2000	-1,816	-281	-445	-111	-19.9
Percent	-3.1	-9.5	-3.7	-19.0	-5.4

Source: U.S. Census Files

In that 30-year period, the region lost 3,638 persons, or nearly 20% of its population. Yet, the pattern of change varied—both Oil City (-3,529) as well as Rouseville (-405) lost population while Cornplanter grew (+296). However, in the last decade, all three municipalities lost population.

Why?

Population loss is due to one of two primary factors. It is either an excess of deaths over births (natural decrease) or out-migration. Given the accessibility of vital statistics, the former factor is quite easy to determine. In the decade of the 1990s, there were 1,897 live births and 2,100 deaths (Pennsylvania Department of Health) within the three communities. This translated to a net loss of 203 persons (about 20 per year). The actual loss in this time period (per the Census Bureau) was 837. So, natural decrease accounted for a quarter of the study area's decrease. Consequently, out-migration represented the remaining 75 percent.

Race and Hispanic Origin

According to Census 2000, the racial characteristics of the study area are as shown by Table D-2.

Table D-2: Race Characteristics, 2000

Race	Cornplanter		City of Oil City		Rouseville		Total	Percent
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent		
Total	2,687		11,504		472		14,663	
Black	11	0.4	102	0.9	2	0.4	115	0.8
American Indian	2	0.1	30	0.3	4	0.8	36	0.2
Asian	1	0.0	33	0.3	0	0.0	34	0.2
Pacific Islander	0	0.0	5	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.0
Other	1	0.0	13	0.1	0	0.0	14	0.1

Source: Census 2000

As these statistics show, the study area is primarily white. Overall, the various non-white groups comprise 1.4% of the total population.

Table D-3: Gender – Study Area

	Cornplanter		Oil City		Rouseville		Total	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Male	1,302	48.5	5,468	47.5	230	48.77	7,000	47.7
Female	1,385	51.5	6,036	52.5	242	51.3	7,663	52.3

Source: Census 2000

The division in gender can be primarily traced to longevity—women live longer than men. For example, in Oil City, there were 1,239 residents over seventy years of age, about one quarter male, and the balance female. Such demographic numbers are typical in western Pennsylvania.

Median Age

As reported in the Venango County Comprehensive Plan, this is an “old” county, in an “old” state. Using the median age as a guide, Pennsylvania, at a median age of 38 years, was the third oldest state in the United States. Within Pennsylvania, Venango County, at 40.2 years, was the eleventh “oldest” county in the state. Within the study area, the median ages were (per Census 2000):

Cornplanter	42.7 Years
Oil City	37.9 Years
Rouseville	44.0 Years

Obviously, with a median age hovering between 38 and 44, the number of families in the key family-forming years (20 to 40) are limited.

Age Characteristics

Detailed age cohort characteristics can be viewed by Table D-4 of the “Venango County Comprehensive Plan, History and Background Studies.” In that report, some 13 separate cohorts were presented. In this study, only five age categories will be used, based upon the following:

0-4 – Preschoolers

5-19 – School age

20-34 – Young adults, family formers

35-64 – Adults, usually stable, higher income

65+ – Retirement age, but diverse in income and needs

Table D-4: Age Groups, 1990–2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville

Community	0 to 4	5 to 19	20 to 34	35 to 64	65+	Total
1990						
Cornplanter	202	628	550	1,087	501	2,968
Oil City	839	2,422	2,563	3,990	2,135	11,949
Rouseville	40	119	117	212	95	583
Total	1,081	3,169	3,230	5,289	2,731	15,500
2000						
Cornplanter	155	551	331	1,112	538	2,687
Oil City	731	2,521	2,032	4,210	2,010	11,504
Rouseville	24	84	78	166	120	472
Total	910	3,156	2,441	5,488	2,668	14,663
Change	-171	-13	-789	199	-63	-837
Percent Change	-16%	0%	-24%	4%	-2%	-5%

Source: U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000

Note about demographic analysis. Over any 10-year period, the interval between the Census events, some losses due to natural causes and accidents can be anticipated. This is somewhat true with newborn children, but really does not show any significant impact until the 65-plus group is reached. Consequently, any significant population losses in groups under 65 can generally be attributed to out-migration.

An analysis of the age patterns for the study area show the following:

Age Group 0 to 4

1990 – 1,081

2000 – 910

The number of “preschool” children dropped by 171, or 16 percent.

Age Group 5 to 19

1990 – 3,169

2000 – 3,156

For school-age persons, a very small decline of 13, or less than 1%, was observed.

Age Group 20 to 34

1990 – 3,230

2000 – 2,441

The young adult category is a critical one. These are the ages when people settle down, buy homes, and start raising a family. In the study area, this age group lost 789 persons, or 24%, between the 1990 and 2000 Census.

Age Group 35 to 64

1990 – 5,289

2000 – 5,488

In contrast to prior age cohorts, the “adult” category grew by 199, or about 4 percent. Normally, these folks are the backbone of a community. They are usually homeowners, and are often good wage earners.

Age Group 65+

1990 – 2,731

2000 – 2,668

Those in retirement age saw a modest decrease of 63, or 2 percent. This age bracket is quite diverse; some are still in the workforce, yet others are frail and in need of special housing and healthcare.

The policy implications from these figures are:

- If the out-migration of the 20 to 34 year olds continues, there will be a decline in school enrollment and a steady erosion of the next critical age bracket, the 35 to 64 cohorts. It will also impact on wage taxes and the real estate market, with fewer new homebuyers.
- Those over 65 will increase in number.

Group Quarters

Persons who live in such places as college dormitories or nursing homes are counted by the Census Bureau as living in group quarters. In the study area, there is a small population in group quarters (see Housing).

Households and Families

In Census jargon, even a single person living in a separate dwelling unit is a household. Only certain households are classified as families. Families must have more than two persons and be related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Table D-5: Population in Households – 2000, Cornplanter, Oil City, Rouseville

Municipality	Persons in Household	Percent Total Population
Cornplanter	2,579	96.1
Oil City	11,306	98.3
Rouseville	467	98.9
Total	14,352	97.9

Source: Census 2000

As Table D-5 shows, the overwhelming majority of local residents live in households. Though Cornplanter has the lowest percentage of persons in households, at 96.1%, it must be noted that a nursing home of about 100 beds is located here.

Table D-6: Households and Families

Municipality	Households	Average Size	Families	% of Household	Average Size
Cornplanter	1,034	2.49	767	74.2	2.91
Oil City	4,762	2.37	2,983	62.6	2.99
Rouseville	204	2.29	138	67.6	2.76

Source: Census 2000

Table D-6 is somewhat surprising. Typically, in western Pennsylvania, family households are at the 70% level, even in urban places. This apparent anomaly is likely explained by age characteristics. There were some 918 single-person households in the three communities comprised of a householder aged 65 and older. Most of the senior single-person households are found in Oil City (763).

Another household type is the female-headed unit. Usually, female-headed households with children have lower-than-median incomes.

Table D-7: Number of Female-Headed Households and Incidence of Poverty, 2000

Municipality	Total	Poverty %	With Children*	Poverty %
Cornplanter	1,034	2.49	767	74.2
Oil City	4,762	2.37	2,983	62.6
Rouseville	204	2.29	138	67.6

*With children under 18 years of age
Source: Census 2000

Future Trends

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 1, 2007, the study area communities had experienced the following population changes since 2000.

Table D-8: Population Change, 2000 to 2007

Municipality	2008	2000	Change	
Cornplanter	2,536	2,687	-151	(-5.6%)
Oil City	10,598	11,504	-906	(-7.8%)
Rouseville	432	472	-40	(-8.5%)
Total	13,566	14,663	-1,097	(-7.5%)

Source: Census 2000 and Census Bureau estimates (released July 2009)

Based on many years of experience, the consultant recommends these numbers be treated with caution—they are only *estimates*! Yet, they do exhibit a dramatic downward trend for all three communities.

Balanced against these figures are resident births and deaths since Census 2000. Such information available from the Pennsylvania Department of Health shows only a small “natural decrease” of about twenty-four persons per year. The disparity is caused, in part, by the nursing homes population. Otherwise, the results are almost neutral.

The Future

In the Venango County Plan, the demographic analysis contains 13 pages. On pages 12 and 13 are projections to 2020. Those prepared by RCS&A, Inc. had three options. All were negative. In addition, projections from the Penn State Data Center were used. From 2000 to 2020, the numbers varied from -4.1% to -18.4% (see tables below).

Table D-9: County Population Projections – 2020

Category	2000 Census	2010	2020	2000-2010	2010-2020 % Change	2000-2020 % Change
Trend Projections	57,565	55,975	54,385	-2.8	-2.8	-5.5
Natural Increase		54,961	52,668	-4.5	-4.2	-8.5
Population Projection		52,268	46,971	-9.2	-10.1	-18.4
Natural Increase and Migration						

Source: 2002 RCS&A, Inc.

Table D-10: Penn State Center Projections – County

	Census July 1, 2000	Projection July 1, 2010	Projection July 1, 2020	% Change 2010-2020
Venango County	55,943	53,140	50,852	-4.1

Source: Penn State Center

GCCA also prepared projections for the study area. The cohort survival method was used. These are summarized as follows:

Table D-11: Cohort Survival

	2000	2010	2020	2030	+ (-)	Percent
No Migration	14,209	14,266	14,110	13,912	(-273)	-3.79
1980 Migration	14,209	14,235	14,018	13,752	(-351)	-4.87
1990 Migration	14,209	14,245	14,046	13,801	(-327)	-4.54

Source: Census 2000, GCCA projections

These latter projections show some initial modest increases, then following 2020, a downturn. They are more optimistic, and they do have some other statistic backing—the Oil City Area School District student projections.

Perhaps things aren't quite as bleak as thought.

Chapter 2 – Land Use



Land Use



Current Land Use

The land use in the study area is typical of western Pennsylvania. What is seen is an interplay of economic forces with transportation, with one major exception—oil! The Oil Creek Valley was home of the oil boom of the 1860s. As the economic importance of oil was realized, this area was transferred from a small wooded rural place to a veritable boom town. Oil derricks, not trees, were seen in the Oil Creek Valley. Oil, refining, shipping, and support industries became the economic lifeblood of the area for over one hundred years. At one time, the population of the oil boomtown, Pithole, alone was higher than the current residents of the entire study area. However, oil dried up, the population left, and most of the physical elements of the boom disappeared. Ironically, the heart of the boom, the Oil Creek Valley, has returned largely to its rural past. Conversely, many remnants of prosperous times are still seen in Oil City. The most visible vestige of oil was in Rouseville. The Pennzoil refinery, once the dominant feature of the Borough, is gone—dismantled and demolished. Yet, the influences of those years remain and are still felt today, especially in Oil City.

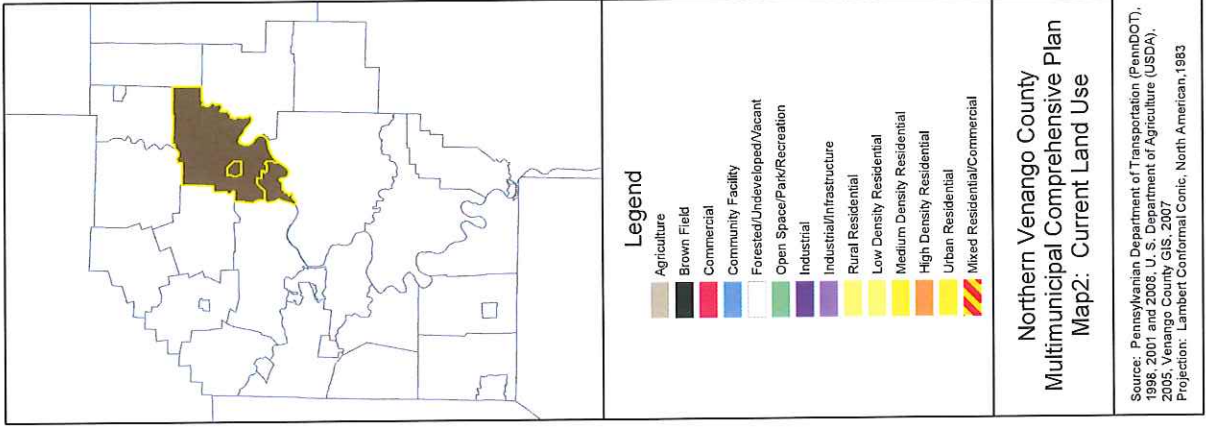
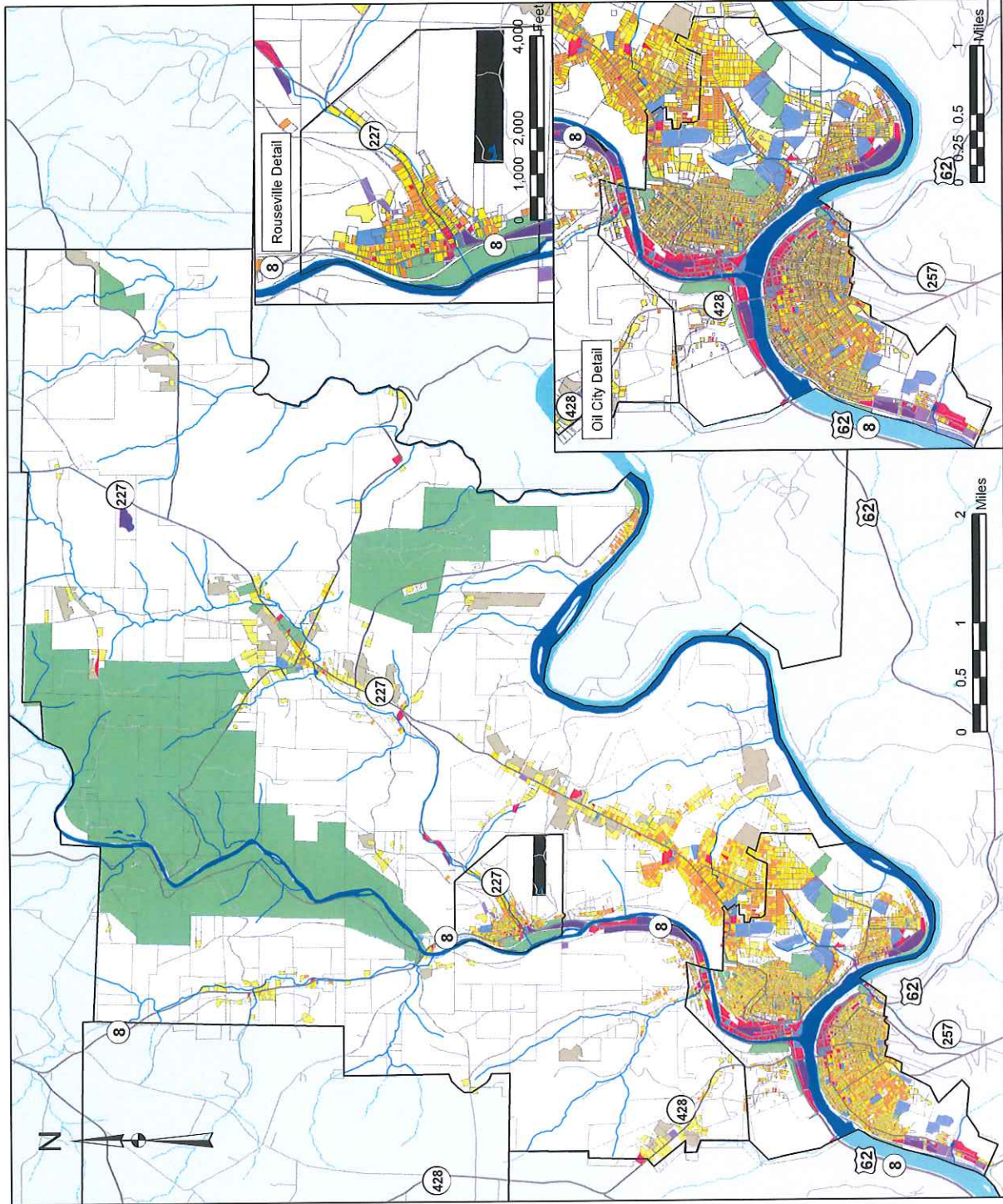
Cornplanter Township

In Cornplanter Township, the development pattern can be generalized as follows:



Oil Creek State Park

In the northern half of the Township, open space dominates the land use. Farmlands, wooded areas, and public-owned land dominate, with residential uses scattered along roadways. The public lands include the Oil Creek State Park, State Game Land No. 253, and the Pithole City historic site. More intense development is seen along Route 8, where residential structures are interspersed with occasional commercial activity north of Rouseville. A second development corridor is Route 227. Here, the Village of Plumer is found. Numerous homes and a few businesses are located in Plumer. Two notable features are the Township Building, located in an old school structure, and the historic Plumer Cemetery.



Grandview, Moody Run Road, the Colonial Village area, and the Hasson Heights area represent the more modern development centers. This area includes much of the Township's single-family units, along with the Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department/social hall, the County's Emergency Management Center, and the Golden Living Center ("Grandview" nursing home). Exceptions to this generalization are the Cherry Hill public housing project (20 units), off of Rockwood Drive, and the Hasson Heights Elementary School, with the School District offices right on the Oil City border.

Along Route 8, south of Rouseville, development changes. McClintockville is a small residential settlement off of Route 8, just above the McClintockville Bridge. Most of the development south of that, along Route 8, is a combination of industrial land—much of it unused and being reclaimed—along with scattered commercial enterprises. This pattern continues to the Oil City line. At the far southern end of the corridor is Clapp Farm—a subdivision dating from 1895.

The final fingers of residential follow Union Street and Route 428 (Halyday Run Road).

Rouseville Borough

The two dominant land uses in Rouseville are residential and the industrial corridor along Oil Creek on the west side of Route 8. Much of this latter site was the former Pennzoil refinery, which has been dismantled, with the land now being redeveloped. The first major project here will be a new facility for Electralloy. The greatest portion of the Borough's residential development is north of Route 227, along and east of Route 8. The Borough Park and Social Center of the Rouseville Volunteer Fire Company are also located here. There is some scattered commercial, with such uses as small personal care homes and beauty parlors. The remnants of the commercial area are along Route 227, near the Route 8 intersection, with a few locations on Route 8. However, most of the commercial properties are currently vacant.

Residential development south of Mechanic Street is limited, due to topography and floodplains. Much of the land development in Rouseville was tied to the employment base created by Pennzoil. Since that company's departure, there has been little development. As noted in the "Housing" section, real estate interest is limited.

City of Oil City

Oil City represents a classic study in the development of western Pennsylvania industrial cities. The river, the railroads, and oil combined caused the City to flourish and grow. Development was spawned by these forces and the topography of the region.

Much of the frontage of the Allegheny River—where it is developable—is taken up by industrial uses. Rail lines, the old Oil Well plant, the Electralloy complex, the rail yards along Front Street, as well as some of the plants and facilities along West Front Street are witness to this fact. The traditional downtown is on the developable land east of Oil Creek. The South Side commercial area is situated across from this.

Residential areas are spaced around the City:

- The North Side is primarily single-family units on small lots, interspersed with duplexes and a few apartments. Some are hillside homes; most are quite old. Some conversions from single-family to duplex units are seen here.
- Palace Hill is similar to the North Side. Lots are small, homes generally older, with some commercial and institutional uses found along Spruce and Emerald.
- Siverly is a mix of development. The Oil City Industrial Park (Oil Well) is found here, along with a sizeable housing area. Many of the older homes on small lots were likely houses of the workers at Oil Well. In some areas, such as Gateway, newer homes with larger lots can be found.
- Hasson Park and Grove Hill Cemetery encompass a considerable portion of land above the North Side.
- Units along Oliver Manor as well as Fisher and Crestview are generally newer homes on larger lots.
- The development around the City's swimming pool, off Grandview, is a mix of residential types, from estate-type homes to modest single-family dwellings. A small commercial node exists here, with a "plaza" development at Grandview and Summit.
- The residential development on the South Side is mixed. On its east side, as well as much of the area between Central and Division, smaller lots and older units are typical. The South Side also has extensive commercial development east of Petroleum as well as the Front and Second Street corridor. The west sector of the South Side is the location of larger lots with more substantial homes.



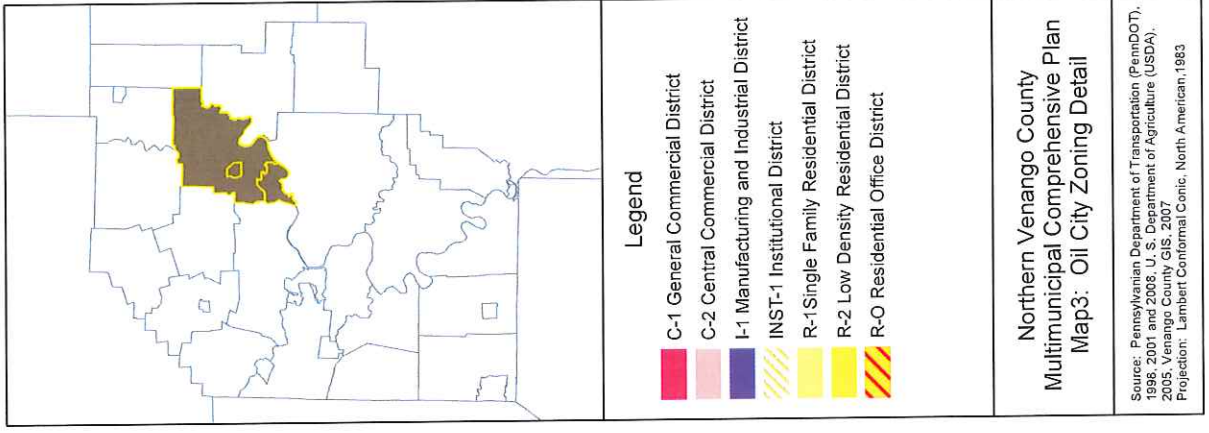
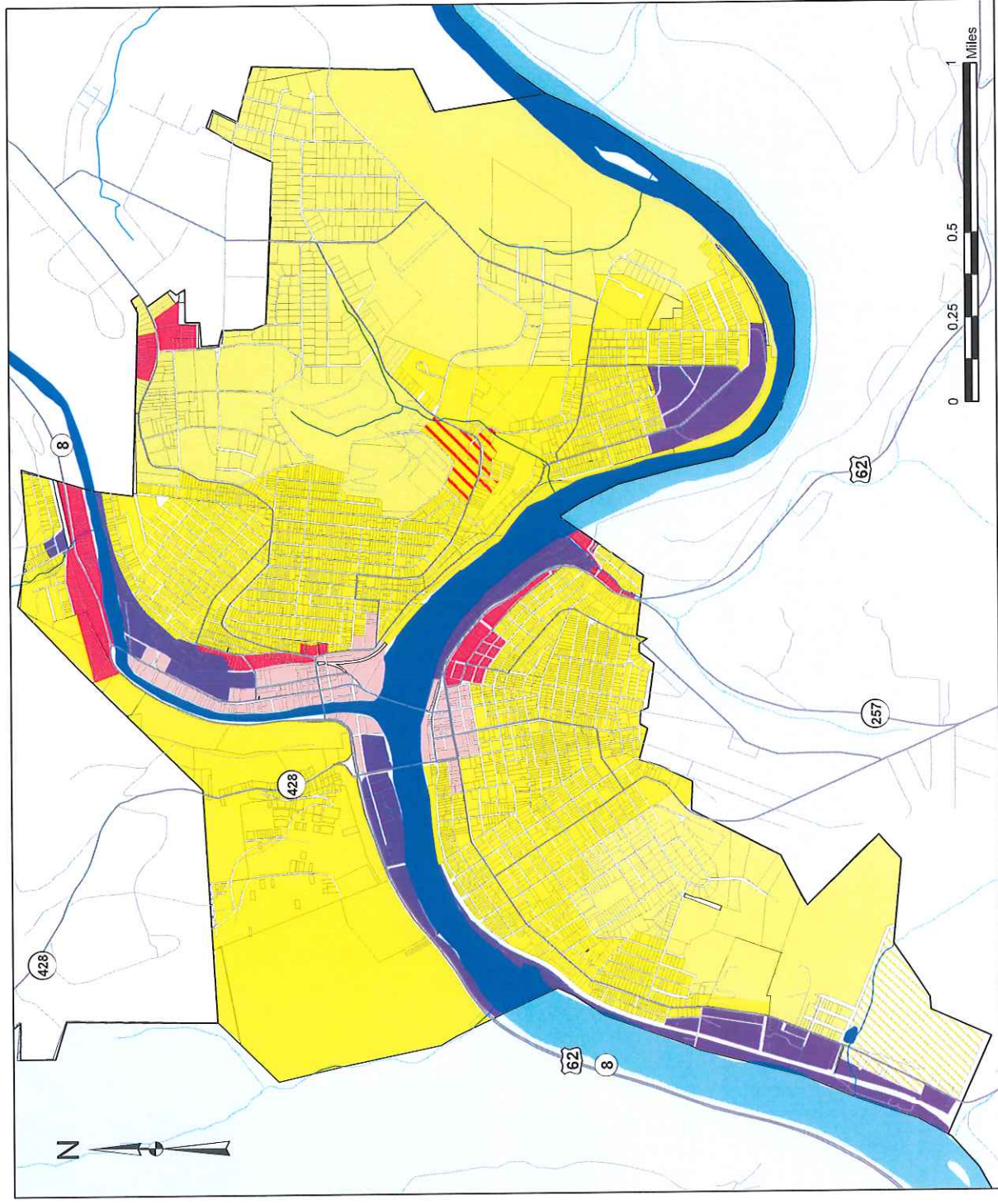
Residential housing in the Siverly area

Overall, the development on steep slopes areas, such as Grove, Butler, Cherry Alley, parts of Colbert—just to name a few—have deteriorated, as jobs have decreased and worker mobility increased. Show places along major streets (West First, East Bissell) are witness to the boom economic times for the City.

Institutional uses are somewhat scattered with many fine old churches. On the South Side, the YMCA, the Library, and a church comprise an entire block. The National Transit Building, imposing churches, City Hall, and the Venango Museum can all be found on the North Side.

Current Land Use Controls in the Study Area

All three communities in the Northern Venango County Area currently have zoning ordinances. An overview of these regulations follows:



Cornplanter Zoning

After the adoption of the community's comprehensive plan, the Township put into effect its current zoning ordinance.

Much of the Township is included in the Conservation District. Roughly, 85% of Cornplanter is zoned Conservation. In general terms, the Conservation District is intended for the Greenspace and Rural Undeveloped Lands. Conservation designations in zoning are also useful for placing land in a holding pattern. The zone discourages intense development so that any subsequent change to more intense use may have a minimum negative impact.

Table LU-1: Zoning – Cornplanter Township

District	Lot	Lot Width	Lot Coverage Percent
Conservation			
Single-Family	1 Acre	150 Feet	15%
All Other Uses	2 Acres	200 Feet	20%
R-1 Residential and V-1 Village			
All Uses Not Served by Public Sewer	1 Acre	125 Feet	20%
Single-Family with Sewer	17,500 Square Feet	85 Feet	25%
Duplex with Sewer	22,500 Square Feet	100 Feet	25%
All Other Uses with Sewer	25,000 Square Feet	125 Feet	35%
R-2 Residential			
Follow R-1, Except Multi-Family	25,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Square Feet for Each Additional Unit	150 Feet	35%
CB – Commercial Business	25,000 Square Feet	125 Feet	50%
IB - Industrial Business	1 Acre	150 Feet	50%

In other areas of the Township, sewage facilities do determine the density that is allowable. In both the R-1 Residential and V-1 Village Districts, the access to sanitary sewer lines regulates minimum lot sizes. If a landowner has a no access to the sanitary sewer system, the minimum lot size is one acre, regardless of use. If sewer is available for the lot, the landowner can build on just 17,500 square feet (2.5 dwelling unit per acre), a smaller lot in rural areas. For a duplex, the lot size increases to 22,500 square feet (3.0 dwelling units per acre). Again, this lot size is small for a rural area. In the case of all other uses, the minimum lot size is 25,000 square feet. Some limited commercial is allowed in the V-1 Zone.

The R-2 Residential District, located in Hasson Heights, is essentially the same as the R-1 District. The only difference is that multi-family units are permitted here—that is three or more dwelling units on one property. In this district, any multi-family structure must tie into a sanitary sewer conveyance system. The lot requirements are a minimum size of 20,000 square feet for the initial dwelling unit plus an additional 5,000 square feet for each additional dwelling unit in the structure. Since this is for three or more dwelling units, the minimum lot size is at least 35,000 square feet (3.7 or more units/acre). Additionally, there is a maximum coverage of 35% for such lots.

The “CB” Commercial Business District allows a wide range of retail, commercial, and limited light industrial uses (contractor yards, light warehousing). It is found along the Route 8 corridor south of Rouseville.

The I-Industrial District is also found to the south of Rouseville and follows the Route 8 corridor, from the Oil Creek Bridge, south to the line with Oil City. A second industrial zone is seen on Route 227, just north of Moody Run Road. This is a very broad district, which permits several industrial uses, along with numerous commercial activities.

Rouseville Zoning

The Borough's zoning ordinance reflects traditional Pennsylvania zoning practice. It has six districts, a conservation zone, two residential districts, two commercial zones, and one industrial district. Required lot sizes, widths, and coverage are given by Table LU-2, Zoning – Rouseville Borough.

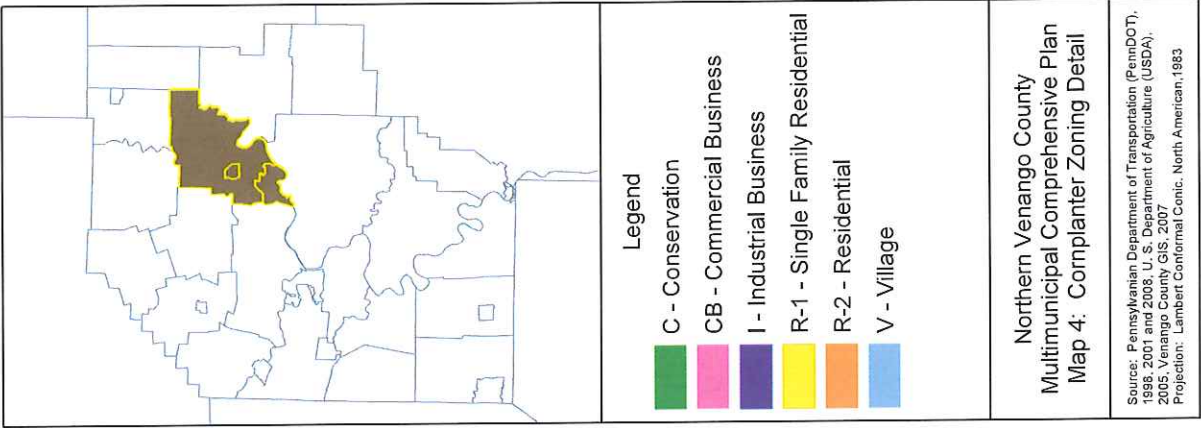
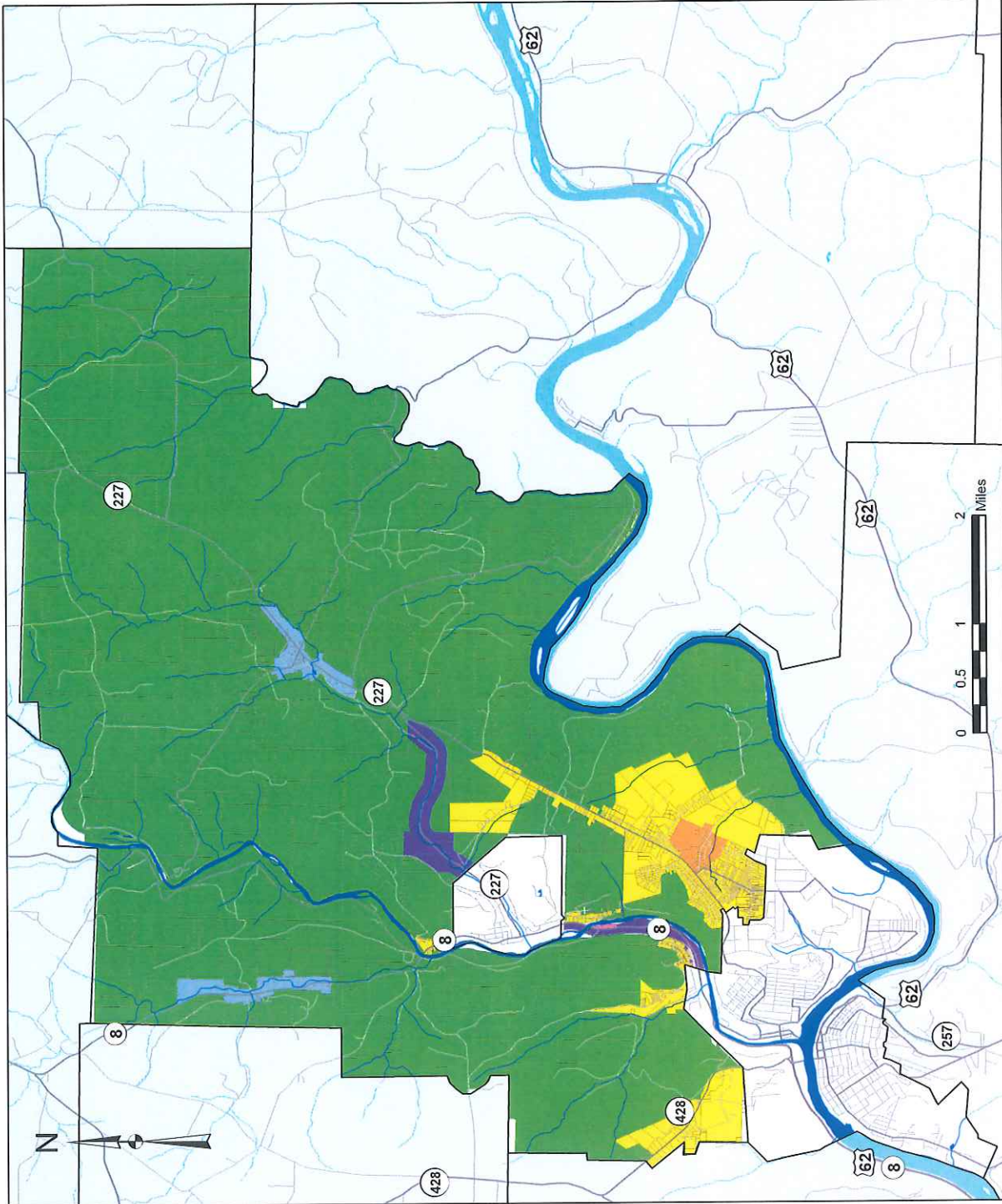
For an older urban area, the Borough's zoning ordinance densities are quite modest. New single-family residential areas would vary from 1.7 to 2.2 dwelling units per acre. Other development varies from a rather dense Central Business to a medium-density Industrial area.

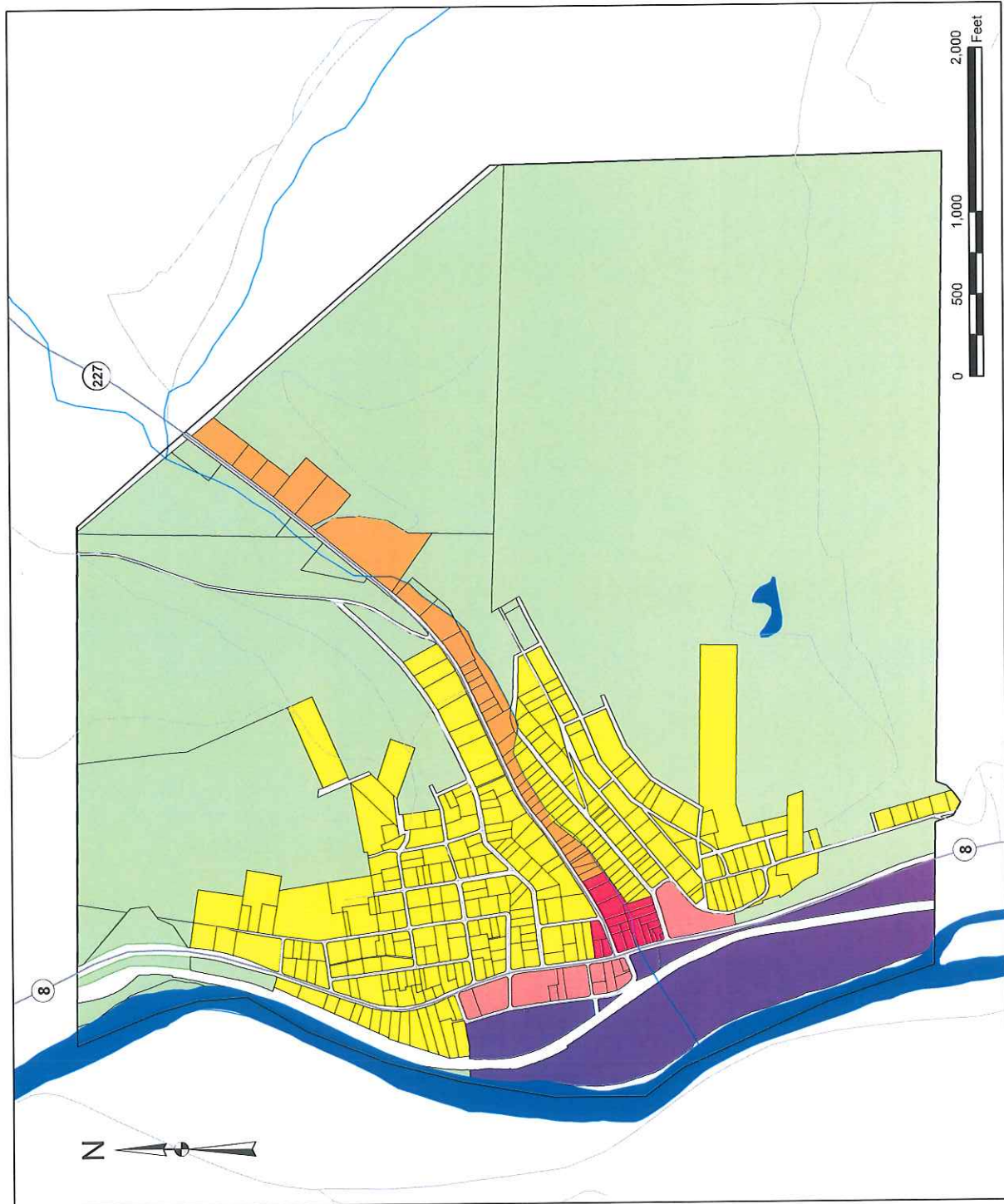
In the Borough's R-1 and R-2 Districts, a relatively wide range of uses is provided, with little difference between the R-1 and R-2 in use patterns. There are two "B" (Commercial) districts in the Borough. The intent was to allow smaller lots with high coverage (80%) in the Central District while larger lots with lower coverage standards (50%) would be permitted in the B-2 District.

The Industrial District has a requirement of 2 acres—a quite modern lot. Although Pennzoil was the primary occupant of the district at the time the ordinance was enacted, it was written to permit a relatively large range of industrial and related uses.

Table LU-2: Zoning – Rouseville Borough

District	Lot Size	Lot Width (In Feet)	Lot Coverage Percent
Conservation			
Residential	1 Acre	150 Feet	15%
All Other Uses	2 Acres	200 Feet	20%
R-1 Residential*			
All Uses (Except Multi-Family)	25,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	25%
Multi-Family	25,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Per Family	150 Feet	35%
R-2 Residential*			
All Uses (Except Multi-Family)	20,000 Square Feet	75 Feet	35%
Multi-Family	20,000 Square Feet Plus 5,000 Per Family	125 Feet	40%
B-1 Central Business*	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	80%
B-2 Community Business*	15,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	50%
I-Industrial*	2 Acres	250 Feet	50%
<i>*All uses must be served by public water and sewer.</i>			





City of Oil City

The City of Oil City has had a zoning ordinance for several years. The most recent edition, from October 14, 1996, replaced the 1963 ordinance. Similar to the Cornplanter and Rouseville regulations, this is written in the “permissive” style.

Table LU-3: Zoning – Oil City

District	Lot Size	Lot Width (In Feet)	Lot Coverage Percent
Residential			
R-1 Single-Family	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	20%
R-2 Medium-Density and R-O Residential Office			
Single-Family	5,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Two-Family	6,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Multi-Family	6,000 Square Feet Plus 3,000 Square Feet	50 Feet	35%
Commercial			
C-1 General Commercial	6,000 Square Feet	60 Feet	55%
C-2 Central Business	4,000 Square Feet	40 Feet	80%
Industrial			
I-Industrial	10,000 Square Feet	100 Feet	55%
Manufacturing and Industrial			
Institutional			
Institutional-1	7,500 Square Feet	50 Feet	20%

There are two residential districts in Oil City. The R-1 is a typical single-family, urban single-family district. Allowed density is moderate, at 5.8 dwelling units (du) a net acre. The R-2 allows a denser single-family use, at 8.7 du per acre. Two-family units are at 14.5 du an acre. The density for multi-family units (3 or more) varies with the number of units. A 10-unit development would need to be 12.1 du an acre. The R-O District was created for the former Oil City Hospital area and is patterned on the R-2, except “multi-family” development is not allowed, while medical-dental-health units are permitted as special exceptions.

Most of the residential land in Oil City is zoned R-2. The R-1 zoning category is seen on the geographically higher areas of the land north of the Allegheny, while the R-1 District on the South Side is found on the west side above Front Street. Though significant land is zoned R-2, most land use in all residential areas is single family. Although “high rise” apartments and some apartments exist, they are limited. The more contemporary housing development is the new student units along West First.

There are two commercial districts. The C-1 is the General Commercial District, while the C-2 is the Central District. The C-2 is used for the “downtowns” for both the North and South Sides, while the C-1 is found along Route 8 (from the White Bridge north), in the upper Grandview area, along East Front and just north of the North Side downtown, along Plummer, Spruce, and Spring.

The Industrial District follows historic development patterns.

The newest zoning district is the Institutional District. This district was created specifically for the Venango campus of Clarion State University. It encompasses the campus as well as the new student housing facility along West Front.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO)

Both Rouseville and Cornplanter use Venango County's SALDO. Oil City has its own ordinance, but it pre-dates the 1968 Planning Code.

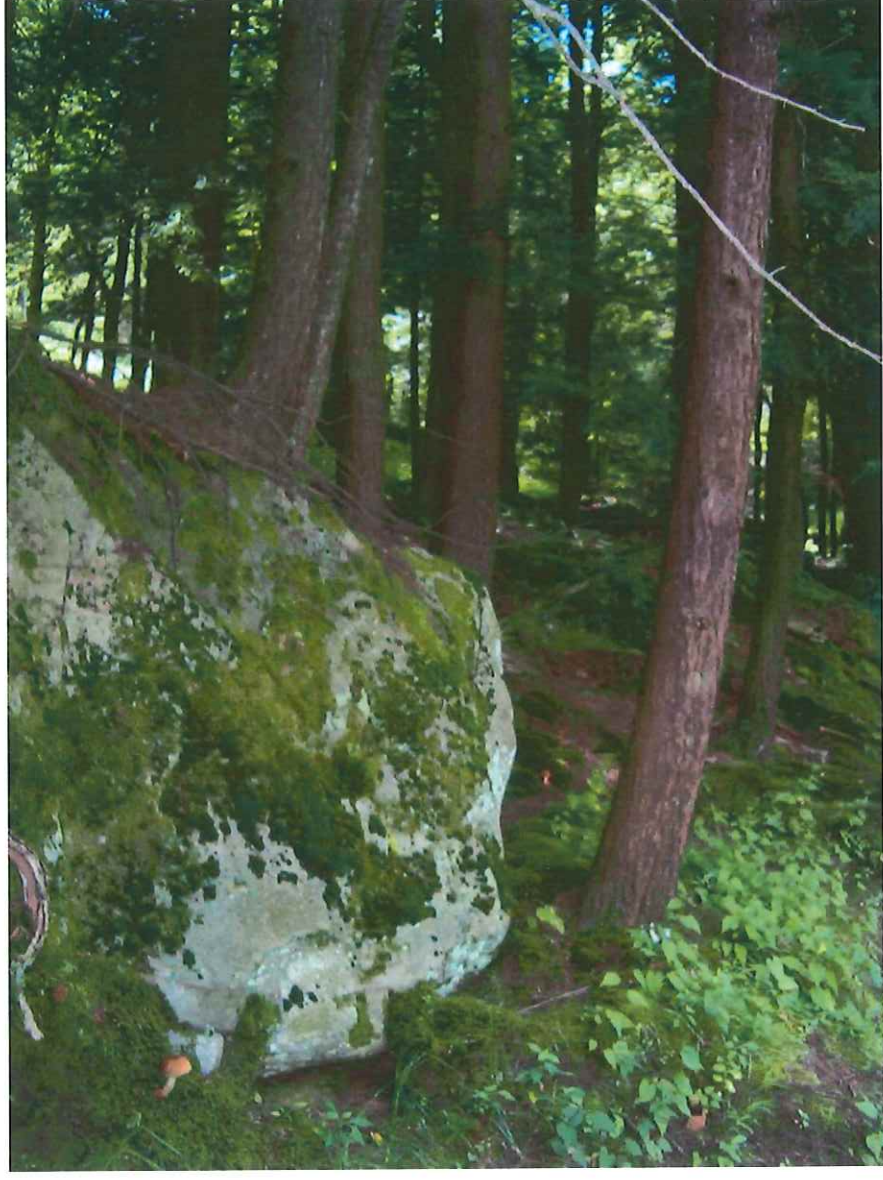
Summary

Even though the densities and some uses in each of the zoning ordinances vary, they are quite similar in format and definitions. As such, these ordinances lend themselves to land use sharing options.

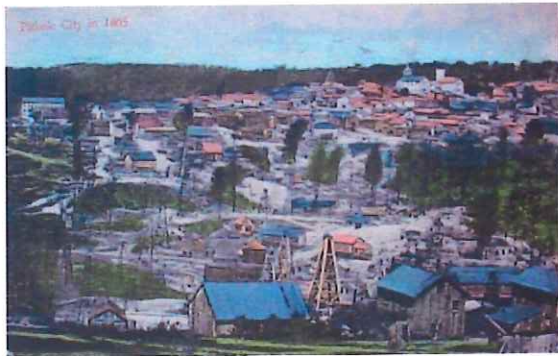
Code Enforcement

The three municipalities all use the Oil City Code Office. The International Property Maintenance Code is the base ordinance. In Cornplanter, the service is primarily complaint-driven, while regular trips are made to Rouseville. In Oil City, the Code Office has some 68 properties on its demolition list, with 10 currently being razed.

Chapter 3 – Physical, Natural and Historic Resources



Physical, Natural, and Historic Resources



Pithole, PA 1865

(FamilyOldPhotos.com website; submitted by John Hummel)

All communities are impacted by local conditions. Those that survive learn to live with what is at hand: the lay of the land, the resources that the earth provides, and the lessons taught by those who were here before us. The following section details the physical world of the study area.

Physical Environment

The most notable natural features of the region are the numerous waterways and the deep cuts they have made into the landscape. The Allegheny River, Oil Creek, Pithole Creek, Cherry Run, and a number of other streams and runs crisscross the three municipalities, impacting them all. The City of Oil City is split into three distinct areas by the Allegheny River and Oil Creek. In turn, Oil Creek is the western border of Rouseville Borough, with Cherry Run splitting the



Cherry Run

community in two. Likewise, Oil Creek splits Cornplanter Township with Pithole Creek, forming much of the municipality's eastern border with President Township. The action of all these waterways has resulted in the scarring of the upland plateau with many deep valleys, especially where the more swiftly flowing streams exist.

The result of these deep cuts on the landscape is a large amount of steeply sloped lands in the study region. Though no land is too steep to develop today as a result of modern engineering techniques, lands with slopes of 15% or more usually are not used, especially in western

Pennsylvania. Several factors influence this trend. The primary reason is the fact that in recent years, it just does not make economic sense to develop steeply sloped lands. This contrasts with early development in Oil City, with many homes located on hillsides (viz. Colbert, Plummer, and Grove). That era has past, and many of these hillside homes are no longer attractive. There are plenty of parcels on slightly to moderately sloped lands to purchase that do not require all the improvements that steeply sloped parcels need. A large portion of the old industrial infrastructure in the three communities has either been cleared of structures or is awaiting brownfield redevelopment. The same is true of residential lands. There are plenty of parcels that can be

redeveloped, particularly in Oil City for residential development where there is little demand to develop sloped lands which are steeply sloped.

With water being such a prominent player in the development of the local landscape, one would expect that floodplains and wetlands would have a big impact on the region. In reality, the impact of wetlands is relatively limited. Most wetlands in the region are located in the floodplains of the Allegheny River, Oil and Pithole creeks, and Cherry Run. And much of the floodplains in the study region were developed years ago, long before regulations preventing building in the floodplain were put into affect. A large portion of this development was devoted to industrial lands, mainly as oil refineries. Much of these have since closed and been demolished, particularly in the Route 8 corridor in Cornplanter and Rouseville.

In terms of flooding in the region, there are two primary concerns. In the smaller streams, such as Cherry Run, Pithole Creek, and the other smaller waterways, the concern is sudden heavy rains or rapid snow melt (usually combined with heavy rain). The waters on these smaller streams climb rapidly, but at the same time, usually return to the normal banks quickly. For the two major waterways in the region, flows work a bit different. The Allegheny River has flood-control dams along its length, including those upstream of the region near Warren and along the Tionesta Creek. These tend to reduce the impact of large regional rain events and snow melts. However, both the Allegheny River and Oil Creek are susceptible to ice dams, particularly in very cold winters. The confluence of the river and Oil Creek traditionally has been an ice-choke point; and, historically, the source of some of the most severe flooding in downtown Oil City. That problem led to the construction of an “ice” dam on Oil Creek, north of the City in the Oil Creek State Park as well as the ice boom in the Allegheny. These devices are intended to lessen ice build-up on those waterways.



Allegheny River

Closely related to wetlands are hydric soils. These soils have a large amount of water in their composition. Sometimes this is because the soil is alluvial in nature, along the bank of a stream. Other times, this is because it has a large amount of very fine particles in its makeup, preventing the draining of surface water and runoff. Thus, whatever the underlying reason, hydric soils are a precursor to wetlands—one does not want to develop these lands. In the three municipalities, most hydric soils are located along the waterways, typically in the floodplains and wetland areas. Again, as with wetlands, no significant portion of any developable areas in the study region has a large amount of hydric soils present. And, while most of the soils in the region have a hydric component, this is typically 5% or less of that soil group. It does not represent an impediment to development.

A concern for rural communities is the ability of the soils present to handle on-lot sewage disposal. While Rouseville, Oil City, and the Hasson Heights region of the Township have public sewage collection, the vast majority of the land area of Cornplanter relies on on-lot sewage

disposal. Most of the Township has soils with severe on-lot disposal limitations. However, unlike much of western Pennsylvania, there are large tracts that do have just moderate limitations and there are actually a few small areas where the soils have only slight on-lot limitations. This should not be construed that development of a parcel to accommodate a single-family home is difficult to impossible. Indeed, on most parcels, one should be able to install some sort of septic system. However, it may take some work with the developer and the Township's sewage enforcement officer (SEO) to identify the proper type, size, and location of the disposal system for the property.

Natural Resources

During the administration of Governor Tom Ridge, the State placed an increased emphasis on the preservation of prime farmland soils. This decree was driven by the suburbanization of southeastern Pennsylvania where large areas of farmland were being converted into office parks, shopping centers, and residential enclaves. The Ridge Administration believed that prime farmland soils were worth preserving, for both economic and historic reasons.

It is in the very nature of prime farmland soils that developers should prize them. They, by definition, have slopes of eight percent or less, are deep, fairly loose, well drained and have a minimal amount of rocks in its composition. The very attributes that make cultivating of such



Oil Creek State Park

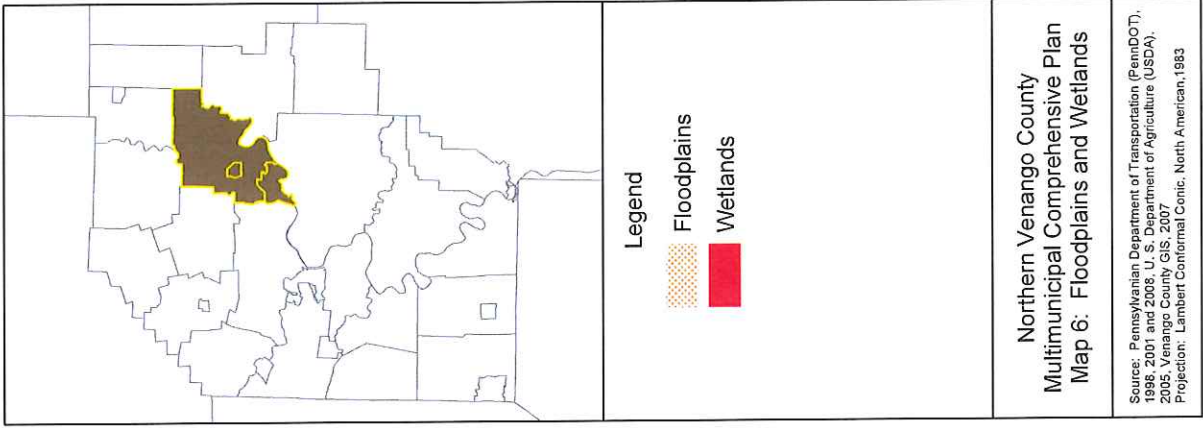
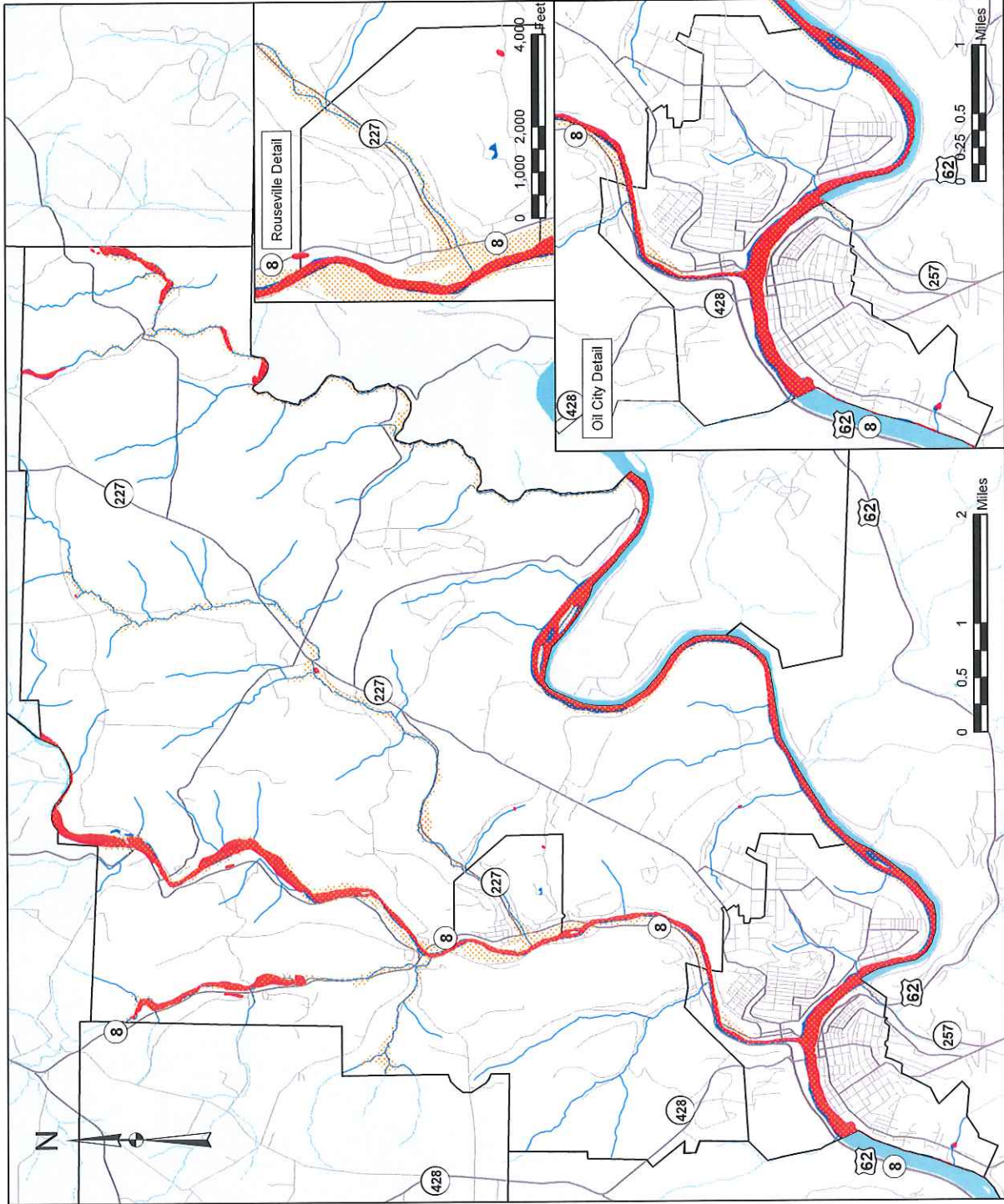
soils easy also makes developing them for any other human activity easy.

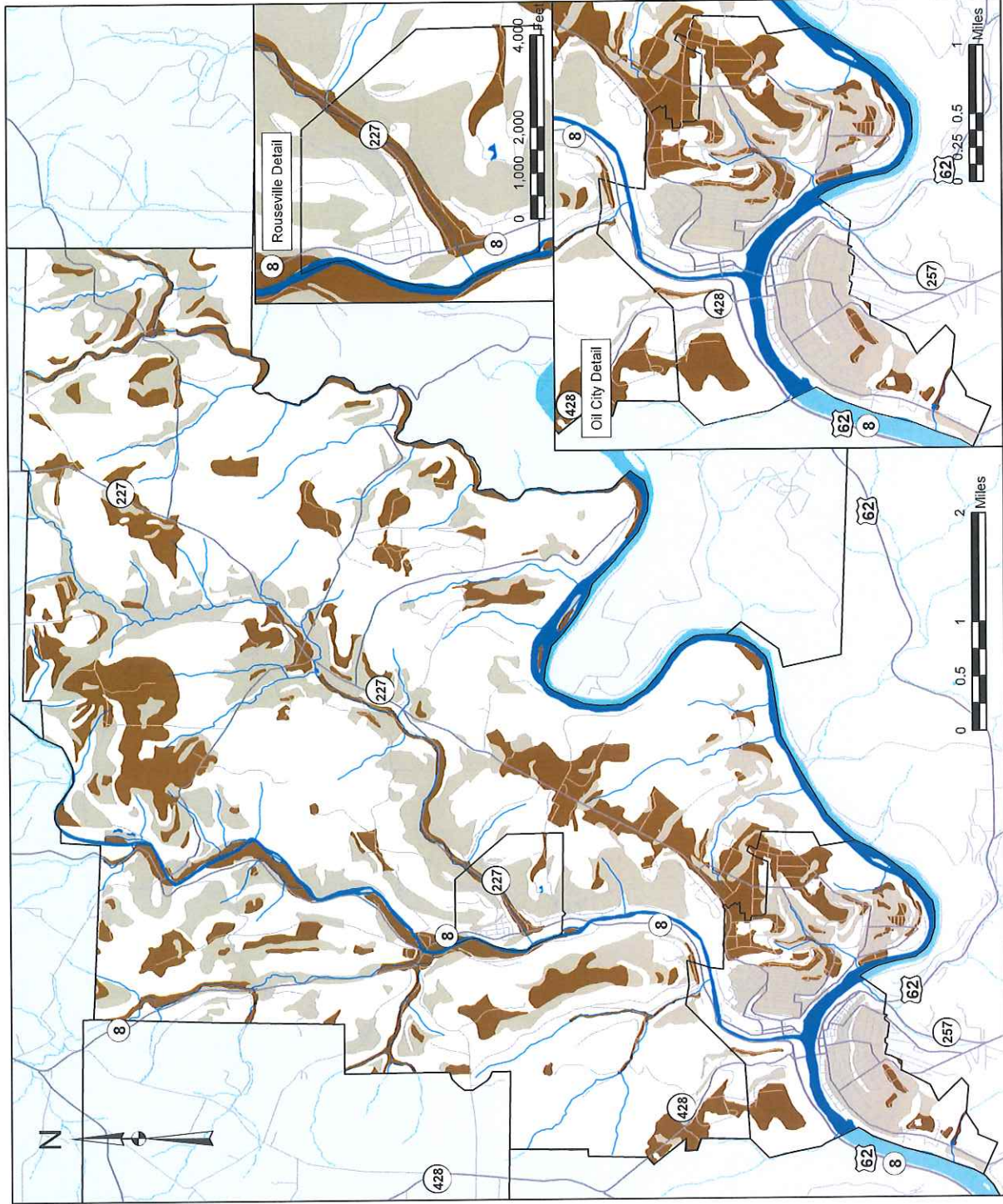
Again, as with on-lot sewage disposal, the emphasis here is on the prime farmland soils in Cornplanter Township. The other two municipalities do have such soils, but as one might imagine in urban areas, they either are usually developed or exist in the floodplains (a traditional location for prime farmlands). In addition to widely scattered areas of prime farmland soils in the Township, there are two large areas where there are large areas of this soil type. The first of these is along Grandview Road, extending from Hasson Heights to Walnut Bend Road. This area has been extensively developed, limiting the need to protect the soils. The other area is north of

Owlville, northeast of Petroleum Center. Here, no extensive development has occurred. Most of the area is forested and part of it is in Oil Creek State Park. No development is likely to occur here.

In fact, much of the undeveloped areas of Cornplanter Township are forested. There is little agricultural activity in the community, other than timber harvest. This was a great economic windfall for local landowners during the recent housing boom. Pennsylvania hardwoods are greatly prized.

One local asset that is sure to benefit from current economic concerns is natural gas and oil. This region is the birthplace of the modern oil industry. Oil Creek got its name due to the fact that crude oil would literally seep from the ground into the water. Most of the oil that was commercially viable has been recovered. Some wells still pump to capture a few barrels of crude to sell to refineries. More important though to the local economy are the gas wells. Natural gas





has become an important part for most of the western Pennsylvania economy and it is true here in Rouseville, Cornplanter, and Oil City. There are wells in all three communities, though the vast majority is located in the Township. Once drilled, these wells usually have little impact on the neighborhood.

The woodlands and waterways also provide a great opportunity for outdoor recreation in the area. Be it hunting, fishing, boating, hiking, biking, or a host of other activities, the natural conditions of the region lends itself to outdoor play in all year round.

Historic Resources

Much has been written about the history of the oil region. By now, it is well known that the area is the “birthplace of oil,” and, without a doubt, changed the history of the world. The extraction, refinement, and marketing of oil made the world a different place than it is now.

The history of the area has also been covered extensively in previous plans, including those completed for each of the Plan communities more than a decade ago, as well as the County’s recently updated comprehensive plan, and the Oil Heritage Region’s Management Action Plan Update, as well as others.

Therefore, this section will not repeat what has already been covered elsewhere. Instead, it will focus on two critical and intertwined issues that face the communities involved in this Plan. Those are the overall housing crisis that is facing not just the Plan communities, but the entire region, and the fact that many of these blighted structures are also important historically to the communities—perhaps not in and of themselves, but because they define the context of the community. Without a well-defined context, the area may well lose its individuality and certainly, its historical significance could be greatly affected, yet without addressing the blighted structures, there well may be no community to protect.

A primary goal of the Plan is to develop a strategy that balances these needs. A well-developed Plan component will consider the critical importance of developing and maintaining a healthy housing stock as well as give more than a nod to the historical significance of Plan communities.

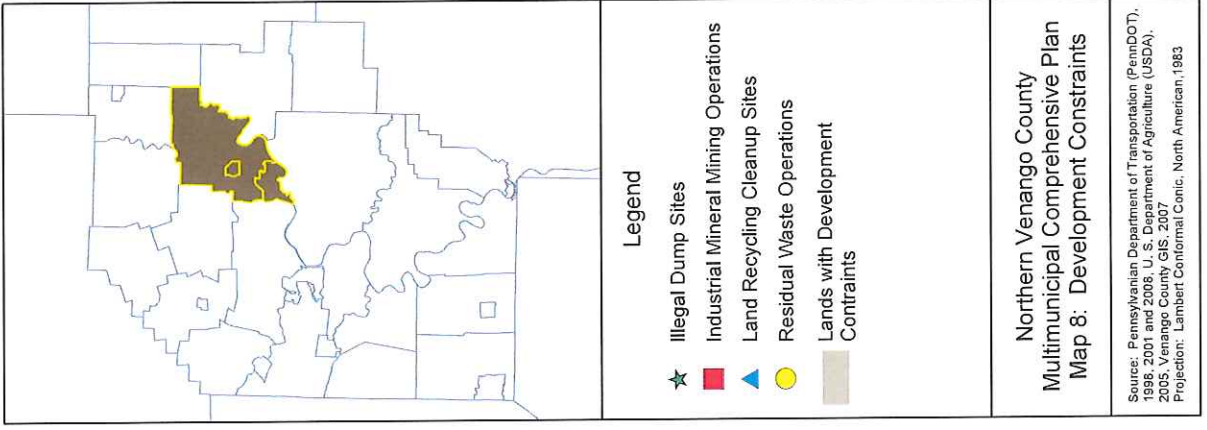
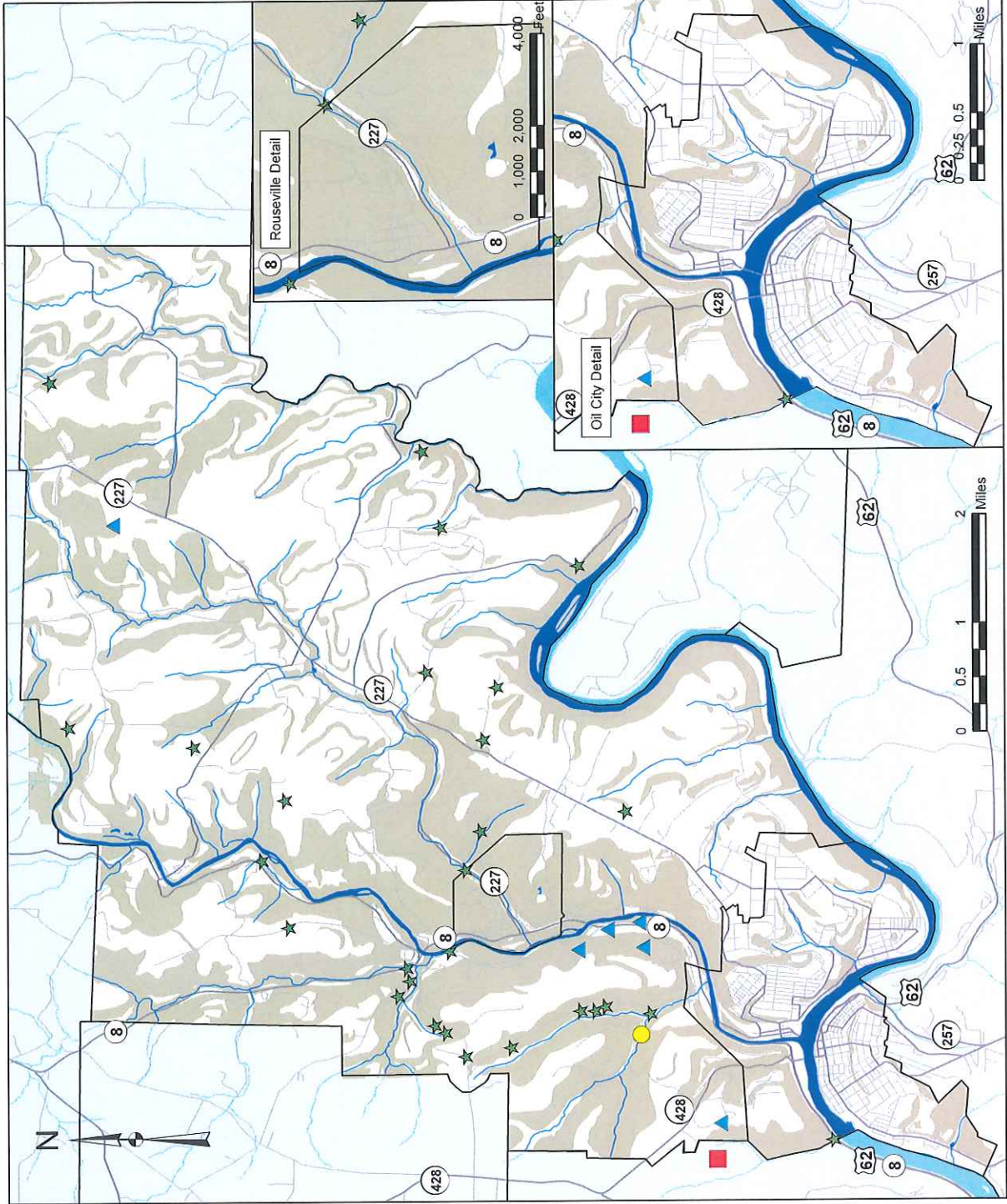
Historic Districts

The existing historical districts in the Plan area, of which there are several, can be used as a logical point for developing this strategy. The remainder of this section discusses the districts and how they can be used to develop a classification system that addresses blighted structures and the area’s historic significance.

There are three historic districts. There are also three buildings in the City that have been designated as historic structures: the National Transit Building, the Oil City Armory, and the United States Post Office (now Museum). The three districts in the City are the:



Active Oil Well



- Oil City Northside Historic District
- Oil City Southside Historic District
- Downtown Commercial Historic District

Oil City: Northside Historic District

This district is an approximately 250-acre parcel that runs along Oil Creek to the north and its confluence with the Allegheny River in the downtown. It is primarily a working class neighborhood, with the most important homes dating from late 19th and early 20th century homes. Of the 1,214 historic structures listed in 1999, 94% were considered to contribute to the character of the district, and only 6% were considered non-contributing. Those buildings were non-contributing for two reasons: (1) they were built outside the period of significance, or (2) they had been altered to the degree that they no longer conveyed a sense of history within the context of the district as a whole.

Approximately 30% of the buildings were built during the 19th century and 70% date from the 20th century. None of the structures, in and of themselves, possess significance or scale to justify their individual identification, according to the National Register. Yet, the neighborhood does provide a sense of history for its period of significance (1870 to 1945).

The oldest buildings date from the early 1870s, with most construction occurring in the years that followed the initial oil boom in the area, from about 1880 to the 1930s. Some of the oldest buildings are in the vicinity of Pearl Avenue. The majority (95%) of the buildings in this district are residential. The remaining 5% of the historically significant buildings in the area are primarily churches.

Although nearly all designs typical of the era are included, the district's historic significance is primarily in its integrity as a working class community. The lots were close to some of Oil City's largest industrial operations and workers as well as managers lived in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood was a popular place to live for a socially and ethnically diverse group well into the 20th century.

Oil City: Southside Historic District

This mixed-used historic district is approximately 222 acres on the south side of the Allegheny River. It consists of a neighborhood commercial area along the banks of the river and a large residential section along the river and on the hillside to the south. There are also several churches and other historical buildings throughout the district.

The district, which was designated in 1997, has 932 resources, of which one, the Armory, was previously listed and four are military-related monuments and memorials. Of the 927 buildings, 882 (96%) contribute to the character of the district; only 45 (4%) are non-contributing.

While there are several newer apartment buildings and some new commercial development, there was no single pocket of noncontributing development in the district.

In 1997, at the time of the listing, the streetscape of the commercial area was generally devoid of vegetation. Within the residential areas, the lots had significant yards and many mature trees, which contributed to the overall character of the district.

Perhaps even more than the Northside, the Southside has widely divergent building types and architectural styles. These range from small cottages to institutional buildings and churches of varying sizes, to typical downtown architecture, grand Victorian homes that were the residences of the area's leading industrialists and modest suburban homes from the 1920s. Residential design within the district includes examples from nearly every architectural style from the Civil War era through World War Two, including at least two that may have been mail-order kit homes.

In 1997, the district was in excellent repair and showed little evidence of disinvestment. The consultant for this Plan has found that to generally be the case in 2009 as well. Certainly, there is a greater level of disinvestment on the Northside than there is on the Southside.

The Register also noted that though some demolition has occurred in the district, the activity was dispersed widely enough so that it did not detract significantly from the overall integrity of the district. Perhaps the most pervasive change has been the use of "artificial" siding and window replacement. Nonetheless, according to the Register, these activities have diminished the district's ability to convey a sense of history.

Oil City: Downtown Commercial Historic District

The Downtown Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register in 1997. It is comprised of a 25-acre, primarily commercial district that is immediately north of the Allegheny River. This core business district includes both commercial and industrial buildings, a church, and two bridges (one for vehicles).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this district is that it contains sixty-five individual resources; three of these (the National Transit Building and Annex and the former U. S. Post Office) were previously listed in the National Register. Of the remaining sixty-two, fifty-three (86%) contribute to the character of the district and nine (14%) are non-contributing. (As noted previously, this assessment is based on the 1997 listing. The tally, especially in this small area, should be updated, digitally cataloged, and compared to the existing register. Likely, much of this information is already available, given the excellent historic resources in the City.)

Both of the bridges are considered contributing resources. The 1939-1940 Center Street Bridge and the 1892 Erie Railroad Bridge both span Oil Creek in the southwestern part of the district.

Although changes have occurred to virtually all buildings within the district, these changes have not diminished the ability of the district to convey its own sense of history. Non-contributing resources are those built outside the period of significance of the district, and include a fast-food restaurant and several commercial establishments, widely dispersed throughout the district. Modifications to buildings within the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District include storefront alterations, window replacement, artificial siding, etc. In no instance is the extent of modification so severe as to render a resource non-contributing.

The period of significance of the district begins about 1870 and continues to about 1945; the earlier date corresponds to the date of the earliest extant resource, a small brick commercial building at 279 Duncomb Street.

The latter date refers to the latest period of construction of the historic buildings within the district, such as the 1942 Art Deco-style General Telephone Company Building at 260 Seneca Street. The closing date for the period of significance also corresponds to the end of the "Settled Phase" of the oil industry, as defined in "Oil Resources of Western Pennsylvania, 1859-1945," according to Historic Register documentation.

Buildings within the district are generally of masonry construction, including stone, brick, and terra cotta, and range in height from one to five stories. The majority of the buildings are constructed flush with one another, with no setbacks and very few buildings have any rear lot setback. A number of buildings have additions to their rear elevations. Several buildings along Seneca and Main Streets extend to the banks of Oil Creek and others extend the entire depth of the lot on which they are built, giving them addresses on two streets.

When the area was designated, the majority of the buildings housed retail or offices on the first floor, with office use above.

As a result of the 1892 flood, which wiped out many of the buildings in the district, the bulk of the architecture dates from the 1890s through the 1960s. No individual architectural style dominates in any one section of the district. For the most part, the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District retains a high integrity, according to the Register.

And, within the context of the entire region, Oil City's downtown historic district is newer than those of Titusville and Franklin. In some ways, it represents the most prosperous years of the oil industry in western Pennsylvania. The developers, builders, and architects who added to the City's commercial district represent the best and the brightest of an entire industry. Clearly, it is a resource that should be protected.

Chapter 4 – Housing



Housing



This section of the background study focuses on housing. As defined in the work program, this is to include:

- Statistical information, primarily from the Census Bureau
- Assisted housing
- Local building permit data
- The current market

In addition, Venango County recently completed a study entitled “Report on the Housing Market in Venango County, Pennsylvania,” (czb, LLC). This provides insight into not only the overall County housing market, but also into individual geographic sectors. Venango County, as part of their “in-kind” support of this project, prepared a special housing insert for Cornplanter and Rouseville. Much of that insert was completed by czb, LLC consultants, with some editing and additional data supplied by GCCA.

Census Data

Housing information is collected as part of the Census effort. As previously noted, a new Census is about one year away (April 2010); thus, only an overview of Census data will be presented.

Table H-1: Housing Count, 1990-2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Percent
Cornplanter	1,204	1,179	-25	-2.1
Oil City	5,449	5,276	-173	-3.2
Rouseville	254	240	-14	-5.5
Total	6,907	6,695	-212	-3.1
<i>Source: Census 1990, 2000</i>				

Similar to the drop in population, all three communities also saw a decline in their housing stock. This trend was not unusual in Venango County. The County’s comprehensive plan (2004) noted that, overall, Venango County experienced a 612-unit decrease, during this same period. It must

be further noted that this decrease of housing occurred when the average household size in the three communities saw a modest 3% drop, from 2.47 persons per household in 1990 to 2.39 persons in 2000. This decline, though small, does create a slight increase in housing demand from the general population. In many western Pennsylvania communities, this decline in household size actually caused a significant increase in housing demand. Such was not the case locally.

A second important characteristic is tenure. In Census jargon, tenure refers to whether the housing unit is either owner- or renter-occupied. In Venango County, the proportion of owners is 76.4% versus rental, 23.6 percent. The characteristics for the study area are shown on Table H-2.

Table H-2: Tenure – 2000

Municipality	Owner	Percent	Renter	Percent
Cornplanter	921	89.1	113	10.9
Oil City	2,977	62.5	1,785	37.5
Rouseville	161	78.9	43	21.1
<i>Source: Census 2000</i>				

These results are typical for western Pennsylvania. Home ownership is highest in townships and smaller boroughs, while more rental units are found in larger urban places. Along with patterns of ownership versus rental, there is a difference in the type of housing units. Typically, high-rise apartments, townhouse developments, and duplexes are seen in cities. Conversely, mobile homes are seen more frequently in rural settings. The data shown by Table H-3, Units in Structure, confirms this trend.

Table H-3: Type of Housing – Units in Structure

Housing Type	Cornplanter*		Oil City		Rouseville*	
Total	1,179	(100.0%)	5,276	(100.0%)	237	(100.0%)
Single-Family	1,054	(89.4%)	3,667	(69.5%)	210	(88.6%)
2-Family	8	(0.7%)	682	(12.9%)	10	(4.2%)
3 to 9	11	(1.0%)	590	(11.1%)	3	(1.3%)
10 to 49	0	(0.0%)	188	(3.5%)	0	(0.0%)
50 or More	0	(0.0%)	143	(2.7%)	0	(0.0%)
Mobile Homes	103	(8.7%)	6	(0.1%)	14	(5.9%)
<i>*Percentages may not total, due to computer rounding.</i>						
<i>Source: Census 2000, Table QT-H10</i>						

Table H-3 supports Table H-2, reflecting that rentals are more apt to be duplexes or other types of multi-family units. Clearly, most of the rental units are in Oil City, which also has the highest incidence of multi-family structures.

Mobile homes are found primarily in Cornplanter, with a few listed for Rouseville, and only six in Oil City. Once more, this is consistent with state and regional trends. Mobile homes are historically a rural housing option. However, it is an option with a shrinking market share. In the mid-1990s, there were between 350,000 to 400,000 mobile homes sold annually. In that time,

they often comprised one third of all new homes. Their popularity has dwindled. In 2008, HUD's quarterly U.S. Market Conditions (May 2009) reported only 69,000 mobile homes placed on site ready for occupancy. Essentially, mobile homes are now less than 10% of the national new housing market.

Vacancy rates are another characteristic the Census measures. The County plan notes that the vacancy rate in Venango County (2000) was at 15.5%, nearly six percentage points greater than that of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. However, that document rightly notes that this rate is inflated by the number of seasonal dwellings in the County (2,586). Vacancy status is shown by Table H-4.

Table H-4: Vacancy Status – 2000

Municipality	Units Vacant	Percent	For Sale Or Rent	Seasonal	Other
Cornplanter	145	12.3	11	114	18
Oil City	514	9.7	231	34	218
Rouseville	36	15.0	11	9	13
Total	695	10.4	253	157	249
<i>Source: Census 2000</i>					

As can be seen, the study area emulates the County. The highest vacancy numbers, but not proportions, are in the large urban place (Oil City) while most seasonal units are in the township (Cornplanter). The units classified as "Other" vacant can be a cause for concern. It is true that "Other" vacant can reflect housing units under construction. This is unlikely in the study area. What is more likely is that such units are nearing abandonment.

The age of housing is also important, as it can be an indication of housing conditions. Older homes usually need more maintenance. The median "year built" listed by the Census was 1958 for Cornplanter—hardly contemporary, but such homes have relatively modern construction, wiring, and insulation. In both Oil City and Rouseville, the median year built was prior to 1940—the earliest date used by the Census. A physical review of homes in the City indicates many were built decades before the 1940 cutoff. It is also an indicator of housing problems—problems confirmed by the housing survey.



Condemned Housing

There is one housing characteristic not included with general housing data. This measures persons in "Group Homes." Table H-5 shows the population in such facilities at the time of the 2000 Census.

Table H-5: Population in Group Quarters – 2000

	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Total
Total	108	198	5	311
Institutionalized	108	165	5	270
Nursing Homes	108	117	5	230
<i>Source: Census 2000, SF-1 Files</i>				

As can be seen, the great many residents of group quarters in the study area are in nursing homes; some 88% of the total. Other persons were in educational dormitories or facilities for juvenile offenders. Since that time, both college housing and the juvenile facility have grown. The County's 2000 Census data showed 3.2% of its population was in group quarters; thus, at 2.2%, the study area is slightly under that proportion.

The age of homeowners is another characteristic that the Census measures. In the 2000 Census, there were an estimated 4,052 homeowners in the three study municipalities. Many are older citizens.

Table H-6: Occupied Housing Units – Owners 65 and Older

	Cornplanter	Oil City	Rouseville	Total
Number of Units	921	2,976	204	4,052
Owner Age 65 or Over	267	863	77	1,218
Percentage	30%	29%	38%	30%
<i>Source: Table H-14, SF-3, Census 2000</i>				

This table indicates an ongoing supply of homes will enter the market as older homeowners look to sell their units. That supply—or oversupply—was noted in the County's recent housing report. It was also mentioned in some of the written comments in the Community Survey—chiefly, by older homeowners who want to sell their home.

Assisted Housing

For the purpose of this report, assisted housing is considered as dwelling units that are subsidized by a governmental agency that also have income limits for its tenants.

There are two primary agencies that provide assisted housing. Both are HUD-recognized housing authorities.

The Oil City Housing Authority (PA059) has the following facilities in its inventory:

Name	Type of Housing	Units
Moran Towers	Elderly and Handicapped	47
Siverly Apartments	Elderly and Handicapped	28
Towne Towers	Elderly and Handicapped	90
Century Terrace	Family	50
Scattered Sites	Family	20
Total		235

Currently, the Authority reports 100% occupancy for its units. They also report an inventory of 167 Section 8 units.

The second agency is the Housing Authority of Venango County. Their offices are located in Cornplanter Township, at their Cherry Hill project.

A few years ago, this agency had some findings from HUD. These centered on the inspection and clearance of units for the Section 8 Voucher program. As a result, the Authority was under close scrutiny and actually lost about 100 of its voucher units. Under new leadership, it has brought its Section 8 inspection program into HUD compliance and has gained back some of its last units. Currently, the County has 340 vouchers. Occupancy at the Cherry Hill Apartments is now at 16 out of 20. Authority officials relate they have been very careful in screening tenants, resulting in some of the vacancies at Cherry Hill.

It must be noted the County Authority does not offer its services in Oil City. Residents there rely on the City's Authority.

Venango County's "Fair Market Rents" and income limits used for the Section 8 voucher program are as follows:

Table H-7: Monthly Fair Market Rents – 2009

Efficiency	\$431
One Bedroom	\$471
Two Bedroom	\$561
Three Bedroom	\$709
Four Bedroom	\$804
For units larger than four bedrooms, a 15% increase per bedroom is used.	
Source: U.S. HUD	

Table H-8: Income Limits – 2009

1 Person	\$18,850
2 Persons	\$21,500
3 Persons	\$24,200
4 Persons	\$26,900
5 Persons	\$29,050
6 Persons	\$31,200
7 Persons	\$33,350
8 Persons	\$35,500
Source: U.S. HUD	

Beyond the resources in the Authority's inventory, there are three other assisted housing projects. Luther Place is a 50-unit apartment (elderly) in the Oil City downtown, located in the former City Hall building. It is operated by the Lutheran Service Society of Western Pennsylvania. Facilities are all one-bedroom units. Rents are subsidized by HUD (Section 8).

A second development is Seneca Court, which is also in the downtown. Located at 232 Seneca Street, this is a 24-unit elderly housing development consisting of one-bedroom units. Financing was assisted by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Authority. The operator is listed as Warrior Run Development Corporation, a subsidiary of Yoder Group. This group has a second development of townhouses in the City overlooking the Allegheny River, off the intersection of Colbert and Harriott.

The Housing Market

National

News articles on the national real estate market can be seen daily. And, it is a market best described as struggling. Two primary sources are used for this section: the U.S. Housing Market Conditions, a publication of U.S. HUD, and the National Association of Realtors (NAR). In outline form:

- In May 2009, existing home sales saw a modest 2.4% increase from April, but still below comparable 2008 levels. The estimated seasonally adjusted annual rate (SAAR) was 4.77 million units.
- The \$8,000 tax credit (see IRS website, First-Time Homebuyer Credit) is seen as a reason for the apparent modest increase in May. However, poor appraisals were blamed for delaying pending home closings.
- Average sales prices of existing homes have dropped from \$260,000 to \$172,900 over the past year.
- Sales prices in the Northeast United States dropped from \$284,600 to \$245,400. (The West saw the largest fall, -30.3%).
- On a positive side, since January of this year (2009), both the volume and average selling price of existing homes have experienced modest gains.

The NAR expects a strengthening market, but has concerns about the issue of good appraisals. This latter problem is of importance, as nearly 30% of buyers are “first-time homebuyers”; and solid appraisals are needed to qualify for the \$8,000 tax credit, instituted by the Federal government to stimulate sales. Recent news stories indicate a modest stabilization in home sales, but it will take some time for recovery.

Local Market

As part of the background research for the housing element, contacts were made with local real estate offices. Their views generally concurred. The first observation was the local markets did not experience the boom of national markets. It was described as somewhat slow, but stable.

Overall, the three municipalities which comprise the study area are seen as slow. Rouseville is seen as a particularly difficult market, especially



Colonial Village in Cornplanter Township

since Pennzoil left. In fact, it is not unusual for units to be on the market in Rouseville for over one year.

Cornplanter is seen as a better market. Still, in 2007, the average time on the market was quoted at 131 days. Average listed prices in Cornplanter (2007) were about \$83,000. The Colonial Village area was identical as a stronger sales area with sales in that development higher than the norm (\$90,000 to \$300,000).

Oil City is more of a mixed picture. Overall, average sales prices were quoted as about \$47,000. Yet, Oliver Manor is seen as a good neighborhood, with values from \$100,000 to \$400,000. Portions of the south side are also seen as strong.

Comments were made by real estate sources on the Art Colony Victorian homes sales. They characterize the initiative as modestly successful. An estimated 18 units have attracted people literally from all over (New York, California, New England, and even New Zealand).

Some final comments from the professionals:

- New “snow bird” housing for the 55-plus market-retiree market are needed
- Need more moderately priced homes (\$80,000 to \$120,000)
- There is an oversupply of lower-end homes in Oil City

Special Note: In late 2009, at least one real estate source reported that although residential sales in the first quarter were “very slow,” sales have picked up over this year, and the local market appears to be recovering.

Report on the Housing Market for Venango County (czb, LLC)

This report was released in 2009 and was prepared by Charles Z. Buki for Venango County via the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Full copies of the report are available from the Venango County Planning Commission. A summary of their findings can be found on page 4 of that report. It is gloomy.

- Population losses depress the housing market
- New home building and significant upgrades are “extremely low”
- Marginal upkeep standards
- Easy market for “slumlords”
- Code enforcement lacks sufficient resources
- Multi-unit layers of government make a unified remediation strategy difficult
- Stable to falling home prices

The report predicts these trends will continue unless significant changes in public policy continue.

New Housing Starts

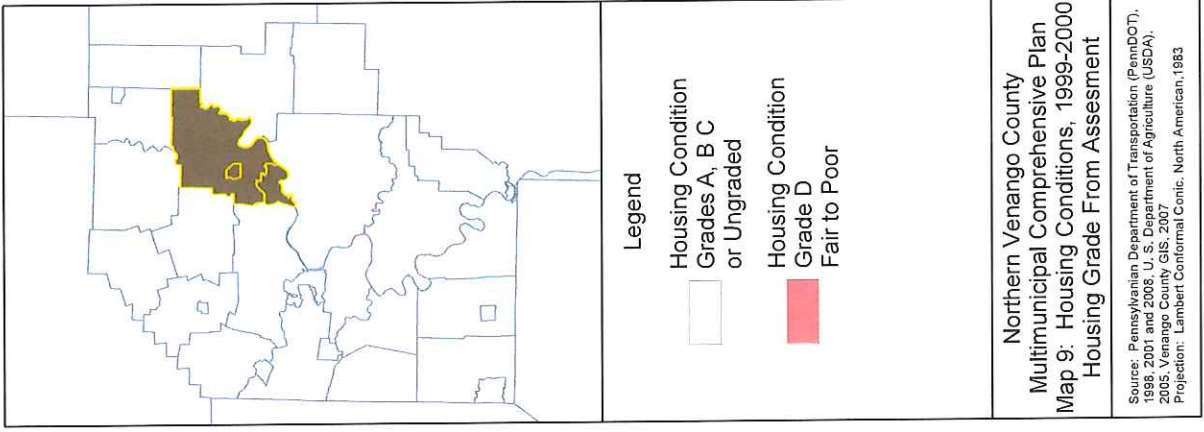
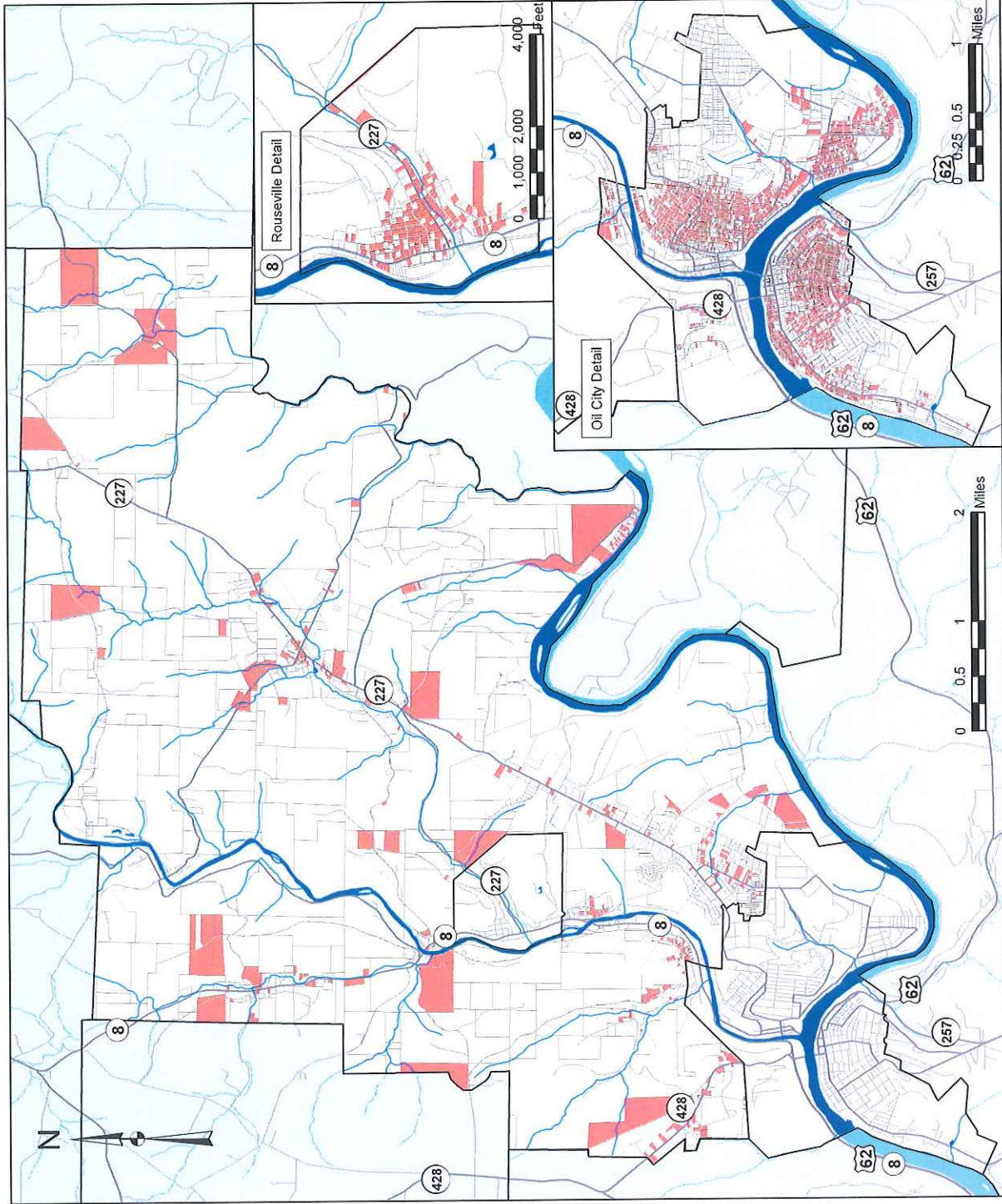
The County's housing market study examined new housing starts on a county level. At best, only a few new units are built per year. Even Cranberry Township—the most active local market—averaged only a few per year.

Report on Housing Conditions

As part of its work on the Northern Venango County Regional Comprehensive Plan, housing surveys were completed. Using a housing standard form (seen on the page H-9), the entire area of Oil City was reviewed by various teams from GCCA. Selected areas in Cornplanter and Rouseville were completed by the County.

In Oil City, approximately 3,600 single-family units were viewed by three separate two-person teams. Field work started in January 2009 and continued until May, with some follow-up work in June. Housing units were evaluated by using a “windshield” survey process. This entails both a driver and a coder, with both individuals participating in judging deteriorated units.

The consultant has completed similar surveys in the past and has found that they typically underestimate the actual level of problem homes by at least 15 percent. This was born out by a comparison with the City “Condemned Structure” list, as some of the units listed were not on the consultant's list. Why? The windshield survey approach allows the viewers only exterior views of the home. The raters have no power to enter into homes and evaluate electric, plumbing and heating systems. Many of the condemned units had such interior problems.



Housing Conditions Survey

Surveyed by: _____ Date: _____

Municipality: _____ Parcel No. _____

Address: _____

1. Use of Structure:

- ☐ Single Family
- ☐ Duplex
- ☐ Mobile Home

- ☐ Multi-Family (No. of Units: _____)
- ☐ Mixed Use (Specify: _____)
- ☐ Commercial (Specify: _____)

2. Principal Building Material:

- ☐ Brick
- ☐ Concrete Block
- ☐ Wood
- ☐ Stone

- ☐ Metal
- ☐ Stucco/Wood Frame
- ☐ Vinyl or Metal Siding/Wood Frame
- ☐ Asphalt Shingles/Wood Frame

3. Structural Conditions (check one for each category):

	<u>Sound</u>	<u>Deteriorated</u>	<u>Dilapidated</u>
Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roofing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exterior Cover (Siding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Porches, Windows, Doors, Miscellaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Structure is:

- | | <u>Estimated Age</u> |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sound | -25 Years (Contemporary) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Need of Minor Rehabilitation | 25 to 50 Years (Modern) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In Need of Major Rehabilitation | +50 Years (Pre-1940) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended for Demolition | |

5. Comments:

Homes are rated using the following criteria:

Sound: A sound house is defined as one which has no visible defects or only those slight defects which are corrected during the course of regular maintenance. Under this approach, a house may have some peeling paint, minor cracks in wood or masonry, or broken gutters/drain spouts, and still be considered sound.

Deteriorating: Deteriorating housing is that which needs more repairs than would be provided through normal homeowner maintenance. Elements of deterioration are holes or cracks in the foundation, exterior framing, walls or roofs, evidence of structural sag, cracked windows, or broken stair treads. Other elements considered were a combination of deferred maintenance aspects, which, singly, may not be a concern, but, in combination, create a problem unit. Deteriorated housing was divided in two categories: Deteriorated-Minor and Deteriorated-Major, the difference being the degree of problems for an individual structure.

Dilapidated: Dilapidated housing has deteriorated to the point that it may no longer be safe or adequate shelter. Its defects are so severe that it would require extensive repair or rebuilding. Open holes, missing material over roofs, floors, or siding; missing windows; and serious structural sags are all indications of dilapidation.

The results:

	Units
Minor Rehabilitation Needed	245
Major Rehabilitation Needed	152
Dilapidated	20
Condemned by City Code Officer	68
Total	485

Based on the prior observations that the windshield survey underestimates the degree of problems, it can be assumed that between 550 and 560 units in the City need some type of remedial action. An estimated 420 to 460 units need rehabilitation. At the average "rehab" cost in western Pennsylvania (\$20,000±), that equals \$9 million to \$10 million. If the City were to receive a maximum HOME grant every year, it would take 18 years to resolve these problems.

Though problem homes are scattered throughout Oil City, there are certain focal points. These are listed below:

- The North Side – Plummer to Colbert Grove, Spruce to Bissell
- The Palace Hill Area – Spruce/Chestnut to Plummer
- Siverly
- The East Side – from Second to Highland, east of Central
- The West Riverfront from Petroleum to Wyllis, north of West First

There are scattered problems seen in nearly all neighbors. The west end of the south side and the Oliver Manor areas are seen as the soundest neighborhoods.

The results of the housing surveys were entered into a database to graphically illustrate where problem units can be found. See the Housing Conditions plate.

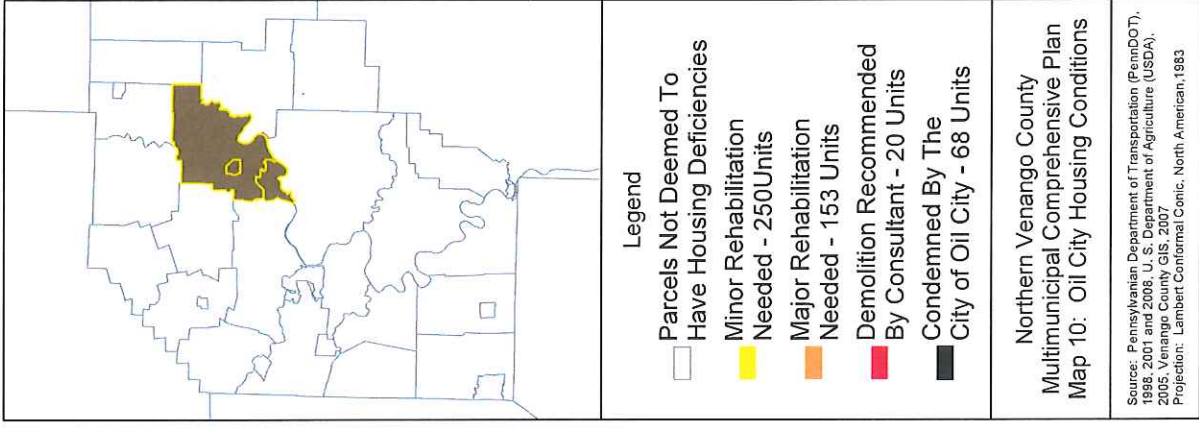
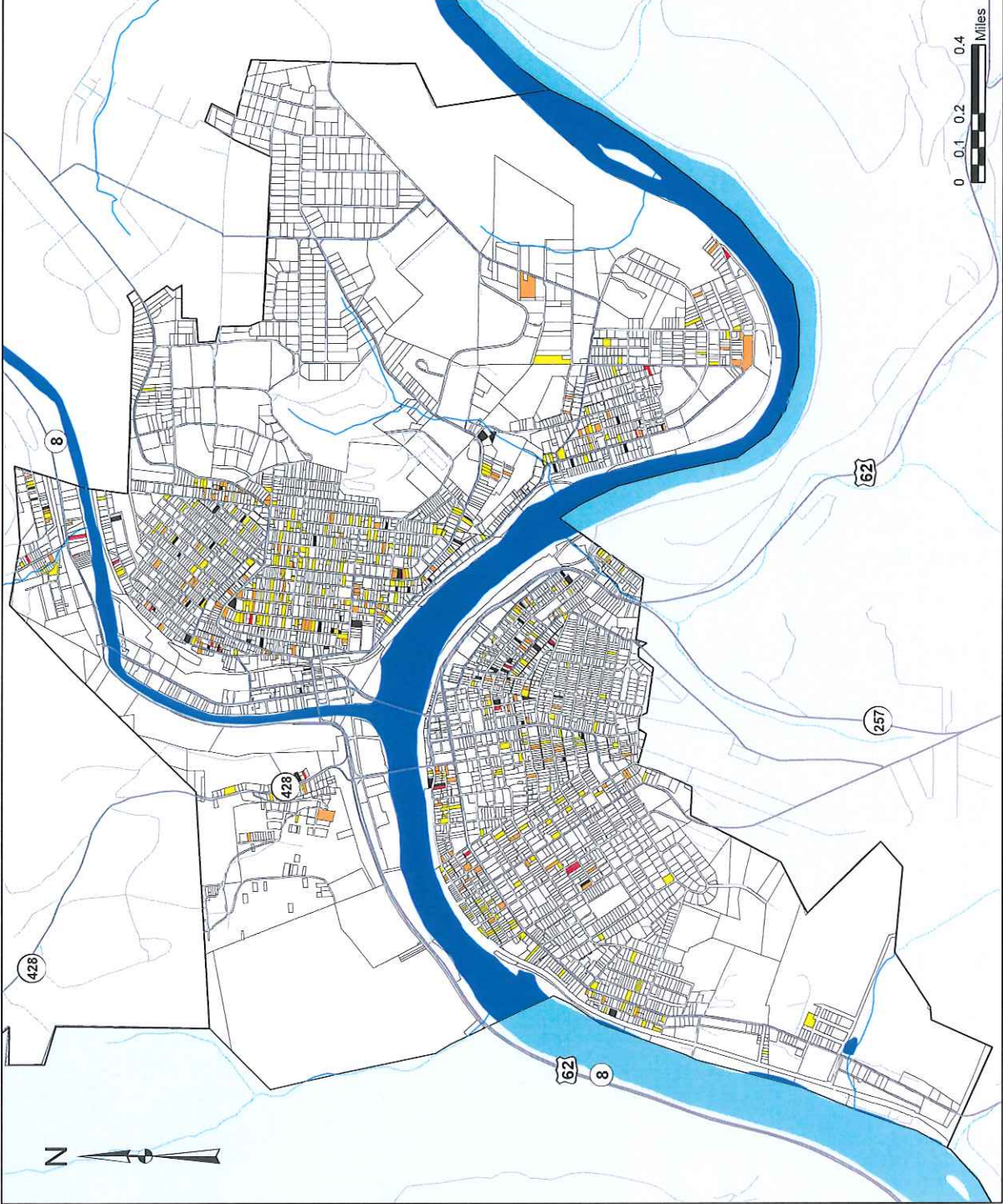
There can be little doubt that during economic boom times in Oil City, homes were built everywhere. Steep hillsides, alleys, and other locations typically bypassed were used. Now jobs are not so plentiful. And, workers who once had to walk to work now drive. Many of the units built in marginal locations are no longer market attractive. Of these, some are in poor condition and even if “rehabbed,” will not be saleable.

Certainly, in Oil City, the condition of housing must be seen as a very major problem. As stated earlier, the County of Venango prepared a special housing element for Cornplanter Township and Rouseville Borough as part of their “in-kind” contribution. This report—published separately—was based primarily on the Venango County Housing Market Study. In lieu of a field survey, that report contained a housing conditions plate, based upon the last County reassessment, was used. Because of the different approaches, GGCA consultants undertook an informal housing survey. All of Rouseville Borough was viewed. In Cornplanter, the Clapp Farm area and McClintockville were viewed.

The results indicated that 26 dwellings—over 10% of the homes in the Borough—were deteriorated. Primarily, these units were found along Cherry Run or east of Route 8 and south of Cherry Run. A full formal survey would likely have seen a higher proportion.

In Cornplanter, the survey problem was more complex. As a rural area, housing is more scattered, with great variations. The Village of Plumer, the “cottage” settlement of Oleopolis, and Colonial Village are quite distinct communities. In the end, field work focused on Clapp Farm and McClintockville as well as a mobile home park. Only 23 problem units were seen. They focused primarily in Clapp Farm. Although 7 units in the mobile home park were rated as deteriorated, none appeared in seriously dilapidated condition.

Overall, all three communities have problem housing to a degree that warrant remedial action.



Chapter 5 – Community Facilities



Community Facilities and Public Utilities



Community Facilities

Oil City Fire Department

The Oil City Fire Department is a full-time operation, consisting of 16 full-time and four part-time persons. Personnel include the chief, three captains, and three lieutenants. Physically, the Department works from two locations. Its primary location is at Fourth Street and Central Avenue, while a smaller facility is located at the corner of Plummer Street and Bissell Avenue. Both structures are quite old. Originally the central station, the Department's headquarters was a school, and it was converted to its current use in 1956, over 50 years ago. This north side station, at one time, housed horse-drawn fire apparatus with an addition added in 1968.

Inventory of Equipment

- 2005 Crimson/International engine – 1
- 2004 Carmate: Special operations trailer (this contains special equipment related to the Department's role in the Region 2, Homeland Security, Urban Search and Rescue Group)
- 2003 Ford F-350 Rescue 7)
- 2001 Carmate 12-foot Cascade trailer
- 1998 Jeep Cherokee Chief/command car
- 1997 Pierce/International engine – 3
- 1996 Roughneck 16-foot 35 hp set board (for river rescue and services)
- 1990 Suburban Utility/Rescue – 12
- 1987 Emergency One/GMC engine – 2
- 1974 American LaFrance platform (snorkel)



Oil City Fire Department Headquarters

Last year, the Department responded to about 1,600 calls, both fire and emergency. In addition, there were some 546 public service calls. Beyond its fire and emergency functions, the

Department has several other activities, which are mostly related to local public safety, while some are regional in scope. Like the City's Police Department, the Fire Department is involved with the Region 2 Counter Terrorism Task Force (Homeland Security).

One of its regional activities is as a team member, with the City of Erie, in the Region 2 Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) team. As a result of that participation, the City has a special operations trailer, which is packed with a variety of gear for search and rescue efforts. Consequently, the Oil City operation has more equipment than is found in a comparable department.

Other activities, though not as dramatic, are important for the City. One is the role of the chief and 6 firefighters who are certified fire inspectors assisting the City Code Official with Fire Code inspections of all commercial, mercantile businesses, schools, restaurants, bars, and churches. In fact, the fire chief serves as the Fire Code Official for Oil City. Yet, another function was originally due to the Department's equipment. The Department maintains the City's traffic lights and controllers. This stemmed from the fact that, years ago, the Fire Department had the only "bucket" truck in the City.

As expected, water safety and rescue is an important service of the Department. Sitting at the confluence of the Allegheny River and Oil Creek, there are a number of boaters in local waterways and a resulting regular need for assistance. As an adjunct to its River Rescue Boat, the Department has a Dive Team. The Dive Team is a cooperative effort with Franklin. Recently, it received a \$50,000 grant for updated diving gear. Prior to that update, the team was using equipment from the 1950s and 1960s.



North Side Fire Station

As with most fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS) are a big element of the operation. This includes some of the functions of the River Rescue team, but is primarily in response to the emergency needs of the City's residents. In 2008, there were some 1,435 EMS calls to the Fire Department. Oil City is unique in that it has an Advanced Life Support (ALS) non-transport ambulance license. Its crews can supply all the needed EMS services. If transport is needed, the Community Ambulance Service is used. That non-profit organization has a contract with the City to reimburse the City for its ALS services.

The ISO (insurance) rating for Oil City is Class 5, out of a possible 10. Class 1 is the best rating, while Class 10 is the lowest. The Department related that its biggest impediment to receiving a higher rating is the number of firefighters. Oil City would need to add about 30 additional staff members to qualify for a Class 1 rating.

Current Priorities

The Fire Department has various capital priorities:

- Replacement of the platform/snorkel truck – estimated cost is \$850,000 to \$900,000*
- Replacement of the 1987 pumper – estimated cost of \$350,000*
- New turnout gear for firefighters – \$40,000*
- Consolidation of its two stations into a single facility. No cost estimate was available. Such a structure would need about two acres of developable land, centrally located.

**Note: All figures are estimates.*

Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department

The Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD) is located off Grandview Road, just south of Horne Lane. It is housed in a combination station and social center. This is a volunteer organization. Last year, the Department received about 400 calls. Unlike many volunteer fire companies in Pennsylvania, the Cornplanter operation has a full complement of personnel, with over 65 persons. Its active roster is 45. Last year, no calls were missed due to a lack of volunteers. Department personnel relate that they can man up to three trucks, if needed, at any time.

Inventory of Equipment

- 2008 HME tanker/pumper (just purchased – \$400,000)
- 1997 Penn Fab tanker/pumper and multi-purpose vehicle. This is a rescue/medical vehicle as well as a fire engine.
- 1995 International tanker/pumper, first out to serve those areas without fire hydrants
- Rescue Wagon – Ford F350 – This is classified as a medium rescue vehicle. In addition to medical and rescue equipment, it also has heavy rescue tools and can respond to water as well as traditional rescue calls.
- Fire-Police vehicle (converted ambulance)
- Two pickup brush trucks



Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department

- 1984 Simon/duplex pumper tanker fire truck. This is surplus equipment and is for sale. It is on display at the rear of the station.

Though well run and quite active, CVFD does have needs, with equipment being one of them. The Department is looking to replace their older pumper. Costs would likely be similar to that of last year's acquisition, somewhere in the \$400,000 range.

Perhaps more dramatic is the need for a new facility. There is serious discussion about building a new station for the CVFD. Property

off Grandview Road, near their current location, is available. The Department is actively seeking funding for this option. They indicate that the station would be the first priority, with a new social hall a long-term project. This may complement the County's needs. The County Emergency Management operation, which is on the same campus as CVFD does needs additional space. So, it may be possible that the current facility could be sold to the County. However, at this time, there is no firm decision on that element.

Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department

The Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department operates from a structure adjacent to the Borough Building, off Mechanic Street, in the Borough. The Department lists the following equipment:

- 1992 International Pumper/Tanker, Engine No. 6, 1,500-gallon tank, 1,500-gallon per minute pump, portable pump, generator, and foam educator
- 1980 GMC Pumper, Engine No. 5, 750 gallon tank, 1,000 gallon per minute pump, portable pump
- 1991 Ford F350 4 x 4 Brush Unit, No. 8, 300-gallon tank, 8 Indian tanks, miscellaneous equipment
- 2005 Ford F350 4 x 4 Rescue No. 4 Super cab, portable generator and lighting, Hazmat Spill kit
- In-house equipment, 6,500 watt generator
- 750-gallon, per minute, portable pump



Rouseville Borough Volunteer Fire Department

Personnel for the Rouseville Borough Volunteer Fire Department report two primary problems. One is fundraising. Historically, bingo was the Department's biggest fundraiser. Since the no smoking State policy went into effect, however, that source has dwindled. Even given that problem, the Department is financially sound. The most pressing issue is personnel. The Rouseville active membership is currently a dozen. They are "just barely making it." As the residents of the Borough age, future recruitments are difficult. And, being a volunteer fire fighter is expensive—expensive in time—about 188 hours of required training—and in-training materials (over \$700). The future of this Department is questionable.

Police Protection

Both Cornplanter Township and Rouseville are served by the Pennsylvania State Police. The local Barracks are in nearby Cranberry Township. They are part of Troop E, headquartered in Erie County. Located on Route 322, the Franklin station is responsible for Venango County.

The Oil City Police Department

Oil City has a full-time professional police operation. Currently, there are some 18 officers, including the Chief. The Department is now in the final stages of a grant process, which, if

successful, will add another officer. The Department operates from the City Hall Building in downtown Oil City. There are two holding cells at the police headquarters. However, if any long-term detention is needed, prisoners must be transported to the Venango County lockup in Franklin. Normally, prisoners are kept only for eight to ten hours in Oil City. Officials indicate they house from 30 to 90 persons a month. They use some nine patrol cars to service the City and log about 100,000 miles per year, in response to an average of 12,000 to 14,000 calls each year, as well as patrols. The Department has its own dispatchers and also uses the County 911 system.

Coverage is on a 24-hour basis, and the Department tries to have three to five officers available on each shift. This is not always possible; and, at a minimum, there are two officers on duty, with backup personnel available.

The Oil City Department has made a commitment to community policing and meets with the three local neighborhood groups on a regular basis. The Chief places a high priority on this aspect of police work. A second initiative is their relationship with the Oil City Area School system. The Department maintains an officer on school premises who services both the high school and the middle school. They also have an active DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program for school students. They now have two officers in the program and are looking to add additional resources.



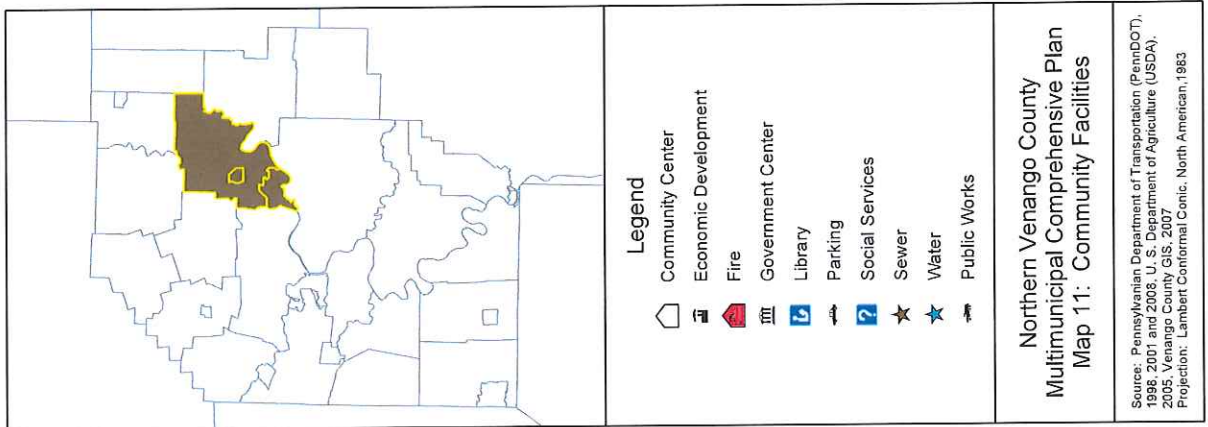
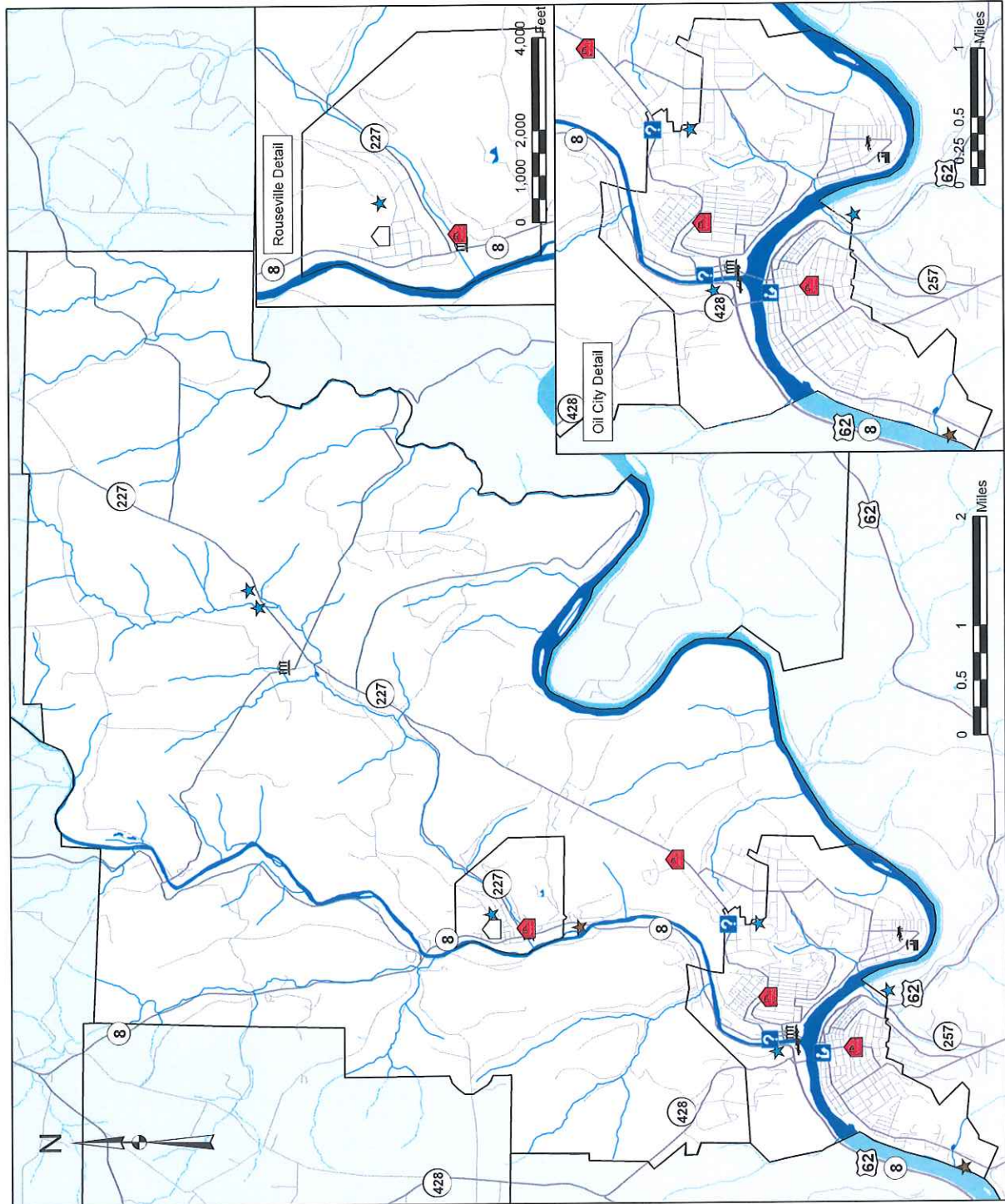
Oil City Police Department

In addition to its local work, the Department is quite active with the Region 2 Counter Terrorism Task Force (Homeland Security). This is a valuable resource for training and possible equipment needs. Training is usually in Meadville, at the Butler Community College, or in Jamestown, Pennsylvania.

The police have one very unique activity. They work with the City's Code Officer to keep an eye on deteriorated housing. The Department has found that often criminal activity and problem housing go hand in hand.

As would be expected, the Department has needs, which include both physical resources and equipment that will make their job more efficient. Current needs include:

- A secure impoundment area
- A secure area for parking police cars
- A 911 radio repeater system for police radios
- New Live Scan Fingerprinting equipment. Currently, prisoners must be transported to Franklin for fingerprinting, taking up time and personnel.
- New bullet-proof vest for the officers
- An updated video arraignment system
- Steady replacement of police vehicles (currently 1 per year)



Educational Resources

The study area is fortunate to have a variety of educational institutions within its borders. In addition to the Oil City Area School District, there is the Venango Technology Center, the Venango Campus of Clarion University, and the DuBois Business College.

Oil City Area School District

The Oil City Area School District serves all of the study area as well as Oakland Township and parts of President Township. Five of its six schools are located in either Oil City or Cornplanter.

Table CF-1: Oil City Area School District Enrollment

	Enrollment
Oil City Senior High School	856
Oil City Middle School	543
Oakland Elementary School	115
Hasson Heights Elementary School	574
Seventh Street Elementary School	167
Smedley Street Elementary School	195
Teaching Staff	178
Support Staff	54
<i>Source: Oil City Area School District website</i>	

The Oil City system has a characteristic somewhat unique in western Pennsylvania. Instead of losing students and considering the closure of schools, they are generally maintaining their enrollment; and, in fact, are expecting a modest student increase. (See the State Department of Education, District Enrollment projections.) To accommodate increases in the K through 5 grades, the District is moving the 5th grade to the Middle School.

The shifting of students is not enough. In addition, the District has embarked on a \$17.5 million-renovation program. Its purpose is to modernize its facilities while maintaining the architectural integrity of the building. This program includes extensive renovations to the high school and middle school.

High School

- New office and security areas
- New electrical system
- Plumbing and HVAC systems
- Renovation of the pool
- Roof
- ADA compliance
- Science room
- Elevator

Middle School

- 7 new classrooms
- 1 special education room
- Electric system
- HVAC and Plumbing
- ADA compliance
- Roof

Athletic Complex

- New track and football field
- Tennis courts and related improvements

As the District has a high reimbursement ratio from the State, about three quarters of the expense for these renovations will be covered by the Commonwealth.

The Oil City Area District is planning a 21st century approach to education—a plan to rejuvenate learning; a concept where a laptop will replace textbooks, a concept of engaging the students' interest, the goal is to make school a place where the students want to be.

Finally, given the economic profile of the District, increased health services of all kinds are being considered. This includes medical, dental, and mental/behavioral services.

The Oil City system is indeed looking to the future.

The school system also supports local recreation, with playgrounds at the Seventh Street, Smedley Street, and Hasson Heights elementary schools available to students and neighbors.

Private Schools

There are two Catholic schools in Oil City. St. Stephens is an elementary school at 214 Reed Street. Enrollment is listed as just less than 160. Venango Catholic High School is at 1505 West First Street, with an enrollment of approximately 90 students.

Venango Technology Center

The Venango Technology Center is affiliated with seven school districts, including the Oil City School District, East and West Forest School Districts, the Cranberry School District, the Franklin School District, the Titusville School District, and the Valley Grove School District. Current enrollment is 840, and the facility operates from a campus located on Vo-Tech Drive in Oil City. Based upon information from the State Department of Education, it has experienced modest growth over the past few years.

They offer some 14 separate programs to school students who attend. In addition to teaching high school students, the Technology Center has an extensive program for adult education. Adult classes are normally from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and cover a wide range of topics. Their most recent session (spring 2009) had 14 separate entities, ranging from maintenance to computer

software. Healthcare, computer skills, manufacturing, and basic business skills are among the topics covered. For some classes, the resources of the DuBois Business School and the Community College of Allegheny County are used.

Their traditional courses include:

- Health Occupations
- Auto Body
- Automotive Technology
- Building Construction
- CAD Programs
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Electronic Technology
- Equipment Operation and Maintenance
- Machine Tools Technology
- Marketing
- Natural Resources
- Welding

DuBois Business College – Oil City Campus

The DuBois Business College is a well-established business school, with its main campus in the City of DuBois. DuBois Business College is accredited and offers students a wide range of tuition assistance. The Oil City location is one of two branch campuses. They offer 18- to 21-month associate degrees as well as 9-, 12-, and 18-month diploma programs.

Its Oil City campus is located on 701 East Third Street. They are housed in the former Grant Street School. This school started its operation in Oil City July of 1996. Sessions consume about 48 weeks per year. Current student enrollment is 60, and school officials relate enrollment generally increases in hard economic times, such as the area is now experiencing. There are eight staff persons.

This facility can accommodate up to 150 students, though practical capacity would be somewhat less. Short-term planned improvements include a new boiler (fall 2009) and a central air conditioning system (spring 2010). Longer-term projects would focus on energy efficiency with new windows the most likely activity. As the school owns the entire former campus of the Grant Street School as well as an additional lot, they do have the capacity to expand.

Clarion University – Venango Campus

With the main campus within 30 miles, students can begin traditional courses at the Venango campus and can either complete their studies here or at the nearby Clarion campus. This facility is unique in two ways. It was the first regional campus in Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. The second aspect is the fact that when founded some 45 years ago, local leaders raised money to establish the campus.

The Venango campus offers associate, bachelor, masters, and one-year certificate programs. Current enrollment is about 1,000 students, with 750 on campus. Many of the students (about half) are adults, and about the same proportions are part-time students. Both residence and commuter students are accommodated.

There are residence facilities available in an apartment complex across West First Street from the campus. These apartments were originally opened in 2004 with additional units scheduled to open for the fall term. After the new units are opened, 89 students can be accommodated. Future plans include two more structures, for a total student capacity of 130. To date, all funding for the apartments is in place before construction, so they are debt free upon completion.



Venango Campus – Clarion University

The school offers:

- 11 associate degrees
- 3 bachelor degrees
- 2 masters degrees
- 12 one-year certificate programs

In addition, some 90-plus bachelor programs are available at the main campus.

Although the facility maintains a strong traditional academic program, its associate and technical offerings are cutting edge. Often, its associate or technical training leads to possible full degrees. Much of the emphasis of its applied technology and associate degrees is driven by community needs. This is based upon the unique community support which led to this campus. Their School of Nursing and Allied Health is a good example. In that school, students can begin with associate courses—sometimes held at a hospital. Those completing such courses can then pursue completion in the full Bachelor of Science in Nursing and go even on to a master's program.

A parallel program is found in the Department of Applied Technology. Here, there are 21 areas of study. One example for this department is line training for First Energy, an electric utility conglomerate. Successful students can obtain an associate degree but they also can continue school to earn a bachelor's degree.

Wind Energy Technology and Agile Robotics are two new potential programs the school is very excited about.

The school uses traditional on-site classrooms, off-site facilities, and on-line resources in its programs. They have outreach efforts in St. Marys and Ridgway.



The "Pond"

Though some new buildings may be in the future, improved use of current structures is first priority. A new laboratory for the School of Nursing and Allied Health is a good example of this policy. The utilization of off-site resources, such as the Precision Manufacturing Institute in Meadville, is another reason why on-site development can be minimized.

Finally, the "Pond" renovation program must be noted. The on-campus pond is a local landmark. In the mid-1990s, a storm caused extensive siltation in the pond. With a \$1 million-plus project (including extensive community support), the pond has been restored and enhanced as both a community and school resource.

Recreational Resources

Cornplanter Township

Cornplanter Township has no municipal parks, but it is the site of the largest recreational complex in the region. The Oil Creek State Park is located in Cornplanter as well as neighboring Cherry Tree and Oil Creek townships. The park encompasses most of the Oil Creek Valley to the north of Rynd Farm, stretching to the Drake Well Museum complex in Crawford County. Created in the late 1960s, much of the early land acquisition was a result of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Total land area is 7,243 acres. Visitations typically run 150,000 to 170,000 annually. Over the past few years, this has dropped to about 130,000. Park personnel indicate the park will increase its marketing efforts for "day trippers"—those within 60 miles.

The focal point of the park is in Cornplanter at Petroleum Centre. Here is the Park Office, Visitors Center, and a station on the OC&T Railroad. The historic theme for the facility is the fact that it is the home of the oil industry. The valley was the site of an extensive oil boom which followed Drake's Well in 1859. Oil exploitation continued until the 1870s when local resources dwindled. However, some remnants of those early days remain, providing a historical backdrop for visitors.

The park is committed to its historical heritage. One of the current projects is the restoration of Egbert Farm. The exterior has been stabilized, and there are plans to begin looking at options for the interior. Park management works closely with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on their preservation and interpretation efforts.

Today, Oil Creek Park's major attraction is its natural state. The park offers an extensive hiking trail system, camping sites, as well as winter cross country skiing. In addition, Oil Creek itself provides fishing and canoeing opportunities. A paved 9.7-mile bikeway follows an old rail right-of-way from the Drake Well area to Petroleum Centre. It is planned to connect this trail to that in Cornplanter and eventually to the Oil City/Justus Trail system. Another attraction is the OC&T Railroad. They operate tourist passenger trains from June to October each year, with some

special trains in the off season. The line begins at the Titusville Station with stops at Drake's Well and Petroleum Centre, terminating at the Rynd Farm station.

One final note: the park is engaged in a long-term program of plugging old "orphan" oil wells for safety and environmental reasons. Often old tree stumps were used as plugs, and these fail over time. This program is a cooperative one with other State agencies (DEP). Some 50 wells in the southern area of the park are being plugged under a current contract, and the park's Miller Farm area is scheduled next.



A second resource in Cornplanter is the noted boomtown Pithole. Settled in 1865, Pithole was the first oil boomtown, with its population peaking at 15,000. It was, in fact, a borough. With the decline of the oil industry, population dropped sharply. That, in addition to a series of fires, led to the community's eventual demise. Currently, there are no structures remaining from the original settlement. In 1961, the site—some 92 acres—was given to the State Historical and Museum Commission. Since that time, a visitors' center and some interpretive

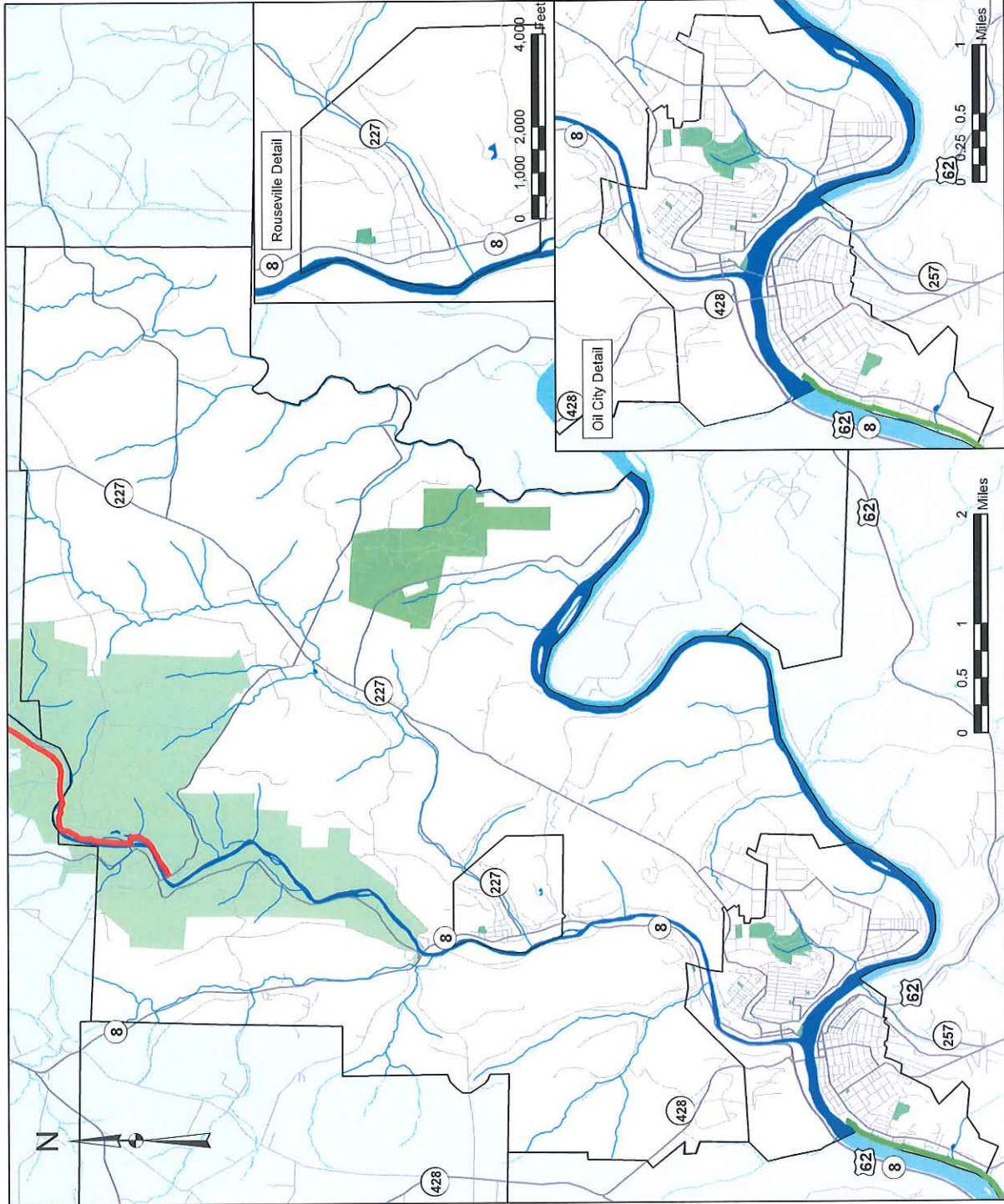
facilities have been constructed. Annual visitations are 3,000 to 4,000 a year. Due to road problems, current visitation is down. Pithole is open during the summer season (June to Labor Day), and volunteers operate the site.

Pithole is operated via the Drake Well Museum. At one time, the property was at risk. It was being considered by the State to be declared "surplus" and could have been sold. However, local volunteers, especially "The Mayor of Pithole," plus the Drake Well staff, have dissuaded the Commission from any sale. Via fund raising and special events, volunteers manage to pay the utility bills and keep the Pithole site viable.

The McClintock Well (off Waitz Road, near Route 8) is also part of the Drake Well holdings. This is the oldest oil well in continual operation in the United States.

Rounding out the outdoor resources of the Township is State Game Land 253. With an area over 665 acres, it provides local hunters with a nearby resource.

There are other public and semi-public facilities in Cornplanter. This includes the Masonic Lodge, the Moose Club, and the Tyred Wheels Museum. The Museum is on Russell Corners Road and features 25 antiques, cars, 5,000 miniature vehicles, and similar automotive memorabilia. It is open on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., from Memorial Day to Labor Day.



Oil City

The City of Oil City has an extensive park system. Their resources range from small neighborhood facilities to those of over 100 acres. A short overview of their facilities follows:

- **Mitchell Avenue Playfield:** This facility contains some 7.93 acres and is located in the residential section of Oil City's "South Side," and appears well used. It is home to three ball fields, a playground, and three tennis courts. When originally viewed, these courts seemed to be little used. However, local tennis players have indicated an interest, and active use of the courts are expected. The playground is a product of the "Land of Laughter" program, similar to the facility on Harriott Street. Overall condition is good to fair, with the exception of the tennis courts, which seem little used and in need of repair.
- **Innis Street Playground:** Located in a dense residential section on Innis Street, it is about one-half acre in size. The playground consists of a hard court basketball area, swings, and a climbing play apparatus with a climbing wall. There is also a picnic table. During the summer, the YMCA often provides this park area with a recreation program for younger children.
- **The Marina:** Situated off Front Street along the Allegheny River, the Marina facility contains about 11 acres. There is a parking area, restrooms, and a river access ramp. The parking area shows signs that trenching has been done and the blacktop has a section of gravel fill. Beyond routine maintenance, the facility appears in good condition.
- **Pierce Avenue Playground:** This facility is located in the Siverly area of the City. It contains a tennis court, play apparatus, a tire swing, swings, and benches. There is a tennis court area, but the court lacks nets and is overgrown. A hard-court basketball area is next to the tennis courts, with two hoops. It appears usable but in rough condition. The biggest issue with Pierce Park is maintenance and access. Located on a hillside, the slope is up to 25% in some areas, making mowing and maintenance difficult. Pierce's secondary access is via Keith Alley, a very narrow road in need of repair, with little area to park. Overall, this park appeared in poor condition and little used. A neighborhood group has indicated a willingness to adopt the park, but no final arrangements have been made.
- **Halyday Playground:** This small facility appears unused and abandoned. It is inconveniently located, with very difficult access and parking. The fencing is in poor condition and the remaining basketball hoop lacks a net.
- **Justus Park:** Justus is literally the Oil City downtown riverfront park. It is along the Allegheny River, just east of the Veteran's Memorial Bridge. There is a band shell,



Mitchell Avenue Playfield

numerous benches, play apparatus, restrooms, and a small shelter. Some statutes are also found in the facility. Though close to the downtown and in a busy section of the City, some evidence of vandalism was seen, particularly to the band shell. Creekside extends from the Justus facility as a lineal walk with seats. It ends near the Center Street Bridge.

- **Charlton Street Playground:** Located in the Clapp Farm area, this playground is not currently in use. A blacktop basketball court is found here, but no use is evident. Under its CDBG program, the City does intend to repair the blacktop in 2010. There is a driveway-type access to the facility; the portion near the street is in poor condition.



- **Hasson Park, Ball Fields, Dek Hockey and the Ramage-Hasson Pool:** This impressive facility is certainly the most imposing park complex of the City. Overall, there are about 100 acres here. The lower section is green space, with picnic facilities, walking trails, restrooms, a pavilion, some play areas, and the Rhododendron arboretum. There are various stone grills and steps that are quite old and some in need of repair. Located to the north of that complex are found the ball field and the dek hockey facility as well as skate park. The dek hockey facility has a program operated by the Oil City YMCA, under contract to the City. It uses the former ice hockey rink. They have programs for three age categories: Youth (ages 6 to 12), Scholastic (ages 12 and up), and Adult (ages 18 and over). These programs are operating during the months of April (or May) to October. In addition, there is a "Foot Hockey" program sponsored, in part, by the Pittsburgh Penguins Hockey team. A companion program is the Skate Park. This facility is designed for roller bladders and skate boards. The pool is to the extreme north of the complex.
- **The Ramage-Hasson Public Pool, or the James A. Nelles Pool,** is certainly one of the crown jewels of the Oil City Park system. It is located off Park Avenue, between Traction Street and Summit Street. This pool was fully reconstructed in 2007. About half of the money for this \$1.6 million project was in the form of State grants, or "CDBG" dollars. The balance of funds was secured from local charitable trusts, businesses, and community donations.

The pool is a true modern facility with a dual water slide for older users and a variety of fountains, and water features for the wader. Modern and well kept, it is one of the premiere public pools in the area. The pool is open noon to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and noon to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. There is an adult "lap" swim daily from 11:00 a.m. to noon. The pool's operation for 2009 is June 6th to August 23rd. Daily admission (2009) is \$4.00, but there are a variety of discounts and season passes available. These range, for residents, from \$60.00 for an individual session pass to \$150.00 for a family pass. A resident includes anyone living in Oil City, Cornplanter, or Cranberry Township. Fees for non-residents are somewhat higher, with the individual

pass at \$75.00 and family passes at \$200.00. An adult lap swim pass is \$25.00. On warm summer days, this is a very popular spot.

In addition to the pool itself, there is a bath house and equipment building. City officials indicate they would like to refurbish the bath house. Though an apparent solid structure, it does show signs of wear.

- The Harriott Avenue Playground: This is a small “Land of Laughter” playground, similar to the Mitchell Street facility. It is about one-half acre in size and is a true playground aimed at younger users. The location is Harriott and Mylan. An outdoor basketball court is part of this facility, located directly behind the playground.
- The School District also supplements local recreational resources. Playgrounds at three schools are open for summer use. The Seventh Street Elementary School also is a YMCA program location.

Rouseville

The Rouseville Park is located off of Second Avenue, on the same complex with the Community Center. The Rouseville Playground consists of play apparatus for climbing, has a slide, merry-go-round, along with a shelter. It is listed as a YMCA summer program park.

The Bike Trails

The study area is quite fortunate to have extensive bike trails. As previously noted, there are 9.7 paved trails from the Drake Well Museum to Petroleum Center. Then, starting at Rynd Farm, it continues along Waitz Road. The plan is to extend this segment along rail trackage to Oil City where it would connect with the Oil City Bike Trail; thence to the extensive Justus-Allegheny Valley tract system. This consists of 32 miles along the Allegheny River. Funds for filling the two-mile gap are available, both for planning/design as well as construction funds via a 2010 Federal earmark.

The primary problem is a three-mile gap from the current trailhead at Petroleum Center to Rynd Farm. Various locations have been studied, with one following the OC&T trackage favored. This is an expensive trail option. Given State Budget problems, this gap may remain for some time. However, modest funds have reportedly been made available, and some construction is expected for the next year.

Oil City Library

The Oil City Library is located at the corner of Central Avenue and Front Street. The structure has been added to since its original construction as a “Carnegie” Library in 1904. Although a department of the City of Oil City, the library is also part of the State system. In 1995, the library was designated by the Commonwealth Libraries to be one of 29 district library centers in the state of Pennsylvania. The Oil Creek District Library Center is the center for the 14 public libraries in the counties of Venango, Clarion, and Jefferson.

The library is open 64 hours a week, with the following hours:

Monday through Wednesday	8:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Thursday	8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Friday and Saturday	8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

They have a collection of 103,000 items. Though consisting primarily of books, audio, and video, an extensive periodical collection is also included. Estimated users are 10,500. Library personnel report an increase of use, especially for internet access, since the economy has weakened. They are especially proud of the children's programs.



Physically, the Oil City facility has about 21,000 square feet of usable space. In addition, there are about 10,000 square feet of unused space in the now unused upstairs and the unfinished basement of their newest addition. An engineering study has been completed examining the structure's mechanical and electrical system, focusing on energy efficiency and increasing the public areas.

The principal support from the library is from the City. However, Cornplanter Township, Rouseville Borough, and President Township do contribute on a per capita basis. In Cranberry Township, residents can purchase a "household" card, with reimbursement from the Township.

The library has some immediate needs, as listed below:

- Roof Repair: Currently, a portion of the roof of the original building (a tile system) is leaking and causing damages to second-floor ceilings. Water is also getting to first-floor areas (estimated cost – \$57,000).
- West Front Street: A new ADA compliant ramp is needed (estimated cost – \$100,000).
- Replacement of stairs, Central Avenue entrance (estimated cost – \$29,000).
- Ongoing replacement of computer equipment and public access computers. (Gates Foundation money is expected.)

Final concerns are funding and personnel, and renovating the library building. With an expected cutback in State funding, local support is needed. The library is encouraging per capita support levels of \$5.00 from participating municipalities to meet State guidelines. Library personnel note current support could be incrementally increased at \$.25 increments over a few years to reach the \$5.00 goal. In addition, they are encouraging Cranberry Township to be a per capita supporter.

The second issue is personnel. The library has a staff of 10, with two part-time employees. Some have 30-year's experience, and retirements are expected. The concern is that current pay rates may not attract qualified replacements.

The third issue is a needed renovation of the library building. The last building renovation was done in 1978. Since 1978, there have been many developments, including the addition of new formats such as DVDs, CDs, etc. to the library's collection and the addition of a computer technology to run the library's operations. The Oil City Library Commission engaged Struxures Architecture and Construction (Seneca, Pennsylvania) to provide a building evaluation study of renovating the library building. The study estimates \$1.5 million in renovation costs to the library building to meet the demands for library services in the 21st century.

Museum

The Venango Museum of Art, Science, and Industry is located at 270 Seneca Street in Oil City, in the Beaux Arts Building, once the former post office. It is operated by a 501 C 3 non-profit organization. They operate from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday; Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Admission rates are modest, ranging from \$1.50 to \$4.00. General membership costs vary from \$5.00 to \$100.00. The Museum has a "Black Gold" or "Black Magic" story on how the local discovery of oil has and continues to impact the area, nation, and world. In addition to its "oil" theme, the Museum has a changing exhibit area, a restored Wurlitzer theater organ, and a historic Cord auto.

National Transit Building



Inside the National Transit Building

The National Transit Building was constructed in 1890 for the Standard Oil of Rockefeller fame. In 1978, the building was put on the National Register of Historic of Historic Places. For a time, Ralph Nadar operated a Civic Renewal effort here. He, in turn, gave it to the Oil City Civic Center, Inc. to be used for non-profit organizations. That board still owns the complex and it is responsible for its upkeep with close assistance and some financial aid from the City of Oil City. Later, the structure was home of combined county economic development agencies, now the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA).

At one time, the ORA occupied the entire fourth floor of the structure. However, in 2009, they relocated to their new quarters, one block away. Currently, the facility has public meeting spaces and offices on the first floor. Other floors are devoted to childcare and various endeavors of

the Oil City Arts Council. The most visible functions are two: the ARTS Oil City Program and the Art Gallery.

Oil City Civic Center, Inc.

ARTS Oil City provides artists with low-cost studio space on the second floor of the complex. The purpose is primarily to nurture an arts colony in the City. Most sales, however, are at shows or galleries out of the area. There are 23 artist studios and 4 studio spaces left. Other activities include art education, an art gallery, and special programming. As an adjunct to this program, a local bank offers 100% mortgages to incoming artists in a designated area around the downtown, in a designated "Arts District." However, given the comparative reasonable costs of homes in the

City, many opt for housing outside the district. Program operators point to some one million dollars in mortgages generated since the program's inception.

Oil City YMCA

The Oil City YMCA is located at 7 Petroleum Street on the south side. They have a variety of resources, from their indoor track, locker rooms, as well as a number of specialty areas. The "Y's" programs cover a gamut of activities, from swimming to "coffee and chat." Essentially, this is a membership organization. Current charges range from a monthly youth fee of \$9.50 to \$41.75 for a family. Annual payments are twelve times the monthly fee. There is a joiner fee for all except the "Youth" category.



Oil City YWCA

Located at 109 Central Avenue, this is also a membership organization. Their building consists of meeting rooms, a fitness center, and an auditorium.

Oil City Parking Garage

The Elm-Seneca Parking Garage is located at the corner of Elm and Duncomb streets.

Constructed in 1975, it has approximately 560 parking spaces. In addition to its function as a parking facility, it also provides some limited commercial office space and a drive-through bank facility. Though originally a full-service parking garage, it now uses a combination of parking meters and permit parking. Just recently, in April of 2009, the firm, Carl Walker, did an in-depth analysis of the structure.



According to that report, the structure has a life of 50 to 75 years (2025 to 2050). However, to have this projected lifespan, significant repairs and serious ongoing maintenance are needed. The minimum short-term budget is \$2,098,784.

Various options would increase costs from \$2.1 million to \$2.5 million. In addition to the structural repairs, the City has just let a \$52,000 contract to repair the elevator.

Public Utilities

The primary public utilities for any community are its water and sewer services. These essential utilities are necessary to both sustain current development and enable new growth. All three municipalities have both public water and sewer services. In Oil City and Rouseville, these essential services are community-wide. In Cornplanter, they are provided in the Grandview/Colonial Village area, the Village of Plumer (water only), McClintock (water only), Dutch Hill and Clapp Farm.

Water Systems

The largest single water system is operated by Oil City. It supplies its own needs as well as providing services to sections in Cornplanter and Cranberry. The Rouseville system has its source in Cornplanter Township, and supplies the Borough as well as the villages of Plumer and McClintock.

The Oil City water system dates back to 1890s. The development of this utility was the result of a typhoid epidemic in 1894.

Oil City draws its water from a series of wells along the Allegheny River located in Cranberry Township at Seneca Farms, a 240-acre property. In 2007, the system served an estimated 11,504 persons. Though its service area is centered in the City, it also serves portions of Cornplanter and Cranberry townships.

The 2007 statistics for the Oil City Water Department were as follows:

Peak Day: 2,919,267 gpd (gallons per day)
Minimum Day: 1,497,377 gpd
Average Day: 2,117,119 gpd

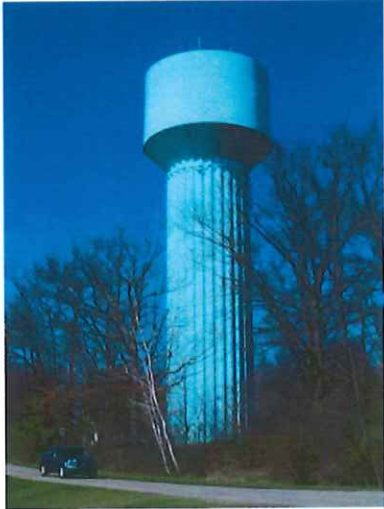
Table CF-2 – Water Use – Oil City Water System

User Class	Customer Number	Gallons Per Day	Percent
Domestic	4,069	555,873	26
Commercial	258	131,566	6
Industrial	25	200,918	9
Institutional	23	50,325	2
Bulk Sales	9	416,037	20
Other (City Departments)	30	8,721	0
Unaccounted	–	753,679	36
Total		2,117,119	100

Source: 2007 Annual Report

As can be seen from Table CF-2, the system is losing about one third of all finished water. City personnel hope to slowly reduce this loss figure to about 20 percent. As part of this program, they have an ongoing leak detection program. This program is twofold. One uses highly sophisticated leak detection equipment, which can literally pinpoint the location of a leak. The second tool is a computer-based software system, SCADA (Supervising Control and Data Acquisition). This allows water system personnel to identify any unusual water usage patterns and isolate where problems (leaks) occur. However, given the overall system age and costs, improvements are incremental.

Due to the City's hilly terrain, the system must accommodate numerous elevations, which have been divided into five service areas. These, in turn, are serviced by some ten water tanks that are fed by four booster stations. To the left is a picture of the Hydro-Pillar, the tank located at Ridge and Summit.



Name of Water Tank	Capacity
Sage Run	2 tanks at 2 mg (million gallons) each
Hog Back	1 tank at 3 mg
Vo-Tech	2 tanks at 500,000 gallons each
Rich Hill	2 tanks at 400,000 gallons each
Clark Summit	1 tank at 24,000 gallons
West End	1 tank at 400,000 gallons
Ridge	1 tank at 500,000 gallons

Operationally, the water system is dependent on the Water Supply Department and the Public Works Department. Water is drawn from the wells and treated at the Seneca Farms water plant. Water treatment includes chlorination and an additive to control the leeching of leads into the system. The water plant is operated by a foreman and one other employee. They are responsible for the water treatment and the plant, the booster pumps, and the maintenance of the ten water tanks. The distribution system is under the Water Distribution Department, which is part of the City's Public Works operation. Individual service lines, mains, fire hydrants, as well as curb and valve boxes are under their care.

The system is metered. During the 1990s, Oil City replaced all of its water meters and now the average age of these are only nine years. Even so, a meter replacement program is in place, with 74 new units installed in 2007. There was no physical expansion of the system in 2007.

In addition to serving its own citizens, the City sells bulk water to both Cornplanter and Cranberry Townships.

Cornplanter Connections

Name	Capacity
Charlton	20,000 gpd
Dutch Hill	10,000 gpd
Hasson Heights	250,000 gpd
Average Daily Sales	220,000 gpd

Cranberry Connections:

Name	Capacity
Collins	10,000 gpd
Harold Street*	50,000 gpd
Laurel	3,000 gpd
Sage Run	100,000 gpd
Seneca	500,000 gpd
Woodland Heights	100,000 gpd
Average Daily Sales:	195,000 gpd
*Harold Street—used as a backup for the Sage Run area only.	

Water usage figures (see Table CF-2) are significantly less than the numbers that were reported in the 1998 Plan, when the system was pumping 3,100,000 gpd annually. City officials relate the reduced pumpage can be traced to:

- Customer drop, primarily residential and industrial
- New meters accurately recording usage
- An ongoing leak-detection and repair program

Planned Improvements

Due to the age of the Oil City water system, much of its distribution network is quite old. Some of its pipes were installed over one hundred years ago. Old pipes often leak and are the primary reason for the system loss of about one third of all finished water produced. As a result of this situation, the City has prepared an improvement program to address its most immediate needs. Its recommendations are generalized below:

- **Line Replacement and Enhancement:** Some 14,391 feet of new water main are scheduled. New lines will be primarily 12 inches in size. In all, 11 new projects are planned. The total cost is estimated at \$1,338,200.
- **River/Creek Crossings:** Two river crossings are slated for renewal, and a new Oil Creek crossing is scheduled. Estimated cost is \$159,500.
- **Booster Stations:** Three booster (pump) stations are scheduled for reconstruction. Estimated cost is \$1,075,000.
- **Storage Tanks:** The majority of the system's water storage tanks are scheduled for repair, cleaning, and recoating.

The total project cost is \$5.2 million. This includes engineering, inspection, and a 10% contingency fee.

In addition to this formal improvement program, there are several other improvements that would improve the water system operations. These can be generalized as follows:

- New river crossing at main plant
- Retention tank/wet well for chlorination
- Security fences – install or improve fences at the main plant and around tanks
- Road improvements to main plant
- Refurbish the water plant – larger with added safety features
- Security cameras – various locations
- Access road improvements
- Additional maintenance truck and gear
- New valves – Clark Summit, West End, Hogback
- New SCADA system

Rouseville Borough

Rouseville Borough owns and operates a water system which provides drinking water to its own residents as well as supplying water to two systems in the Township—one for the Village of Plumer and one for McClintockville.

The Borough's water supply is from two locations. One is located north and up-gradient of the Village of Plumer and west of Route 227. The second source is Well No. 5, located east of Route 227, just across from School House Road. Well No. 5 is described by Borough officials as their water system's primary source. Wells Nos. 1 and 2 are shallow (approximately 30 feet). Well No. 5 is at a depth of 110 feet, drilled into the Cuyahoga rock group.

Water quality of the Plumer system is judged good. The most recent Annual Drinking Water Quality Report shows no violations with all tested qualities well below the Maximum Contaminant Level, as set by Federal and State standards. The Borough's water has also been tested for nitrate-nitrogen content and, per a water sample of March 2005; the result was 0.59 mg/l, well below the 5 mg/l standard.

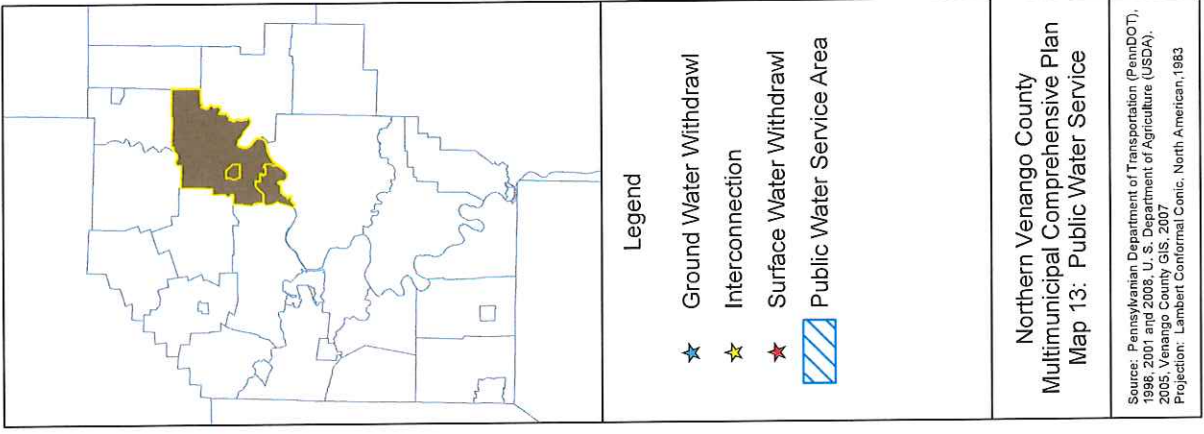
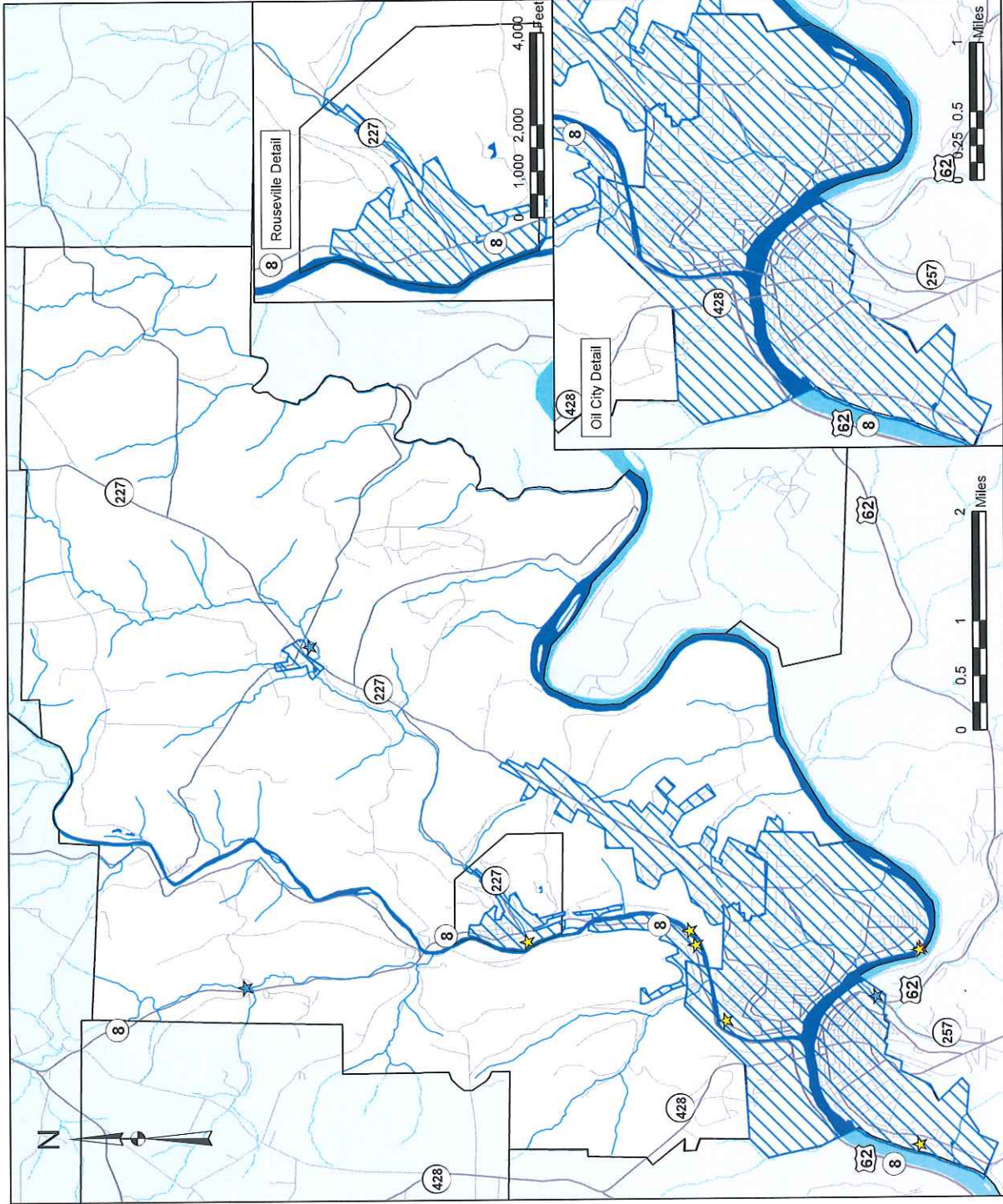
Water is collected for the Rouseville system at the well and fed by gravity or pumped to a small treatment facility in Plumer where the water is aerated and chlorinated. The Rhodes Water Company, which supplies the Plumer area, takes its water at this point. However, most water is then piped to Rouseville for distribution to serve the Borough and the nearby settlement of McClintockville. The system has two storage facilities, a 96,000-gallon tank, and a 30,000-gallon reservoir.

The Borough's primary distribution system is for its own residents. It has approximately 240 customers in the Borough, primarily domestic. As noted, the system sells water bulk to two customers. The Plumer Water Company (Rhodes Company) purchases water at the treatment facility in Plumer for the households in the village (approximately 68 households). The Township also purchases bulk water for McClintockville (9 households) through its own distribution system.

Cornplanter Township

The Township uses both the Rouseville and City of Oil City water systems to supply its users. The Rhodes system which supplies Plummer is described above. Oil City provides water service to other areas in Cornplanter Township. The principal sector is in the Grandview-Hasson Heights area, just north of the City, which includes Colonial Village, Horne Road, Oak Road, and abutting areas. There are 675 customers in this service region. Oil City also supplies water to Clapp Farm (27 users) and Dutch Hill (11 customers).

Although the Township controls the system, day-to-day maintenance services are provided by the Oil City Public Works Department for Cornplanter, as requested. For its services, the City bills Cornplanter Township for employee hours, and materials. Water testing, however, is done by the Township, with Stewart Laboratories preparing the required analysis reports.



Sanitary Sewer Systems

There are two primary sewer systems within the study area—those of Oil City and Rouseville. Areas within Cornplanter which have public sewers are tributary to the Oil City system.

The Oil City system is comprised of some 70-plus miles of sewer lines, sanitary as well as combined sewers (sanitary sewers that also function as stormwater drains). The system is connected to collection systems both in Cornplanter and Cranberry townships. The City maintains its lines as well as those in Cornplanter.

There are five pump stations within the Oil City system. The primary ones are Northside, Southside, and Oliver Manor. Smaller pump stations include Colbert and Moran. Moran just went on line in 2007 to remediate a direct sewage flow into the Allegheny River.

Name	Capacity
North Side	468,000 gpd
Southside	200,000 gpd
Oliver Manor	115,000 gpd
Colbert	151,200 gpd
Moran*	
*Went on line in 2007	



North Side Pump Station

All sewerage is transported to the City's treatment plant. Located on the south bank of the Allegheny River, the plant now has a practical capacity of 11 mgd, up from its prior hydraulic limit of 4 mgd. The treatment plant could handle wet weather surges to 12.5 mgd. Its current limitation is due to the capacity of its chlorine contact capacity. The organic capacity is 5,542 ppd, with loading well below that level. The plant upgrade took place in 2008 as a result of a Consent Order and Agreement between the City and DEP dating from 1996. That order was issued due to wet weather overflows of the plant. In accordance with its agreement with DEP, the

City completed a new Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. After acceptance by the State of the Act 537 Plan, Oil City embarked on a three-phase remedial program.

The plant currently has a staff of six operators, although a seventh person is budgeted. There is also a summer employee at the sewer treatment plant. Plant personnel are responsible for the collection system's pump stations and interceptor, as well as plant operation.

The City Public Works Department maintains the balance of the collection system. Similar with the water system, it also provides services to Cornplanter, as requested, with billing based upon crew hours and material.

As is the case with its water lines, much of the City collection system is old, with cracked or broken pipe, bad joints, and similar problems. However, here the problem is water entering the

system rather than leakage from the system. Known as I&I (infiltration and inflow), this extra water enters through old cracked sewer pipe and joints (groundwater infiltration) as well as stormwater directly entering either, via the combined portion of the collection system, by parking lot drains, or roof drains (inflow). During heavy rains, or snow melt, this extra water would overload the plant.

As noted above the City completed a new Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan. Once accepted by DEP, the plan outlined a three-step process. Phase 1 was to increase the capacity of the sewer treatment plant so it would have the ability to handle these peak flows. Phase 1 was completed in 2008 at a cost of about \$4.25 million.

A secondary consequence of the hydraulic overloading of the system is a series of overflows. These allowed untreated sewage to enter the Allegheny or Oil Creek via a system of combined sewer overflows (CSOs). Currently, there are 16 CSOs in the system. They are the target of the Phase 2 project. These facilities will be rebuilt to direct more waste water to the plant and capture floating debris. Also, two of the CSOs will be combined. That project is designed, and construction is expected to be completed in 2009.

The overall system goal is to treat 85% of all water entering the system. This includes wastewater as well as any I&I from any source. Once the 85% goal is reached, this would bring the Oil City system into compliance with State DEP and Federal EPA standards.

Phase 3 of the plan (scheduled for 2010) will monitor the system to determine whether the new plant and reconfigured CSOs have reached the 85% treatment goal. If it does, the system will then follow a program of operation and maintenance with repairs as needed. However, if the 85% level is not achieved, further work will be required.

Though not formally part of the Act 537 project list, the wastewater treatment plant does have additional needs. Grinders are needed for the digester, belt press, and pump station (\$25,000 total). A flow meter is needed for Hogs Hollow. Finally, a pickup maintenance truck with a plow and lift are also needed.

Rouseville Borough

The Borough of Rouseville owns and operates its own sewer collection and treatment system. The sewer plant was built in 1963 and is in need of repair or replacement.

The plant is on Route 8, just south of the Borough, in Cornplanter Township. Raw sewage flows by gravity to a pump station at the treatment plant. It is then pumped through a grit separation unit and then into one of two aeration basins. After treatment, it is processed through two final clarifiers, where sludge is extracted. Effluent is treated by chlorine before discharge into Oil City. Sludge residual is hauled to the Franklin sewer treatment plant.

This plant has a permitted hydraulic capacity of 240,000 gallons per day and a rated organic loading of 204 pounds BOD⁵/day. According to its most recent Chapter 94 Report, the plant is working within both its hydraulic and organic loading parameters. However, the plant is now over 40 years old and is expensive to operate, primarily due to electric and personnel costs. The

Borough recently completed a special Act 537 Plan which recommends a new plant using Sequencing Batch Reactors. Cost for the new plant is estimated at \$1.7 million.

It must be noted that Rouseville has not only lost population over the past decades, but also its major industry, the Pennzoil Refinery, has closed and has been dismantled. Its former real estate holdings were turned over to the Borough, and new industries are expected.

The Borough's collection system is primarily composed of vitreous clay pipe with mortared joints. As such, there are infiltration issues. Over the years, the Borough has periodically replaced some of its older sewer lines with new PVC, reducing groundwater infiltration into the system. And, the proposed project does include some additional line replacements. Though some infiltration will continue, the new plant will have sufficient capacity to treat projected flows.

Currently the Act 537 Plan is under review by DEP. The Borough has been asked by DEP to compare the cost of the new plant with the cost of transporting its wastewater to the Oil City treatment plant, via a proposed line in Cornplanter Township along Route 8. That analysis has been completed and the recommended option remains the rebuilding of the Rouseville Plan.

Cornplanter Township

The sanitary sewer collection system of Cornplanter Township is focused in the Grandview Road and Colonial Village area. It extends along Grandview Road to the Golden Living Center. Much



Golden Living Center

of this system was installed during the 1960s and 1970s to accommodate residential development. Sewer lines are a combination of 8-inch and 10-inch diameter AC, VCP, and PVC pipe with the 4-inch force main to the nursing home. There are a total of eight pump stations within this collection area. The Cornplanter system connects to the Oil City system within the Hasson Heights area. Some 579 customers are served.

In addition to the Grandview area, there are two other sewer connections in the Township. One is on Dutch Hill and the other in Clapp Farm. Both are tributary to the Oil City system.

As is the case of the water supply, the Oil City Public Works Department is contracted by the Township to provide maintenance for its sanitary sewer collection system on an as needed and requested basis.

Special Note: Currently, at least two of the systems (Oil City and Cornplanter) are connected, as Oil City provides treatment. In the preparation of its 537 Plan, the City did not anticipate additional flow from Rouseville. Oil City has also been informed that Cranberry Township may wish to send more wastewater. This presents a potential problem. All system modeling to achieve the EPA CSO "85%" treatment level did not include these flows. The issue is: Can the transport system (the pipes) accept these additional loads and still keep the Oil City system at the 85% goal. At this time, no one knows.

Public Works

Cornplanter Township

Overall, Cornplanter has six employees. Two, the Secretary and Treasurer, work in the office; the other four are part of the Public Works Department. Duties include roads, drainage, and miscellaneous responsibilities. And, although the Oil City Public Works Department does routine maintenance and repair to the water and sewer system, the Township does the meter reading and water testing.

Oil City

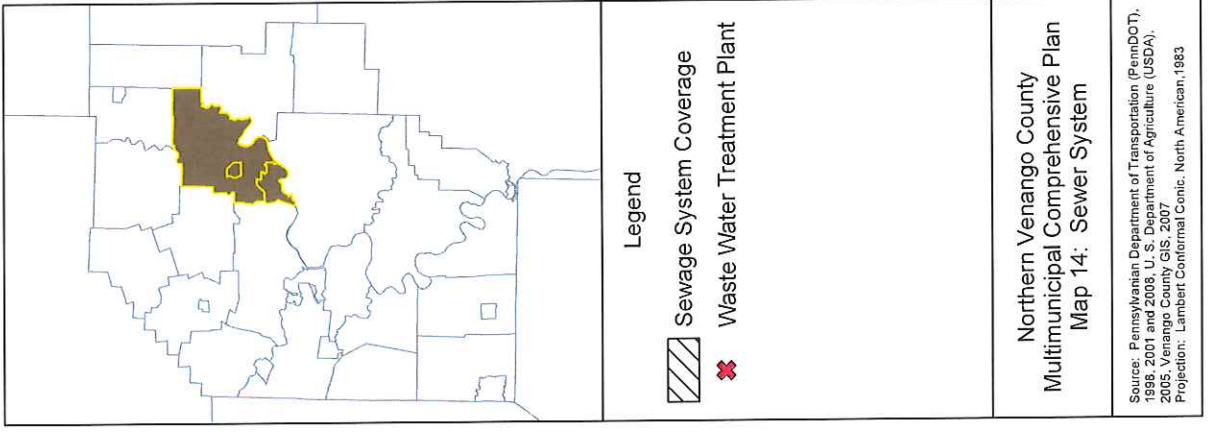
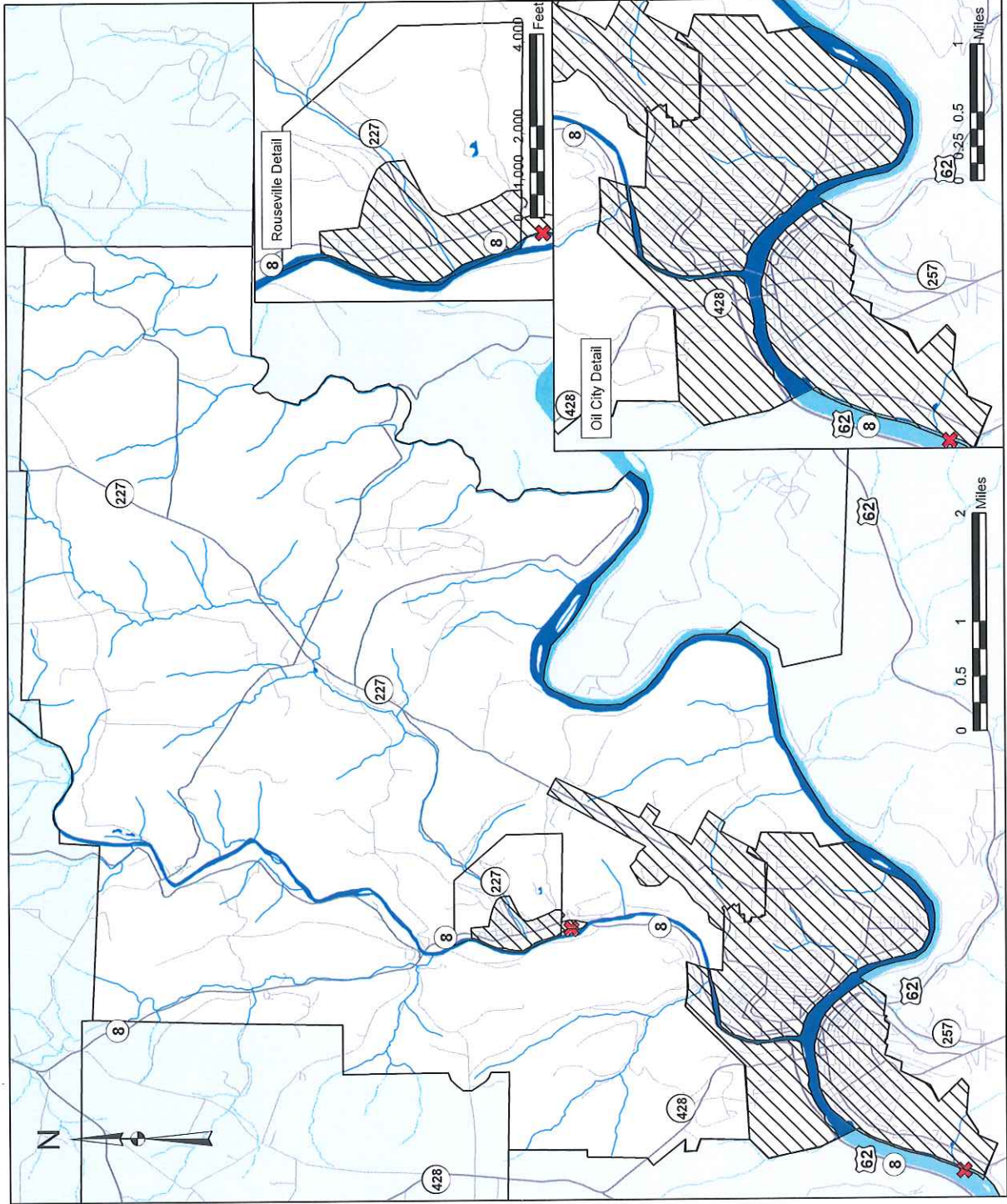
The duties of the Oil City Public Works Department relative to water and sewer are covered elsewhere. In addition, they:

- Maintain all City parks and operate the pool
- Maintain and plow 76 miles of road (64 paved and 12 unpaved)
- Remodeling, repairs, plumbing, and electrical repairs for all City buildings
- Maintain City-owned vehicles (over 50)

In addition to the ten regular employees, the City does add summer help for mowing and the pool.

Rouseville

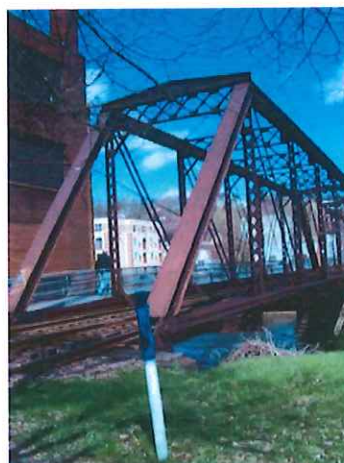
The mayor of Rouseville also acts as its public works foreman. He and a second worker do most of the smaller public improvements needed in the Borough.



Chapter 6 – Transportation



Transportation



One of the hallmarks of the current economic and social life of this country is convenient transportation. A ubiquitous road system, regional airports, and a re-emerging railroad network all are important to the study area. Only water transportation is lacking locally. This section of the Plan examines that network.

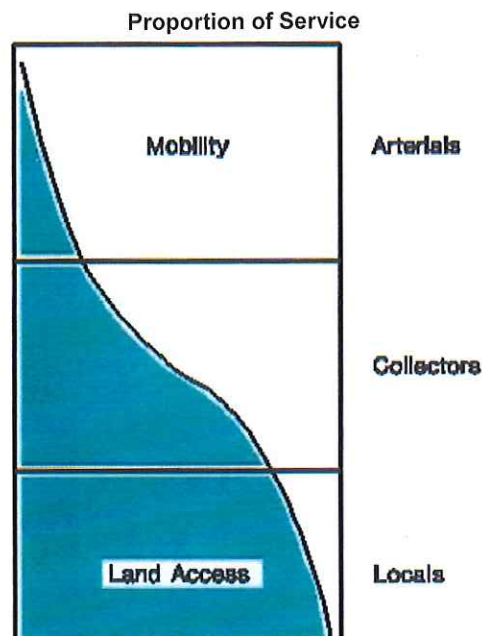
Roads and Highways

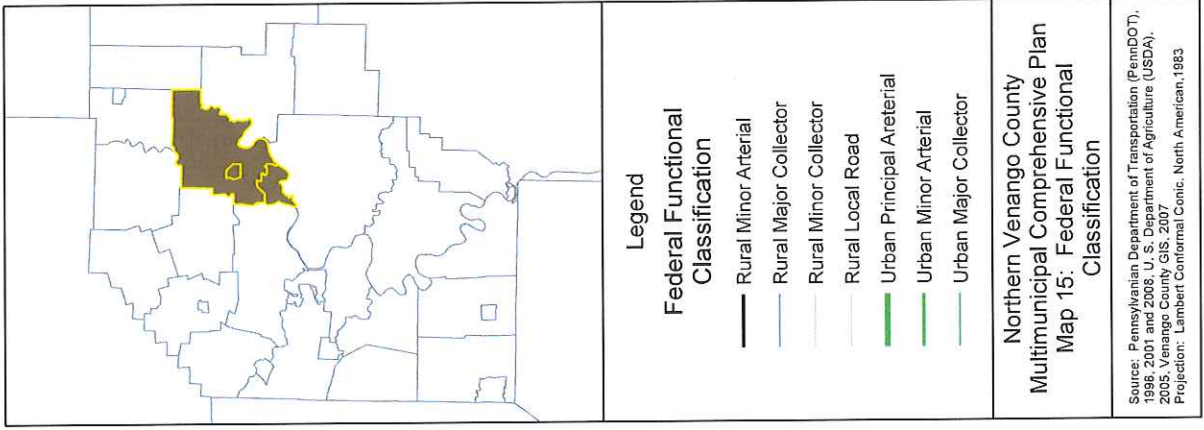
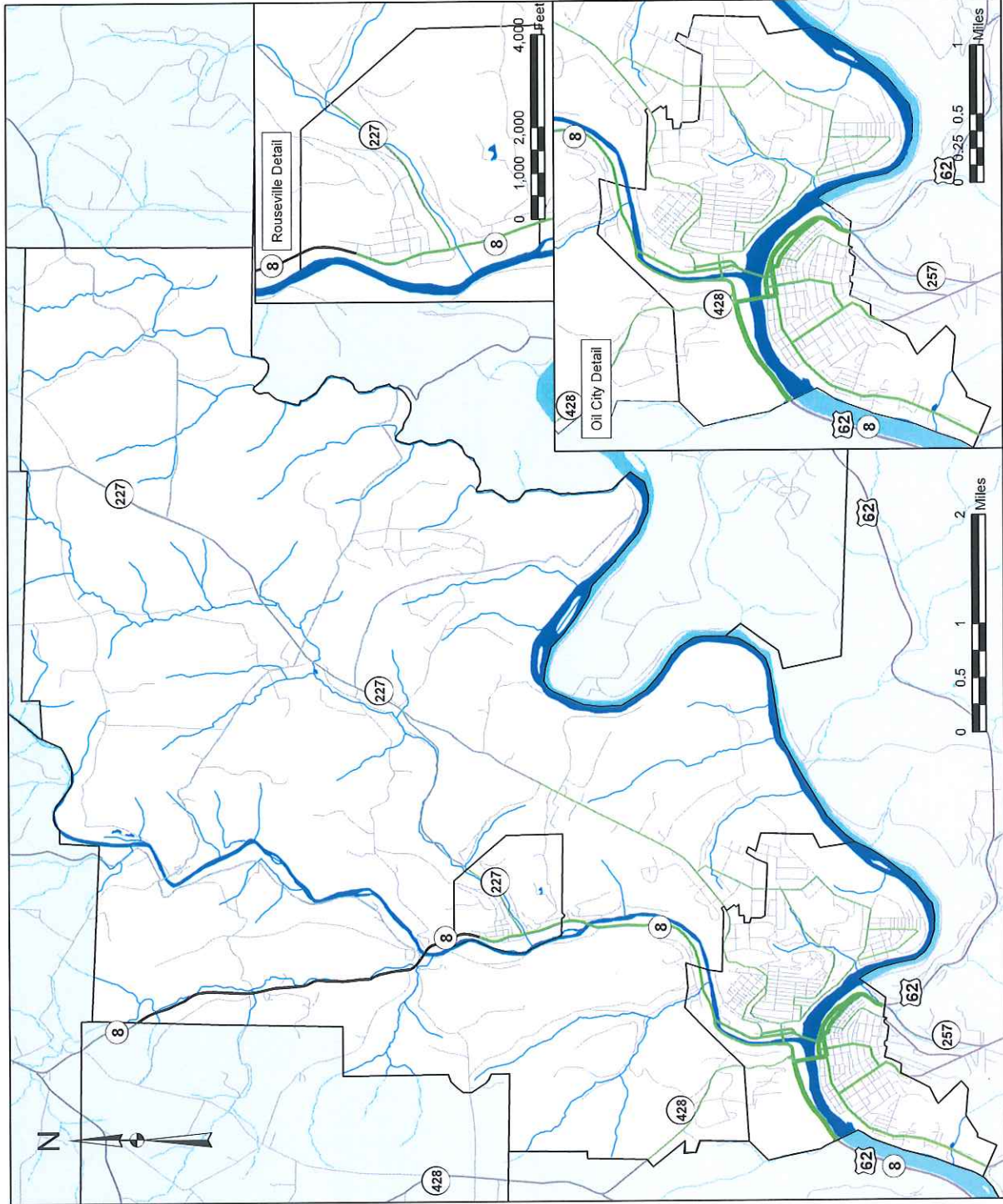
This element of the surface transportation network comprises the local and State road system. Within the Northern Venango County Region, there are approximately 170 miles of roads.

Transportation planners have long divided the road system into functional categories. These categories explain the purpose of roads. Generally, they are related to two characteristics: movement and access.

There are three overall classes of roads: arterials, collectors, and local. Their names are generally indicative of function. The “higher” class of roads is designed to carry larger volumes of traffic over longer distances. These are the various arterial roads. Next are the collectors. Though they may see hefty volumes of traffic, their function is more short range. Generally, they either “collect” traffic from local roads to arterials or to connect smaller developments. Finally, there are local roads. Though essential to the road network, they are less concerned for vehicle transport than for access to individual properties. This discussion is not purely academic, but also relates to road funding. Generally, projects for arterial and major collectors are funded. Consequently, road classification is important.

Relationship of Functionally Classified Systems in Serving Traffic Mobility and Land Access





Transportation Planning Process

The primary source of funds to improve the surface transportation system is via Federal (USDOT) funds. Normally, they supply about 80% of project costs, although this formula can vary. These funds supply the dollars used for major projects in the area; the balance is normally made up by the State (PennDOT). Certain local bridges and roads sometimes are also in this mixture with a municipal match.

The primary planning process for funds coming from the Federal/State sources is set forth by a series of laws and consequent re-enactment over the past years. The acronyms are numerous, but the process can be summarized as follows:



- Projects are suggested, nominated, etc. by local communities to individual county planning agencies. Along with roads and highways, airports, rail lines, transit, and even trails can also be involved.
- Under the auspices of the regional planning mechanism (Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission), a “Rural Planning Organization (or RPO), project lists are developed. This is done with the District PennDOT office in Oil City.
- The process is budget-constrained. This leads to rounds of processing and compromise locally and with the Harrisburg office of PennDOT—even the Federal Highway Administration is involved.
- This result is two basic documents. The first is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the list of projects to be accomplished over a 5-year period. The second is the Long-Range Transportation Plan. That plan has a 25-year horizon. Non-highway transportation, including rail and transit, are included in this process.

Current TIP Projects

As noted above, the “TIP” process has two characteristics: it is ongoing and it is budgetarily constrained. That constraint has become more acute in recent years. According to a recent release, the Federal Highway Trust Fund currently has a \$3.2 billion deficit and PennDOT is facing a “funding pinch.”

The current TIP lists the following projects:

- Waitz Road Bridge* (Cornplanter Township) and Bankson Road Bridge (Cornplanter): To be let in 2010.
- Sportsman Curve Project – Route 8: Design is authorized; construction not schedule yet.

- Route 8, Cornplanter Run: This is a small bridge near the intersection with Union Street. Estimated let date is 2011.
- Route 8 Bypass Wall: Let April of 2009 to repair the retaining wall along the Route 8 bypass in Oil City.
- Route 227 – Bridge over Cherry Run in Cornplanter Township: designed and bid April 2009.
- Petroleum Center Bridge (SR 1004): This is on the TIP, but no let dates have been set.
- McClintock Bridge on Route 8 (Cornplanter, just below Rouseville*): Due to be let 2011.
- Route 8 Bridge over Kane Run: Let June 2009.
- Oil City, Rynd Farm Trail: This is a Federal “earmark.” Design is underway. Will connect the Waitz Road bike trail section with Oil City.
- Railroad: Bridge rehab and construction. (No details known.)
- Transit: Buses, shelters, and signage.



Route 8 Bypass Wall

A second State planning process is via the County PennDOT maintenance operation, which programs road and bridge maintenance projects.

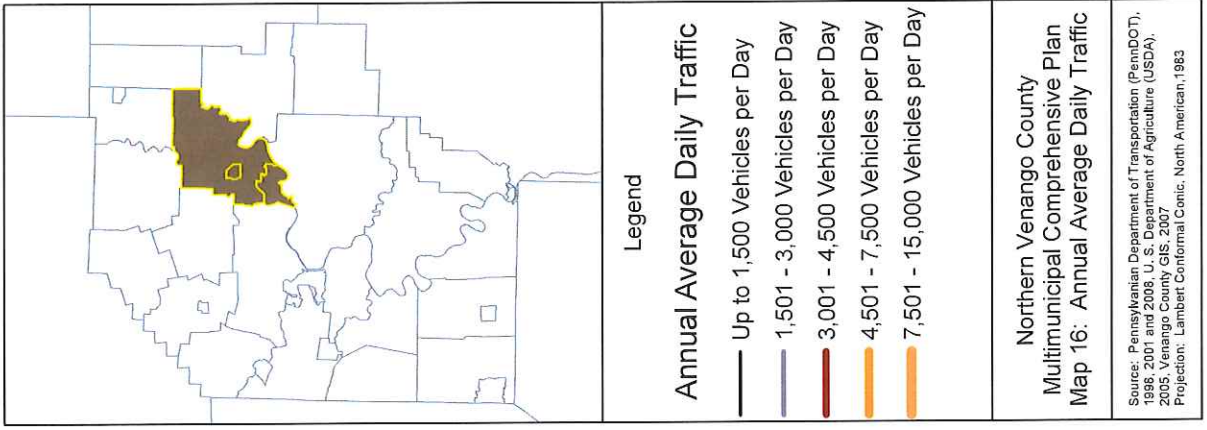
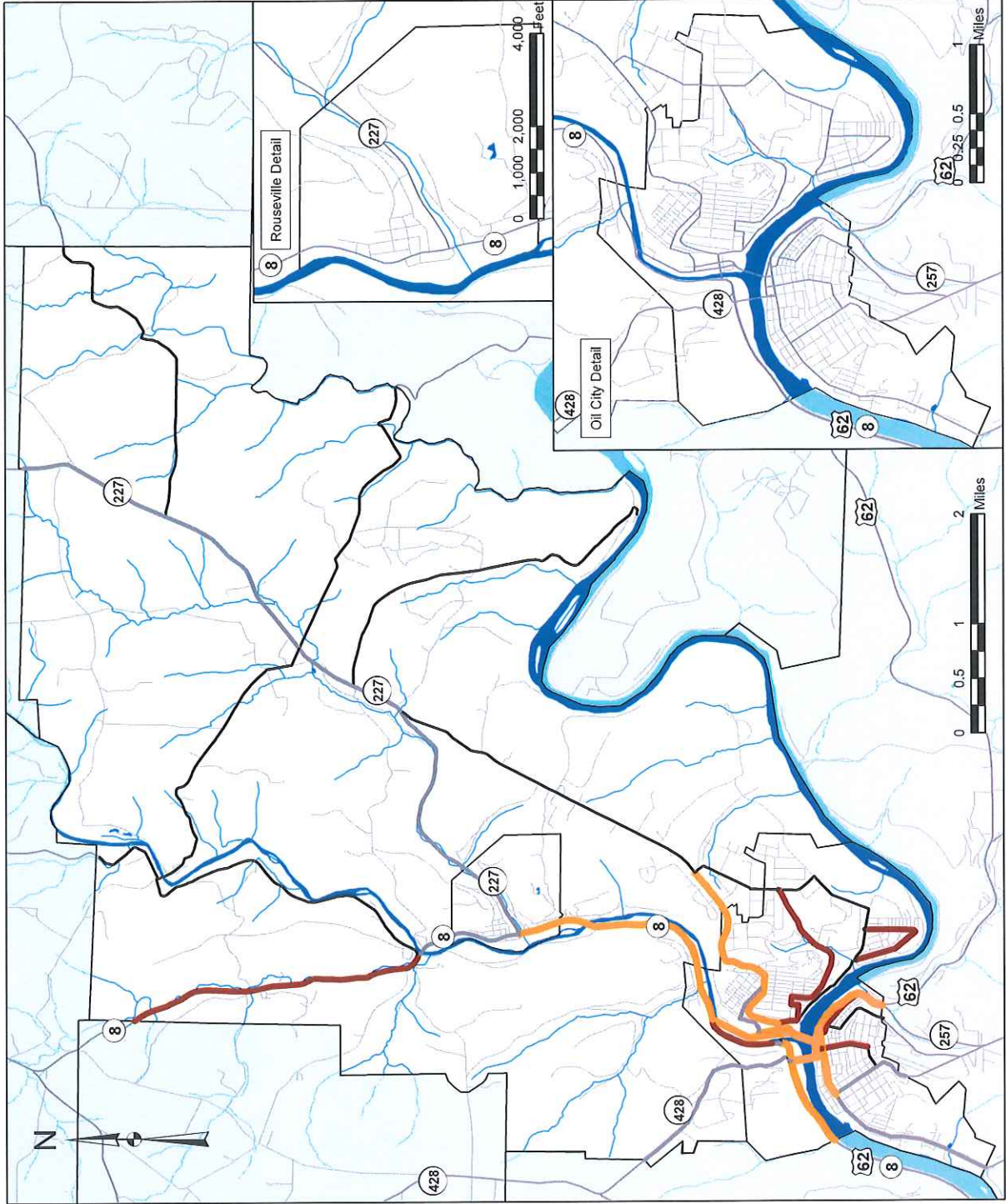
This planning process is ongoing, with two-year cycles. The 2009 update is now underway.

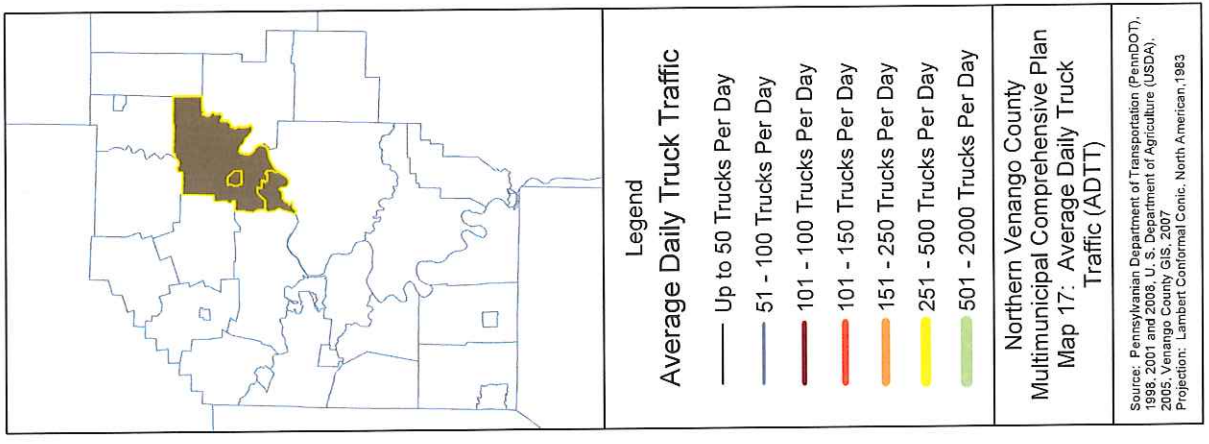
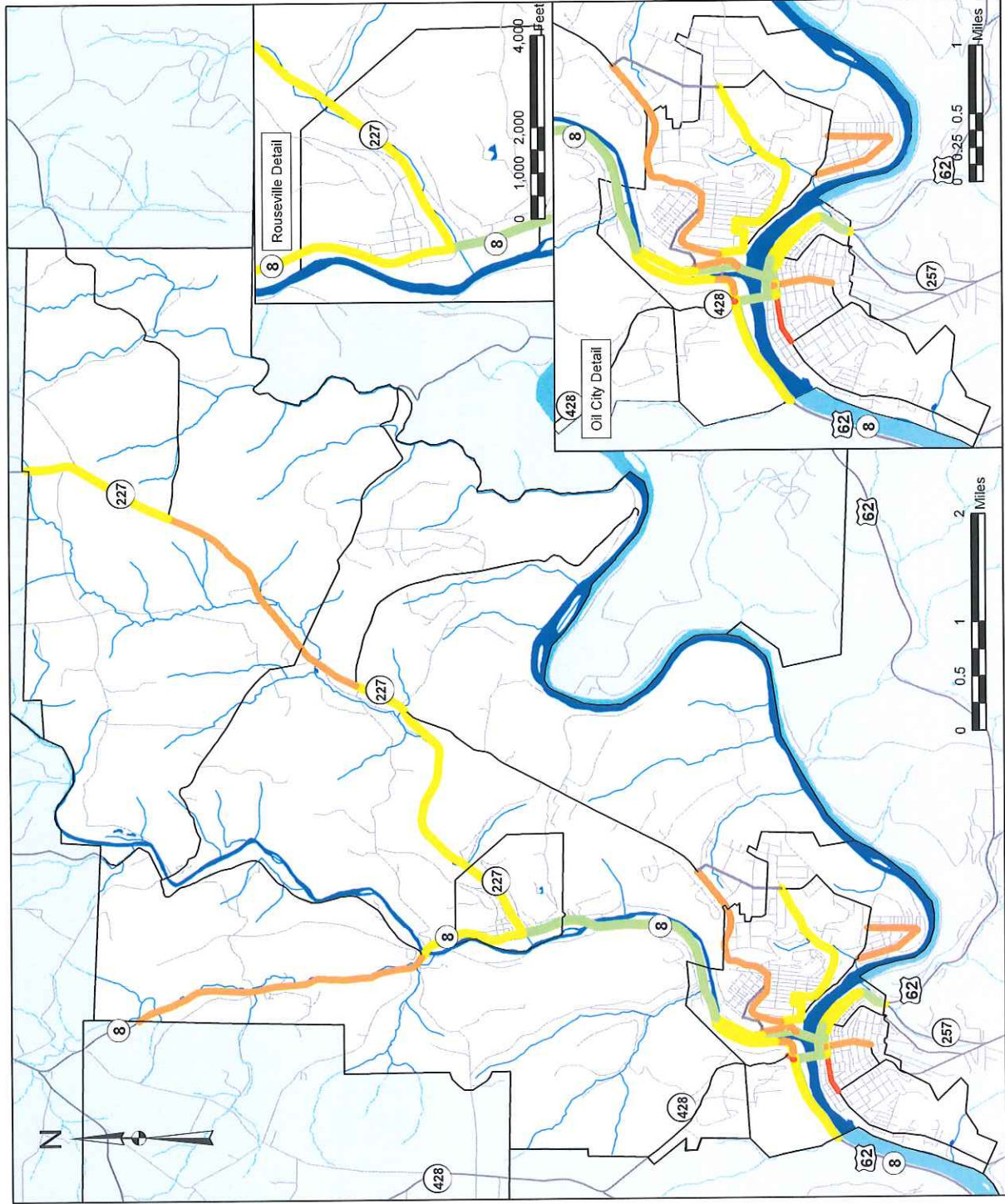
Of course, local roads, owned and maintained by municipalities, have maintenance or construction priorities set locally. They are constrained by local resources and the local share of Liquid Fuels funds.

Traffic Volumes

In terms of traffic volume, the State road system is the most important. Their classification is shown on the map “Highway Functional Classification.” The highest road classifications are Interstate or “Freeway” arterials. The nearest example would be I-80. However, there are important arterials locally.

- Route 8: From the Sugarcreek Borough line to Petroleum, this highway is an Urban Principal Arterial. North of Petroleum it is classified as an Urban/Rural Minor Arterial.
- Route 62: Where it shares cartway with Route 8 is an Urban Major Arterial. It keeps that designation until it exits into Cranberry Township.





- Other Minor Arterials are:
 - West First Street (SR 3025)
 - Innis Street (SR 2027)
 - Route 8 (Spruce Street)
- Other State Routes, either SRs or Traffic Routes, such as Route 227, are classified as Collectors

Accidents

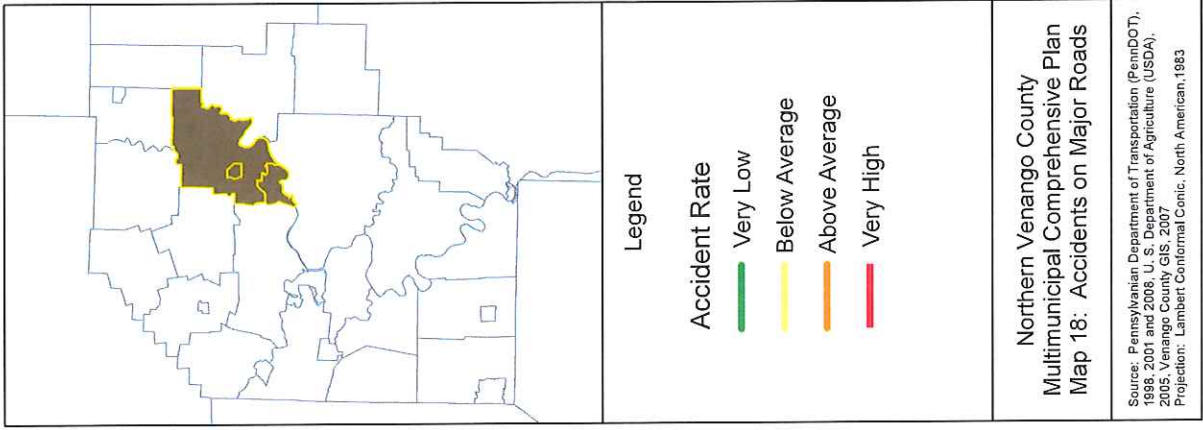
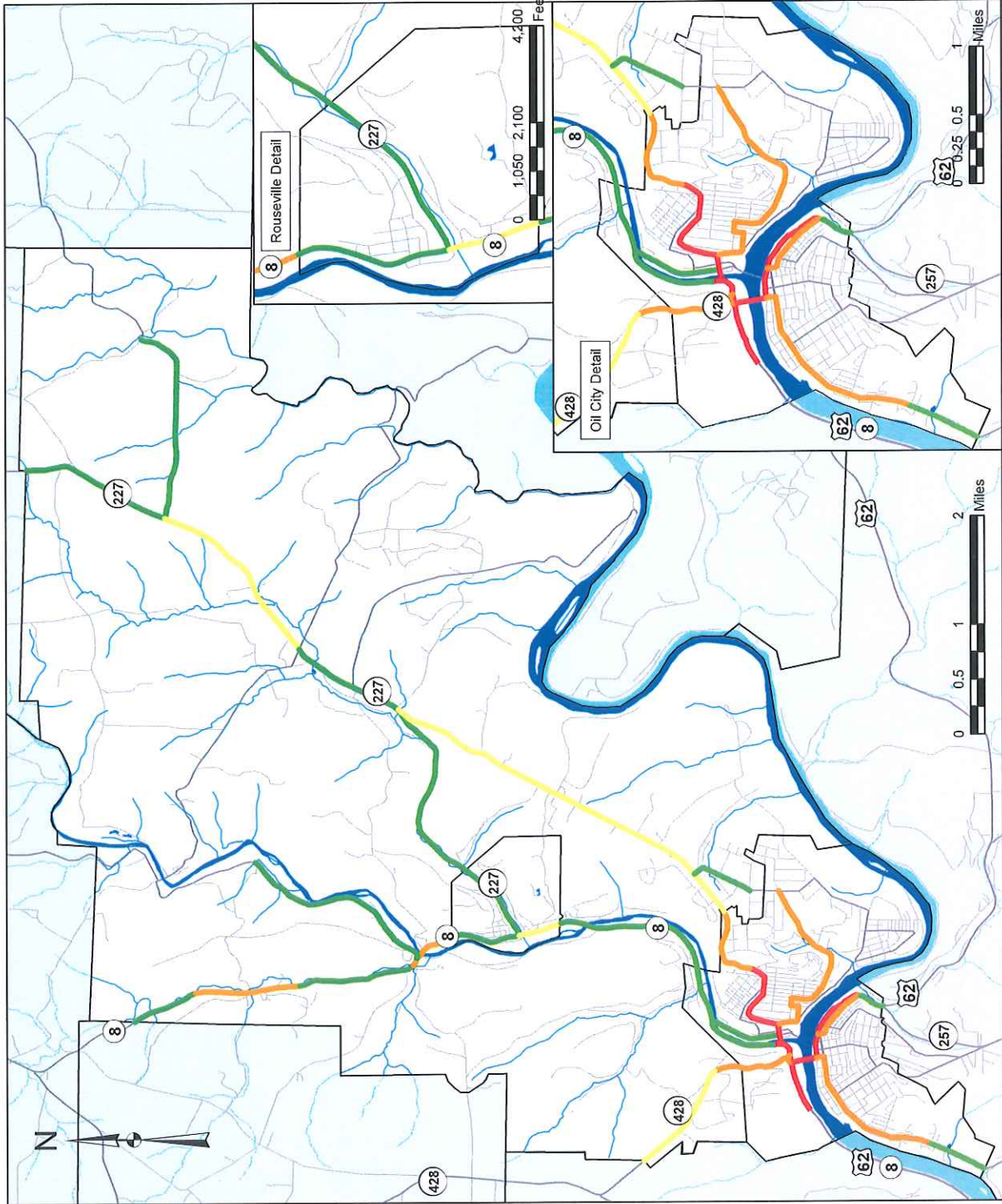
The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation provides accident data in a generalized fashion. Based on their information, some generalizations can be made. These are based on reportable crashes, 2004 through 2008, a five-year period. The crash incidence coding is shown on the accompanying maps. They can be summarized as follows:

Oil City (see map)

- High Accident Roads (12 crashes or more)
 - Route 8 from the City's west line to the intersection at Center Street
 - Petroleum Street/Route 62 from Route 8 to Pumphouse Road (*Note: Only the northbound lane of the divided portion of the highway*)
 - Center/Plummer corridor from Route 8 to Merrit Street
 - Innis Street, from First south to the Cranberry line
- Medium Crash Rating (7 to 11 crashes)
 - Route 428/Halyday Road
 - West First Street from Petroleum to Mineral Street
 - Plummer/Grandview from Merrit to the Cornplanter line
 - East Bissell from Harriott to Crestview
 - Route 62, split road southbound (entire length)
- Low Crash Rating (1 to 6 crashes)
 - Route 8 from Cornplanter to Center (via the "Bypass")
 - Route 8, Business (Seneca Street), White Bridge to Center
 - Spring to Graff and Harriott to Bissell
 - Route 62 from Pumphouse Road to the Cranberry Township line

Cornplanter Township (see map)

- High Rating (8 or more crashes)
 - Route 8, north of Rynd Farm
 - Route 428 from Route 8 to Lawrence Drive



- Medium Rating (4 to 7 crashes)
 - Route 8, from Waitz Road to the Oil City line
 - Route 8, Rouseville to Wykle
 - Grandview near the entire length from the “Y” to the Oil City line
 - Route 428, Sugarcreek Borough line, south to Lawrence Drive
- Low Rating (1 to 3 crashes)
 - Route 427 at Grandview “Y” and isolated locations
 - Route 8, from high accident stretch to Cherrytree line
 - Oak Road from Grandview to the Oil City line
 - Portions of Eagle Rock

Rouseville (see map)

- High Rating (4 to 7 crashes)
 - Route 8, from the Route 227 intersection to the southern boundary
- Medium to Low Rating (1 to 3 crashes)
 - Route 8 south of Route 227 to the northern boundary

Railroads

The study area is served by two railroads. From the Rynd Farm station north to Titusville is the 17-mile Oil Creek and Titusville Lines (OCTL). This is a short-haul rail which traffics in hardwood lumber, plastic resins, sand, petroleum wax, and fertilizer. This short line has an interconnect with the Western New York and Pennsylvania (WNYP) Railroad at Rynd Farm/Rouseville. In turn, the WNYP rail line connects to the Norfolk and Southern Railroad at the Meadville yards. That service has interconnects with Canadian Pacific, CSX and the Genesee, and Wyoming at various other locations on their line. Interconnects allow local users wide access to the national rail system.

The Oil City and Titusville Railroad (OC&TRR) also uses this track. It is a tourist railroad operating primarily in the summer months, up to October. The OCTL is the designated line operator running its freight operation, maintaining the right-of-way, and trip-leasing the engines to pull the OC&TRR passenger-excursion trains. Current ticket prices on the OC&TRR range from \$11.00 to \$17.00, with various discount options available. The fall foliage time is a particular busy time for the OC&TRR. Stations are located at Rynd Farm, Petroleum Centre, the Drake Well Museum, and in Titusville.



South Side Tracks

The Venango Bus



This is a transit operation of Venango County funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The primary routes are in Franklin and Oil City, with extensions into nearby points such as UPMC, Reno, the Cranberry Mall, and Pinoak Village.

In Oil City, services start at about 8:00 a.m. and last until about 5:00 p.m. Service head time (time between buses at a stop) are one hour. Principal stops in Oil City are:

- Central Avenue and Front Street
- Venango Campus (Clarion University)
- Giant Eagle parking lot
- Siverly
- Vo-Tech
- County Services Building

Service on Saturday starts one hour later. There is no Sunday service or on major holidays (New Year's, Christmas, etc.).

Rates for adults are \$1.50, children (ages 6 to 11) are \$.75, and senior citizens with a transit pass can ride free from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and all day Saturdays.

Beyond the Venango buses is the Demand Response system. Like the bus system, this service relies on State funding. Operated, under contract from the County, by Baker Transportation of Oil City, it primarily serves older, disabled, or medically dependent persons. Generally, a rider calls and is picked up by a van. The rides are primarily for medical or shopping purposes. Those eligible do not pay for this service. Persons who are not eligible for assisted rides can ride at full fare, but few take that option. Baker relates that rides must be scheduled at least two working days in advance.

Air

The Venango Regional Airport is the nearest commercial airport. It is served by Gulfstream International Airlines, with connections from Cleveland. An option for private pilots would be the Titusville Airport in Cherrytree Township.

Chapter 7 – The Economy



The Economy



SMS Millcraft – Oil City Plant

Economic Characteristics from the Census

The Census is completed every ten years. Consequently, then next one is due April 2010—about a year away. That means the data of the last Report is now at least nine years old. However, for many economic elements, it is even more dated as the Census requests income information from the prior year. Hence, Census 2000 uses 1999 income data. As a consequence, this element of the background report will only focus on the highlights of census economic information.

Most reports that measure the comparative prosperity of communities focus on the median household income. These figures also are often used by many government programs.

Table E-1: Median Households, 1990 – Compared to 2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Adjusted Change*
Cornplanter	27,391	36,066	+\$8,675	-\$735
Oil City	20,411	29,060	+\$8,649	+\$637
Rouseville	23,380	22,917	-\$463	-\$8,032
*See text				
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census Report; CPI Inflation Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics				

To compare income figures from the two Census figures, two approaches were used. The first is a simple arithmetic approach measuring the difference between the two figures. For the “Adjusted Change,” the 1990 Census data (1989 income) was “inflated” using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) “inflater” to 1999.

As can be seen, Cornplanter’s adjusted income level dropped just a little; in Oil City, households actually saw an appreciable increase of \$1,637. However, Rouseville experienced a significant loss. The data for Rouseville, however, must be taken with the proverbial “grain of salt.” This is primarily due to two factors. First, there were only 204 households in Rouseville in 2000. Second, information on income is sampling data. More than likely, only 30 to 35 households were included in the Census sample, meaning a relatively few extreme changes could result in such dramatic results.

Table E-2: Median-Family Income, 1990 – Compared to 2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Change	Adjusted Change
Cornplanter	\$35,125	\$48,259	+13,134	+\$1,067
Oil City	\$25,737	\$36,149	+\$10,412	+\$1,571
Rouseville	\$24,833	\$30,341	+\$5,508	-\$3,023

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census; CPI Inflation Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Two characteristics can be seen in the “Family Income” table. First, all three municipalities saw “raw” increases in income, ranging from \$5,508 to \$13,134. However, once more, when the “CPI” inflator was applied to Rouseville, a “constant” dollar decline of \$3,023 was the result.

Poverty status is another measurement that many governmental programs use.

Table E-3: Poverty Levels, Family and Individual – Census 2000

Municipality	Family		Individual	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Cornplanter	58	7.5	260	10.1
Oil City	487	16.2	2,141	19.0
Rouseville	22	16.3	118	25.2

Source: Census 2000

This table shows, graphically, that Oil City and Rouseville had a disproportionate number of families and persons in poverty per Census 2000. The same Census reported that on the State level, families in poverty were at 7.8% and individuals in poverty 11.0 percent. At the County level, figures for families were 10.4% and for individuals 13.4 percent. Though Cornplanter was more in line with County data, Oil City and Rouseville witnessed high levels of poverty.

Unemployment

Monthly unemployment data is not available for the study area, but it is for Venango County. Numerous reports done on Venango County show it traditionally has an unemployment rate higher than Pennsylvania by one or two percentage points. In the most recent on-line publications of the Pennsylvania Department of Industry (Center for Workforce Information and Analysis), the County’s unemployment rate was 9.0% in June and 9.1% in May 2009. The comparable rates in Pennsylvania were 8.3% and 8.1%, respectively. In June, Venango County’s unemployment ranked 34th out of all 67 Commonwealth counties. It is interesting to note that the County actually had a lower unemployment rate than the nearby counties of Erie, Lawrence, Clarion, or Crawford.

The July 2009 County Profile (Center for Workforce Information and Analysis) lists the top six employers (third quarter 2008) as:

- Joy Mining Machinery
- Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare
- UPMC Northwest
- Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
- Venango County
- Metric Limited

Out of the top ten employers, four were manufacturers and one a retailer.

According to the same source, the top three employment industry sectors were:

- Manufacturing
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Retail Trade

Local average annual wage rates were also given. The most recent Profile is presented below. As can be seen, Venango County wages lag significantly behind the State average.

Venango County Profile

October 2009

Employment and Wages by Industry Sector ¹					
	NAICS Industry Sector	Employer Units	Employment	County Wage	PA Wage
	Total , All Industries ²	1,364	20,470	\$32,979	\$44,381
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	7	22	\$25,194	\$27,532
21	Mining	12	95	\$35,919	\$59,907
22	Utilities	6	141	\$90,343	\$96,484
23	Construction	89	496	\$30,214	\$51,928
31-33	Manufacturing	96	4,457	\$46,145	\$51,529
42	Wholesale Trade	54	542	\$39,297	\$63,443
44-45	Retail Trade	214	2,896	\$19,672	\$24,399
48-49	Transportation and Warehousing	54	708	\$34,957	\$38,121
51	Information	17	176	\$30,778	\$59,311
52	Finance and Insurance	57	571	\$42,475	\$71,782
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	36	136	\$18,930	\$44,688
54	Professional and Technical Services	64	287	\$31,334	\$73,808
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	6	40	\$42,957	\$97,505
56	Admin/Support, Waste Mgmt/Remediation Svcs	33	694	\$23,152	\$30,887
61	Educational Services	9	92	\$21,247	\$45,970
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	261	3,478	\$32,172	\$41,185
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	16	102	\$9,925	\$26,583
72	Accommodation and Food Services	99	1,336	\$10,936	\$14,848
81	Other Services, except Public Administration	130	699	\$15,336	\$27,059
	Federal Government	18	122	\$47,157	\$63,173
	State Government	22	1,502	\$44,700	\$49,166
	Local Government	66	1,879	\$33,309	\$41,721

¹ 2008 Annual Average

² County total includes Private, Federal, State and Local Government

Bureau of Economic Analysis

The Bureau provides insight into sources of income for Venango County. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (U.S. Department of Labor), the County's 2007 per capita personal income was \$28,916. The components of personal income were net earnings, 53.3%; dividends, interest, and rent 13.4%; and personal current transfer receipts (social security, et. al) at 33.3 percent. This source makes a 10-year comparison (2007-1997) and showed a modest drop in "earnings"; a significant drop (nearly -4%) in dividends, interest, and rent; with an increase in

transfer payment, from 27.5% of County personal income to 33.3 percent. What does it mean? More retirees in the County!

Retail Trade

Tables E-4 and E-5 display the retail trade statistics for both Oil City and Venango County for 1997 and 2002. (*Note: The 2007 Census of Retail Trade will not be available until 2010.*) The Census of Retail Trade had no separate entries for either Cornplanter Township or Rouseville Borough.

Table E-4: 1997 Retail Trade

	Establishments	Sales*	Payroll*	Employees
Oil City	60	\$59,916	\$6,742	498
Venango County	247	\$417,353	\$37,828	2,792
Oil City Percent	24	14	18	18
*(\$1,000)				
Source: 1997 Census of Retail Trade				

In 1997 and 2002, Oil City had approximately 20% of Venango County's population. However, its share of retail sales was only 14% while both payroll and employee figures were at 18% of County totals.

Table E-5: 2002 Retail Trade

	Establishments	Sales*	Payroll*	Employees
Oil City	50	\$66,689	\$5,994	424
Venango County	244	\$542,766	\$47,956	2,957
Oil City Percent	20	12	9	14
*(\$1,000)				
Source: 2002 Census of Retail Trade				

As can be seen in comparing 2002 data with 1997, Oil City's share of retail trade in all categories dropped over this five-year period. Furthermore, the payroll figure in that sector dropped by some \$748,000, in spite of the inflation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) by 12 percent.

Such trends are not unexpected, as retail trade has suburbanized significantly.

Within the 2002 retail sales of \$66,684,000, the major components of Retail Trade in Oil City were:

Food and Beverage	\$24,866,000 – 37%*
Health and Personal Care Stores	\$14,368,000 – 22%*
Building Maintenance, Garden Equipment	\$9,105,000 – 14%*

**Percentage of all reported Oil City sales – 2002 Census of Retail Trade*

In all, these segments amount to about 75% of all trade in Oil City. Other reported sectors were Motor Vehicle Parts, \$3,991,000; Gasoline Stations, \$6,313,000; and Miscellaneous Stores, \$3,723,000. In sectors where only one of stores was present, data is withheld to respect confidentiality.

The Retail Trade Study

In 2005, the Shepstone/Fairweather consulting group did an extensive study on retail trade for the Oil City downtown. It covered both retail sectors in detailed tables, using proprietary data sources. That report also analyzed trade areas at three levels, and where local volumes indicated “leakage” of business to competing areas. This report will not duplicate the Shepstone/Fairweather report. It is a very detailed analysis of available public and proprietary statistics for Oil City, with a series of recommendations for the downtown. The picture on the right-hand corner of this page demonstrates a serious problem with the local sector—vacant storefronts!



Downtown Oil City

The report must note that efforts are underway to improve downtown Oil City. A committee of property owners working with the City, the specialist from the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, and the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) are preparing an application for full “Main Street” designation under Pennsylvania’s New Communities program. The application is partially drafted and well underway. It could hardly have come at a better time. Work on the downtown physical rejuvenation project is now complete and two special studies are in the process, which should enhance the Oil City downtown.

Commercial uses in both Cornplanter and Rouseville are scattered.

Commercial Real Estate

A review of real estate sales from 2000 to the present in the Oil City downtown was made. Some 25 sales were covered, in the traditional “downtown” sector, both North and South Side. The marketplace can be characterized as slow. Most commercial properties are on the market for over a year and sell at about two thirds of the asking price. Though hardly a brisk marketplace, it has held up surprisingly well. There are two major vacancies in the downtown: the Brady block and Cornplanter Square. The Brady block buildings are vacant and at least one segment has been condemned. The balance of the block is likely to follow suit. One bright note is the willingness of the ORA to assume ownership of that property if a suitable price can be negotiated. Some view the site as a possible greenspace—a central anchor for the Northside downtown.

The second building is Cornplanter Square. This is a more formidable structure. It has been vacant for some time, and no serious potential buyer is known.

The Economy – Local Sources

According to economic development professionals, the County’s economy is now feeling the effects of the National recession. Generally, the area is not affected by short-term variations. In fact, in the first quarter of 2008, the Oil Regional Alliance was literally scrambling to help local employees find qualified workers.

Now, however, many manufacturers are running 30% to 60% behind their normal employment levels. There is one bright spot locally, SMS Millcraft, at the Oil City Industrial Park, is expanding their operations and physical plant. The \$1.4 million construction is nearing its completion. SMS Millcraft's Oil City operation focuses on continuous caster molds, repairs and maintenance, along with a variety of fabrication, electroplating, and coating technologies.

The Oil City Industrial Park is certainly a local bright spot. Overall, there is about 200,000 square feet of manufacturing space, along with 7,500 square feet at the Innovation Center (former Oil Well offices). The Innovation Center now has USA Choice (an internet provider); the Life Long Learning Center; and a new tenant, St. Benedicts Education Center, aimed at job training and placement. In the past, this facility served as a business incubator, with very mixed results.

Currently, there are two tenants in the manufacturing space. SMS Millcraft occupies about 130,000 square feet. Schake Industries has 12,000 square feet, but will move into the space (about 55,000 square feet), recently vacated by Electralloy, and will end with about 67,000 square feet. This firm manufactures large tanks (water and oil) as well as fluid systems. They also do specialty fabrication as well as painting and powder coating. Their engineering services cover the same fields.

The Oil City Industrial Park is now essentially full. There is some thought of constructing a "spec" building on the site.

Another piece of good news—countywide—is the fact the Barkeyville Industrial Park has only 15 acres left. In addition, the Sandycreek Industrial Park off Route 8 in the township still has good potential, with another 40 acres poised for development.



Overall, the Oil Regional Alliance expresses concern of some local businesses to survive a long-term slow down. They emphasize so many of the smaller operations act as subcontractors to larger operations, such as Joy Manufacturing. These firms may not be in the immediate study area, but businesses in the study area do rely upon a healthy overall county/ regional economy.

The Northern Venango County Community Survey

Love the arts program in Oil City; one of the reasons we moved here.

Need a more positive attitude from younger generation to stay in their hometown.

CORNPLANTER TOWNSHIP, CITY OF OIL CITY, AND THE BOROUGH OF ROUSEVILLE

I wouldn't want to live anywhere else!



We need more emphasis on housing control.

2009

Oil City is a lovely community where people work together.



I like the hiking and biking trails in the area.

You can survey all you want, but if you don't get rid of drugs and blighted housing, and attract new industry, you're wasting time and money!

We love Oil City and the surrounding communities, and believe in the people!

I like living in a small town—less traffic, friendlier people, and feel safer.

Drugs are infesting Oil City big time!

I would like the people to take better care of their homes, storefronts, and neighborhoods.

For the most part, we feel it's a perfect area for retirement.

We need to focus on youth in the area!

The Northern Venango County Community Survey

**Cornplanter Township, City of Oil City, and
Rouseville Borough**

2009

**This project was funded, in part, by a Land Use Planning and Technical
Assistance (LUPTAP) Program grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,
Department of Community and Economic Development**

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The Northern Venango County Community Survey

Prologue

Why a survey? In an age where there is cable (or dish), television, soccer, dance lessons, and two-worker households, people often do not have the time nor the inclination to attend public meetings. This is especially true if the sessions are on future policies and plans and not on some controversial topic. Hence, to get public input, a survey.

How was it done? First, each municipality was asked to provide a list of households. Lists from Cornplanter Township and Rouseville Borough had names with the address, while those from Oil City had “Resident” with the address. Names tend to increase response rates. From the survey universe, approximately 1,500 households were selected. They were chosen using a random-number generator that the Commonwealth has accepted.

Letters were sent first class, using stamps, not a postage meter. This option tends to increase response rates. Letters were sent in March 2009. The response goal was 361 to 384 surveys. Using various formulas, this achieves a situation where we can be 95% sure the results are no more than a 5 error, compared to a survey of the entire 6,000-household universe.

As is the case with any survey, there were returns. The returns were from all the communities, though most were from Oil City. In all, 100 returns were received. Some were from bad addresses, but the majority of these were from Oil City, because of vacant structures.

Even with this problem, the response was 463, about one third of all “good” surveys. And, more than sufficient to achieve, the confidence interval and level quoted above. There is one final note. Though every effort is made to achieve a true cross section of the three communities using a sampling universe, this is not always achieved. In doing similar surveys for other clients, our firm observes that homeowners respond more than renters do, and older residents usually reply more than younger ones. There are two other observations. First, in western Pennsylvania, jobs and the economy have always been the number-one concern in surveys taken by this firm. Second, the most popular public services are the fire departments. Yet, given the statistical approach and the response rate, readers can view the results with confidence.

Why not survey everyone? Money. The cost of a survey of all residents would have been well in excess of \$20,000.

The Results

For convenience of the reader, results of this survey are given at the end of this narrative. Certain questions asked for fill-ins or comments. They are summarized in this report, and each community will receive copies of these written entries. In all, these comments fill over 70 pages. Survey results were tabulated using Access, the database software from Microsoft. As this was a survey for a three-community plan, the combined results are given in this report. *Please Note: Not every respondent answered every question, so the results’ total is usually less than 463.* Results for the individual communities will take time to extract, and copies will be forwarded to the individual municipalities.

The response rate was 34% and 70-plus pages of comments. People in the three communities of the Northern Venango County Region care—they care very much.

The results of the survey are slightly skewed. Both Cornplanter and Rouseville responses are slightly higher than their population, while Oil City is slightly under-represented. Why? Vacancies in the Oil City housing stock resulted in the majority of bad surveys.

As stated earlier, there were 463 respondents—115 from Cornplanter, 323 from Oil City, and 25 from Rouseville. Most are long-term residents, averaging 32 years in the area.

In western Pennsylvania, at most public meetings on the economy, the common complaint is: “My children had to leave home to get a job.” It seems at least partially true here. Of those with adult children, nearly half (45%) have left the area and, on average, live at some distance of over 600 miles.

Quality of Life

Some seven questions were asked in this category. To an overwhelming degree, respondents believe this is a beautiful, affordable, great place to raise kids, with good community spirit. The question “Freedom from Crime” was answered by 399 households. Fifty-four percent agreed the area is crime free and forty-six percent disagreed.

There was agreement on one topic. Ninety-four percent believe it is a poor job market.

Community Services and Facilities

Community services and facilities encompassed five general headings that included both public and private aspects. Here, the response options were Very Good, Adequate, or Poor.

Emergency Services

In emergency services, police received a 35% very good rating and a 52% adequate ranking, for an over 87% positive rating. The Fire Department (a perennial favorite in such surveys) had a 70% very good and an overall 99% rate. Ambulance and emergency scored 65% very good rate and 98% when adequate was included.

Community Services

Under this topic, five activities were presented. The Oil City Library received the highest number of “Very Good” responses—72% of all respondent votes. Next was health care, at 30 percent. That heading also saw some 81 “Poor” votes. Only “Public Transportation” and “Recycling Facilities” received more than 100 “Poor” votes. A generic “Access to Public Services” had 64. Except for the Library, other services did not fare as well in the section.

Sewer and Water

Sewer and water is somewhat harder to judge, as public water and sewer are not universal. Nonetheless, 70% of those on a public sewer service rated it as very good, while 61% believe the public water is very good. On-lot systems did not do as well. Water was nearly 50-50 between very good and adequate, with 18% as poor. On-lot sewage was marginally better, with a slight edge to adequate and only a 9% poor rating.

Parks and Recreation

The heading had five entries. Questions relative to quality, recreational opportunities, and outdoor recreation were ranked by most respondents as adequate. Generally, for traditional outdoor recreation, the “Very Good” responses were numerous, with the “Poor” responses the minority. However, in terms of Indoor Recreation and Recreation for Youth, the greatest number was in the “Poor” class. Though not a majority, just over 40% of the respondents used that classification for these two questions.

Buildings and Land Use

The real purpose of this question is to measure what type of new development local citizens believe is needed. There were 11 separate categories, from Single-Family Housing to Woodland. Residents identified “needs” as Industry, Small Retail Stores, and Large Retail Stores, in order. They appear satisfied with the current supply of housing. According to the survey, there are “Enough” farmlands and woodlands.

Local Government Priorities

Here, there are thirteen options, from Local Roads to Green Infrastructure. The top priorities were:

- Local Roads
- Fire Services
- Ambulance and Police (a virtual tie)
- Economic Development

Those with lower rankings were:

- Green Infrastructure
- Green Development
- Protection of Historic Sites

Housing

The responses to this section of the survey are very interesting, especially when compared to land use. Though there appears to be “Enough” land devoted to housing, there seems to be deficiencies in particular types. Interestingly, the public sees a lack of market-rate condominiums for seniors, and in the general market. This corresponds with other communities in western Pennsylvania. Low-maintenance housing options become more popular, as populations age. And, the market usually delays in meeting these needs. Manufactured home parks is ranked poorly—typical of all surveys this firm has conducted in western Pennsylvania. This section also saw a number of “no” responses. Likely, persons not interested in the local housing market did not answer many of these questions.

Transportation

The first seven questions dealt with routine matters. Local road crews should be congratulated, as winter road maintenance scored quite well. Bike and hike facilities also scored high. Those garnering “poor” ratings were: quality of roads, streets, and sidewalks, and parking.

The next series of questions asked about the most dangerous road. Plummer was chosen, scoring more than twice than any named road; the next road was Route 8. This question allowed respondents to write in other roads. The most frequent of these entries were West First, Grandview, and Route 227.

Three options were listed for which road needs repaired. Once again, Plummer Street was number 1, but by a narrow margin over Colbert Avenue and Central. The written "Other" responses filled three pages. Most of the streets mentioned were in Oil City.

For dangerous intersections, East First and Wilson were ranked the worst, by far. There were some 88 "Other" entries. Most of these were Oil City intersections, primarily along busy roads. In Cornplanter Township, Route 227 and Grandview were named, especially the Moody Run and Grandview intersection. Generally, accident frequency and traffic volumes go hand in hand.

Economy

The next questions concerned economic matters. In terms of employment, the 162 retirees were the greatest number of entries. They comprised just over one third of all responses. Those actively employed showed a wide mix of jobs. Though medical/health had the most, the type of employment varied greatly, with a rather even, wide variety of answers. No one single employment base is evident. Only some 5% listed themselves as unemployed.

For those who worked, most, about 66%, worked within 10 miles of home. Some 128 traveled 11 or more miles to work.

The answers to the quality of jobs were universally negative. All three questions received a "Poor" rating, ranging from 405 to 379. It is hardly surprising that "More Jobs" received 439 "Yes" votes. Though jobs and the economy are perennial top concerns. The results in this survey topped any results seen by this firm in recent years.

When asked what types of job opportunities or businesses were needed, the top three, in order, were:

- Light Industry (303)
- Hardware Store (245)
- General Retail and General Industry (tied at 232)

Shopping patterns: "Why shop in another community" elicited a variety of responses. But, the top very logical three were:

- Prices
- Quality
- Convenience

The "Other" fill-in brought 74 responses. Most centered on selection and availability.

The next three series of questions were all “fill-ins.” They were: Why do you like living here, two things to change, and “other” comments.

The responses are worth reading. In all, there are over 50 pages of these responses. In general, they can be summarized as follows:

- What do people like about the area?
 - Family connections
 - Quiet, small-town, friendly atmosphere
 - Comparatively safe
 - Scenic qualities—outdoors
 - Sense of history
- What they would change?
 - Need more jobs – first in both sections
 - Improve roads
 - Get rid of dilapidated homes—improve appearance
 - Drug use and crime
 - The police garnered many comments, but they varied from isolated criticism to requests for more patrols.

Summary

Most of the results from the Citizen Survey were predicable, but helps to set some Plan priorities. Jobs, housing, and roads are of primary concern. Yet, certainly *all* were certainly not negative. First, a goodly number of people returned the surveys—a positive sign that the citizens care. Second, the number of written comments reinforced that observation. Finally, people *really* like living in the study area and appreciate the beauty and ambience of the area. Not all communities can boast of such attitudes! As one respondent observed:

The community “has a soul (historical depth, etc.) and people who care.”

The Northern Venango County Community Survey Results

Community Services and Facilities, Continued

Parks and Recreation	Very Good	Adequate	Poor
Quality of parks	165	236	55
Recreation opportunities	148	205	102
Outdoor recreation	186	190	81
Indoor recreation	51	201	202
Recreation for Youth	57	187	200
What do you think about the use of buildings and land in your community?	Enough	Not Enough	No Opinion
Single family housing	298	96	54
Multi-family housing	252	112	82
Offices and business services	177	209	60
Small retail stores	74	355	26
Restaurants	180	246	25
Large stores and shopping areas	126	309	17
Industry	26	299	31
Commercial business parks	80	272	92
Parks and recreation areas	257	158	34
Farmland	262	95	94
Woodland	330	64	56

Local Government Priorities

Local government resources are limited. How would you prioritize our time and financial resources?

Government should focus on . . .	Highest Importance	Minor	Lowest Importance
Local roads	375	62	12
Snow removal	303	132	11
Building code enforcement	209	189	54
Public safety (police)	334	100	15
Fire services	358	82	7
Ambulance	336	104	9
Recreation	143	266	36
Economic development	337	53	16
Public Sewer	230	187	29
Public Water	251	169	27
Protecting historic sites	146	219	82
"Green Development"	166	187	91
Green infrastructure (e.g., LED street lights, expanded recycling program)	170	183	95

Housing			
Do you own or rent your home?	Own – 388	Rent – 63	No Response – 63
Your opinion of housing quality and availability?	Very Good	Adequate	Poor
Market rate housing for seniors (senior only)	35	163	108
Rental only	29	182	104
Purchase only	44	185	79
Condominium (joint ownership of commons)	12	109	174
Market-rate housing for the general population	42	165	63
Rental only	40	211	115
Purchase only	63	228	69
Condominium (joint ownership of commons)	12	135	194
Public housing	50	207	91
Affordable housing to purchase	98	219	79
Affordable housing to rent	60	205	134
Manufactured home parks	11	176	193
Transportation			
What is your opinion of . . .	Very Good	Adequate	Poor
Winter road maintenance	153	216	88
Signage	110	281	38
Parking	55	232	162
Bike and pedestrian facilities	153	219	69
Traffic signal timing	101	270	75
Quality of roads, streets, and sidewalks	28	143	283
Rail crossing safety	68	286	93
What is the most dangerous road in the region?			
Colbert Avenue – 66	East Second Street – 36	Plummer Street – 166	Other – 46
Route 227 – 18	Grandview Avenue – 68	Route 8 – 68	
What is the road most in need of repair?			
Central Avenue – 106	Colbert Avenue – 108	Plummer Street – 119	Other – 75
What is the most dangerous intersection in the region?			
E. First & Wilson – 163	E. Second & Central – 68	W. Seventh & Innis – 40	Other – 86
Route 227 and Moody Road – 27			
Economy			
What is your primary occupation?			
Agriculture – 2	Education – 21	Military – 0	Management – 27
Finance – 5	Medical/health – 38	Retired – 162	Manufacturing – 29
Government – 21	Clerical – 20	Student – 2	Construction – 11
Retail sales – 23	Utilities/communication -- 3	Personal Services – 22	Unemployed – 24
Mixed Occupations – 29			

Economy, Continued

How far do you commute?

Within my community or two miles of my home – 85

Within 11–25 miles of my home – 75

Within 2–10 miles of my home – 161

More than 25 miles from my home – 53

Quality of Jobs**Very Good****Adequate****Poor**

Availability of living-wage jobs

1

60

379

Availability of jobs in general

2

66

372

Economic opportunity

3

33

405

Do you think there is a need for more jobs in your community? Yes – 439 No – 6 No opinion – 7**If yes, which job opportunities and businesses are most needed** (check all that apply)?

General retail – 232

Clerical – 84

Appliance repair – 134

Specialty retail – 143

Light industry – 303

Restaurant – 156

Finance/banks – 18

Pharmacy – 24

Video rental – 17

General Industry – 232

Hardware store – 245

Movie theater – 89

Car sales – 20

Bar/tavern/club – 16

Other (please specify) – 65

Auto repair – 36

Laundry service – 40

Medical health – 97

Barber/beauty shop – 31

If you shop in another community for items that are also available in your community, why do you do so?**Highest Importance****Minor****Lowest Importance**

Prices

305

74

25

Convenience of shopping

239

118

31

Quality of merchandise

255

115

16

Store hours

172

170

38

Merchant friendliness

140

186

53

Advertising

91

190

99

Frequency of sale items

211

131

48

Product services

189

131

92

Store policies on returns

130

157

94

Other – 74

Please list two reasons why you like living in your community

1. (See Narrative)

2.

Please list two things you would like to change about your community

1. (See Narrative)

2.

Other comments (feel free to attach additional sheets of paper)

(See Narrative)

The Northern Venango County Comprehensive Plan

CORNPLANTER TOWNSHIP, CITY OF OIL CITY, AND THE BOROUGH OF ROUSEVILLE



2011

The Northern Venango County Comprehensive Plan

Cornplanter Township

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Carl Hohmann, Vice Chair
Nicholas Melnick, Secretary
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City Council

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Planning Commission

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Jason Bidish
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Rick Cook, Zoning Officer

Rouseville Borough

Borough Council

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Nora Heber, Vice President
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Community Development Objectives

Basic Plan Philosophy

There are three overarching philosophies of this Plan:

1. Use existing resources first—physical, governmental, or institutional. They should always be the primary options.
2. Choose a few projects from the many presented by this Plan to accomplish in the first year to give the Plan implementation traction.
3. Explore, use, and promote avenues to regional cooperation.

Quality of Life

The study area is regarded as a beautiful, affordable community, as well as a safe and excellent place to raise a family. This Plan is dedicated to preserving, improving, and fostering these qualities.

The Study Area is a beautiful, affordable community, as well as a safe and excellent place to raise a family.

Land Use

In general, this Plan does not recommend wholesale changes to the existing land use patterns in the three municipalities. Current zoning ordinances do need technical updating to reflect various changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PaMPC). And, in keeping with the Quality of Life goal, some down zoning of residential districts in Oil City is a key element. Finally, the additions of new zoning techniques, especially the option of the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), are recommended. Both the Route 62 Study and the Waterways Study contain recommendations for improving design appearance in the South Side Business District. This Plan's recommendations for the Oil Creek and Allegheny River areas are consistent with the special Waterways Study.

Housing

The Plan objectives for housing require dramatic action.

The Plan objectives for housing require dramatic action. It is the pivotal point for the area's future. The overall Plan goal is to change the area's housing market to a stable one with reasonable costs and steady sales—one where the purchase of a home is a sound investment. A complementary goal is to provide housing options to the age 55-plus market. To accomplish this goal, the following activities are needed:

- Elimination of dilapidated units, with priority given to those that have the most blighting influence.
- Remediation of housing through the encouragement or implementation of rehabilitation or modernization programs, both public and private.
- Aggressive code enforcement, coupled with the rental inspection program.

- Changes to zoning to prevent the overcrowding of land.
- The promotion of 55-plus housing at market, or near market, rates.

Transportation

The basic framework of the area's transportation network is sound. What is needed is its enhancement to optimize its functioning:

- Implement the Route Corridor 62 Study recommendations.
- Corridor studies for Grandview Road and selected portions of Route 8 are needed.*
**Essentially safety and road geometry*
- Evaluate and alleviate safety concerns identified in this study.
- Preserve railroad service.
- Institute bus service to Rouseville, and if feasible, to the Village of Plumer.

Community Facilities and Services

Water

Oil City should undertake the improvements to its water system, as set forth by this Plan. Its viable functioning is a very important regional resource. Rouseville should continue its program of waterline replacement and conduct an evaluation of its overall system.

Sewer

Both Oil City and Rouseville need to implement their respective Act 537 Plans. Oil City has completed its first two steps and will soon enter into its monitoring phase. Rouseville's 537 Plan calls for a new plant to be constructed. Both municipalities need to also pursue "I&I" reduction programs.

Public Safety

Police: Oil City must continue to support its police department, especially its community policing and foot patrol initiatives. An option of contract police services to Cornplanter, Rouseville, or other communities should be available.

Fire: At this time, the three departments have positive working relationships, and that asset should be fostered. There are individual department needs, addressed in this Plan, which merit support.

Emergency Services: These services appear to be functioning well. No changes are suggested.

Parks

There are abundant recreational resources in the area which can, and do, meet local needs; and in some instances, foster tourism:

- Oil City should maintain its parks and recreational resources, as noted in the Plan, and shed unused facilities. Hasson Park and the Nelles Pool deserve special support. One new small neighborhood park is suggested in Oil City.
- Rouseville has an attractive park for the young. Its continuance and modest improvements are recommended.
- Existing recreational cooperation between the City, the Borough, the School District, and the YMCA must be a priority for all participants.
- Cornplanter – The Oil Creek State Park provides many recreational resources for the Township; but until the State's budgets improve, this resource must be watched and protected.



**Rouseville Borough
Playground**

The Library

A true regional resource, the Library was given the most positive rating in the Community Survey. Its continuing service improvement is a priority of this Plan.

The Oil City Library is a true regional resource, while the ARTS initiative is a cultural and economic asset.

The Oil City ARTS

The ARTS initiative is a cultural and economic asset that should be continued and expanded.

Northern Venango County Multi-Municipal Plan

Preface

This area—the heart of the original “Oil Country”—is facing problems—problems of housing, out-migration, and its economy. But, the region is hardly a stranger to adversity. Local histories are replete with disasters—floods, fires, and its economy. Each time, this area has recovered, often improving itself. Today, that same spirit of determination is needed. And, as in the past, there is no reason why the future cannot be better than the past.

The region's assets are its people.

Format

Recognizing its obligations to Cornplanter, Oil City, and Rouseville, the following format is presented. First, a brief overview of the issues and proposed actions for each of the three municipalities, along with a summary, which highlight activities, will be offered. Municipalities are taken in alphabetical order, and the relative Plan length is a product of issues and solutions.

This is a multi-municipal plan, and, as such, it combines three sovereign municipalities into a single comprehensive plan document. Though one of this Plan's fundamental purposes is to promote common goals and expand cooperative action, it also recognizes its responsibility to provide the three individual communities with viable planning recommendations. To achieve this goal, a separate section for each municipality is presented, followed by the Regional Vision.

As previously noted, a Plan element is called Regional Initiatives. Included in this element are: Land Use, Housing, Community Facilities, and Public Safety. Also are economic and bike trail plans as well as the Arts and Culture Plan.

**Grants should not
dictate policy—
commonsense should.**

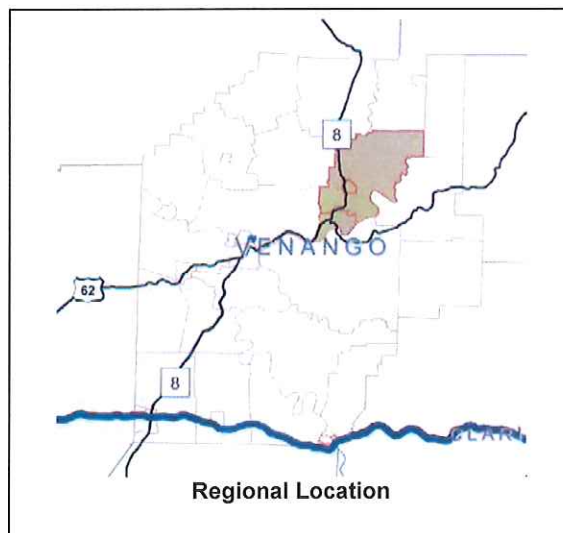
This presents
opportunities for
these three
closely bound

neighbors to work with each other in a cooperative and positive mode. A cooperative attitude is a real imperative if the entire region can expect to regain its former viability.

Unfortunately, little in the way of Commonwealth assistance can be expected.

Budget crises have reduced the much publicized “regional” policies of Pennsylvania to a few small initiatives. Moreover, **grants** should **not** dictate policy—commonsense should.

The regional approach just makes sense—from an administrative, economic, and political point of view. With honest, ongoing cooperative action, the future is promising. Fortunately, the base for this approach even now exists. Frequent, formal, and informal cooperation now is practiced—and that base needs only to be built upon and fostered.



Cornplanter Township

Cornplanter is a second-class township, with a population of 2,687. It is on the northern border of the three municipalities and is geographically the largest (47,616 acres). The Oil Creek Valley runs through the Township. Cherry Run is the second major stream, while the Allegheny River, with Pithole Creek, makes up much of its eastern border.

Plan Issues and Recommendations

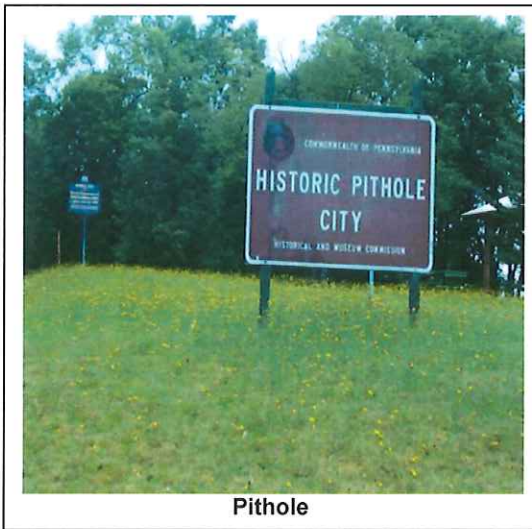
Historic Preservation – Current Status

To determine current historic assets in Cornplanter, two sources on the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission website were consulted—ARCH* and CRGIS (Cultural Resources Geographic Information System).

**No longer available.*

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission database “ARCH” listed only the site of Pithole City, while the Commission’s CRGIS database has 19 entries. However, only one is listed on the National Register, Pithole City, with three others listed as eligible. Of these, two are bridges and the remaining is Coal Oil Johnny’s home, which is now restored and located at Rynd Farm.

Actions



Pithole

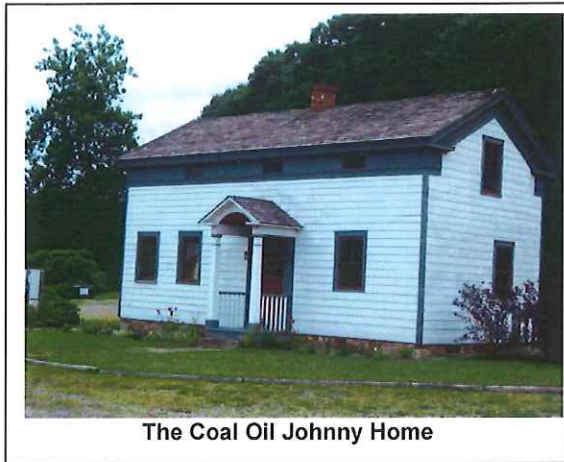
The site of Pithole City is owned by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Though owned by the Commonwealth, it is manned by volunteers whose fundraising activities usually meet its modest operating budget. Past plans have suggested enhancing Pithole with additional interpretive material (\$150,000 to \$165,000), but there is no funding.

The very strength of Pithole, concerned volunteers, is also a weakness. As long as the current group of volunteers remains dedicated and active, Pithole will continue its existence. But, it is a precarious future. The loss of even a few of these dedicated individuals could be a catastrophe for this unique place that once was a boomtown of 15,000 people.



The salvation for Pithole is more tourists. If visitations increase, State support can be expected to continue, perhaps even to increase.

The Coal Oil Johnny home at Rynd Farm has been restored both outside and inside. Currently, the Oil Heritage organization is accepting appropriate antiques for the interior. The home is on land owned by DCNR, and the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) is in the process of negotiating a lease. Once a lease can be secured, the facility will be open to the public. Rynd Farm is slated for interpretive visual panels. These will provide informative visuals on early oil families and the preservation of the Coal Oil Johnny house.



The Coal Oil Johnny Home

In addition, DCNR is restoring the Egbert Home at Petroleum Center. There are other historic assets in the Oil Creek State Park (Blood Farm, etc.), but much of the physical remnants from the oil boom days are gone.

The great majority of historical assets are in State or ORA ownership, and they are important to Cornplanter Township. The Township supports the preservation and improvement of these valuable historical/tourist assets and looks to the ORA, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and DCNR to accomplish this goal.

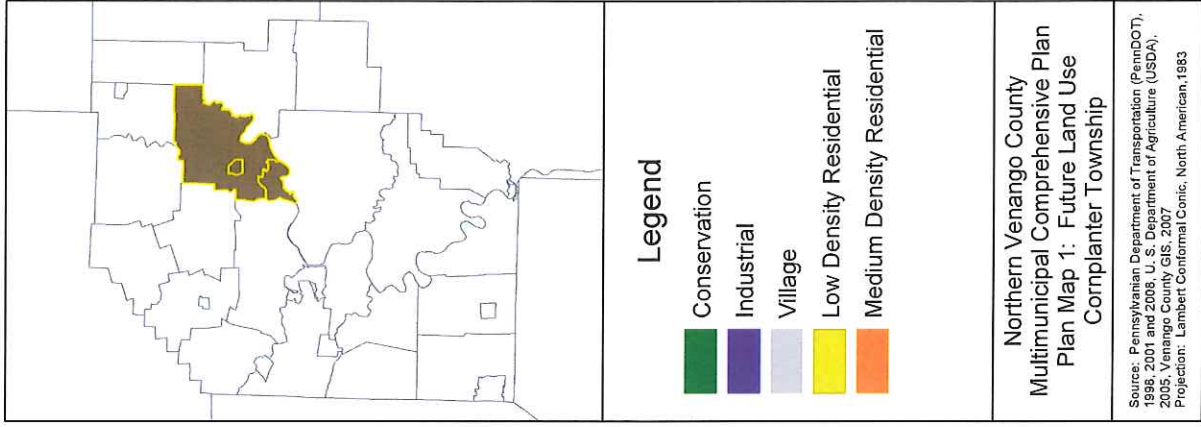
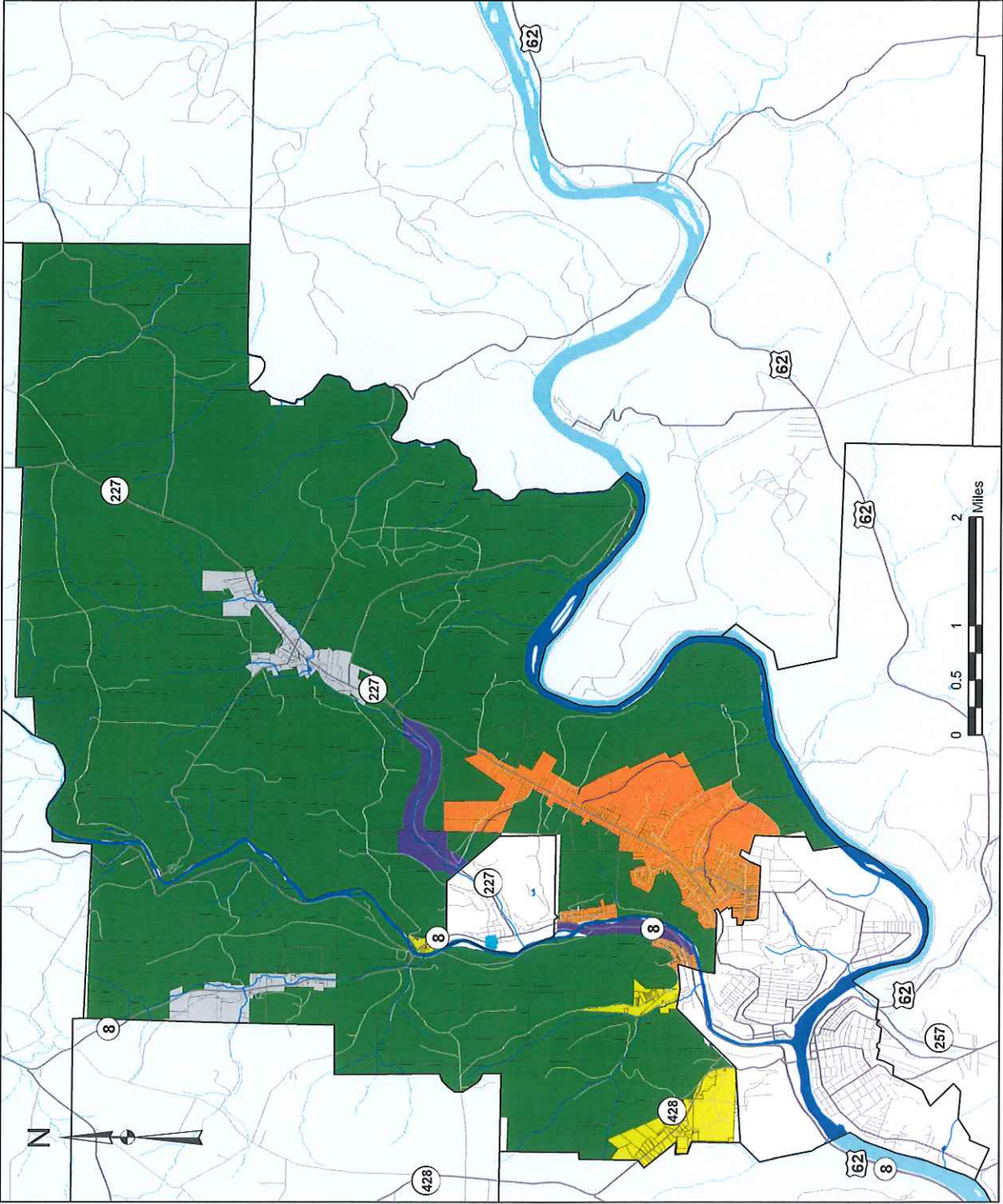
Land Use



Oil Creek State Park

As noted in the Background Report, much of Cornplanter is lightly settled, with extensive areas of publicly owned land (Oil Creek State Park, Game Land 253). Residential development is focused along Grandview, in Plumer Village, at Oleopolis, Kaneville; along Route 428; or scattered along Route 8. The remaining homes are in very low-density rural settings. Existing commercial/industrial uses are along Route 8 (south of Rouseville), with more limited activity along Route 227. Scattered cottage developments, such as Oleopolis, are found along the Allegheny River.

The Township has its own zoning ordinance, adopted in 1994, while relying on the County's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). Continuous reliance on the County SALDO is recommended, given current development levels.



A technical review of the Township's zoning was completed as part of the Plan background activity. Although the recommendations cover some two-and-one-half pages, most were quite modest in nature. Detailed suggestions were prepared and reviewed with the Township's Planning Commission.

Future Land Use Policies

Based upon current economic conditions, limited growth is seen for Cornplanter over the next decade. The County Housing Market Report (2009) estimated new homes are constructed in Cornplanter at a rate of 5 to 6 per year. In the immediate future, this level of growth may decline, but, over the term of this Plan, it should rebound. This leads to the following recommendations:

- Traditional suburban residential, to the extent possible, should be in the Colonial Village, Horne Lane, and Rockwood areas where utility extensions (water and sewer) can be most easily accomplished. Given slope considerations, the areas east of Grandview are the most likely candidates. Much of the expected residential development over the next decade can be accommodated within the current "R" zoning districts.
- The existing development nodes of Clapp Farm, Kaneville, Plumer, and McClintockville will likely experience only limited infill development in the future. Both Clapp Farm and McClintockville will need housing rehabilitation actions to encourage such development.
- Low-density development—single, scattered homes on larger tracts—will likely be seen throughout Cornplanter and should follow past trends.
- Commercial and Industrial: Historically, these uses have been focused along Route 8 from the Oil City line, north, to the bridge over Route 8. This Plan believes that focus should remain. Much of this land was used for the Pennzoil Refinery. It is being reclaimed. However, FEMA is redrawing its flood maps (now in draft form) and much of this corridor may be designated as floodway. It must be noted that a small area just to the south of the McClintockville Bridge on Route 8 is zoned commercial; but due to scale, it is not visible on the maps in this report. Moreover, the Cornplanter zoning ordinance does allow some commercial uses in the Conservation District. Secondary potential industrial areas are along Route 227, just north of Moody Run Road. Currently, they are unsewered and best fit for low-intensity development. The 1992 Comprehensive Plan also identified a potential industrial development node east, on Route 227, just south of Pithole Road. Given the distance from utilities, its development is still likely years off.
- Second Home-Cottage Development: There is little doubt that a quality second-home development would be an attractive addition to the Township. The area across from Rockmere (Horse Creek) would be an excellent location. However, road access is an issue. Oak Grove Road and Horne Lane are the closest Township roads. There is a private road leading to the Allegheny River area. A second option would be the use of the abandoned Conrail right-of-way of Colbert Avenue in Oil City. If a second-home development is to become a reality, a well-financed developer is needed. A special seasonal home overlay district should be considered, likely as a TND zoning option. This approach would allow the Township to work with developers to achieve quality design standards.

- Some questions were posed relative to the Township's zoning map. The Township's solicitor should be consulted on this matter and, if necessary, the map readopted.

Long-Term Land Use Recommendations

- If major subdivisions such as Colonial Village are once more experienced in Cornplanter, the Township should consider adopting its own SALDO.
- Prepare/consider the following zoning actions:
 - Update the Mobile Home Standards in the zoning ordinance. Current Township zoning standards are inadequate for today's mobile home units.
 - Prepare regulations to control development on steep slopes and riparian areas.
- Review the "C" Conservation Zone to determine its effectiveness, as intended.

Transportation

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, there are 74.5 miles of road in Cornplanter; 32.7 on the State system with 41.8 on the Township system. State roads are classified by function. Key roads are arterials and collectors. The primary roads in the Township are:

Road	Classification	Volume*
Route 8 (William Flynn Highway)	Rural Arterial	7,400-3,200
Route 227	Arterial	2,300-2,100
Grandview Road	Arterial	5,700-1,000
Route 428 (Halyday Run Road)	Collector	2,400
Oleopolis Road	Collector	150
Petroleum Center-Eagle Road	Collector	100-200
Pithole Road	Collector	150
*AADT – Annual Average Daily Traffic Source: PennDOT		

Based upon current traffic conditions, the arterial roads appear to have the theoretical capacity to handle expected traffic flows.

In addition to its highway system, there are also two rail companies in the Township. Between Rynd Farm and Titusville, a single line is shared by a tourist rail operation (OC&TRR) and the freight "short line" (OCTL). The former is a seasonal tourist operation; the latter is a short line hauling hardwoods, plastic resins, petroleum wax, and fertilizer. Physically, the OCTL interconnects with the WNYP railroad at Rynd Farm. No current rail customers are known in the Township; however, the potential for these customers exists, especially along the Route 8 corridor from Rouseville south to Oil City.

Recommendations

Following are a series of transportation recommendations for Cornplanter Township. *Please Note: The bikeway project is being addressed in a separate Plan element.* See Map 9, Transportation Plan, following Page 41.

As reported in the Background section, highway projects are governed by a federal, state, regional, county, or local process which results in both a long-range plan and a short-term action element, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This element of the transportation recommendations will focus on projects already in the “TIP.”

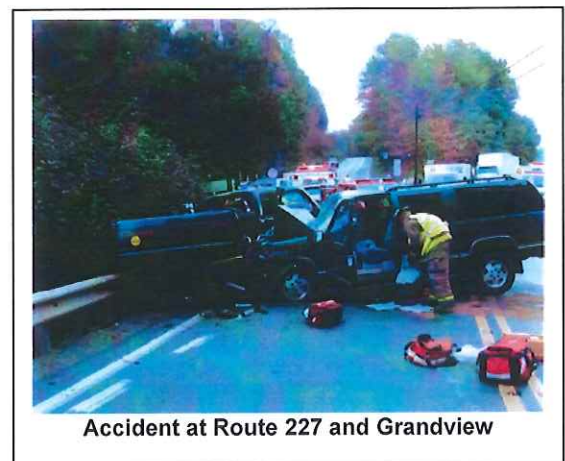
- Waitz Road Bridge and McClintock Bridge on Route 8: Due to their proximity, PennDOT is planning to bid these two structures together. The Township’s concern is that Waitz Road is a logical alternative to Route 8 for local traffic. If bid together, construction should be staged so one bridge remains open at all times. At this time, PennDOT understands that concern. Construction is slated for 2012.
- Sportsman Curve on Route 8: This is a vital part of the overall Route 8 “North” improvement scheme and must remain a regional priority. Currently, the TIP lists this project over a three-year period for needed reviews and design. Construction is estimated in the 2011-2018 period.
- Route 8 – Bridge over Cornplanter Run: Scheduled for 2010-2011.
- Route 227 – Cherry Hill Bridge: Bid 2009. Due to school bus issues, it should be a 2010 summer project (started and completed in 2010.)
- Petroleum Center Bridge (SR 1004): Design is scheduled for 2011.

Safety Concerns: The following areas were listed with a “High” crash rating by PennDOT and consequently are a continuing concern:

- Route 8, north of Rynd Farm*
- Route 428, Route 8 to Lawrence Drive*

In addition, the following areas have been identified by local officials as areas of safety concern:

- Grandview: The road has been identified locally and by PennDOT data (medium accident rating) as a safety concern. The entire length from Route 227 into Oil City should be examined for alignment and sight distance. Volume counts are also recommended. Special attention must be paid to the area near the Cornplanter Volunteer Fire Department, the Hasson Heights Elementary School, the Golden Living Nursing Home, Moody Run Road, and the Route 227 intersection. Due to terrain and curves, this road has earned a bad reputation with local motorists. Standard sight distance criteria, such as the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) guidelines, should be used for safety evaluations in the study.*



- Rattlesnake Curve, Route 227, and Old Warren/Russell's Corners Roads*
- Water Trough Curve-Route 227, near the Grandview Road intersection.*

**These projects are to be presented to the Venango County Planning Commission and the "RPO" (Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission) as safety or corridor projects.*

Local Road Projects

These are the Township projects:

- Harper Road Bridge (T589)
- Old Bankson Road – pave from Route 8 to Coal Oil Johnny's house
- Gaugh Road – pave (estimate 620 feet)

Transit

Currently, the VenanGo bus has a route on Grandview, with the Golden Living Nursing Home as the turnaround point. Presently, there is no service to Rouseville. Given the financial status of transit in Pennsylvania, any service expansion would be difficult to realize. However, if possible, a "loop" via Route 8 into Rouseville and a return via Moody Road should be a common goal of the two communities that would add only a few miles to the current route system. In the longer term, service to Plumer should be considered, especially if the Rouseville loop is successful.

Sidewalks

In the 1992 Plan, a sidewalk program was recommended around the Hasson Heights Elementary School. This Plan concurs that sidewalks in the Hillcrest, Fairview, Oak Road, and Grandview areas make sense, as do sidewalks in the Colonial Village area. As a first step, an informal liaison with the school is needed to determine potential student use. In addition to the use, issues with traffic safety are a concern. Any crossing of Grandview by school children must pay close attention to the traffic concerns previously noted.

Housing

There is detailed background information on housing, both in the general Background Report as well as the special housing report produced by the County. These reports show a modest decline in housing count from 1990 to 2000, per the Census. But, new housing starts in the past decade were estimated at 5 to 6 annually. This brings the accuracy of the Census housing figures into question.

The housing quality in Cornplanter was judged good—with the Colonial Village area identified as one of bright spots of the Venango County housing market.

Overall, the housing quality in Cornplanter was judged as good, with the exception of two pockets of problem homes. In fact, the Colonial Village area is identified as one of the bright spots of the Venango County housing market. Census data from 2000 indicates the estimated value of owner-occupied homes at \$64,100 (median) was the highest within the three study communities.

In Cornplanter, about 90% of the housing is single family, with the next largest category mobile homes (8.7%). In all, less than 3% of the housing stock is some type of multiple-family unit.

The Township has adopted the International Property Maintenance Code and uses the Oil City Code Officer for enforcement. It consequently has the legal power to remediate problem homes.

Recommendations

Consistent with the Land Use Plan, housing development should be encouraged, primarily in the Colonial Village-Hasson Heights area, where water and sewer services are reasonably available.

Though the Township's problem homes are proportionally a small percentage of its total housing stock, remedial action is warranted. This Plan recommends the Township institute a housing "rehab" and intense code enforcement program. Ideally, the Township could partner with Oil City or Venango County in such a program. It is further recommended that the Clapp Farm area be the first priority of this program and McClintockville Village the second priority. A goal of 20 to 25 "rehabbed" units should be set.

Protection of Natural Resources

Most of the threats to the environment focus on mineral extraction. Given the history of the area, gas and oil extraction are likely conflict points. According to online records, DEP had issued 108 drilling rig permits for 2009 in Venango County (up to 10/09). Two were issued in Cornplanter. This activity is under DEP control. Generally, Cornplanter can only monitor activities. However, there are also other concerns in the Township—areas where the Township can act. These include protection of steep slopes, wetlands, and riparian areas via zoning regulations.

Recommendations

- Monitor well drilling activity. (*Note: Rig permit data is available by way of the DEP website.*)
- Support the ongoing oil well plugging program at the Oil Creek State Park.
- Review Section 412 of the current Township zoning ordinance re: steep slopes.*
- Consider the adoption of riparian regulations in the Township zoning ordinance (stream setbacks usually depend on slope characteristics).*
- If Marcellus Shale exploration appears likely, the zoning ordinance should be amended to require larger lots, provide for isolation distances of any processing structure, and protect Township roads from heavy equipment.

**Both the American Planning Association and DEP provide guidelines for such regulations.*

Community Facilities and Services

Community Services

One of the most important community services is public safety. In Cornplanter Township, that is the Cornplanter Township Volunteer Fire Department. This is an active, vital service. They are constructing a new fire station at the current site. In addition, since July of 2010, they now have ambulance service.

Recommendations

- **Public Safety:** Continue the Township's current financial support of this service. Further, it should assist the Department in its construction of a new fire station.* The new station is currently planned just north of the current facility on Grandview. However, final funding has not yet been finalized.
- **Library:** Cornplanter has long been a financial supporter of the Oil City Library. This Plan recommends that support be continued.*
- **Parks and Recreation:** The Oil Creek State Park is a valuable asset to Cornplanter Township. Its trails, picnic and play areas provide local residents with recreational resources that would typically be a municipal activity. Continued support and cooperation with that entity is this Plan's policy. Of special interest is Cornplanter's continued support to complete the bike trail in the park from Petroleum Center to Rynd Farm.* The section from Waitz Road at the McIntock well site, south to Oil City, is scheduled for construction in 2011. Trailheads are planned at Rynd Farm and the McClintock oil well sites.
- **Township Building:** The Township Building is the former Plumer Elementary School. Overall, the building is sound but will benefit from ongoing improvements and maintenance.

**High priorities*

Water and Sewer Facilities

These facilities are the key to maintain current development and attracting new residential, commercial, and industrial development. Currently, the Township has sewage collection systems and water distribution systems. Sewage treatment is provided by Oil City and water is supplied by both Rouseville Borough and Oil City (see Background Report for details).

This Plan has two sets of recommendations. The short-term recommendation is for the next five-plus years. The medium long-term sections are for longer-range activities.

Short Term: Projects proposed under this scenario will start in 2011 and expected to be completed in 2012. All short-term projects will rely on Oil City for water supply or sanitary sewage treatment.

High-Priority Projects

- **Water:** Route 8 corridor (Oil City line to Waitz Road) – estimated cost \$1.5 million. This project services the Township's prime economic development corridor.
- **Sewer:** The industrial corridor from the Oil City line to Waitz Run along Route 8 – cost \$1.4 million.*
- **McClintockville:** This will be a combination of gravity, force main, stream crossing (Oil Creek) project servicing the Village of McClintockville – \$576,000.

- Clapp Farm: Gravity flow collection system to service this 1895 subdivision – \$1.1 million.*

**Combined projects*

Medium-Range Projects*

- Plumer: A small flow facility for three users – Cost – \$94,900.

**Act 537 projects*

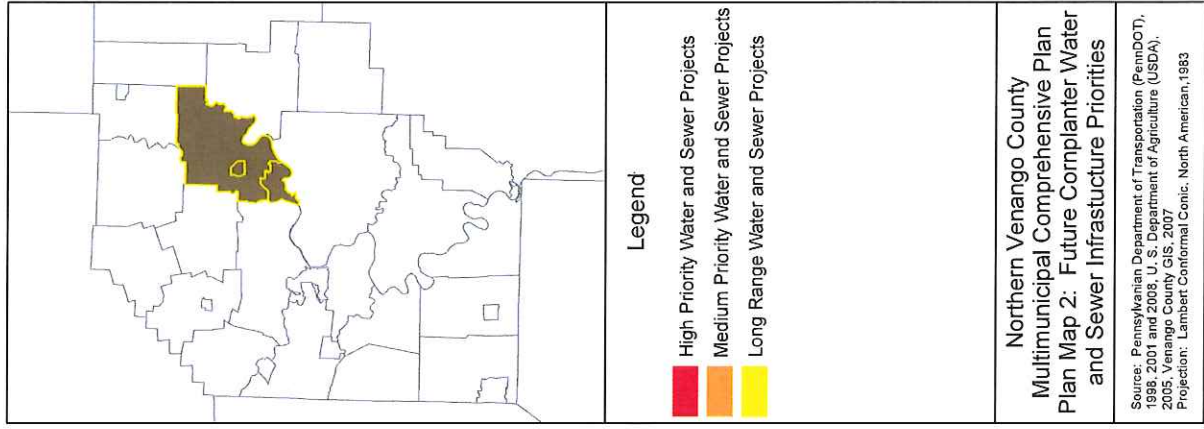
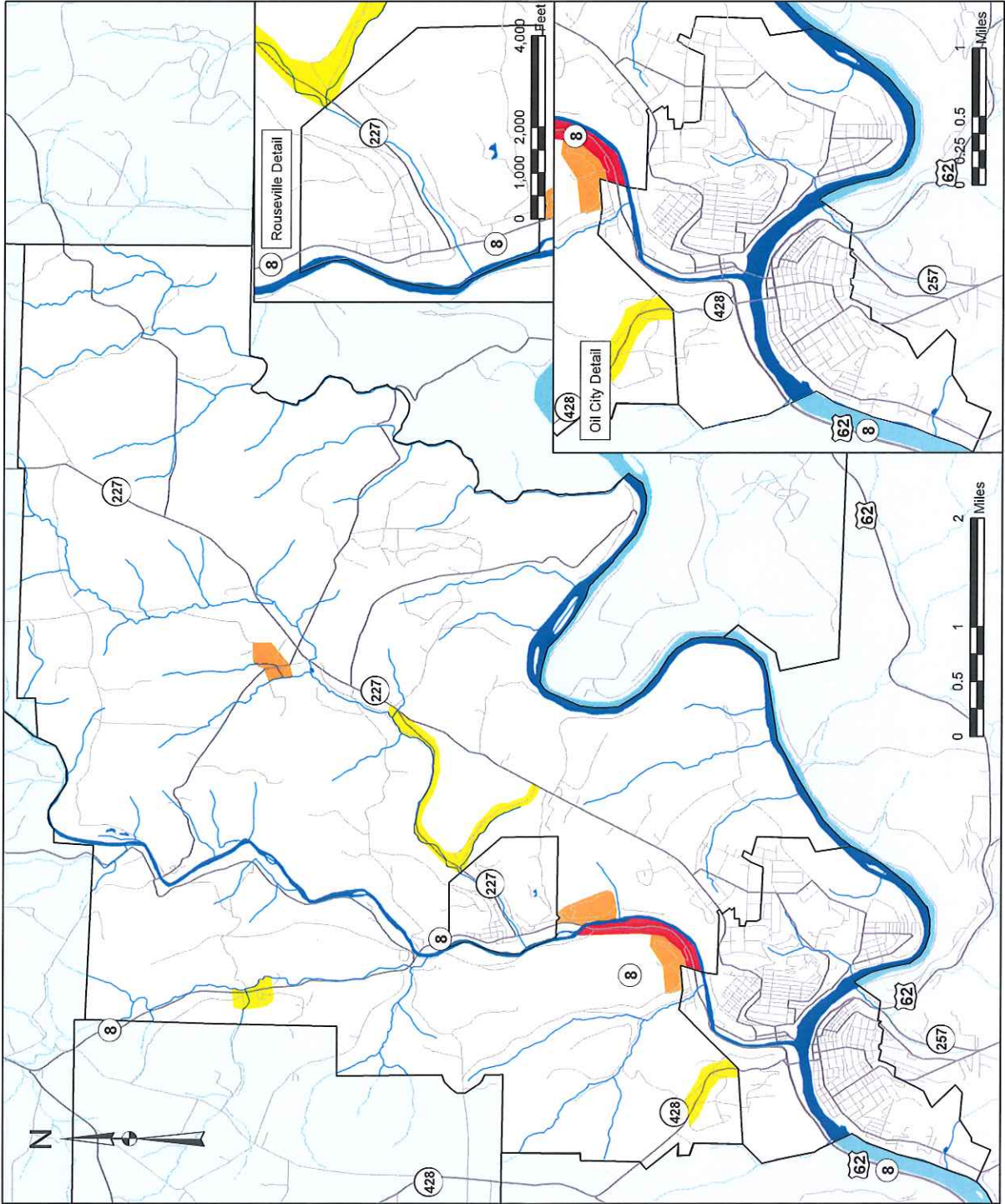
It is expected there will be relatively short extensions to developments off Grandview Road in the Colonial Village-Horne Lane-Rockwood-Hasson Heights area. No cost estimates are available. These extensions should primarily be funded by developers.

Medium- to Long-Range Projects

- Halyday Run Road: Essentially residential, sewer
- Moody Run Road: Residential, water and sewer
- Route 227 Industrial Corridor: Moody Run Road to the Masonic Hall (sewer)
- Plumer: Essentially residential (sewer)
- Kaneville: Essentially residential (water and sewer)
- Rynd Farm: Water and sewer

Summary

With few exceptions, Cornplanter is a very pleasant suburban/rural community. If its pockets of problem housing are remediated and new commercial/industrial development constructed along Route 8, the community should continue to thrive as an attractive place to live, with an improving tax base.



City of Oil City

Introduction

Of the three municipalities, in many ways, Oil City presents both the greatest opportunities as well as the greatest problems. Yet, the good news is that there is no reason why Oil City cannot achieve the goals set forth in this Plan. However, to do so, it needs one important resource—its people. It is absolutely imperative for this Plan to have the full backing of the citizens if this is to succeed.

The Plan for each individual municipality has particular emphasis. So, it is for Oil

The two elements of emphasis for Oil City are housing and economic development.

City. The two

elements of emphasis for Oil City are housing and economic development. Economic development in this context is more than the traditional concept. It also includes both tourism and the ARTS program.

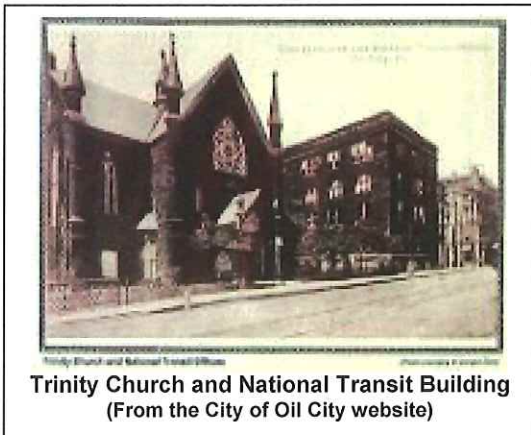


City Hall

Historic Preservation

Currently, there are some 497 acres of Oil City that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This translates to about 17% of its entire land mass. This situation is both a benefit and a practical problem.

It is a benefit to help preserve elements of the past that have significance to the community. Such assets as the National Transit complex, the Oil City Library, the Trinity Church, and Christ

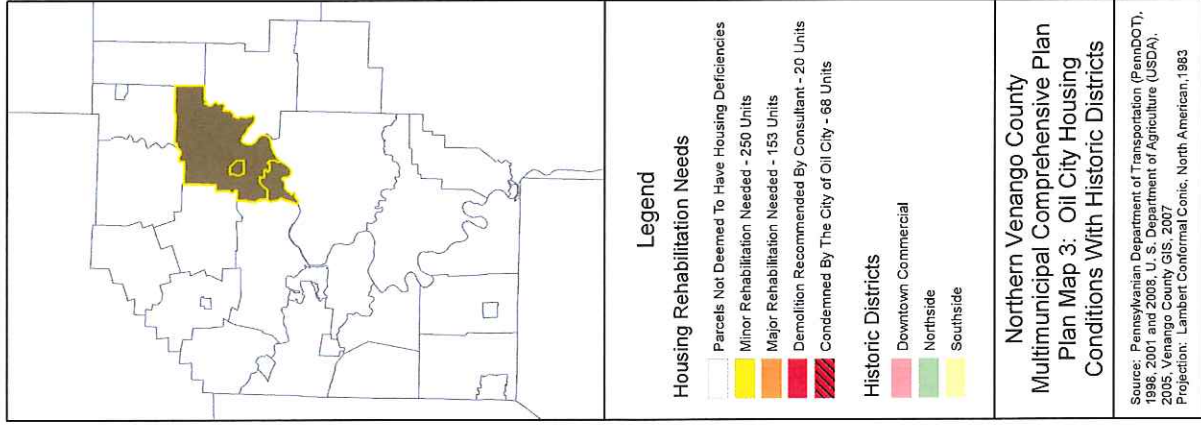
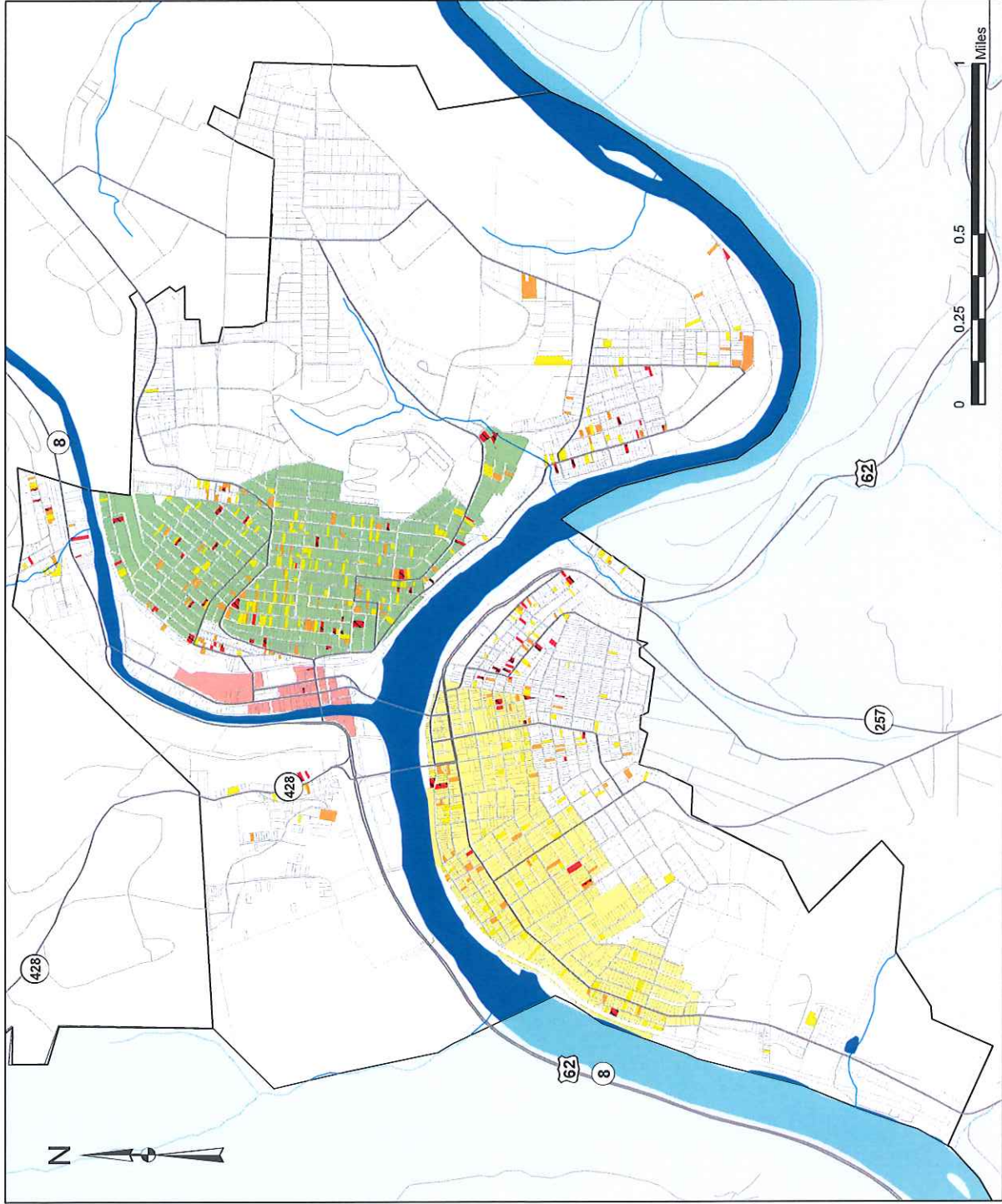


Trinity Church and National Transit Building
(From the City of Oil City website)

Episcopal Church are all structures of special merit and certainly deserve protection, as do many others. For commercial structures within these areas, there are potential additional benefits—Federal tax credits. The rehabilitation of commercial properties that follow proper guidelines (see the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission website) can receive up to 20% tax credit from the Internal Revenue Service.

However, the sheer size of the three historic districts has created a problem. For example, on the “North Side,” there are over 1,100 structures included in the inventory. The great majority of

these homes were built as inexpensive worker housing, constructed on small lots. They were frame construction, lacking modern insulation, double-pane windows, etc. Many of these homes



are now over 100 years old. Most lack the design cachet of popular Victorian architecture. It is from historic neighborhoods that many of the City's problem homes are located (see Housing section). In addition, this is an area identified in the County Housing Study as a very weak market.

These generally are also "LMI" neighborhoods. LMI is an acronym which indicates households are determined to be income eligible for certain Federal assistance. Specifically, grant funds under Federal programs—CDBG and HOME. Yet, due to the age of the structures and the fact that they are listed historic resources, efforts to rehabilitate or demolish them can, and do, create a bureaucratic nightmare. To demolish a home that is a blighting influence requires letters, documentation, and delay.

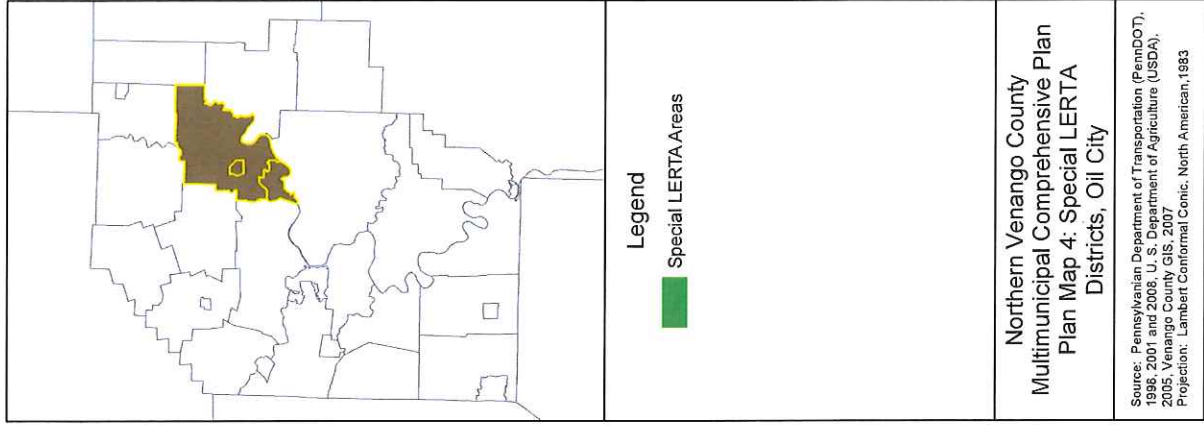
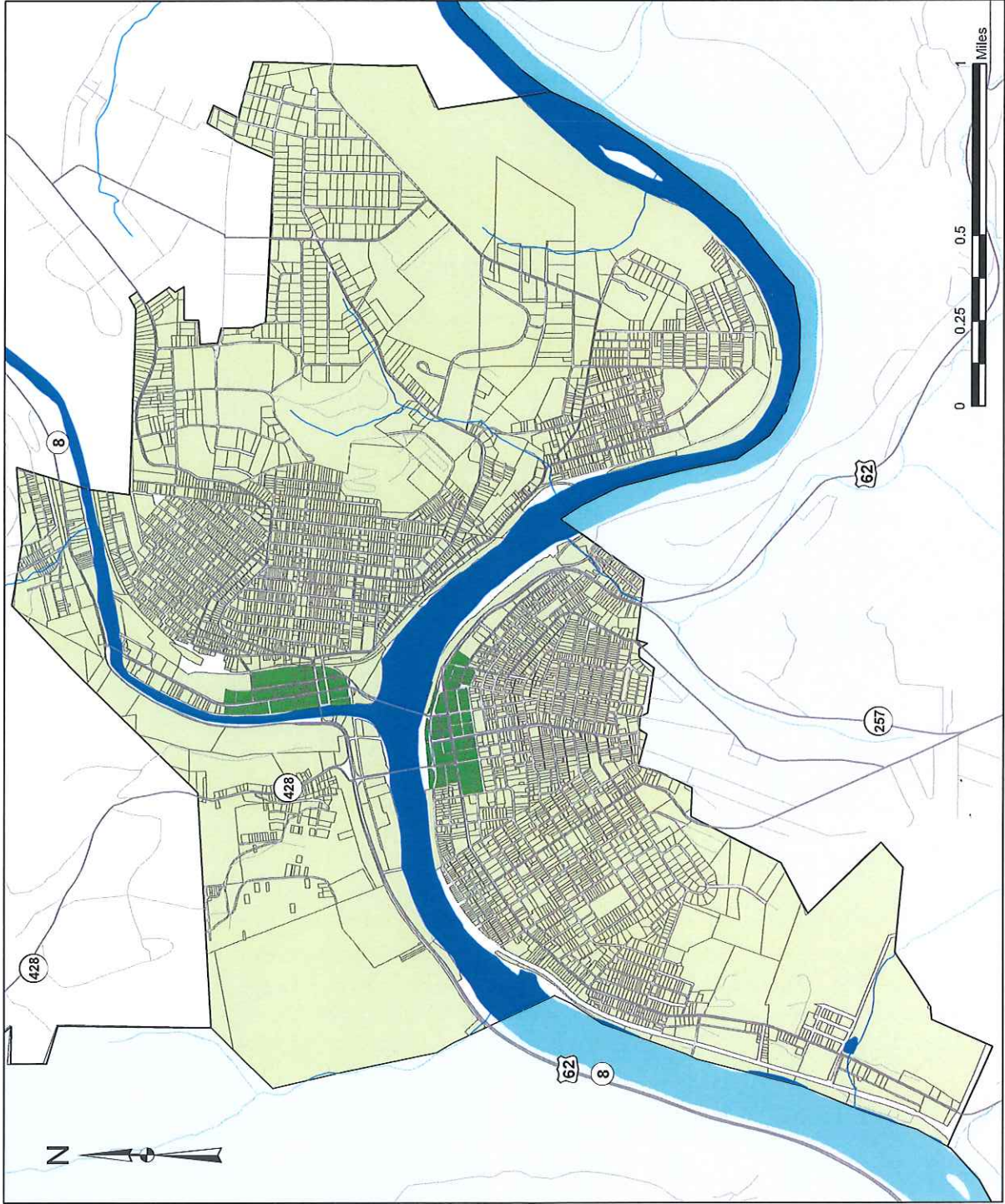
The real-world dilemma is how to protect legitimate historic resources and, yet, facilitate the removal of blighted structures is critical to this Plan. The recommendations in this Plan element recognize the following facts and analysis:

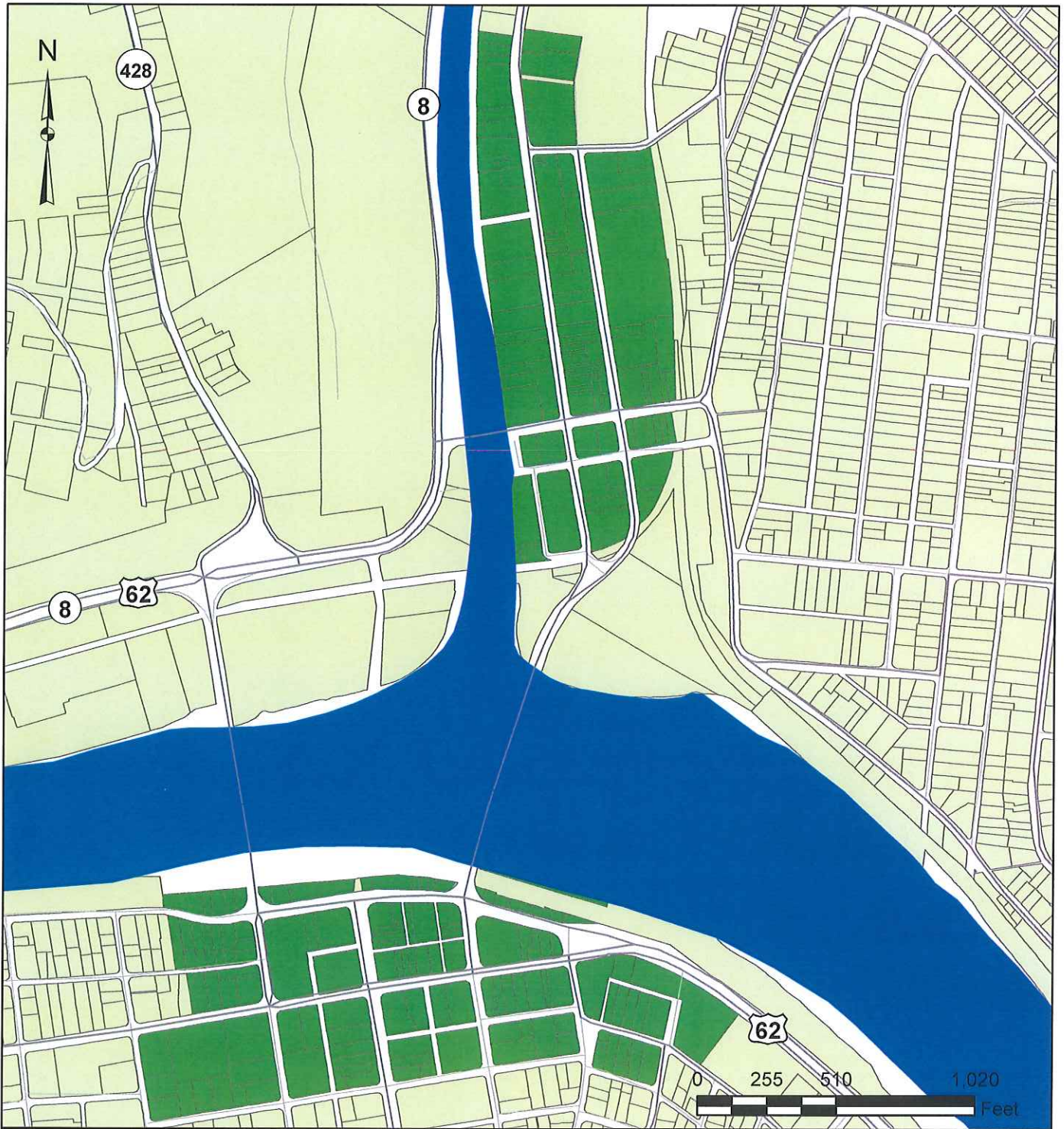
- In the Venango County Housing Study, it clearly states there is an over supply of housing (5,312 units) for lower-income families in the County.
- Oil City is in a cluster of the poorest-ranked housing markets (especially the North Side).
- According to a 2009 housing survey, there were an estimated 550 to 560 housing units in Oil City that were judged deteriorated or dilapidated.
- Some 62% of all identified substandard homes in Oil City are in registered historic districts.

Obviously, something must be done to facilitate Oil City's efforts to demolish or rehabilitate its problem homes within the context of responsible historic preservation.

The following actions are recommended:

- Extend the LERTA tax abatement in the Downtown areas (both North and South sides) to encourage reinvestment from five to ten years.
- The Resource Inventory for the three historic districts should be "vetted" and any truly significant historic structures placed on a special "watch list." This arrangement is needed to protect valuable historic resources. It is further recommended that historically minded citizens be "drafted" to participate in this process as a cost-saving measure.
- In order to facilitate the demolition of unsafe structures or the rehabilitation of homes, a "historic mitigation agreement" is a must between Oil City and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), which administers the key Federal CDBG and HOME programs. There are various actions which could be offered to facilitate this mitigation agreement. One would be the creation of a "model" Polish immigrant home tied to the "Assumption" Church on Pulaski Street.
- Sell the tax-credit concept. One of the reasons for the original historic district initiative was to generate tax credits. Has it been used? Since 1976, in Pennsylvania, nearly 2,200





 Special LERTA Areas

Northern Venango County Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan Plan Map 4A: Special LERTA Districts, Oil City Detail

Source: Pennsylvanian Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007, Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

tax-credit projects have been approved, generating \$3.9 billion in activity. Oil City entrepreneurs should explore this option. A tax-credit workshop is a good idea.



Pennsylvania Historical
& Museum Commission

pennsylvania PA



The historic issues certainly go beyond programs to improve the City's housing stock; however, once more, the size and diversity of the

historic district create a problem. In all three areas, the really significant historic resources are not necessarily of a single architectural style. This fact was noted in the 1996 application for the Downtown District. Essentially, it means that a traditional historic zoning district tied to a single design style may not be feasible.

From a practical standpoint, detailed design control presents a second problem—the housing market. If strict historic standards are put in place to govern either new construction or rehabilitation, will the market absorb such costs? Generally, and especially on the North Side, the housing market is identified as poor; and it is quite likely stringent design controls will be seen as another negative.

It is this Plan's further recommendation that the City identify areas within its three historic districts, which merit protection and are reasonable in size. TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) sections in the zoning ordinance can be developed along with general design guidelines to protect such resources. These guidelines should focus on the traditional values; see the *Fundamentals of Urban Design**:

- Building silhouettes, as compared to neighboring structures (essentially height).
- The primary facade plane.
- General characteristics of windows and doors.
- Building height relative to the distance between opposite building facades (primarily for commercial areas).
- If there is a dominant architectural style, it could be part of the standards.
- A simple compilation of acceptable and unacceptable design as shown via digital photographs is one quick and inexpensive way to develop a design manual. Simply put, in the context of a neighborhood, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable? A ranch home in a Victorian area is clearly not acceptable.

**Fundamentals of Urban Design*, Hedman and Jaszewski (1984 Planners Press), and *The Small Town Planning Handbook*, Third Edition (2007, American Planning Association), pages 301 through 333, in particular.

The goal of such regulations must be a balance between the community's need for design input with the realities of the marketplace. The use of special zoning districts should not be limited to primarily commercial uses. Selected corridors, especially along West 1st Street and East Bissell Avenue, are also visually important. One further neighborhood that deserves special consideration is delineated by the "South Side Walking Tour" brochure.

Housing Plan

Oil City's housing issues are one of the centerpieces of this Comprehensive Plan.

Oil City's housing issues are one of the centerpieces of this Comprehensive Plan. In analyzing the background element of this Plan, three basic issues emerge. First, the extent and number of problem homes. Second, a generally weak housing market—

which, if the County's Market Study is read—is partially due to an oversupply of homes. Third, a lack of options for older residents (those aged 55 and over). Based on these issues, there are several goals to consider. The goals are presented below and given code designations to relate to proposed actions:

- Remove blighting influences; demolish dilapidated structures; rehabilitate deteriorated homes; rigorously enforce the Property Maintenance Code. Make the housing stock a community asset. Code B
- Create a positive real estate market environment so homes can be bought and sold at reasonable values. Code M
- Promote condo, townhouse, or apartment options for the aged 55-plus market. Code 55
- Deal positively and innovatively with the Tax Title "Repository" properties. Code R
- Clearly identify corridors and neighborhoods for priority action consideration. Consider priorities based upon a total neighborhood evaluation. Certainly, dangerous structures must be eliminated, regardless of their location. But, given the limited funds normally available, consider upgrading units before blight has spread, as well as areas with a preponderance of problem homes. Code PR



How can these goals be achieved? It will not be easy. Rather than a narrative litany, this Plan presents a "Toolbox" of options which is coded to the above-stated goals. If these goals are acceptable, and the tools are appropriate, numbers of units are then needed. These numbers must be tied to realistic budget figures. Generally, these tools are grouped by function; but, there is overlap, and, there are connections.

The Housing Toolbox

Codes and Regulations

- **Code Enforcement:** The International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), the Rental Housing Ordinance, and the Uniform Construction Code all fall under this heading. All are important; yet, the IPMC deserves special support. A liaison between the Code Officer and the housing rehabilitation program is needed. Where income-eligible persons (especially retired or disabled) live in a code violation unit, some priority in the "rehab" program is recommended. As part of the Code program, the Rental Inspection program is

key element. This Plan recommends that Oil City, like other western Pennsylvania municipalities, charge a modest fee for inspection rental units. Also, a second full-time Code Officer is needed for the foreseeable future. **The fees generated by the rental unit inspections should be used to offset the salary of the second code officer.** Code B, Code M

As part of the Code program, the IPMC Section 107.5 should be enforced upon all sales, including tax-title properties. This requires that the new owners of properties with code violations be notified of these violations and acknowledge them.

- Zoning: There are two zoning initiatives which can be easily accomplished and will require only minimal expense. Their purpose is to discourage the unneeded crowding of structures on small lots. The first priority must be to “downzone” significant areas of the City to a “single-family” designation. Some areas can simply revert to R-1; other sectors

The first priority must be to “downzone” significant areas of the City to a “single-family” designation.

will need a new R-1 District. The downsizing initiative will need additional and close scrutiny by both the Oil City Planning Commission and City Council. On the South Side, many of the parcels now zoned R-2 could be downsized, using the current R-2 lot size (5,000 square feet) and yard

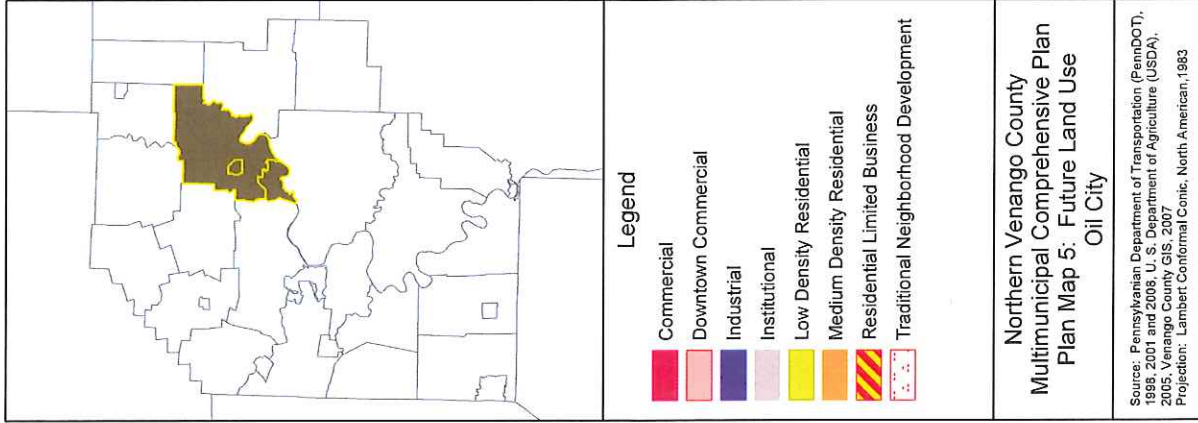
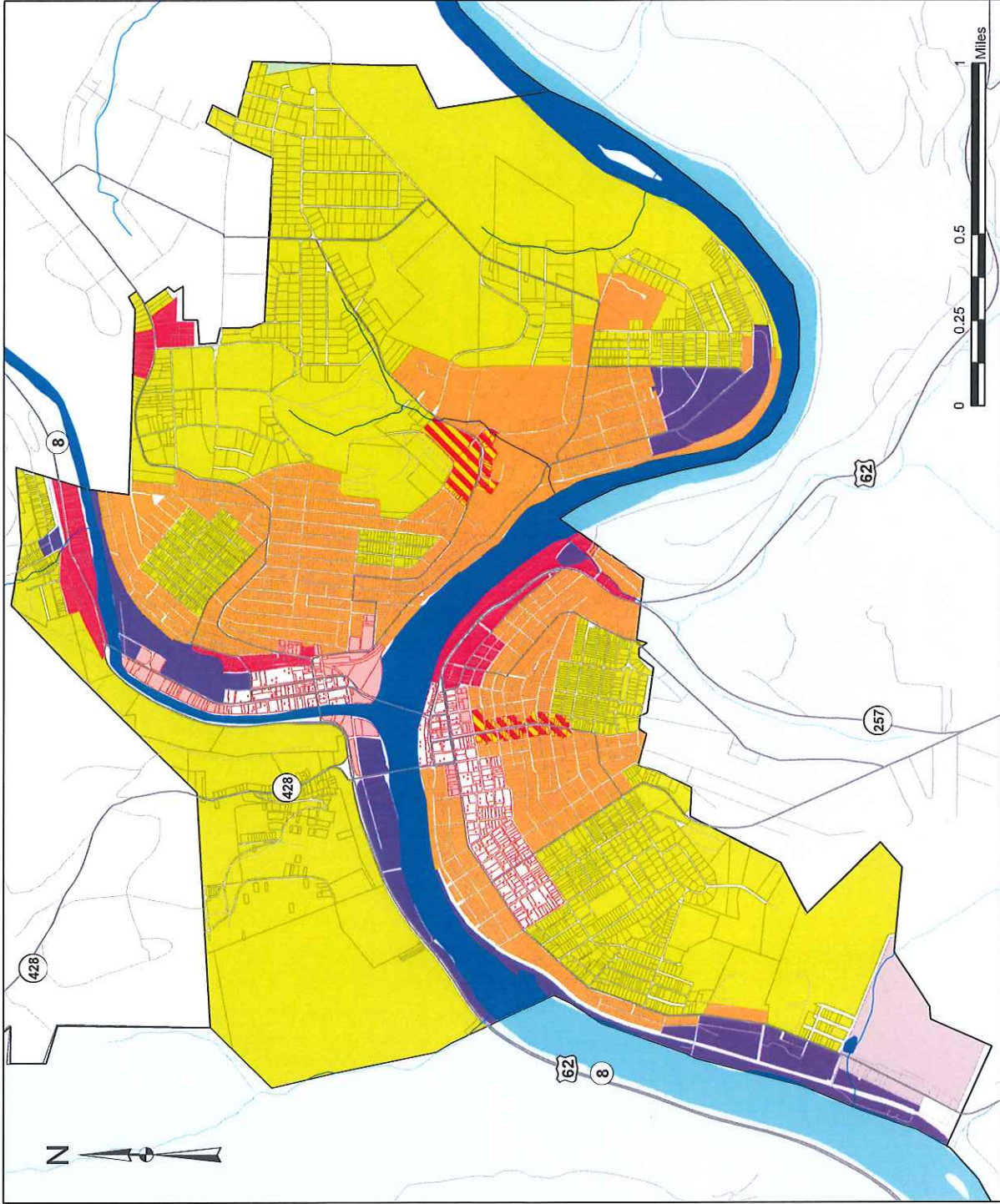
configurations, but R-1 use patterns. However, on the North Side, the downsizing of lots becomes more difficult. For example, lots off Cornplanter Avenue and Gay Street are nominally 37 feet by 120 feet, or 4,440 square feet. A sampling of areas will be necessary to determine if two separate “down zones” are needed, or a single zone, perhaps at 4,400 square feet is best. Regardless of the approach used, a two-family dwelling should require at least 6,000 square feet of lot area. Once more, it is important to emphasize the strategy is to stabilize residential neighborhoods and prevent overcrowding. (See the Future Land Use Map)

The second zoning tool would be the creation of Traditional Neighborhood Development districts. This device allows for innovation, use variations, and design control. This Plan recommends **simple** design controls. Controls driven by current neighborhood development—not a formal architectural pattern book. In a straightforward manner, it could accomplish the goals of this Plan. To study this option in more detail, please see Article VIII-A of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The TND option allows both innovation and flexibility in keeping with some prior zoning initiatives of the City. (See above comments on “TNDs” in the Historic Preservation section.) Code B, Code M

(See the “Proposed Zoning Map” for possible TND districts.)



**Condemned Housing on Pearl Street
“In Process”**



**Northern Venango County
Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan
Plan Map 5: Future Land Use
Oil City**

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), 1998, 2001 and 2008, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2005, Venango County GIS, 2007
Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic, North American, 1983

- Demolition: Based upon the 2009 Housing Survey and the 2009 list of condemned properties, there were 88 properties identified as dilapidated/condemned. A review of the condemned list is now underway by the City Code Office and a new one not yet published. A goal of 10 properties per year for demolition should be set. Priorities should be set relative to:
 - Public safety – condition of unit, proximity to neighboring structures
 - Appearance – visual appearance of unit
 - Location – impact on the neighborhood

Code B

- Housing Rehabilitation Programs: The 2009 Housing Survey identified approximately 550 problem units. If Venango County had been awarded Federal NSP2 funds, much of the City's problem homes would have been rehabilitated. However, this did not occur. Consequently, reliance must turn to the traditional source—the HOME program. Using this limited funding, the City has hard choices to make. At best, the HOME program could be counted on for 10 to 20 homes per year. Depending on a variety of factors (eligibility, ownership, staff capacity), it would take over 25 years to address current needs, using that program alone. This means the City will not have the resources to resolve the housing problem with current resources. The following set of program priorities are appropriate:
 - Set aside funds for 1 or 2 units for Code Officer hardship referrals.
 - Set aside funds for 1 or 2 units for other hardship cases.
 - Use about 70% of the funds on a **targeted housing rehabilitation program** (see next entry).

Introduce “appearance” rehabilitation. Often, the improvement of a home’s appearance can generate similar private activity in neighboring homes.

Finally, the City’s priority system and “appearance rehab” must be sold to the State’s Department of Community and Economic Development.

In addition to the HOME program, the USDA does offer a grant-loan program. The USDA 502 and 504 programs are geared for low-income homeowners. A 33-year, 1% loan is available (up to \$20,000), with some grants to those over 62 (up to \$7,500). The programs operate directly between the USDA (Meadville, Pennsylvania office) and the homeowner. It is a useful option for Oil City “rehab” applicants who cannot be covered by the HOME grant.

Finally, there are programs available from the Pennsylvania Finance Housing Agency (PHFA). Generally, they have low fees and interest rates. PHFA programs are also more accessible to middle-income persons than those of HUD or the USDA. However, they are *loan* programs—some supplement other governmental programs—others direct loans. Among the potential benefit is reduced mortgage insurance costs and other “front-in” fees. In addition, PHFA has a variety of programs available to homeowners, especially to assist in energy efficiency. Code B, Code M

- The Oil City Targeted Housing Rehabilitation Program Guidelines:

Neighborhood Preservation: Given the scope of the need, *there are not enough* grant funds to help everyone in need. Recognizing this, the City must prioritize neighborhoods, realizing that blight spreads. In a transparent process, the City should be divided into a three-tier priority system. Essentially, sound neighborhoods with only a few problem units would be in Tier I—the first priority. Tier I would also include areas with high-profile visual impact. This includes high-volume road corridors heavily used by visitors to the City. Tier II would consist of areas where deterioration is more evident but not pervasive. Tier III would be areas where problem units are abundant. See the Housing “Rehab” Priority Map. *Note: These priorities are from those funds administered by the City. Code B, Code M*

Suggested Corridor Priorities:

- A. Harriott from Spring to Bissell*
- B. East Bissell from Harriott to Forest Place*
- C. West 1st from Petroleum to Mayer
- D. The Colbert Avenue area, as set forth by the Waterways Study

**Identified, as they are gateways to the VTC and the Oil City High School complexes.*

Code PR

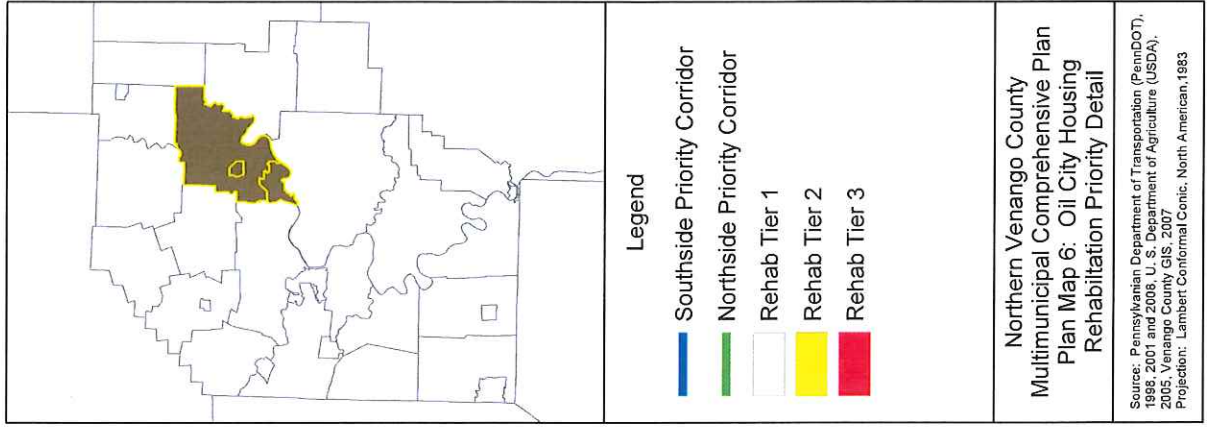
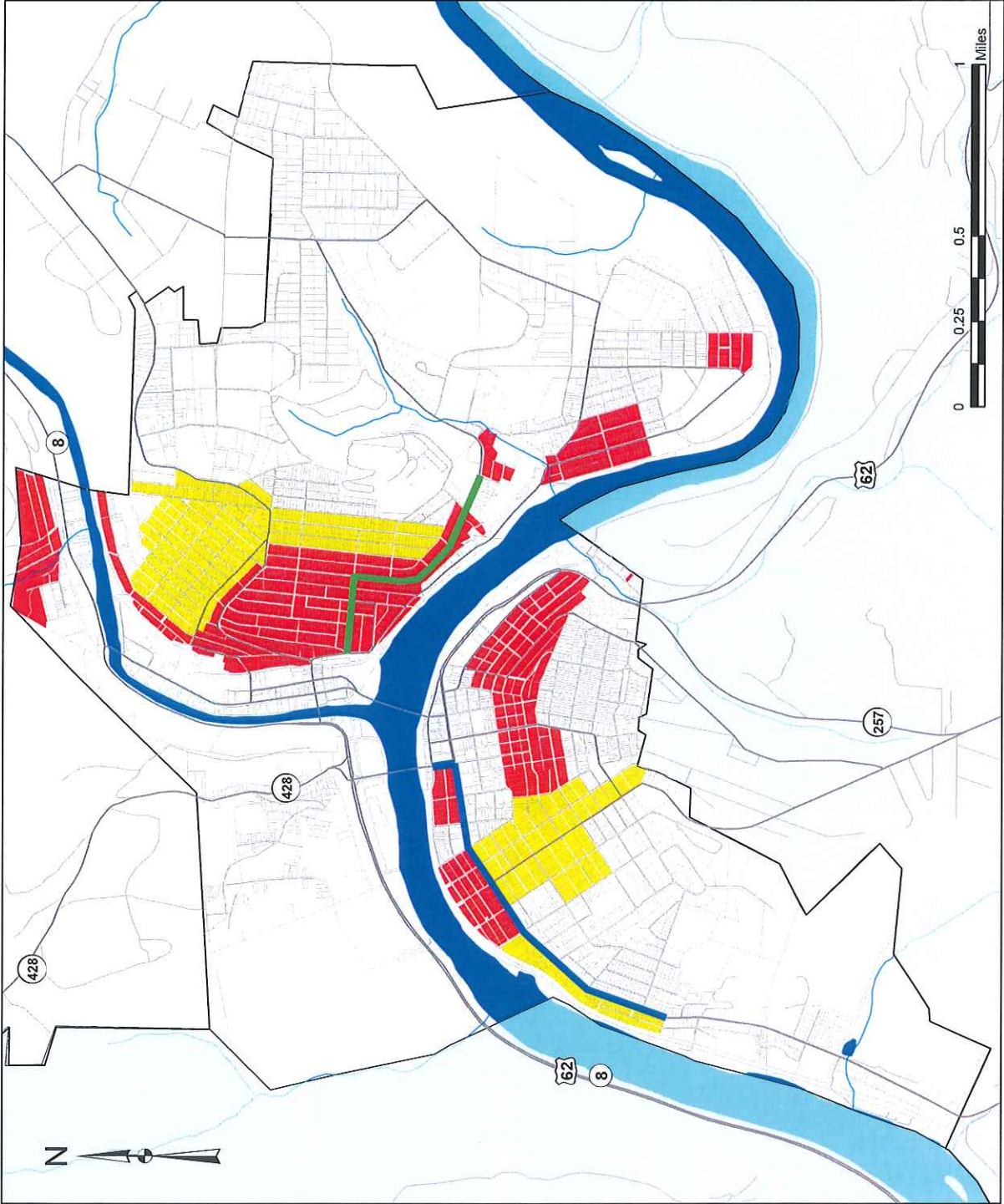
- Private Initiatives: To be successful, the Housing Plan must have active support, as most public agencies realize code enforcement is not popular. The following are public-private initiatives:

- Enlist churches and service clubs for neighbor-to-neighbor assistance with minor home repairs, maintenance, and yard work. Groups with such programs in place now could share their expertise.
- Neighborhood organizations should monitor worst-case homes, especially condemned units and request timely updates on remedial steps.
- Engage the Private Market: Ultimately, the marketplace will judge the efficacy of housing efforts in the City. Periodic meetings with local real estate offices and the City would be helpful to both receive suggestions and explain the City’s program. Their support is needed.

An identified housing need is market-rate 55-plus housing units, either apartments or rentals.

One of the identified housing needs is market-rate 55-plus housing units, either apartments or rentals. Survey comments indicated some homeowners would welcome such units. If the private market supports such developments, this is a key opportunity facing the City. Code B, Code M, Code 55

Special Opportunities: There are two areas which must be considered for such housing developments. Both are on the North Side. The most obvious one is on East Bissell; the former Oil City Hospital location. The second is the former school site off Gay Street. The City’s Redevelopment Authority is the best agency to implement such programs.



They can investigate options, set up design and use standards (via a redevelopment plan), and sell property based upon project needs—not the highest bid. Code 55

- Promote 55-Plus Housing: Meet with real estate personnel and potential developers to develop a market “wise” strategy, concerning locations and type of unit.
- Housing LERTA: Many cities—Erie for example—have used the LERTA, tax abatement process, to encourage either development or assessable improvements to existing housing. In their “target areas,” Erie City extends 90% tax forgiveness on properties for five years. The abatement then continues for a full ten years, but at a reduced level. Programs vary by municipality, but LERTA is a time-tested successful approach. Code B, Code M
- Rental Units: Public “rehab” funds for rental units have never fared well in western Pennsylvania. However, some effort to start one is recommended, tied to the code inspection program. It should be a low-interest rate program, but operated on a business-like basis.
- Other Initiatives: Continue the policy of police surveillance on problem or abandoned housing units.
- Housing Bond Issue: One of the biggest impediments to housing rehabilitation lies with the typical grant source. Federal money is limited and brings with it a multitude of regulations that complicate, delay, and increases the cost of that program. Municipal bond issues for housing have been around for decades. Originally for new homes, they can also be used for housing acquisition, demolition, and rehabilitation. And, they are not encumbered with “regs.” The feasibility of this approach would require legal and fiscal expertise.

But, it is an idea worth investigating!

- The Law: There are four key initiatives that would aid Oil City and other Pennsylvania communities in similar situations:
 - Develop a program similar to that of Beaver County to return selected tax title properties to the marketplace. This would involve consulting with neighbors to identify potential usable properties; search title and ownership information; clear title and sell. (In the fall of 2010, Oil City initiated this program, in partnership with Clarion University.) The City should establish geographic priorities in its efforts to deal with repository properties, based upon title and market potential.
 - Require that Section 107.5 of the IPMC (or similar codes) be rigorously applied to foreclosed and tax-title properties.
 - Promote laws that facilitate the return of tax-title “repository properties” to active use. This would require changes to Pennsylvania’s law on “Adverse Possession.”
 - If legal changes cannot be accomplished, petition the Commonwealth to offer title insurance for reclaimed repository properties meeting certain conditions. This is a complicated concept, but potentially very useful. Lawyers, real estate, and housing experts will be needed to draft real-world solutions.

Land Use Plan

The City of Oil City can be described as a classic western Pennsylvania river-town development.

The City of Oil City can be described as a classic western Pennsylvania river town. Its development was primarily shaped by two events. First was the discovery and exploration of oil. This not only saw the oil boom in the Oil Creek Valley but also helped to develop Oil City as an early trading and shipping center. The second influence was the development of heavy industries and the resulting extensive railroad infrastructure.

This history not only set the pattern of commercial and industrial land use but also influenced much of the residential development. Typically, worker housing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was located so people could walk to work. This accounts for the small lots and modest homes of the North Side and East Side. It also explains the fact that there are numerous housing units along the City's alleys. They are often seen above garages or as small homes tucked into narrow lots, often as a second home on a lot originally intended for only one dwelling. Many of these homes were built for a housing market that no longer exists. This is illustrated by the poor state of many homes along areas of Colbert Avenue.

Given this background, what is the role of the Land Use Plan; more specifically, Oil City's land use ordinances in this Comprehensive Plan?

The first step is a simple, but vital, one. It is to set forth a basic land use philosophy. The purpose of the land use ordinances in the City should:

- Manage residential densities.
- Aim for quality development within the realities of the marketplace.
- Provide the City with practical land use tools to achieve its goals.

Manage Residential Densities

Though the City's ordinance has been updated many times, its core rests in a 1960s document where the accommodation of growth was seen as the key function. This was reflected in the amount of land zoned as R-2, allowing intense residential development. Given its recent population losses, the City does not need to crowd land, especially for residential purposes.

This Plan proposes a change to that policy. It promotes lowering overall residential densities to complement the Housing Plan in a comprehensive strategy to stabilize neighborhoods. Guidelines for land use policy follow.

Residential: Oil City is essentially a community of primarily single-family homes. Yet, the largest single zoning district is the R-2 Medium Density District. This Plan believes much of the current R-2 land should be in a single-family designation.

Recommendations

- Create a new R-1 zoning district(s) designation for older areas of Oil City with single-family lots that are smaller than the standard R-1 designation.*

- Downzone much of the current R-2 District to either an R-1 or a new R-1 designation (see Proposed Land Use map).*
- Require any new duplexes in the R-2 District to have 6,000 square feet of lot area.
- Examine the Clapp Farm/Selden Avenue area. Consider new R-1 zoning districts to control future densities.
- Halyday, Clark's Summit, Dwyer, Hogback: This entire area is currently zoned R-2; rezone to R-1 or a new R-1 District. Due to limited utility access and slope considerations, these areas are best suited for light development.

**See the discussion in the Housing Plan for zoning.*

Mixed Use: The City currently has an R-O Residential/Office District that was designed to complement the now defunct Oil City Hospital. Many communities use a similar approach to facilitate the adaptive re-use of larger, older homes along busy streets. A new Residential Limited Business (RLB) District should be re-configured to include such uses and be considered for selected areas along East Bissell (Harriott to Hone), West First, Grandview, and Central (north of the fire station). See the Future Land Use map.

Facilitate the adaptive re-use of larger, older homes along busy streets.

Commercial: No changes in district boundaries are recommended; however, see "Special Zoning." See comments below.

Industrial: No changes are recommended.

Special: Unused railroad properties should be identified and potential reuse identified.

Special Zoning

Article VII-A of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code allows for the creation of TND districts. It is an ideal tool for Oil City. And, it need not be a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Rather, they can be crafted for one specific area. In the TND zoning district, residential and commercial uses can be mixed. Furthermore, design standards and a design manual prepared by the municipality are allowed. Characteristics of the TND are listed below:

- Can be a conditional use.
- Can be an overlay or outright zoning district.
- Can mix commercial and residential.
- Should be pedestrian-oriented.
- Can relate to natural features, such as *waterways*.
- Allows for a positive interaction between public and private actions.
- Can vary developmental density.
- Allows for a sketch plan with an informal presentation of same.

The only problem for Oil City is its lack of its own SALDO, as the TND also allows for variations in SALDO regulations.

- Select areas for application of TNDs. The West First, North and South Side Downtowns, and the Bissell corridors are suggested. Both the Route 62 and Waterways studies suggest special design concepts in the South Side Downtown. The use of form-based codes is one approach. This study recommends that concept be blended into TND zoning. It is important that tourist-oriented retail be included.
- A TND should be a mixed-use district where various types of residential options can be integrated with typical downtown commercial activities, or it could be an essentially residential area. The TND is the *only* zoning district where design guidelines are specifically permitted (See PaMPC 708-A) in Pennsylvania. This district can be used as either an “overlay” zone or a standalone district.
- Expand the current R-O District concept to encourage non-retail, low-impact, daytime uses as the RLB District.
- Develop a simple “design” manual appropriate for specific areas.
- Waterways Zoning: One or two possibilities for river-trail-based locations need to be addressed. The first suggested location is near the Marina; another is in the East Siverly area.

Updates: In addition to the substantive changes listed above, the current ordinance does require a variety of updates to be consistent with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, and modern practice. (*Note: Those updates have been already initiated.*) Another update will only apply to areas of the City where there is no sanitary sewer service. The zoning ordinance should note that all such lots must be approved for on-lot septic systems by the City’s Sewage Enforcement Officer. A one-acre lot minimum is recommended, though, often, such lots require nearer two acres.

Community Facilities Plan

The Plan will follow the same format as the Background Report—that is public safety, education, recreation, the Oil City Library, and miscellaneous resources. The Bike Trail is a separate Plan element. The cost of public services, especially water and sewer facilities, is a tremendous burden to all local governments. In many instances, improvements to water and sewer systems are mandated and perhaps are environmentally justified. But, the result is to pass on yet additional costs to local residents.

Public Safety

Fire Department: The Oil City Fire Department is an evolving organization. It is now more than fire fighting. Its services include fire fighting, code enforcement, traffic signal maintenance, emergency services, and water rescue. At this time, the Plan's only service expansion recommendation would possibly be additional assistance in general code enforcement over the next five years. Current staff levels should be maintained.

The physical needs of the Department have been identified and are presented below.

In priority, needs are as follow:

- Replace Snorkel (\$900,000)*
- Turnout Gear (\$40,000)
- Replace 1987 Pumper (\$350,000)
- New Central Fire Station House**

**Purchase initiated 2010*

***This is a multi-million dollar undertaking and must be considered as a long-term project.*

Police: The Oil City Police Department should be kept at its current levels and its "community" policing philosophy continued. Its presence is a valuable resource to Oil City beyond the obvious element of immediate public safety. For example, its liaison with the Code Officer helps to discourage the property crimes rampant in some western Pennsylvania communities. The police foot patrol program is another community benefit. Both the Downtown areas and some of the public housing units see real benefits from this activity.



The Oil City Fire Department



The Oil City Police Department

The police do have some capital needs, as are listed below:

- Programmed-steady vehicle replacement – 1 per year
- Secure impoundment area
- Parking area for police cars
- 911 Repeater System
- Live scan fingerprinting
- Video arraignment system

At least one local business, the Arlington Hotel, must be complimented, as it does allow some of the police units to use their nearby parking facility.

The police should develop costs and a model contract to allow neighboring communities to purchase police services.

Weed and Seed

One of the Police Department's key initiatives is its weed and seed program; a program to "weed" out drugs and crime and to "seed" educational, recreational, social, residential, and economic opportunities. The goals of the Strategic Revitalization Plan are:

1. Reduce drug traffic and increase arrests in the target areas.
2. Prevent juvenile delinquency
3. Improve referral processes between police and social agencies to respond to immediate needs within the target area.
4. Develop cooperative relationships between police officers and residents.
5. Reduce neighborhood blight.

Funded through local and State funds, the program supports a coordinator and officer. But, the essence of the program is close community work within the target area. Actions vary from saturation patrols to safe havens, referrals, working with neighboring groups, and code enforcement, among other matters. The program is focused on target areas (Siverly, East Side, and North Side) within the City that had significant criminal arrests.

This is an excellent example of how various programs (i.e., code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, and land use policies) are complemented by other City efforts. The "Weed and Seed" program deserves continued support.

Education Resources

Both the Oil City Area School District and the Venango Technology Center have completed, or have projects, underway to physically upgrade their facilities. Consequently, this Plan does not suggest additional physical improvements.

Both the Oil City Area School District and the Venango Technology Center, and their ties with the Venango Campus of Clarion University, represent a unique asset of great value.

However, as noted in the Economic Development Plan, these institutions and their ties with the Venango Campus of Clarion University represent a unique asset of great value. The recognition of education, and especially technical/job skill training, deserves enthusiastic support.



**Robert W. Rhoades Center
Venango Campus of Clarion University**

Though the Clarion, Venango Campus has a policy of using existing resources rather than building new classrooms/labs, the policy may need to change in future years. Once again, wholehearted support of this unique resource is a major Plan goal.

Though not as large as the foregoing institutions, the DuBois Business College is a valuable contributor to the local educational infrastructure, and local officials should work cooperatively with it to facilitate its improvement program. Historically, the

educational resources in the area do meet regularly and cooperate on activities. This Plan recommends that practice continues.

Recreational Resources

Oil City has an extensive park/recreation system. This Plan follows the listing contained in the Background Report. There must be one caution. If the history of recreation in Pennsylvania has provided one lesson, it is that parks and playgrounds *must be maintained!* A second lesson is that park budgets, particularly for operations and maintenance, are the first to be cut. With these concepts in mind, the recommendations of the Plan are conservative.

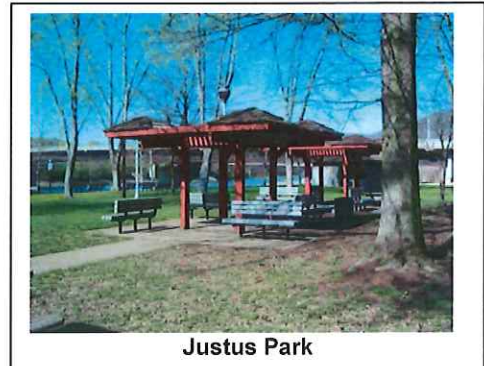
Individual Park Recommendations

- Mitchell Avenue: This complex includes ball fields, tennis courts, and a “Land of Laughter” playground. These facilities appear well used and a continued high level of maintenance is needed.
 - Consider limited night lighting on a “players-pay” basis for the tennis courts.
 - If the tennis courts lack use, consider their conversion to a hard-court basketball facility or skate park.
- Innis Street: A small park, but seems to be a well-used playground. The “Y” provides summer programs here. Maintain as is.
- The Marina: A wonderful facility, with great potential for expanded use. See the Tourism section of the Economic Development Plan. The “Waterfront Study” is recommending improvements and expended uses; this Plan concurs. (See the “Special” Section)



Innis Street Park

- Pierce Avenue: Due to topography, it is difficult to maintain and parking is nearly non-existent. The Siverly Neighborhood Association has officially adopted this facility in July of 2010. It was renamed in honor of local football standout, now businessman, Jim Shaughnessy. This project was also supported by the “Weed and Seed” program.
- Halyday Playground: Mothball, and, if possible, sell.
- Justus Park: The key City central park. No new facilities are suggested, but continued maintenance is needed. This is an important facility for Downtown activities. Also, given the park’s location, it is near to the bike trail, with a large parking lot adjacent to it. With little investment, it would be a first-rate trailhead. (See also the Bike Plan)
- Charlton Street Playground: The revitalization of this facility is already a “CDBG” project.
- Hasson Park and Related Facilities: A sprawling complex of passive (for example, Rhododendron Arboretum) and active recreational use, from picnicking to play apparatus. Ball fields, Dek hockey, and a skate park are yet other resources. This is a widely used facility. It must always receive a priority for maintenance.
- Ramage-Hasson Public Pool: The pool itself saw a \$1.6 million reconstruction. In a typical year, the pool attracts 15,000 to 20,000 visitors. Now, the bathhouse should be rejuvenated and a new roof installed.
- Harriott Avenue Playground: This includes a playground and a hard-court basketball court. The court needs repaired. It is well used and well placed. It should be a maintenance priority. The “Land of Laughter” playground also sees active use and is a valuable resource to Oil City’s North Side.
- Little League Fields: City-owned (Ridge/Traction) but maintained by the Little League. No changes are suggested.
- East 3rd and Walnut: This is a new vest-pocket playground serving the East Side in the City. Due to its relative small size, this new facility should make minimal maintenance demands. It will service an area which now lacks public recreation.
- The Siverly Neighborhood Association: The Siverly Neighborhood Association is also looking to improve a small park at Colbert and Wabash, on land owned by the Oil City Redevelopment Authority. Their intention is to add fencing and play apparatus.
- See also the Waterways Plan in the Special Section for recreational improvements along Oil Creek and the Waterways Plan.



Justus Park

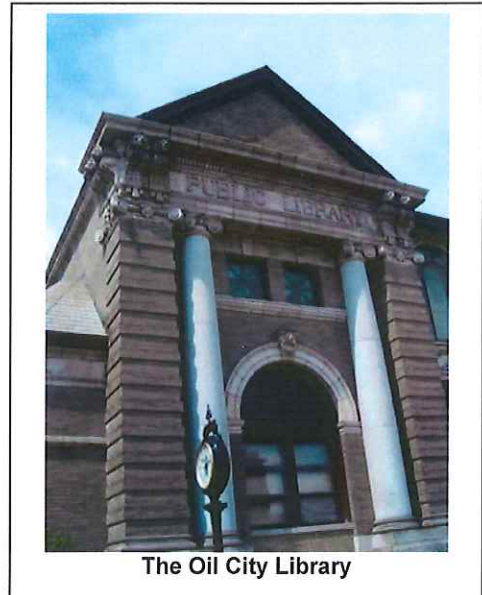
Note: The Bike Trail is a separate section.

One of the needs identified by the Community Survey was for an indoor facility, especially one focused on youth. Given budget realities, the three municipalities cannot afford such an undertaking. A special task force representing all three municipalities, the YMCA, the YWCA, and local churches, should be formed to examine this issue. Rather than a single, expensive solution, perhaps the solution lies in a coordinated programmed use of existing facilities.

The Oil City Library

Though a City department, the library must be considered as a regional asset. In fact, both Rouseville Borough and Cornplanter Township—partners in this Plan—are contributing members. This Plan recommends:

- **First Priority:** The roof, fortunately, is secured with assistance from the Peter's Foundation, the Justus Trust, as well as from the Library endowment fund. Work has not yet started, but is scheduled for 2011. The repair of the roof is the critical first step before any other significant work to this structure can proceed.
- **Replacement of the Handicapped Ramp/Central Avenue Stairs:** Once more, a mixture of grant funds (Commonwealth Libraries grant, DCNR and CDBG) will go toward these projects. (Scheduled for 2011)
- **"The Struxtures Study":** This is a \$2,500,000 project which would include electric, HVAC, and weatherization (see below). The two projects listed above are part of the Struxtures. Key elements are bringing the second floor auditorium into use as well as the unfinished basement area (see Library website for details). The Library is hoping for Federal and/or State funding for this undertaking. To better facilitate the implementation of the "Struxtures Study," phasing is a strong possibility. Once it is completed, the Library will have much larger, usable space and be a real showplace for the area.
- **Window Replacement:** A major project (\$368,657) is part of a County Capital Assistance grant (an element of the Struxtures study).
- **Personnel:** Although grants from government and foundations can help to resolve the physical issues with this popular asset, personnel are a separate issue. That issue is a concern for qualified replacements if retirements occur. This issue is now regarded as the key Library problem.



National Transit Building

At this time, the National Transit Building is a functioning facility of the Oil City Civic Center, Inc. It traditionally has received ongoing assistance from the City in terms of maintenance. This Plan recommends such assistance continue within the capacity of the City's budget. However, it is unlikely that the Civic Center's long-term capital needs can be met via City funds. Fortunately, the structure and its annex are now in sound condition.

Consequently, it is important that this facility look to attract either additional art-related tenants, or compatible non-profit/governmental organizations to realize income levels future enhancements may require. (See also ARTS section)

Oil City Parking Garage



This facility provides 560 parking spaces for the North Side downtown area. As noted in the Background Report, the facility's lifespan should extend until 2025 to 2050. However, that projection is based upon making significant repairs to the structure of \$2 million to \$2.5 million.

Parking garages should be "pay as you go." This Plan recommends that improvements to the structure be based upon projected income. Current income from the ramp is estimated at about \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year. If the income is not sufficient to meet the estimated expenditures, a compromise approach is called for.

Public Utilities

As little to limited growth is projected in Oil City over the next decade, the recommendations in this section are predicated upon these priorities:

- State-mandated*
- Activities where grants or very low-interest loans can make the improvements affordable to City residents
- Projects that increase system reliability and lower operational costs
- Projects which enhance worker safety

**Primarily aimed at the sanitary sewerage collection and treatment system*

Any improvement to furnish capacity or service to other users should be borne by those users, with costs fairly and transparently developed. It is important that cost data be clearly communicated to surrounding communities that use Oil City water services.

There is, however, one caveat. The City's Public Works Department does provide contract services to Cornplanter Township for water and sewer maintenance and repair. This Plan recommends that practice continue as long as the Department can meet its primary obligations within the City. If it cannot, that practice may need to be changed. But, no change should occur without giving the Township sufficient notice (at least six months) so they can reasonably arrange for alternative services.

Recommended Improvements – Water System Capital Program

- Line Replacement and Enhancement: Some 14,391 feet of new water main are scheduled. New lines will be primarily 12 inches in size. In all, 11 new projects are planned. The total cost is estimated at \$1,338,200.
- River/Creek Crossings: Two river crossings are slated for renewal, and a new Oil Creek crossing is scheduled. Estimated cost is \$159,500.

- **Booster Stations:** Three booster (pump) stations are scheduled for reconstruction. Estimated cost is \$1,075,000.
- **Storage Tanks:** The majority of the system's water storage tanks are scheduled for repair, cleaning, and recoating.

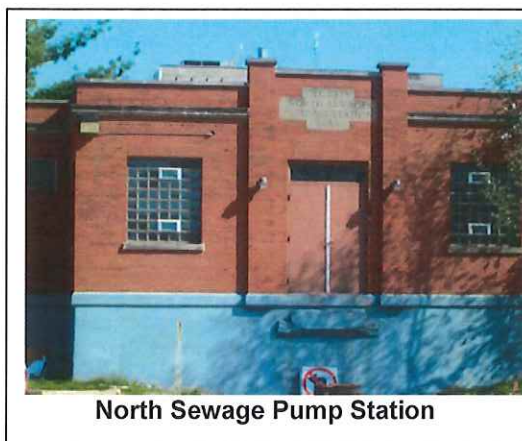
In addition to this formal improvement program, there are several other improvements that would improve the water system operations. These can be generalized as follows:

- New river crossing at the main plant
- Retention tank/wet well for chlorination
- Security fences – install or improve fences at the main plant and around tanks
- Road improvement to the main plant
- Refurbish the water plant
- Security cameras – various locations
- Additional truck for maintenance with needed gear
- New valves – Clark Summit, West End, Hogback
- New SCADA system

It must be stressed that many of the City's water lines are over 100 years old and are subject to breakage. Consequently, repair of the water lines is not just to reduce the loss of water—as important as that is. Usually, line breaks require road repair as well, incurring, over time, costs. So, the expense of poor lines is more than the loss of finished water. Projects to identify and electronically map waterlines are needed.

For years, Oil City has had a safe and apparently limitless supply of water. Yet, this resource needs protection. This Plan fully endorses the Water Resources Protection Plan, recently outlined for the area.

Sewer System Recommendations



North Sewage Pump Station

As noted in the Background Report, the City sewer treatment plant has a practical capacity of 11 million gallons a day (mgd). This is nearly a threefold increase in plant capacity from 2007. Why? Infiltration and inflow to the collection system during rain storms often overwhelm both collection and treatment capacity. As a result, the City prepared the needed "537 Plan" and has worked with the State to rectify its problems. This first step was to upgrade the treatment plant's capacity. That step has been completed.

The second step was completed in 2010. That involved the reconstruction of and improving the combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into the

Allegheny River and Oil Creek. The reconstruction will help to reduce overflow volumes and capture floating debris.

After the CSO work is done, the system must be monitored for a period of time. The goal of the system improvements is to treat 85% of influent, regardless of the source of the wastewater. This is an EPA/DEP-mandated goal. If this goal is not met, the City likely faces additional system improvements that could run in to millions of dollars. The City has ordered the needed monitoring phase, and it will start in 2011.

To somewhat complicate this issue, both Cornplanter and Cranberry townships will be increasing their contributing flows. However, City consulting engineers, and its engineering department, are taking these future flows into consideration as they work on system improvements.

Meeting the 85% treatment standard is the first priority. However, there are other needs at the treatment plant. These are:

- Grinders for the plant digester and pump station
- Belt press for sludge
- Flow meter for Hogs Hollow
- Pickup truck with a snow plow for site maintenance
- Identify and map sewer lines in the City

Public Works

The Public Works Department

This department provides a wide scope of services but has very limited resources. As it is unlikely that additional personnel will be added soon, as an alternative, needed equipment can be purchased that will facilitate operations. Listed below are the priority items for the Public Works operation:

- New excavator on tracks (\$90,000 to \$100,000)*
- Leaf removal equipment – 16- to 25-yard capacity
- Street sweeper (\$200,000)*

**Estimates*

Transportation – Oil City

There is a separate Transportation section for each municipality, with an overall Plan element focusing on PennDOT projects. This section highlights Oil City's needs.

Roads of Local Impact: The following roads/highways have been identified by the Citizens Survey or local sources as needing repair, repaving, or upgrading:

- Central Avenue (to 9th Street)
- Innis Street
- East Second Street
- Oak Grove Street
- Route 8 – City line west to Center

The most dangerous intersections:

- First and Wilson
- 2nd and Central
- 7th and Innis

In the 1989 Oil City Comprehensive Plan, the widening of the Route 8 “Bypass” (Center Street Bridge) to the White Bridge was recommended. This Plan continues that recommendation. It further recommends that in lieu of the current stop sign arrangement at the White Bridge, the feasibility of a traffic circle should be investigated.

The Route 62 Study focuses on the transportation system on Oil City's South Side. This includes a traffic circle at Wilson and signal enhancements, as well as strategies to increase in pedestrian traffic. Both the Route 62 and Waterways studies embrace the extension of hike/bike trails. (See Special Section)

Rail

It is important to continue local rail service. There have been suggestions to reestablish rail service to the Oil City Industrial Park. Preliminary cost estimates for this project are at least \$600,000. However, no details have been obtained relative to needed car volume to institute active service to this facility.

At the current time, rail service through the City appears sound. However, some properties may be surplus, and there is the possible abandonment of lines. The City should acquire such properties. In this manner, they can be secured for bike/hike trails or kept for other future needs.

Transit/Bus

In view of the precarious transit funding, this Plan recommendation is modest – keep the current routes and the Demand/Response system. If possible, a loop from the White Bridge along Route 8 to Rouseville should be instituted, then up Moody Run Road to Grandview and the Golden Living Center, where it would intersect with the current route for Oil City. This modest route

change is suggested for Cornplanter/Rouseville. (See also Cornplanter and Rouseville sections.) Cornplanter would also like to see service to Plumer by the transit service.

Pedestrian

The Route 62 Study addresses pedestrian needs in their study area. However, sidewalk needs are prevalent through many areas. Neighborhood associations should be asked to prioritize sidewalk needs in their respective areas and the City institute a sidewalk repair program. In limited instances, State (PennDOT) funding may be available.

Special Projects

There has been much discussion to transform the unused section of the Wye Railroad Bridge between Siverly and the East Side as a pedestrian crossing. In fact, it now serves as an informal one. Both special studies—Waterways and Route 62—also recommend pedestrian use of this structure, as does this Plan*. However, two important conditions are made:

First: The pedestrian portion of the bridge must be properly fenced and made safe.

Second: Safe, convenient access to the bridge from both Siverly and the East Side must be provided.

**It must be noted that the bridge is railroad property and its cooperation is a must.*

Rouseville Borough

Introduction

Rouseville's current comprehensive plan is now about 20 years old. Some of the pressing issues identified in that document no longer exist. Others have been solved, some have changed, and some have remained.



Rouseville Borough Building

The principal change to the Borough over these past two decades was the closure and demolition of the Pennzoil refinery and offices. The presence of the refinery historically engendered mixed results. On one hand, it was the economic base of Rouseville. Conversely, it often could be intrusive, impacting on the quality of life.

Once again, the former Pennzoil site is at the economic heart of Rouseville. But, in lieu of a current asset, it is in the role of its future economic base. The development of that cleared land is singularly important to Rouseville; however, the lessons of history must never be forgotten. Responsible development allowing a productive coexistence between residential and industrial or commercial land is a must.

Perhaps the three overarching needs of Rouseville are economic development, housing, and attracting new residents. These last two are interrelated. For the past several years, the housing

market in Rouseville has been very slow. Policies must focus on making the Borough a more attractive place to buy a house and to raise a family. A better housing market would also enable older residents to sell their home. This leads to another expressed need—condo or apartment units for the aged 55-plus housing consumer. Attractive homes with limited maintenance responsibilities are a plus for older citizens.

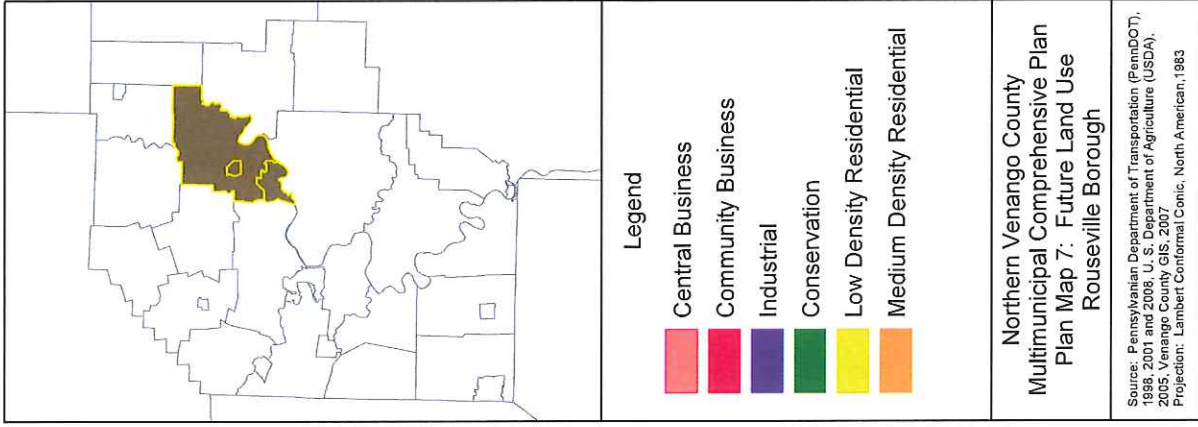
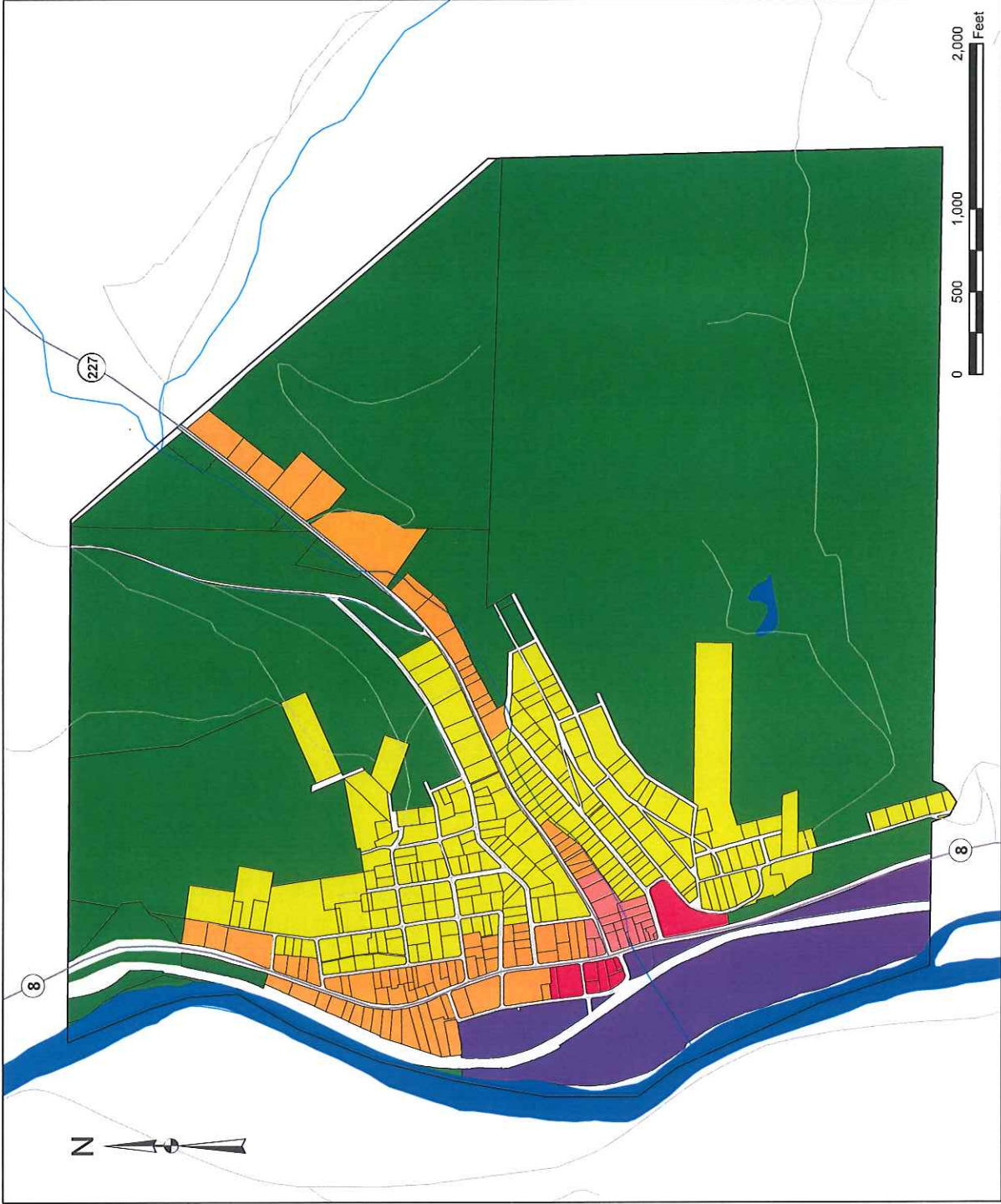
Three overarching needs of Rouseville are economic development, housing, and attracting new residents.

The primary focus on the Rouseville element of the Plan emphasizes these needs. However, there are other items of importance—water, sewer, roads, public safety, and recreation.

Historic Resources

Though much of Rouseville's built environment is over 50 years old, no listing in the State "ARCH"* historic database has been found. Consequently, no actions are recommended.

**Since discontinued by the State.*



Land Use

Rouseville is essentially a residential community. Most of its housing development is east of Route 8 and north of Route 227, with a smaller residential area found south of Cherry Run and east of Route 8. To a large extent, steep slopes and floodplains have limited development patterns in other areas. As noted in the Background Report, there is little commercial use remaining in the Borough. Most of its existing commercial property is now vacant. Industrial land has a similar characteristic. It is present, but largely undeveloped. An existing warehouse structure on Route 8 is the largest industrial use. However, the vacant Pennzoil property, now controlled by the Borough, does have great potential; and a local industrial firm has purchased a large parcel there. Development is eminent. That, or any, development will primarily be guided by the Borough's zoning ordinance.

Generally, the current zoning ordinance fits Rouseville fairly well, but this Plan does have some recommendations:

- The zoning ordinance is about 20 years old, and there have been several changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code that should be incorporated into the Borough's ordinance. (*Note: Suggested amendments were forwarded to the Borough in February of 2010.*)
- Consider restricting uses in the Conservation District. Even though this district requires large lots, its lack of infrastructure and slope characteristics calls for low-impact uses. A review of current permitted uses is recommended to eliminate inappropriate uses and to focus on a few low-impact uses.
- Focus the R-1 District to a true "single-family" district—delete intense uses.
- If a "55-plus" housing project is a goal of the Borough, the zoning ordinance needs to be amended to reasonably allow this. Given current regulations, a 40-unit low-rise apartment complex would require a parcel of nearly 5 acres. A provision to allow multi-family development as a conditional use with some modest design criteria (landscaping, lighting, etc.) is recommended.
- Develop new landscaping standards for industrial uses, especially along Route 8, which is Rouseville's "face" to those traveling through. Such standards should be reasonable, and allow for safe sight distances at driveways (look at PennDOT HOP requirements, 67 Pa Code 441.8). A Beatification Committee has been formed to help with such standards.

The Borough does not have its own subdivision and land development ordinance. Given the limited new development in the Borough, the Plan does not recommend a subdivision and land development ordinance be adopted, and Rouseville should continue to rely on the County SALDO.

Housing

A review of “multi-list” housing sales from 2002 to 2008 showed 27 housing sales (four changed hands twice during that time). The average sale price was \$27,718, and the average number of days on the market was 190 days. This is dramatic proof that the current Borough housing market is weak. The following actions are suggested to strengthen this situation:

**55-plus
housing is a
priority.**

- Continue working with Oil City and Cornplanter in an all-out code enforcement blitz. Poorly maintained housing seriously depresses the market.
- Facilitate housing rehabilitation efforts. The following options are recommended:
 - Join with the County of Venango in a HOME application grant. Request the County or a consultant to file and administer the program.
 - Join with Cornplanter and/or Oil City in a HOME application. Request the County or a consultant to file and administer the program.
 - Promote the USDA housing program. This program operates directly between eligible homeowners and the USDA Meadville office. Low-interest loans and some grants (for older homeowners 62-plus) are available.
- Promote a 55-plus housing development. THIS WILL NOT BE EASY. First steps:
 - Get a sponsor—normally church groups or similar nonprofit organizations.
 - Visit communities that have attractive market rate, or near market rate, 55-plus housing. Learn from their experience. (Suggestions: Erie; Meadville; Neshannock Trails; Indiana, Pennsylvania)
 - Shop for a developer. Such groups as HANDS of Erie; NCR (National Church Residents) of Columbus, Ohio; and Lutheran Social Services of Western Pennsylvania all have various types of 55-plus developments in western Pennsylvania.
 - Note: The above organizations usually focus on government-assisted units. Unfortunately, assisted housing has a bad reputation. This is primarily due to the restrictions that HUD places on units that it finances. Too often, they are soulless slabs. It need not be the case. There are some very attractive government-assisted units. The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency has sponsored some excellent projects in western Pennsylvania. Private developers are also available.
 - Locate a site for the development in the Borough.

Demolition: Even the best code enforcement program cannot remediate all housing problems. The Borough must consider a demolition program, and, likely, needs to expect two or three units may warrant this action. Prior to beginning a demolition effort, Rouseville should consult with their solicitor and the Oil City Code Office on procedures and problems.

Community Facilities

Water

The Borough has been progressively upgrading its water distribution system over the past few years, usually with CDBG assistance. The following areas still need to have lines replaced:

- Second Street
- First Avenue
- Church Street

In addition, an evaluation of finished water treatment and storage facilities are suggested as a preventive measure.

Sanitary Sewers

This is an older system. Borough officials believe using a surge storage tank in the Borough should be the next priority. The Borough completed its Act 537 Plan on June 29, 2010. The centerpiece of this Plan is a new sewer treatment plant at the current location. The cost is \$1.7 million. Currently, the Borough is in the process of finalizing its financing plan. However, once the plant is constructed, the Borough should continue the process of updating the system and eliminate all the "I&I" possible.

Borough Park

The Borough has a small park for youngsters, off of Second Avenue, near the Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department Social Center. Its continued maintenance is recommended. Some simple landscaping with low maintenance shrubs would improve this facility's appearance.



Rouseville Volunteer Fire Department

The Fire Chief reports that new recruits have been found and the Department should have sufficient personnel for the future. They are active and well trained. The Department is financially sound and no immediate capital needs are reported.

Library

Historically, the Borough has supported the Oil City Library. This Plan recommends a continuation of that policy.

Transportation

With the rebuilding of the Route 8/Route 227 intersection, no major projects are suggested. However, an improvement to the turn radius of that intersection (northeast quadrant) would facilitate truck left turns from Route 8 (south bound) to Route 227.

In addition, the Borough is looking into State and Federal grants relating to sidewalk programs. In the previous comprehensive plan, a sidewalk program was suggested; it remains a need. Many

Borough sidewalks are in poor condition. Rather than a mandated program, a cost-sharing approach is suggested. Some communities have instituted “50-50” sidewalk programs. The municipality furnishes the cement and the homeowner the contractor. This program would have two primary benefits. First, it would allow Borough residents and their children a safe place to walk or play. Second, it would help promote the housing market. In the early 2000s, the National Association of Realtors did an in-depth study of homebuyers. Sidewalks were a top attraction. This program is another initiative to promote the Borough’s housing market.

Finally, there should be consideration of re-instituting bus service to Rouseville. County officials indicate the Rouseville stop was terminated due to a lack of ridership. But, if a senior housing development is a potential, bus service will certainly be a plus. A new loop could begin near the White Bridge in Oil City, proceed to Rouseville along Route 8, and then proceed up Moody Run Road to Grandview. This route could then connect with the current VenanGO route on Grandview, at the Golden Living Nursing facility.

Economic Development

To be able to realize some of the suggestions in this Plan, dollars are needed. Historically, the Borough has relied on grants for some of its infrastructure needs. However, the ongoing State budget crisis is an illustration that the grant options are not always available. The other option is to begin enhancing the Borough’s real estate tax base. Two primary actions are suggested:

- Join with Oil City, Cornplanter, and the ORA in actively promoting the sale and use of the Route 8 property and the former Pennzoil laboratory building.*
- Work positively with potential developers to determine if funds are available to assist with new development.

**See also the Economic Plan.*

Summary

Many of the issues facing Rouseville have been building for years and will not be resolved by mere words on paper, nor will solutions occur quickly. But, the actions suggested are both doable, and will make a great difference to the Borough.

Regional Initiatives

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been fostering regional, multi-municipal activities for the past fifteen years. Such a policy makes sense for both economic reasons and to enhance citizen services. This Plan embraces that concept and sets forth the following regional initiatives,

Regional activities take time and effort. Actions that foster regional solutions do not need to be complicated.

both general and specific. No plan is self-executing. And, regional activities take time and effort. Actions that foster regional solutions do not need to be complicated.

A series of four task forces are to be formed. All three municipalities are to be members of these groups, with neighboring municipalities and the County asked to participate, as needed. The process should be as open and transparent as possible. The basic goals should be to identify regional needs where cooperation is vital, identify discrete actions, and take them. However, where agreement on actions cannot be mutually agreed on, those issues should be put to one side. COOPERATION can accomplish much—disagreement little.

Steering Committee

In order to oversee the suggested “Task Forces” listed below, a steering committee is needed, composed of members from all of the municipalities. It is recommended two or three members be appointed from each municipality (at least one elected member of the governing body) to meet on a quarterly basis. The initial task would be to discuss common problems and set up the Task Forces described below.

Task Force #1 – Land Use

At this time, no policy of “land-use sharing” or “specific plan” is suggested (see Planning Code). However, these options may become more attractive in the future. The immediate goals of this group would be to discuss the current land use policies of all three municipalities, keep the respective ordinances updated, and promote common land use policies. At this time, only four meetings per year are suggested. (See Map 8, Future Land Use)

Task Force #2 – Housing

This is one of the key groups to implement this Plan. There are four major goals of this Task Force:

- **Code Enforcement:** Fortunately, all three municipalities use the Oil City Code Office and have adopted the International Property Maintenance Code. Aggressive, strict enforcement in all municipalities is a must.
- **Demolition:** Unfortunately, there are units in all three municipalities which warrant demolition. The Oil City Code Officer can advise on the process of demolition. All three municipalities would benefit by cooperative actions and bidding.
- **Appearance:** Public and private renovations are needed to restore a viable regional housing stock. The USDA, HOME, PHFA programs as well as private initiatives are needed.

- **The Market:** This goal is to measure the impact of the prior three actions on the regional housing market. The return of a viable market is a central Plan goal. In addition, this group should cooperatively look to initiate and promote the successful construction of 55-plus housing. Local real estate offices should be included in this Task Force.

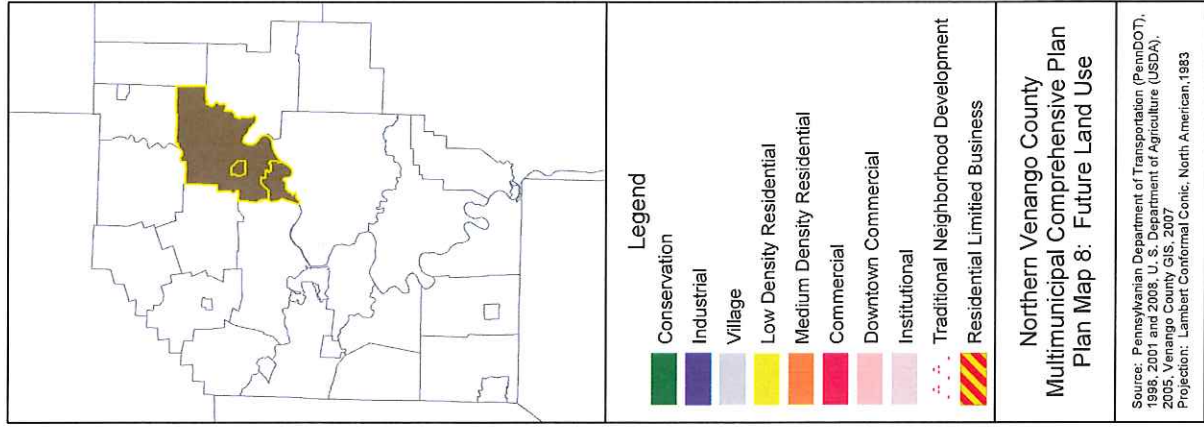
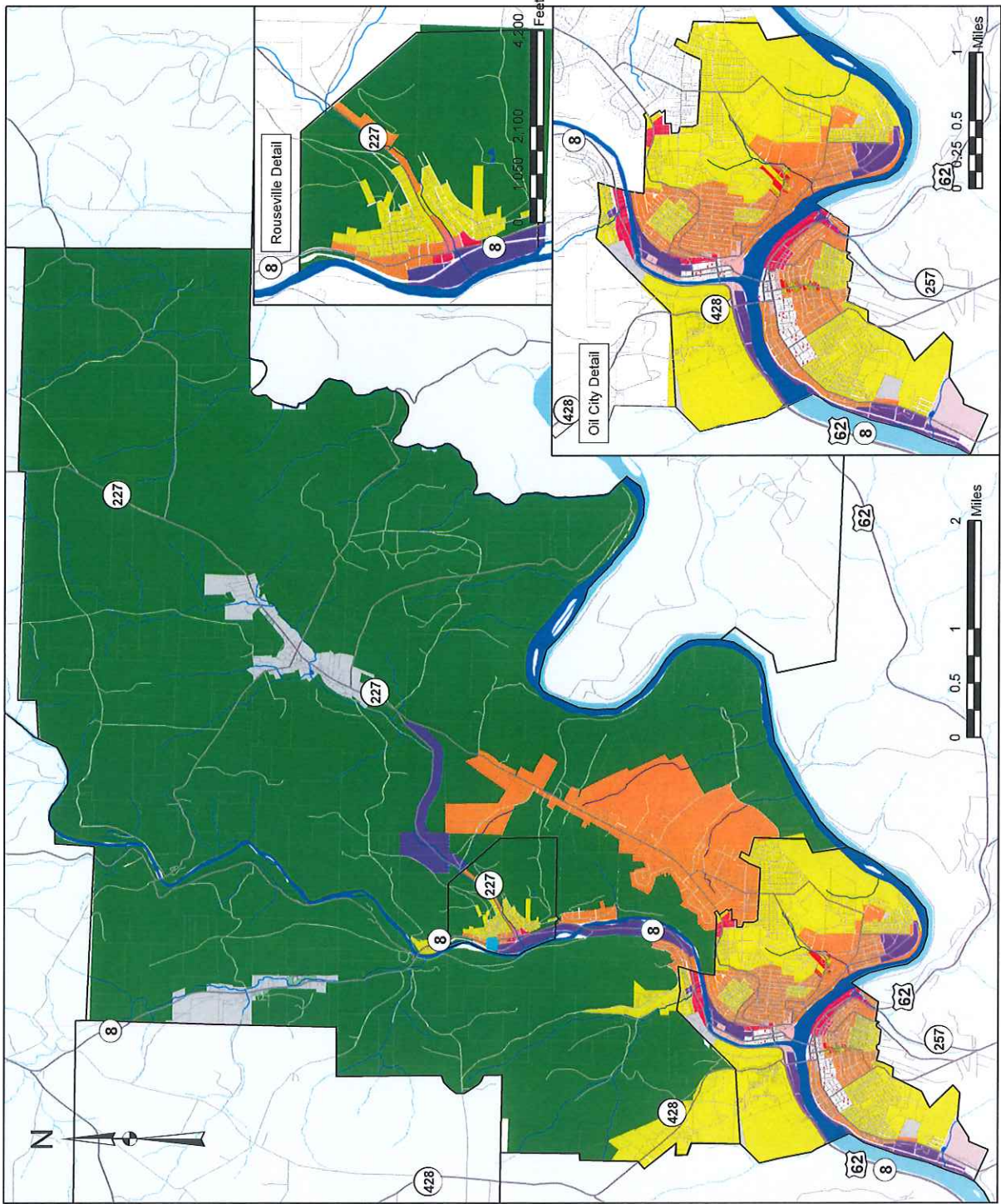
Task Force #3 – Community Facilities

This task force would have a wide-range mandate. Its obvious goal is to improve the provision and services for essential services, especially water and sewer. But, it should also include any services where heavy equipment and special services are needed.

Some consideration of a Regional Municipal Facilities and Service Authority is warranted. The question is whether local resources can be economically grouped for better, less expensive service? Only objective/open cooperation will answer this question.

Task Force #4 – Public Safety

Though this Plan does not foresee any immediate changes to current public safety arrangements, continuing cooperation is a must. Though only Oil City has police services, all communities have fire departments and share emergency services. Oil City should establish a format to offer contract police services, if requested, from other Plan communities.



The Regional Transportation Plan

As noted in the Background Report, the primary source for transportation funding is the United States Department of Transportation. Generally, their funds are funneled through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. Eligible funding categories include transit, air lines, rail, as well as roads and highways.

The planning project for selecting projects is based upon Federal law. Over the past ten years, that law has gone through a series of name changes, starting as “Ice Tea” and now bearing the name “SAFETEA.LU.” Regardless of the acronym, the planning process has remained essentially the same.

- Projects are suggested, nominated, etc. by local communities to individual county planning agencies. Roads and highways, airports, rail lines, transit, and even bike/hiking trails can also be involved.
- Under the auspices of the regional planning mechanism (Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission), a “Rural Planning Organization (or RPO), project lists are developed. This is done in concert with the District PennDOT office in Oil City.
- The process is budget-constrained. This leads to rounds of processing and compromise locally and with the Harrisburg office of PennDOT—even the Federal Highway Administration is involved.
- This result is two basic documents. The first is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the list of projects to be accomplished over a 5-year period. The second is the Long-Range Transportation Plan. That plan has a 25-year horizon.

The current TIP lists the following projects:

- Waitz Road Bridge* (Cornplanter Township) and Bankson Road Bridge (Cornplanter): To be let in 2011.
- Sportsman Curve Project – Route 8: Design is authorized; construction not schedule yet. It is now listed 2011-2018 at \$5,000,000 for construction.
- Route 8, Cornplanter Run: This is a small bridge near the intersection with Union Street. Estimated let date is 2011.
- Route 8 Bypass Wall: Let April of 2009 to repair the retaining wall along the Route 8 bypass in Oil City. (Completed)
- Route 227 – Bridge over Cherry Run in Cornplanter Township: designed and bid April 2009. (Completed)
- Petroleum Center Bridge (SR 1004): This is on the TIP, but no let dates have been set.



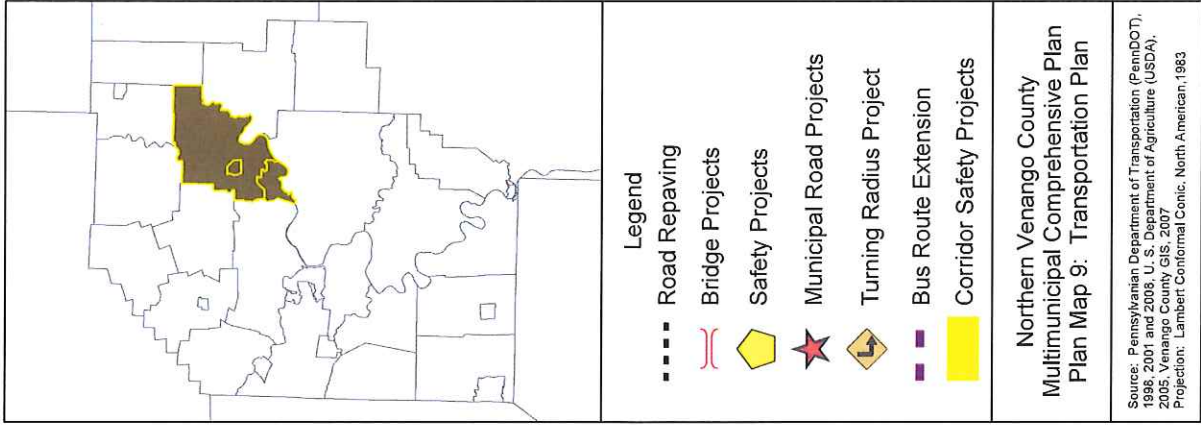
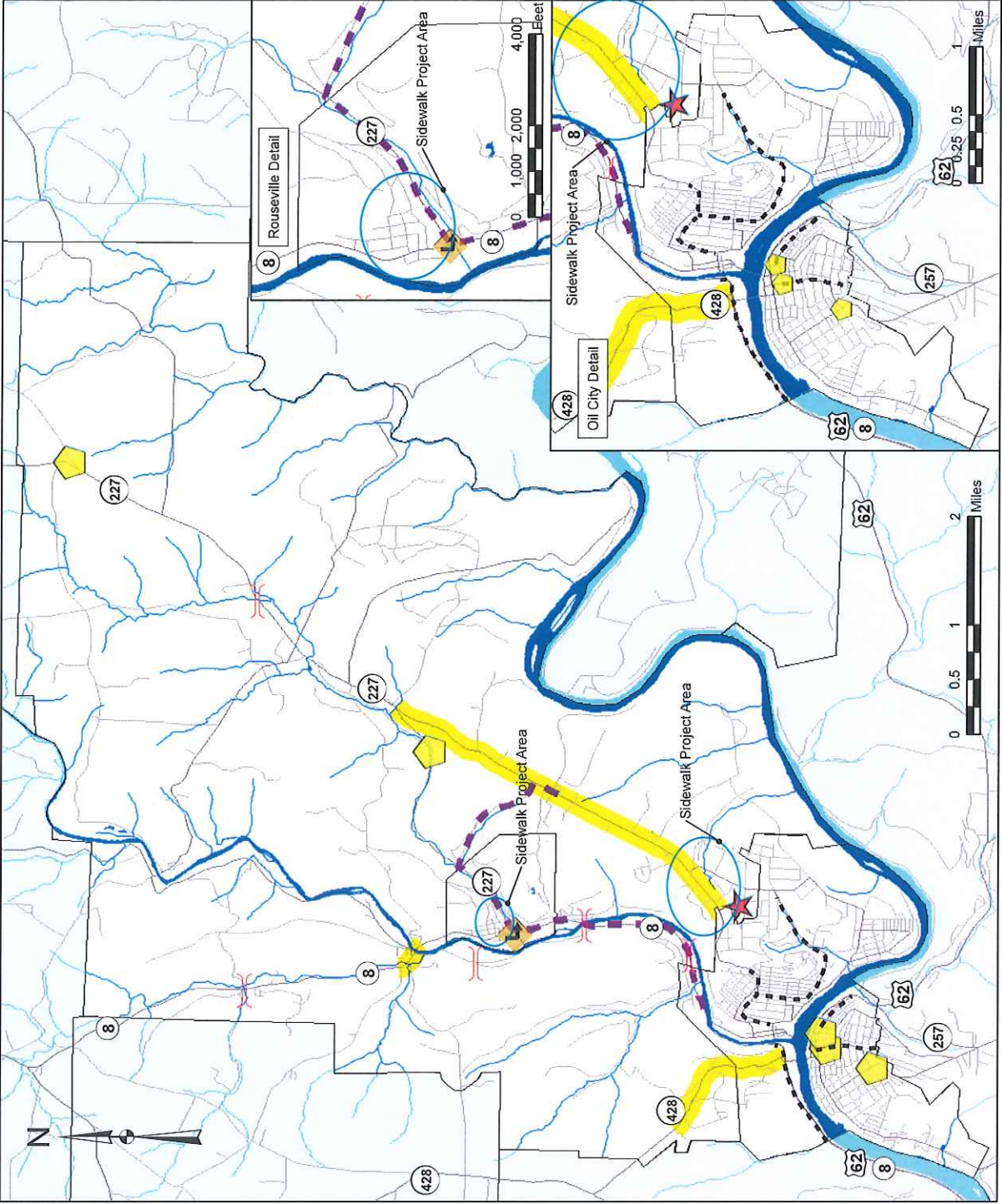
Route 8 Bypass Wall

- McClintock Bridge on Route 8 (Cornplanter, just below Rouseville*): Due to be let 2011-2012. In excess of \$7 million.
- Oil City, Rynd Farm Trail: This is a Federal “earmark.” Design is underway. Will connect the Waitz Road bike trail section with Oil City – \$1.5 million – construction 2011.
- Railroad: Bridge rehab and construction. About \$200,000 per year – 2011 to 2014.
- Transit: Buses, shelters, and signage.
- Bankson Road Bridge: Cornplanter (\$550,000).
- Route 62 Corridor Study recommendations (traffic circle, signalization, pedestrian enhancements, etc.).

**These two are scheduled to be let together.*

In addition, there appears to be over \$7.6 million scheduled for the Routes 62/257 intersection. Physically, this project is in Cranberry Township; yet, this intersection is vital to Oil City and its South Side, in particular. Also, it must be noted that Route 62, from the Petroleum Street Bridge to the City line is, the subject of a special study; its recommendations are part of this Plan.

There are several additional projects discussed under the individual headings. Map 9, “Transportation Plan,” shows an overview of all projects. See the Route 62 Study also for its transportation recommendations.



An Economic Plan for the Cornplanter-Oil City-Rouseville Area The COR

The economy of any area is not monolithic, but is composed of a myriad of interconnected relationships. Every community has a unique set of assets—qualities which present opportunities. Thus, it is locally. There are unique qualities which should enable the COR area to re-energize its economic base. We must stress this is not a full-blown economic plan—such as the specialized Downtown Plan—nor those prepared for the Oil Regional Alliance (ORA) or Northwest Regional. Rather, it seeks to capitalize on existing assets where municipal level assistance can be most effective.

Every community has a unique set of assets—qualities which present opportunities.

One of the primary assets of the region is a constellation of superior educational resources. Technical training—of all sorts—is a primary requisite for competing in today's economy. Such training must be contemporary, and be able to quickly adapt to market conditions. The “big three” locally (Clarion University—Venango Campus, the Oil City Area School District, and the Venango Technology Center) recognize this need. They talk and cooperate on this task, which is an asset few communities possess.

Current Conditions

A detailed analysis of the local economy was contained in the Background Report. A brief synopsis follows:

- Between 1990 and 2000—on an adjusted basis—Cornplanter (-\$735) and Rouseville (-\$8,032) saw decreases in median household income in constant dollars, while Oil City experienced a modest increase (+637).

Table 1: Median Household Income – Census 2000

Cornplanter Township	\$36,066
Oil City	\$29,060
Rouseville Borough	\$22,917
Venango County	\$32,267
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	\$40,106
<i>Source: Census 2000</i>	

As can be seen, Cornplanter's incomes are higher than those of Venango County as well as Oil City and Rouseville, but all areas lagged behind State-wide figures. This is a typical situation for western Pennsylvania.

- Poverty levels were high in Rouseville (25.2%) and Oil City (19.1%), per Census 2000.
- According to State data, annual average wages in Venango County were about 75% of the State's level.

Table 2: Average Wages – Top Five Employment Sectors – 2008

Sector	Employment	Average Wage
Manufacturing	4,457	\$46,145
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,478	\$32,172
Retail	2,896	\$19,672
Local Government	1,879	\$33,309
State Government	1,502	\$44,700

Source: WIA, State of Pennsylvania

- County income was derived from earnings (53.3%); transfer receipts—usually retirement and Social Security (33.3%); and dividends, interest, and rents (13.4%). Over the past 10 years, transfer receipts have increased, indicating more retirees. (Data: U.S. Department of Labor, 2007)
- Retail Trade: Data is only available for Oil City for 1997 and 2002. It showed sales did increase, just slightly less than the rate of inflation. Retail payrolls (adjusted for inflation) experienced a 23% decline.
- According to local sources, industrial employment was significantly below 2009 levels; but there were some positive signs. Locally, SMS Millcraft, Schake Industries, and Electralloy all are expanding their facilities.

The Plan

The issue relative to economic development strategies is basically in what areas are local strengths most apparent and how can the three communities positively impact the various economic sectors. Plan recommendations will be done by economic sector. They will identify appropriate lead agencies and what role the three municipalities could play.

Tourism

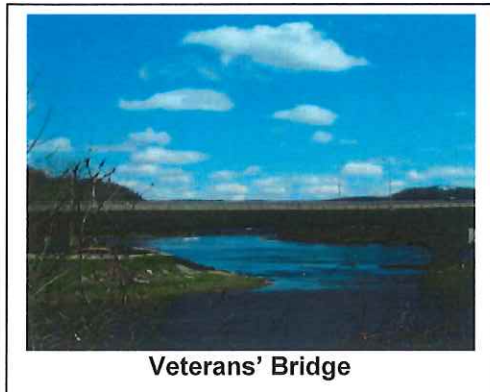
Tourism is traditionally touted as one of Pennsylvania's major industries. According to a report prepared by Global Insight for the Pennsylvania Tourism Office (2007), tourists spent \$27.81 billion in the Commonwealth. This reportedly generated \$18.96 billion in wages. Venango County is included in Pennsylvania's "Great Lakes" Region, and that region was credited with \$1.25 billion in tourist income.

Tourism impacts primarily two economic areas: NAICS*, Sector 71 (Arts, Entertainment and Recreation) and Sector 72 (Accommodations and Food Services). In Venango County, these two sectors employed about 1,400 persons (7%) of the County's 20,420-person workforce (2008 data). These sectors have relatively low wage rates (\$10,000 to \$11,000 annual average)—about one third that of the County average. Yet, they



Oil Creek State Park

provide important “second” jobs. In addition, private tourist-based businesses do help stabilize property assessments. Where possible, tourism efforts should be enhanced.



Veterans' Bridge

Additional tourist assets would be useful; for example, a bait “concession” stand located along the Allegheny River, near the Marina, and handy to the bike trail. In addition to snacks and fishing needs, a potential for bike, boat, and canoe rentals exist. This recommendation echoes that of the concurrent Waterways Study. River access points at East Siverly, as also recommended in that Plan, would be a benefit. Finally, the Waterways Study recommends a “white water” attraction, starting near the Veterans’ Bridge on the South Side. (See Waterways Study)

Another strategy is the grouping of attractions. The “Tyred Wheels” Museum, a privately owned resource, is for sale. It presents an opportunity to purchase and locate it in a central location, more attractive to tourists. This concept should not focus on one attraction. The study area with the Venango Area Chamber of Commerce and Oil City, in particular, should form a committee to look for similar opportunities.

Traditionally, tourism is the purview of the Chamber of Commerce. In this region, tourism is also aided by the Oil Region National Heritage Area. Between these two agencies, tourist promotion is professionally handled. The continuing success of the annual Oil Heritage Days in Oil City is witness to this fact. This Plan suggests no change to the current tourism policies. Municipal cooperation and support are warranted.

Where can the area help? It is also critical the three municipalities support tourist assets as well as promotional activities. Here, their support could be quite effective. One of the primary tourist resources is the Oil Creek State Park, which was threatened with a shutdown during the 2009 State Budget crisis. Though the shutdown was avoided, this resource merits continued protection. Just as important as the Oil Creek Park— or perhaps more so—are the regional bike trails. Though this resource is covered by a separate Plan element, its completion would provide a continuous trail system from Titusville to Emlenton, well over 50 miles in length—enough for the most enthusiastic cyclist.

**North American Industry Classification System*

Retail

Most of the retail activity in the study area is within Oil City and is focused in either the North Side or South Side Downtowns. As noted in the Background Report, retail trade has been declining in Oil City. Retail activity, however, has at least three benefits: employment, tax base, and community identity.

The recently completed Downtown enhancement programs have created a pleasant, welcoming environment. But, the basic need is a revitalized commercial base. For some time, various groups have been working on that issue—the retail vigor of Oil City. They have coalesced into a

working group assisted by the Chamber, the ORA, and the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission. Based on current initiatives, the Plan suggests the following:

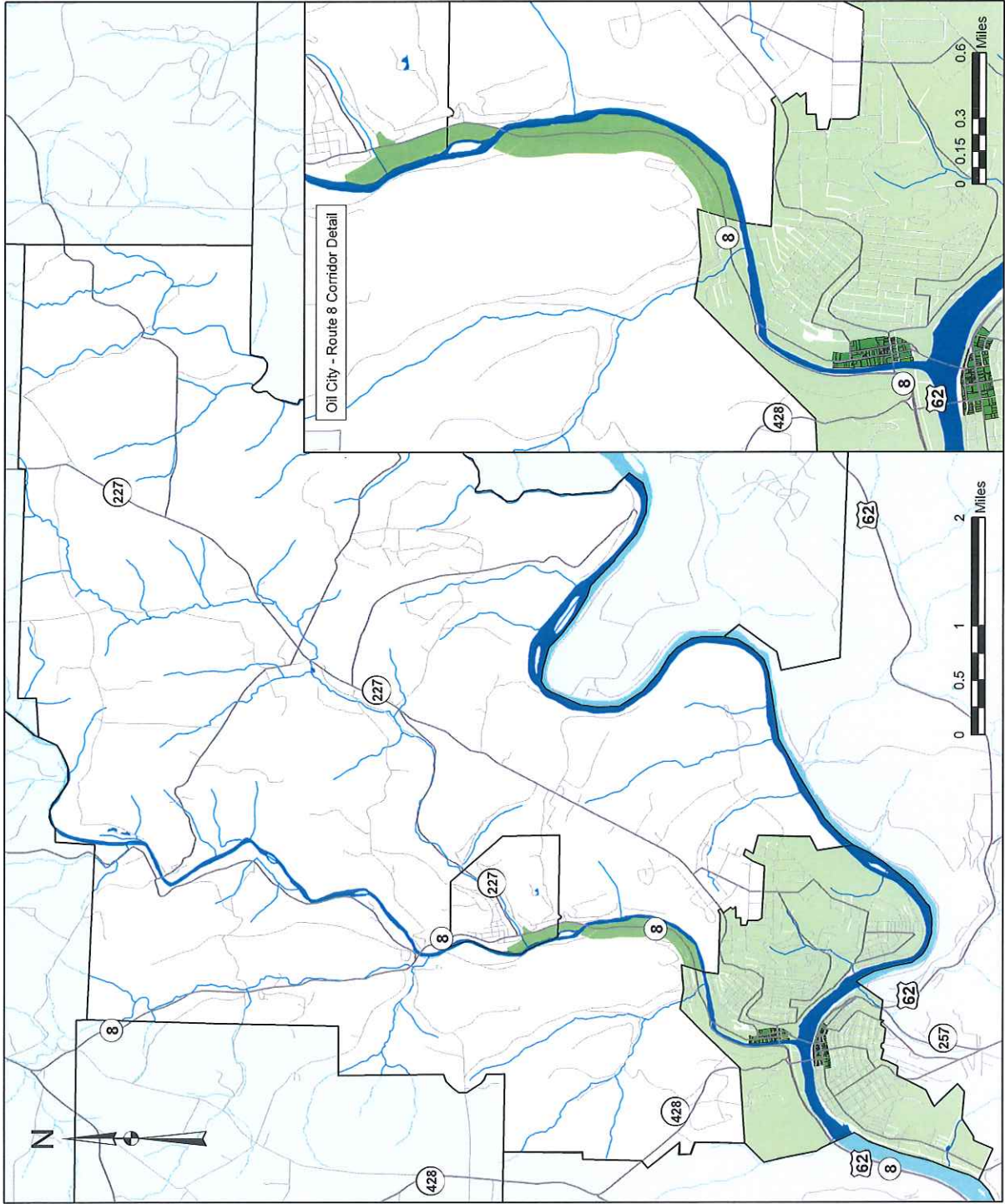
- A “Main Street” application has been prepared for Oil City, with active support by the ORA. If funded, financial support will be needed from the City.
- Anchor Building Grant: In addition to the Main Street program, an Anchor Building nominee should be considered by the Main Street working group. Grants of up to \$500,000 are available—for 30% to 50% of eligible project costs (see State website). Selection of an “Anchor” building should be the task of the Oil City Main Street program.
- Problem buildings in the Downtown are a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The “Brody” block is now condemned. The demolition of this building, however, presents real challenges. The primary one is the presence of asbestos. Proper removal of this hazardous waste is an estimated cost of \$200,000. In addition, there is an accumulation of bird waste on the upper floor, presenting yet another health hazard. The Downtown Group envisions a “greenspace” here, in lieu of the current structure. This greenspace would serve as a land bank, waiting for an appropriate developer. It could be used temporarily for a number of uses. Even a synthetic ice rink has been suggested.
- The largest physical challenge is “Cornplanter Square.” The former Mellon Bank Building has been vacant for years. Its location is a key one in the North Side Downtown.
- Analysis of Downtown Buildings, both the North and South Sides: As an initial activity to the Main Street program, a cursory analysis of the structures in the Downtowns would be useful. The inventory could use the database of Downtown structures already completed as part of the Main Street application. It is suggested the Oil City Redevelopment Authority be involved in this effort. There may be obstacles to such an activity; yet, it would be of great benefit to any Downtown initiatives.
- There are other projects the Oil City Main Street program could pursue. These include shared elevator access of multiple buildings and a Venango Campus bookstore in the Downtown.
- For highway commercial development, the Route 8 corridor from Oil City to the Route 227 intersection in Rouseville should be the area’s focal point. At a minimum, a list of



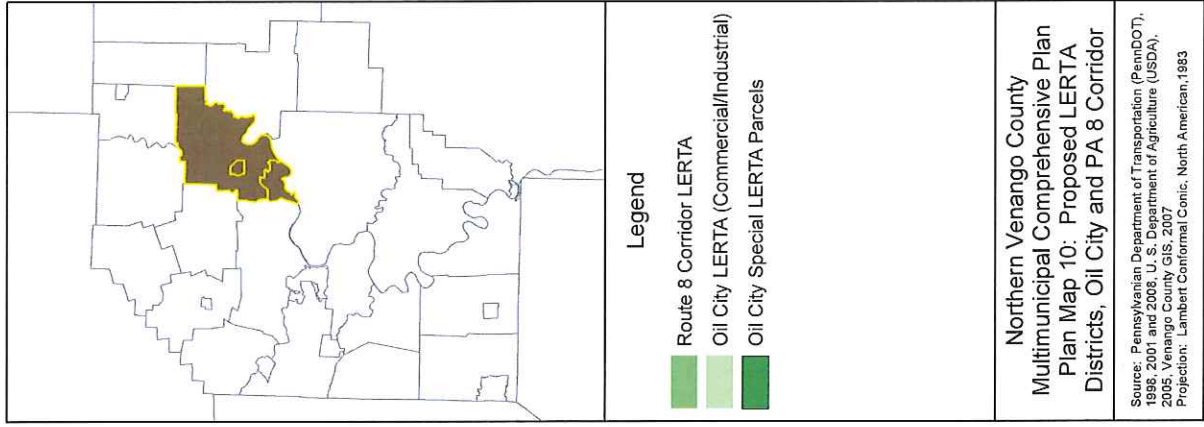
The “Brody” Block



Oil City Industrial Park



Oil City - Route 8 Corridor Detail



available properties, contacts, asking prices, utility availability, zoning, and traffic counts should be made available. A *joint* LERTA district is recommended. LERTA is a tax abatement of assessable improvements to real estate. The Oil City pattern of a five-year program is recommended, using a 100%, 80%, 60%, 40%, 20% declining abatement approach. Rouseville and Cornplanter should adopt similar schemes for the corridor. *(Note: Oil City has only limited space in this corridor, from the "White Bridge" north, to the City line.)* (The change of FEMA floodplain areas on Oil Creek has limited the attractiveness of this proposal.)

Manufacturing: In 2008, manufacturing was the top employment sector in Venango County, with an average wage of \$46,145 (about 40% higher than the County average). The traditional inducements used in Pennsylvania to help manufacturers expand or to relocate focus on land, capital, and labor. Oil City has abundant water resources. Marketing efforts should promote this resource, both for processing needs and as a potential geothermal energy source.

Land and Buildings: A long-time approach to economic development is developing or redeveloping industrial land and/or buildings. Sometimes, the land is sold or leased at below-market rates. A successful local example is the Oil City Industrial Park. The park is full, and employers there are paying good wages.

Its very success is a problem, as all available manufacturing space has been let. And, as a result, one of the recommendations of this Plan is for the City to consider the development of a "spec" building on the site. Such a building should consist of a metal shell, with a gravel floor and minimal electric connections. Usually, these structures are 10,000 to 12,000 square feet in size and are easily expandable. The benefit of such buildings is they can be quickly finished to accommodate a specific user. Concrete floors, electric, plumbing, insulation, and HVAC can be installed typically in 30 to 45 days. Other initiatives would include upgrading the unused section of the Innovation Building and redoing the parking area.

The Route 8 corridor also has available industrial land; though, sufficient acreage is not available for the development of a traditional industrial park. One of Route 8's major advantages is the rail lines, which can be accessed by many of its parcels. Most of the available space is in Cornplanter and Rouseville.

Capital: ORA is the County's lead economic development agency with access to a variety of loan programs, including the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority (PIDA). The funds provide below-market interest rates for machinery, equipment, land, and buildings. Though current interest rates are low, this option will be helpful when the prime rate is above 6 percent.

In addition to potential below-market loans, the LERTA program, previously mentioned, would be another inducement for manufacturing. There is no need to create another agency to compete with the ORA. Rather, local leaders should do everything possible to work with the group.

Labor: America is now in an era of exponential technology changes. This is true especially in manufacturing. Low skilled jobs are often sent overseas, while there always seems to be slots for workers with advanced or special skills. And, this applies to more than factory work. The healthcare sector is another prime example of technical change. As medicine becomes more complex, and as people live longer, the need for skilled caregivers, from technicians to nursing,

is an ever-increasing labor market. In fact, the medical services area is projected as a major employment growth area (see BLS employment projections). New technologies and changing workforce demands require nontraditional solutions.

It is for this emerging demand for a well-trained workforce that Oil City can capitalize on its **most valuable assets**. There is a unique combination of educational institutions in the area that look forward. Institutions that realize new approaches and new thinking are needed in the 21st century. That combination is a unique force that could assist this area to, once more, gain its economic vigor and be a leader, breaking away from its long role as dependence upon economic cycles.

These institutions realize new thinking is needed for new times. And, training must react quickly to a changing marketplace. Educating workers for a new economy cannot wait for endless committees to review new curriculums. It must act promptly, often using a variety of sources to accomplish its goal. It is upon this concept that the area can regain an economic initiative. The capacity to train a variety of people in a variety of sectors can be as much an attraction to industry today as oil was in the 1860s.

Who should head this effort? Already identified are the three organizations: the Venango Technology Center, the Oil City Area School District, and the Venango Campus of the Clarion State University. The “Vo-Tech” has long been in the forefront of traditional job training. The Oil City Area School District has committed to a 21st century education approach.

Build a Future Economic Base



Traditionally, western Pennsylvania communities build their economic development programs on one or two primary elements—manufacturing and tourism being typical. In Oil City, a broader approach is possible. In addition to these traditional aspects, the ARTS program is a unique asset. Even more exciting are the resources of the Venango Campus of Clarion University, which could make the area the premier site for technical training in this part of the State. And, perhaps that is understating the potential of this resource, which already has a multi-state presence.

And, what areas are the most promising? Certainly, there is a myriad of new techniques that look favorable. Perhaps the most promising arena—one that is locally appropriate—is energy. The much talked about Marcellus black shale requires new drilling techniques, quite different from traditional oil and gas drilling in Pennsylvania. Furthermore, wind energy, with its associated technologies, is rapidly moving from a “green” dream to a practical reality. For example, on December 10, 2009, General Electric signed a \$1.4 billion contract to construct 338 turbines from Caithness Energy. Another potential energy source is water. Both the Allegheny River and Oil Creek are possible energy sources. In fact, the Venango Campus is already active in basic “high” growth job areas. Current Federal policy is also witness to this. Based on local capacity

and the Federal High Growth Training Initiative, the following sectors appear particularly good foci:

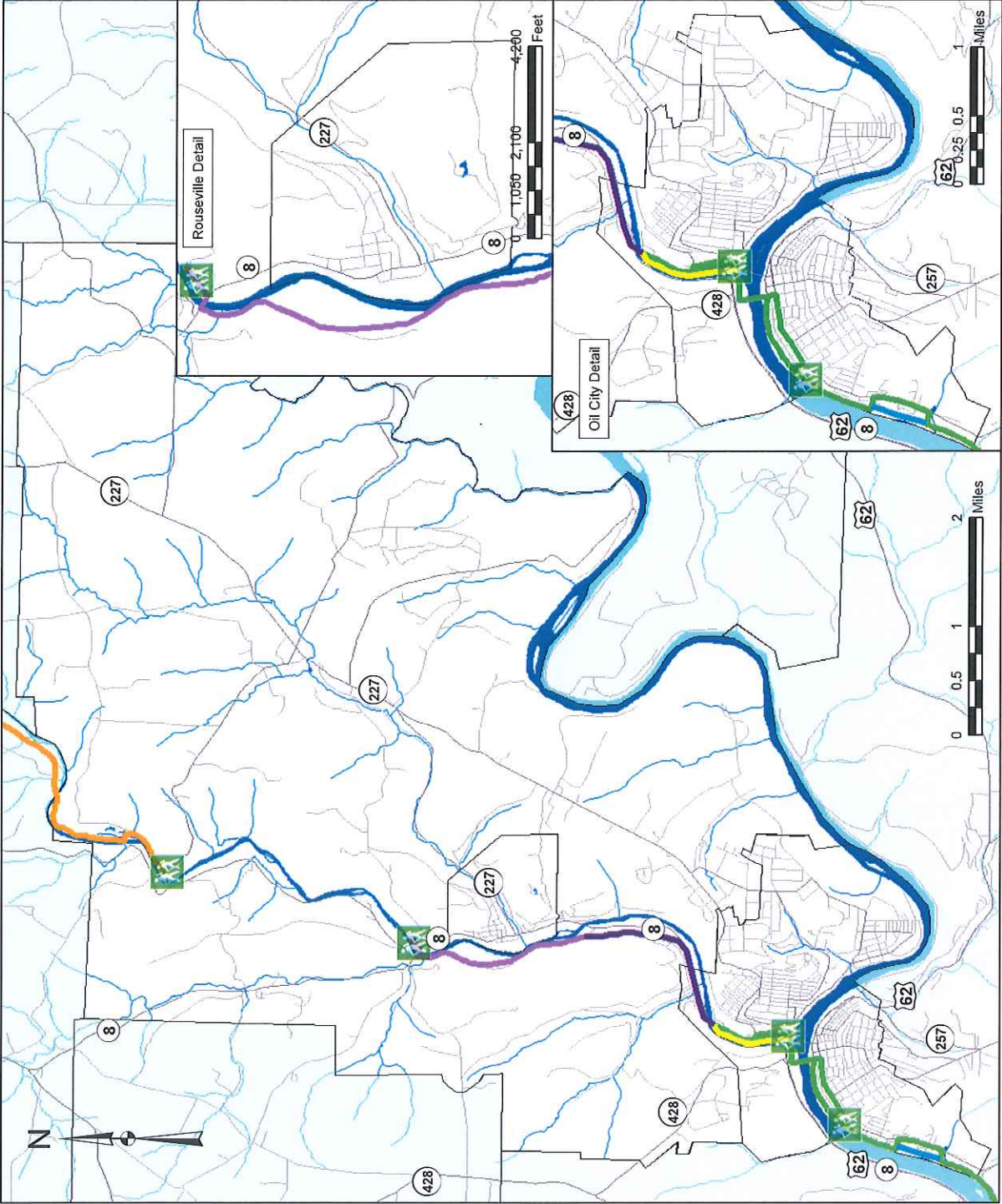
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Health Care
- Energy

As the Clarion Campus expands its programs, its enrollment—both on line and residential—will expand. Resident students make good consumers. If this area expects to return to vitality, education is one asset that can, and must, be exploited. But, it will require real local support and wholehearted cooperation. Education and training must be a full partner in this area's economic plans.

Education is one asset that can, and must, be exploited, which will require real local support and wholehearted cooperation.

Broadband

Using the ORA, any current needs for broadband access should be identified and remediation projects started.



The Bike Trail

Recently, the bike trail has become a priority for the Oil Region Alliance, and this Plan does not suggest a change. It has proved its capacity to secure needed funds for a critical trail gap. This Plan suggests some positive additions to the current bikeway plans.

Though nominally part of the recreation element, the local bike trail is one link in a system that eventually could link Lake Erie to the Pittsburgh area. In the short term, a trail of nearly 50 miles is possible within a few years.

This Plan has the following recommendations:

- Support construction of the missing link of three miles from the trailhead at Petroleum Center to the Rynd Farm area, via DCNR funding.
- Support the ORA in its current project to design and construct the trail from the Waitz Road (McClintock #1) termination to Oil City. Construction is scheduled in 2011. Included in this concept are trailheads at Rynd Farm and the McClintock well.
- Relocate the trail in the north side of Oil City to the Downtown side of Oil Creek.
- Make Justus Park, with its restrooms, and the adjacent parking area as a major trailhead option. Use informational kiosks to highlight Downtown business attractions for bikers.
- Relocate all trail segments in the South Side of Oil City to the Allegheny River from West First.
- Put a concession stand/boat canoe rental at the Marina to complement the viability of both features.
- Repair the Bike Trail Bridge over Oil Creek (proposed for 2011).

This initiative will require the cooperation of the City, Cornplanter, and the ORA.



ARTS and Culture Plan

ARTS Oil City Economic Impact Statement

In the three years from July 2006 to July 2009, ARTS Oil City has had a visible economic impact on Oil City's Downtown. The City investment of \$67,000 over the three-year period, plus a \$15,000 marketing grant from the Venango Area Community Foundation, has resulted in one new downtown business, 17 home purchases, and the development of a downtown art studio incubator in the National Transit Building, which now houses 25 artist tenants. That constitutes more than a ten-fold return on investment.

The new business, a gallery café on Seneca Street, has become a magnet for other businesses. Classy Catering and Classic Salon relocated to the Downtown, and the old Singer's building next door has been purchased with an eye toward arts development. The artists in the National Transit Building are planning a second nonprofit gallery in the Annex. ARTS Oil City partners wherever possible with the North Side Business Association, and events like the Second Saturday Open Studios, weekly Pipeline Alley lunchtime concerts, and the Oil Region Indie Music and Arts Festival draw visitors downtown.

Oil City Investment

Year 1: \$18,000 (salary for 15 hours/week and office expenses)

Year 2: \$22,000 (salary for 20 hours/week and office expenses)

Year 3: \$27,000 (salary, fringe, and office expenses, plus \$2,000 marketing)

Total City Expense: \$67,000

Venango Area Community Foundation Grant funds over 3-year period:

Years 1 to 3: \$15,000 Marketing

Total Expense: \$83,000 (Over period from June 2006 to date)

Economic Impact on Oil City: 17 homes purchased by artists @ \$48,000 (Median home value in Oil City)

\$816,000: 17 households paying local taxes, purchasing local goods and services

\$26,000: 2009 – 23 artists paying rent @ .49/square foot x 4,451 square foot = \$2,181 x 12 =

\$20,000 (rough estimate for 2008)

Total rents since 2007: \$46,000

Total Economic Impact: \$862,000

The ARTS program was started locally in 2006. It has multiple goals. Certainly one is to foster the arts in the Oil City area. Yet, perhaps, the more important aspect is to make Oil City a destination for artists and to encourage these artists to both live and work in the City.

To promote this latter goal, there are two primary incentive programs. The first is to offer studio space in the Transit Building Annex, at very attractive rates. This program element has been so successful that all studios are now rented and the rental income, even at such reduced rates, covers insurance and utility costs.

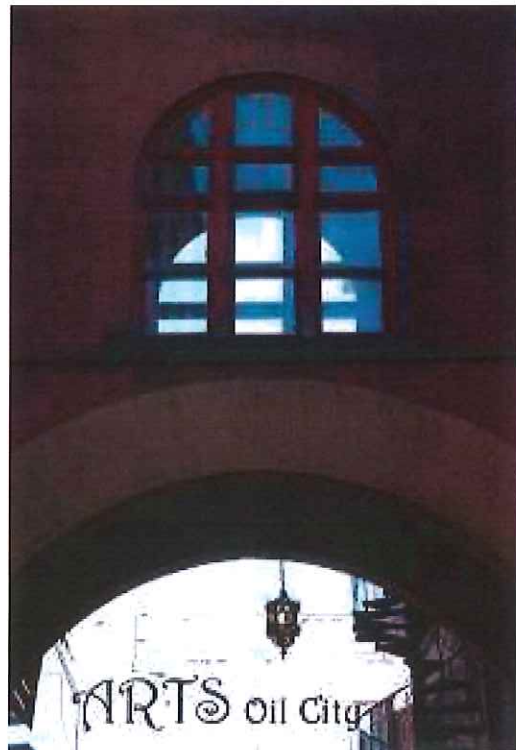
The second aspect, in concert with the First National Bank of Pennsylvania, is to offer 100 percent housing mortgages in a designated Arts Housing district. To date, 19 new artists have moved to Oil City. They work here, shop here, and pay taxes.

The total benefit to the area, over a three-year-plus period, is estimated great (see prior page). This was accomplished for an investment of some \$87,000. The ARTS program has done much, and promises much.

Yet, in spite of its success, this program is now at crossroads. The initial surge is losing momentum. The outreach must expand and services become full time, so the Oil City area becomes a destination for artists, a destination not just because of inexpensive housing and studio space. Rather, it must become a destination because artists want to locate here. That means the continued recruitment of artists to build up a critical mass of professional artists. In this manner, the needed cultural and support services will begin to emerge, bringing with its emergence, a new economic base for the local economy. A second key is to enhance the Oil Heritage Art Show so it becomes a truly prestigious event.

It is now time to take ARTS Oil City to the next level. The ARTS Council has set forth an ambitious program that is part of this Plan and is summarized below:

- Expand the hours and, hence, the impact of the ARTS office to recruit more artists for the area.
- Expand the marketing budget for both the national market and to attract more local participation.
- Better connect the ARTS effort to the City's day-to-day operations.
- Improve/better fund the Oil Heritage Art Show to attract more artists of wider prominence.



Finally, for a longer-term strategy, a “Master Plan” for the ARTS is needed—one completed by professionals in this specialized field.

Such a plan could include:

- Pottery studio (Transit complex)
- Develop third floor of Annex
- Roof of Annex use for a greenhouse and dining area
- Energy-efficient windows for the Transit complex
- New elevators for the Transit complex and Annex
- Arts (sculptor) on streets and regional gateways
- First-rate theater next to the Annex

If these steps are successful, the Oil City area will become a destination for artists—a destination that needs less subsidy.

In addition to its external program to attract new artists, there are ongoing events which provide entertainment and cultural activities for the residents of the Plan area—in reality, for the entire County. These include:

Arts in the Transit Building

Arts in Justus Park

Arts in Various Venues – music of all types as well as the Oil Heritage Art Show

Music in Pipeline Alley

First Night

These programs truly help make this area a “special blend.”

This is the time to take:

“Oil City ARTS to the Next Level.”

Special Section

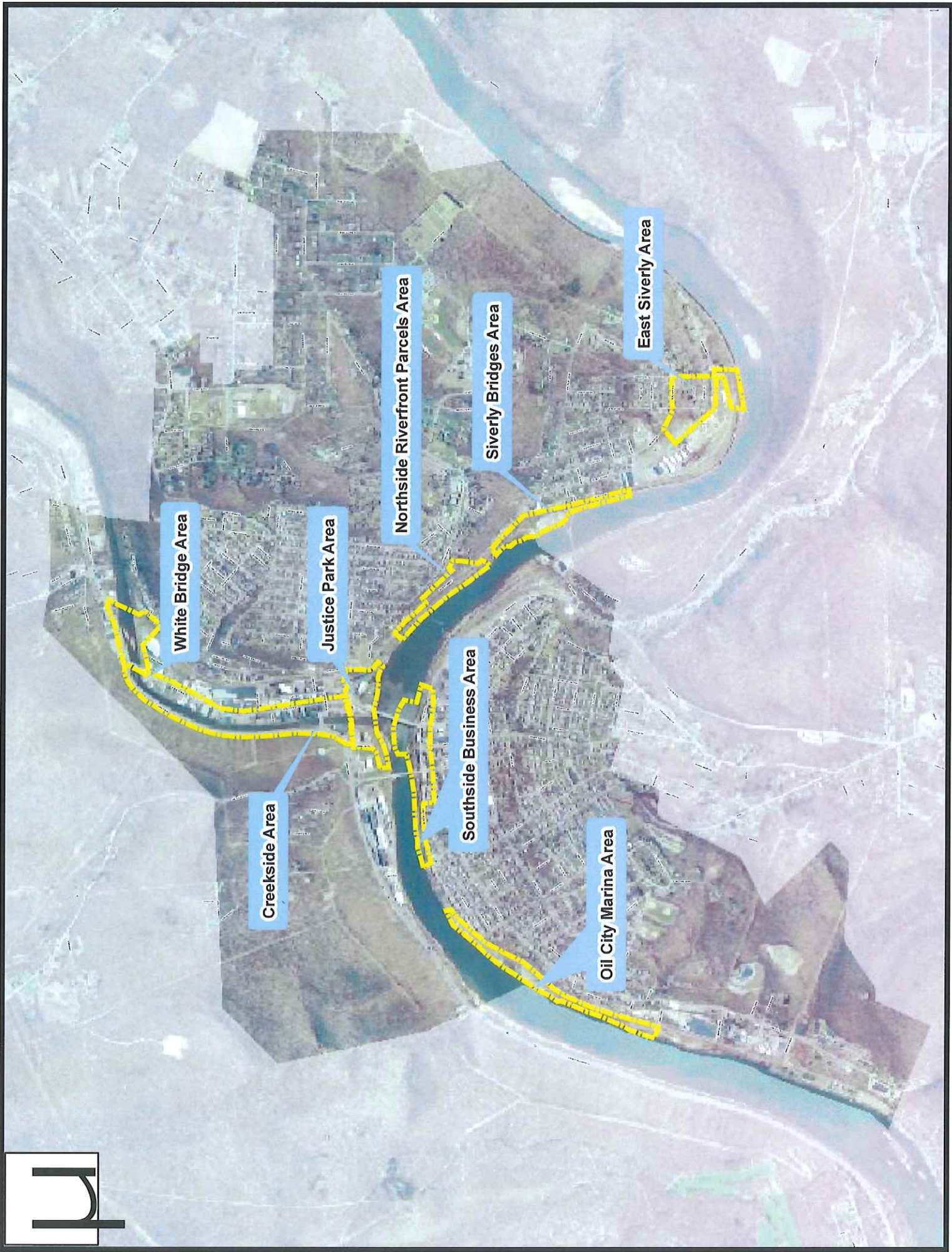
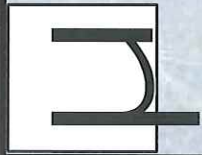
Concurrent with the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the City of Oil City was engaged in two parallel planning activities—a Comprehensive Waterways Plan and the Route 62 Corridor Smart Transportation Study. These studies were the products of Mackin Engineering Company (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), and Johnson Mirmiran & Thompson (York and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). These studies and their recommendations are hereby wholly incorporated into this Plan by reference.

Oil City Comprehensive Waterways Study (Mackin Engineering)

The Oil City Comprehensive Waterways Study is being completed concurrently with the City's comprehensive plan. The Plan is a comprehensive approach to identify opportunities and develop strategies that would enhance the portions of the waterfronts of the Allegheny River and Oil Creek, located within the City limits. Eight areas along the creek and river have been identified in this effort (see map insert), with a variety of recommendations for each. In addition, general corridor-wide recommendations are also included in the Plan. This Plan adopts, by reference, that efforts result. In this Plan, only the highlights of each area are given.

1. Marina Area: As shown by the map, this area extends along the Allegheny River in Oil City's "South Side," where the existing Marina is located.
 - Improve boat launch
 - RV parking
 - Primitive camp sites
 - Improved fishing access (pier and riverside)
 - Kayak storage and bike facilities
 - Interpretive wetland area
 - Concession and exhibition pavilion
 - Dog park
2. Creekside: This area includes the section from SR 8 to Seneca Street, from the confluence of the creek and river to approximately the Seneca Street Pizza Hut.
 - Sponsor creek-oriented community events
 - Fishing enhancements
 - Improve visual Gateway to Oil City
 - Building façade program
 - Outdoor café/art shop, Center Street Bridge
 - Creekside boardwalk
 - Decoration and fencing

3. **East Siverly:** This area is just north and east of the Oil City Industrial Park and includes some of the parking lot for the Innovation Center.
 - Establish a boat, canoe, kayak launch area with support facilities
 - Picnic areas
 - Improve river access – trails
 - Community market area
 - Improve Colbert – planting, sidewalks
 - Improve/renovate playground areas
4. **Justus Park Area:** This area includes both the east and west banks, at the confluence of Oil Creek and the Allegheny River.
 - Establish a trailhead at Justus Park with support services
 - Bridge walkers loop
 - Signage and information
 - Dog park; picnic facilities (VFW area)
 - Season concession
 - Improve river access
5. **White Bridge Area:** This includes both sides of Oil Creek, from the White Bridge upstream to the Railroad Bridge.
 - Picnic areas
 - Improve creek access (kayaks, inner tube, canoes)
 - Bike/hike trail loop and connection
6. **South Side Business:** This area extends from Division upstream to the fountain area at Wilson.
 - Designate a white-water loop under the Veterans' Memorial Bridge
 - Improve river access (fishing and boating)
 - Redevelop, strengthen the South Side; institute a consistent façade program
7. **Siverly Bridge:**
 - Passive camping
 - Extend the hike/bike trail along Allegheny (from Justus Park area)
 - Improve river access – trailhead facilities
 - Dog park
 - Designate conservation area



8. North Side River Area: This area is along Colbert and is largely undeveloped.

- Rails-to-trail connections – Justus Park to Siverly
- Fishing access points

Some general corridor-wide improvements include the elimination of invasive species, the opening up of viewsheds, and improving water access. Pedestrian and bike access is also an important element of the Waterways Plan. The main theme is to refocus the City's attention on the waterways and reconnect the residents and visitors with invaluable and unique resources available in Oil City. Where possible, "CSOs" are to be eliminated.

Route 62 Smart Transportation Study (JMT)

This study focuses on Route 62, from the Petroleum Street Bridge to just past Pumphouse Road.

By way of consulting with the business people of the South Side, the project Steering Committee and the public, some ten "Issues and Concerns" were identified. These were:

- Antiquated traffic signal; accidents; right burns (W)
- Poor sight distance at major intersections (W)
- Blighted properties (T)
- Need for pedestrian enhancements (O)
- Traffic speed (W)
- Enhance safety and pedestrian signage (O)
- Traffic calming – roundabout (O)
- Local economy – lack of funding (T)
- Pedestrian trails, paths, and sidewalks; the Railroad Bridge (O)
- Bike lanes along roadways (O)

W = Weakness

T = Threat

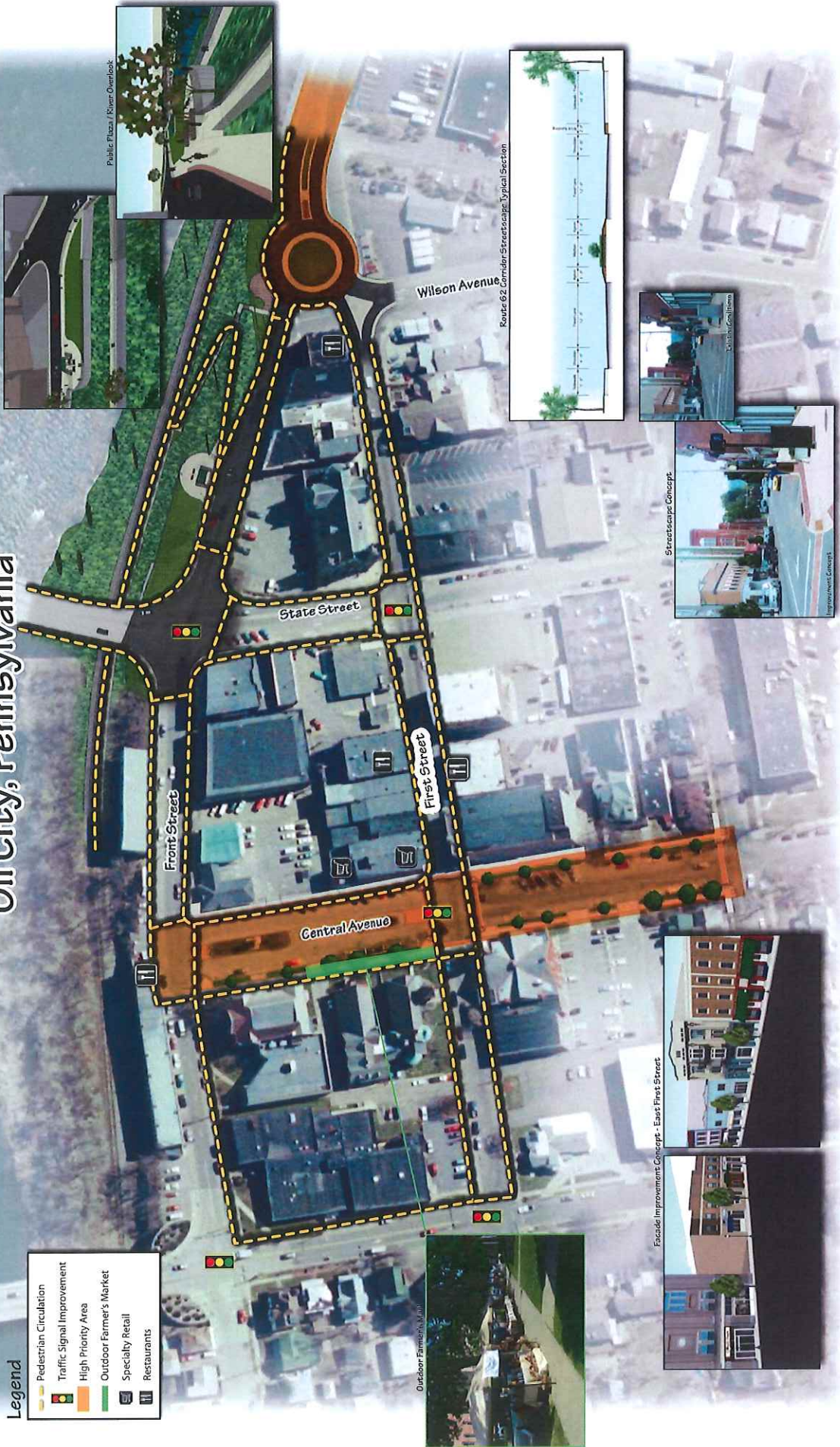
O = Opportunity

The study has established the following priorities:

The various projects that contribute to fulfilling the vision for Smart Transportation solutions along the Route 62 Corridor and surrounding South Side area have been analyzed in terms of cost, impact to the community, financing, necessary partnerships, and improvement to the local economy. Through the analysis, the following project implementation and prioritization strategy has been developed:

Route 62 Smart Transportation Study

Oil City, Pennsylvania



Project Prioritization and Implementation

- **High-Level Priorities**

- *Central Avenue Streetscape Improvements:* Central Avenue improvements would provide necessary infrastructure improvements and an aesthetically pleasing upgrades to the pedestrian and roadway facilities between the limits of Front Street and Second Street. The improvements will accomplish these goals without impact to the existing cannon and monuments within the central island area.
- *Central Avenue and First Street Signal Improvements:* Accessible (or Audible) Pedestrian Signal (APS) improvements at the intersection of Central Avenue and First Street will provide a safer crossing condition for the visually impaired pedestrian, as well as all pedestrians. The goal of an APS is to provide an audible notification of when it is safe to cross at an intersection. In addition, most modern devices are equipped with brail to provide additional directions for operating the pedestrian push button.
- *Second Street Streetscape Improvements:* Streetscape improvements along the Second Street corridor, from Wilson Avenue to Front Street would provide functional and aesthetic improvements to the existing pedestrian facilities along the commercial/residential corridor. The improvements should be completed in coordination with access management improvements along the commercial side of the corridor, as well as infrastructure upgrades to the existing public water facilities.
- *Front Street (Route 62) Corridor:* A “road diet” project along the Route 62 corridor will establish a transportation facility that is consistent with existing and projected traffic volumes while promoting alternative modes of transportation through the inclusion of pedestrian facilities.
- *First Street Roundabout:* A single-lane roundabout at the intersection of First Street/ Wilson Avenue and Front Street will provide a gateway into the business district of the south side of Oil City. The roundabout will also provide a means of traffic calming and improve the overall safety of motor vehicles and pedestrians.
- *Land Use Initiatives:* Incorporation of the various revitalization strategies identified in the previous section with a focus of balancing the transportation and land use initiatives to enhance the Downtown core of the South Side Business District.

- **Middle-Level Priorities**

Downtown Core Streetscape: Streetscape improvements within the downtown core area will provide an impact related to the Smart Transportation goals and objectives that were used as guidance through the development of the Corridor Study. The streetscape improvement would be focused on safety and aesthetic improvements to the pedestrian facilities. These improvements could be completed at once or packaged as smaller, more affordable projects.

Railroad Bridge: Currently, the railroad bridge is posted for no pedestrians; however, the bridge is commonly used as an access means between the north side and south side of Oil City. Bridge safety improvements, as well as upgraded pedestrian and bicycle facilities would provide a safe and convenient access between the residential area on the North Side and the commercial area on the South Side. Implementation of these improvements will require coordination and buy-in from Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad.

Rail Trail: Open space along the southern banks of the Allegheny River provides a convenient opportunity for a hiker/biker trail within the study area. The proposed trail could stretch from the Veterans' Memorial Bridge to the Wye Railroad Bridge and connect to future trail extensions. The goal of this improvement is to create a pedestrian facility that promotes pedestrian and bicycle use, serving as recreational purposes, as well as transportation purposes. Implementation of these improvements will require coordination and buy-in from Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad.

Public Plaza: The proposed public plaza is located adjacent to the First Street and Front Street intersection. The goal of this improvement is to create a beautiful pedestrian gathering facility within the study area in a location that is located within close proximity to the Downtown core area of the South Side, as well as access to the views and potential recreation opportunities along the Allegheny River.

Consistency

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code states (Section 301.4) that municipal comprehensive plans shall be generally consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted on January 5, 2010.

This analysis follows the goals as set forth by the County Plan's Executive Summary (pages 15 through 41).

Goal No. 1: To sustain the highest quality of rural residential, suburban, and urban life for the residents of Venango County. The Plan is consistent with the County Plan:

1. To provide for a planned mixture of residential, agricultural, commercial, recreational, and industrial land uses throughout the County.
 - All municipalities have zoning ordinances to rely on the County's SALDO, and this Plan recommends that process continue.
 - Zoning designations are compatible at the borders with the minor exception of land in Cornplanter, west of Route 8. It is zoned residential and abuts industrial land. (*Note: Current land use is a sewer plant.*)
 - The Plan recommends that both Oil City and Cornplanter adopt "TND" provisions in their zoning to ensure development is consistent with policy.
 - This is a multi-municipal effort.
2. To preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the rural character of Venango County by focusing commercial and residential development in or near the established villages or downtowns.
 - This Plan keeps the focus on growth in established areas. Municipal land use ordinances allow for a mixture of uses in commercial areas and adaptive reuse in selected residential areas.
3. To promote alternatives to residential and commercial strip development along major highways, such as Routes 8, 62, 257, and 322, and to encourage scenic roadways on various State and local roads in rural areas.
 - This Plan promotes the use of approved access management standards along major highways.
 - Most of the roadway corridors are already developed in the study area.
 - Street standards are generally found in SALDOs. The study area relies on the County SALDO.
4. To promote higher-density development where roads and utilities are capable of sustaining service to such development.

- Most new development is scheduled in Cornplanter Township. The Plan analysis concluded that projected growth could be concentrated in areas already appropriately zoned.
5. To maintain and strengthen the agricultural and forestry economy.
 - The only community with agricultural or forestry activities is Cornplanter Township. No changes to current zoning, which allow these activities, are suggested in the Plan.
 6. To encourage economic growth by industries and businesses related in the natural, economic, and educational resources of Venango County.
 - This Plan recognizes the Oil Regional Alliance as the primary economic development agency.
 - The Plan identified the Route 8 as its prime economic corridor.
 - The Plan supports the Oil City Main Street effort. It also recommends expanded LERTA in the Oil City Downtown as well as along the Route 8 corridor in all three municipalities.
 - This Plan recommends the emphasis on training programs as an economic development tool.
 7. To identify opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation in the delivery of public services.
 - This Plan recommends the formation of four multi-municipal task forces; two of these deal directly with public service and public facilities.
 8. To promote public/private partnerships in identifying and solving problems.
 - This Plan recommends the inclusion of the private sector, especially in housing—one of the key Plan priorities.

Goal No. 2: To provide policies, plans, and proposals to municipalities for the physical, economic, and social development of their communities while protecting the natural, historic, and built environments.

1. To encourage all municipalities in Venango County to adopt local or multi-municipal land use plans, and, if recommended in those plans, to adopt local land use ordinances.
 - This is a multi-municipal plan. All municipalities have land use ordinances.
2. To promote the form of development called “Conservation Subdivisions” throughout the County. (Conservation Subdivision is a form of subdivision design that preserves 40% or more of the total land area of a parent tract as permanently undeveloped land.)
 - Given the modest level of development forecast over the next decade, the Conservation Subdivision option was not regarded as viable.

Note: Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 23 essentially County Commission, County Planning Commission, or ORA activities.

20. To encourage municipalities to regularly review and revise sewage facility plans, comprehensive plans, and capital improvements plans.
 - Act 537 Plans for all municipalities were initiated prior to the funding of this Plan and are essentially complete.
22. To encourage County and municipal governments to maintain public safety facilities, resources, and personnel at the highest degree of readiness.
 - All public safety organizations were contacted and expressed needs included in this Plan.

Goal No. 3: To promote conditions providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Venango County.

The first eleven items under this Goal were County Planning Commission, County, or other agency activities.

12. To encourage municipal and county governments to establish regular ongoing training for employees and to establish standards of professionalism for such employees. The County and its municipalities should establish mechanisms for sharing highly specialized management, technical, and enforcement personnel.
 - The three municipalities do encourage training and already share personnel (Code Officer).

Note: Items 13 and 14 are identified as County Planning Commission, the Parks Authority, and Conservation District activities.

15. To explore the creation of a Venango County Library System and establish formulas to provide consistent levels of public funding for such a system.
 - The Oil City Library is a de facto regional facility and provides offices for a regional, county, state library function.

Goal No. 4: To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain safe, affordable, housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing that annually costs no more than 35% of the median household income, as defined in the most recent United States Census Information.

- Items 1 and 2 are essentially County functions.
- Items 3 and 4 involve zoning map and ordinance provisions, a priority in this Plan, to enhance area housing conditions.
- Items 5 and 6 involve bonus densities and the development of Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) or TNDs. After a review of the County Housing Market Plan, it

was concluded the local market was not yet robust enough to utilize a PRD option. However, TNDs have been recommended.

- Items 8, 9, 10, and 11 are identified as County Planning Commission or County Commissioner functions.

Goal No. 5: To provide equal opportunities for all residents to obtain meaningful employment.

- Most of these activities are designated for organizations other than the three members of this Plan.

Goal No. 6: To promote the enhancement of the agricultural and forest areas of Venango County in an economically sound manner.

- Most of the actions recommended are by the County Planning Commission, the County Conservation District, or the ORA.

Goal No. 7: To provide a framework for cooperation within Venango County and the region.

- Most of the actions recommended are by the County Planning Commission, the County Commissioners, or other County organizations.

Based on the forgoing, this Plan is found to be generally consistent with the County Plan.

Plan Interrelationships

The following are the key interrelationships between Plan elements:

1. The primary linkage is between the Housing and Land Use elements. This linkage is essentially a remedial one which uses the zoning ordinance as a tool to stabilize and improve the area's housing stock and market.
2. The second key linkages are Land Use, the Economic Plan, the Bike Trail, and the ARTS. Land use can provide for viable attractive commercial areas, while the bike trail and ARTS program support tourism as well as the area's overall viability.
3. Community facilities, especially water and sewer systems, are needed elements to allow for housing development and foster economic development. The provision of adequate water and sewer facilities along Route 8 is a key prime example of such linkages.
4. Transportation – A safer and efficient transportation system is essential for all Plan elements.

Implementation

The implementation of many recommendations in this Plan consist of activities that are relatively standard and do not require a detailed explanation. In some other instances, projects are set forth in enough detail to facilitate implementation. This section highlights two elements: high-priority activities and “Quick Start” projects.

Quick Starts Projects (QSP)

- Justus Park Trailhead – Oil City
- 3rd and Walnut Park – Oil City
- Water and sewer lines, Route 8 – Cornplanter
- New sewer plant – Rouseville
- Paving Old Bankson Road – Cornplanter

High-Priority

Historic Preservation

- Institution of TND* zoning – Oil City Downtown
- Downtown LERTA – Oil City

Land Use

- Amend ordinance to allow reasonable multi-family “55-plus” development – Rouseville
- Update zoning ordinances – All municipalities
- Prepare TNDs for residential and second-home areas – Cornplanter and Oil City

Transportation

- Promote all TIP projects – All municipalities, Venango County, RPO

Housing

- Code enforcement – All municipalities
- Demolition – All municipalities
- Rehabilitation – All municipalities
- “Down zoning” – Oil City

Natural Resource Protection

- Zoning – All municipalities

Community Facilities

- Implement Act 537 Plans – All municipalities
- Water projects – All municipalities

Economic Development

- Institute the training center concept – All municipalities
- Route 8 priorities – All municipalities
- ARTS – Oil City

Throughout the body of this Plan, there are recommendations for specific actions, usually identifying pertinent actions/programs. In addition, an “Implementation” workshop was held to better acquaint participants with available resources.